

Shifting Narratives

The political economy of public services, spending and production

Online, 27 June 2022 – 30 June 2022

[Event Registration Webpage](#)

A yellow rectangular poster with white text. At the top, a white box contains the text 'REGISTRATION NOW OPEN'. Below this, the title 'SHIFTING NARRATIVES' is written in large, bold, white capital letters. Underneath the title, the subtitle 'THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF PUBLIC SERVICES, SPENDING AND PRODUCTION' is written in smaller white capital letters. Further down, the dates '27 - 30 JUNE 2022 | ONLINE' are displayed. At the bottom left is the IIPP logo (a square with 'IIPP' inside) followed by the text 'UCL Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose'. At the bottom right is the University of Greenwich logo (a circular emblem) followed by the text 'UNIVERSITY OF GREENWICH' and '2021-2022 Academic Year'.

Register Now

Event Information:

Open to:

All, but registration is required.

Organisers:

UCL Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose (UCL-IIPP)

University of Greenwich's Public Services International Research Unit (UoG-PSIRU)

In partnership with:

- Azim Premji University, India
- CONICET, Argentina
- Public Services International (PSI)
- Transnational Institute (TNI)
- University of Ghana, Institute of African Studies
- Young Scholars Initiative, Institute for New Economic Thinking (YSI-INET)
- Oxfam
- International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF)

This is a call to register for a four-day online conference on shifting narratives around public services, spending and production (PSSP). It will examine, globally, the contested landscape of PSSP, and the shifting balance between mainstream narratives hostile to PSSP, such as austerity, and the political, social, economic, and other factors – such as COVID-19 and climate change – bringing positive narratives and theories for a greater role for PSSP.

It will provide not only an academic conference for leading research on these issues, but also a forum for sharing information by bringing together experience, insights and tools from academics and young scholars with those involved in these narrative shifts - social movement activists, trade unions, media and NGOs.

The economic and political role of public services, public spending and public production of goods and services has been a central issue for economic and social policy at national and international level for many decades. There are thus continuing disputes over the scope of

public service systems, and the scale of government spending on these services. The theories and analyses used by economists and political scientists form a significant set of narratives in this contest. Some critique the fiscal burden of taxation on commercial activity, and the disruption of labour markets by public employment, while favouring the use of public spending and services as opportunities for private finance through PPPs or long-term outsourced contracts. Others frame analyses around the key role of PSSP in driving innovation and delivering new public missions, its economic role in providing physical and service infrastructure, the role of public sector capacity in direct provision of goods and services and enabling public policy development shielded from corruption, and its historical role in delivering socio-economic, racial and gender equality, and enabling democratic control, transparency and accountability.

This conference grows out of a report on '[Narrative change and Public Services, Spending and Provision](#)' carried out by a team led by PSIRU. Social movements and unions have recently summarised the social and economic case for PSSP in a 'global manifesto': '[The future is public](#)', and other reports on issues related to public services are published by the global partners in this conference – [Public Services International \(PSI\)](#) and [Transnational Institute \(TNI\)](#). This conference is supported in part through a grant from the Open Society Foundations (OSF).

The objectives of the conference are to:

- bring together academics, unions and social movements in a 2-way sharing of research and information on issues, trends and campaigns around public services, globally
- to encourage critical academic research on PSSP issues and narratives of concern to SMs/unions
- to encourage collaboration between academics/young scholars and social movements and unions

Conference Structure

- **Day 1** will be a plenary session with a number of invited presentations on the political economy and narratives of PSSP, by leading academics and speakers from unions and social movements.
- **Day 2** will have thematic workshops, including one on narratives of public spending and workshops on a range of issues eg public finance, economic planning, trade and public services, participatory budgeting. Each workshop will last 1.5 hours, with 1 hr for papers and contributions from academics, young scholars, unions and social movements, with 30 minutes of discussion.
- **Day 3** - there will be parallel workshops on public service trends, narratives and issues in global regions: Africa, Americas, Asia, Europe. These workshops will follow a similar format of 1.5 hours, including papers and contributions from academics, young scholars, trade unions and social movements, followed by discussions.
- **Day 4** will be a final forward-looking plenary session with an invited panel of speakers including academics, union and SM speakers, discussing future academic agendas and the prospects and strategies in relation to PSSP, and the potential for collaboration.

We also hope to organise an in-person meeting for young scholars, and young trade unionists/activists close to the dates of the conference in London.

Outputs

The outputs from the conference will include:

- publication of working papers and presentations on the conference website.
- An accessible summary report of the conference, to be published within 1 month, for all participants including academics, trade unionists and social movement members
- a special issue of an academic journal containing conference papers selected by the scientific committee
- conference blog and twitter feed
- plans for possible future conferences and other partnerships

Proposed structure

Day	
Day 1	Opening plenary session
	This will frame the conference with presentations from academics, unions and social movements around the core objectives of encouraging critical academic research on PSSP, sharing information on current issues between academics and unions and social movements, and potential for collaborations
Day 2.	Parallel thematic workshops (1.5 hrs: 1 hour of academic/union/SM contributions; + 30 mins discussion)
	A. Case studies of academics and researchers working with unions and social movements to address PSSP issues, at local, national and global levels
	B. Other thematic workshops. Proposals for papers are welcomed for other themes including:
	- Shifting narratives: climate change, trade agreements, COVID-19 and public health, PSSP and employment
	- Reclaiming economic and political framework: public planning, public capacity, and public finance
	- Democratic politics: PSSP narratives on participation, populisms , public ownership
	C. Dynamics of narratives on PSSP: mapping the positive and negative narratives around public spending and public services: results of a PSIRU-led study 2021
Day 3	Regional trends and YSI session
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional trends in PSSP: politics, economy, narratives. Parallel workshops and sessions
Day 4.	Final plenary: the future and PSSP
	A round table of academics, trade unionists and social movement activists on a future research agenda for PSSP, the role of PSSP in building a better economy and society, and potential for collaboration

Contact

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Lead Organisers

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This conference is organised by:

University College London Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose (UCL-IIPP)



University of Greenwich Public Services International Research Unit (UoG-PSIRU)



In partnership with:

Azim Premji University



CONICET



Public Services International (PSI)



Transnational Institute (TNI)



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