



## Shifting Narratives

### The political economy of public services, spending and production

Online, 27 June 2022 – 30 June 2022

[Call for paper](#)

**CALL FOR PAPERS**

# SHIFTING NARRATIVES

AROUND THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF PUBLIC  
SERVICES, SPENDING AND PRODUCTION

27 - 30 JUNE 2022

**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)

This is advance notice of, and call for contribution proposals 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

## **Call for papers and contributions from academics, young scholars, and union and social movement activists**

In order to encourage maximum participation from academics, young scholars, unions and social movements, there are four distinct calls for papers and proposals.

### **Call for papers: academics**

Academics, young scholars and researchers are invited to submit proposals for papers to be presented at any of the workshops on day 2 (thematic workshops) and day 3 (regional workshops).

We particularly encourage proposals from academics and young scholars in the global south; from early career academic (PhD and postdoctoral) researchers; from researchers and activists working with unions and social movements; and from Black and other voices currently marginalised in academia.

Proposals may be for presentation of a full paper, or for a working paper presenting research work in progress. Proposals should indicate the theme or region or proposed workshop, to which the presentation relates, as well as the name of proposer, current position, and brief CV.

Any enquiries related to application are to be sent to Nadia Ntow-Aninkora ([n.ntow-aninkora@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:n.ntow-aninkora@ucl.ac.uk))

- Deadline for submission of abstract (approx. 250 words) is **25 April 2022**
- Acceptance letters will be sent out on **02 April 2022**
- Accepted proposals will be expected to submit their paper (either working or full paper, from 2000 to 6000 words) by **30 May 2022**

Proposals will be evaluated and approved for quality on the basis of the usual criteria, of coherence, accuracy and contribution to knowledge and analysis, by a scientific committee of recognised academic specialists. In addition, they will be assessed for relevance to issues of concern to social movements and trade unions, and more generally to current narratives on PSSP.

Submission link: <https://forms.gle/owDKU2mpWazH6hxBA>

**Young scholars' participation – co-ordinated with the Young Scholars Initiative, Institute for New Economic Thinking**

If you wish to be assessed as a young scholar, please follow the following guideline.

Young scholars are strongly encouraged to participate in the conference and workshops in a number of ways:

- by submitting proposals in response to the call for papers for the workshops
- volunteering to be 'initial respondents' in workshops, asking a question or comment to help start discussion (optional)
- volunteering as rapporteurs to write summary 500-word reports of the workshops (optional)
- volunteering to help academics, unions and social movements organise regional workshops (optional)

Young scholars are also encouraged to express interest in participating in the proposed YSI session in London in late June (close to the conference dates) with limited travel and accommodation support.

Any enquiries related to application are to be sent to Dr. Surbhi Kesar ([development@youngscholarsinitiative.org](mailto:development@youngscholarsinitiative.org))

The timeline for submission is:

- Deadline for submission of abstract (approx. 250 words) is **25 April 2022**
- Acceptance letters will be sent out on **02 May 2022**
- Accepted proposals will be expected to submit a full draft of the paper by **30 May 2022**
- Submission link: <https://forms.gle/QN6drGmzxU9UBJh6>

### **Trade unionists and social activists**

Contributions by trade unionists and social activists are an essential part of the thematic and regional workshops. Proposals for such contributions are strongly encouraged. They are expected to cover real current issues and experience of political processes and narratives on PSSP. They can take various forms and use existing materials e.g. regional newsletters, campaign reports, union research, video interviews, international strategies. They can also be new briefs or reports or presentations. They are not required to produce academic research papers. The organisers, PSI and TNI will offer as much support as possible to help activists develop such contributions.

Proposals for such contributions can be made by sending the proposal to Nadia Ntow-Aninkora ([n.ntow-aninkora@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:n.ntow-aninkora@ucl.ac.uk)).

*Young trade unionists and social activists* are also encouraged to express interest in participating in the proposed YSI session in London in late June (close to the conference dates) with limited travel and accommodation support. Any enquiries related to application are to be sent to Dr. Surbhi Kesar ([development@youngscholarsinitiative.org](mailto:development@youngscholarsinitiative.org))

### **Other parallel workshops**

Proposals are also welcome from academics, young scholars, trade unionists and social movements for additional thematic workshops. Such proposals should include a rationale for the workshop, together with suggestions for specific speakers, including both academic and union/social movement contributions. Please send these proposals to Nadia Ntow-Aninkora ([n.ntow-aninkora@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:n.ntow-aninkora@ucl.ac.uk)).

## Proposed structure

Day	
<b>Day 1</b>	<b>Opening plenary session</b>
	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
<b>Day 2.</b>	<b>Parallel thematic workshops (1.5 hrs: 1 hour of academic/union/SM contributions; + 30 mins discussion)</b>
	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 <b>participation, populisms</b> , 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
<b>Day 3</b>	<b>Regional trends and YSI session</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regional trends in PSSP: politics, economy, narratives. Parallel workshops and sessions</li> </ul>
<b>Day 4.</b>	<b>Final plenary: the future and PSSP</b>
	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

Nadia Ntow-Aninkora [n.ntow-aninkora@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:n.ntow-aninkora@ucl.ac.uk)

### Lead Organisers

Dr. [Tue Anh \(Jenny\) Nguyen](#) (UCL-IIPP), Dr. [Vera Wegmann](#) (UoG-PSIRU), [Professor David Hall](#) (UoG-PSIRU)

*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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