

# 12<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference of the International Society for the Study of Work and Organizational Values

June 27-30, 2010 Estoril-Lisbon, Portugal

Work and values debate in times of change: the paradoxes related to the notion of public service

LILIANA CUNHA  
Universidade Católica Portuguesa  
lcunha@porto.ucp.pt

MARIANNE LACOMBLEZ  
Centro de Psicologia da Universidade do Porto  
lacomb@porto.ucp.pt

## The notion of public service in transport sector

- The transport sector was the only one for which it was clearly enshrined the notion of public service in the EEC Treaty (Article 73);
- However, the organization and the delivery of public service has been taking various forms...



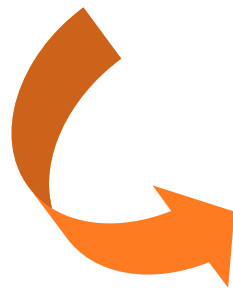
**In Portugal:**

**until the 90's** - the services of public transport should **escape the application of a mercantile logic**, of profitability search

**since the 90's** - another logic starts sustaining the notion of public service, **including now the presence of the market.**

## The evolution of the notion of public service and its challenges

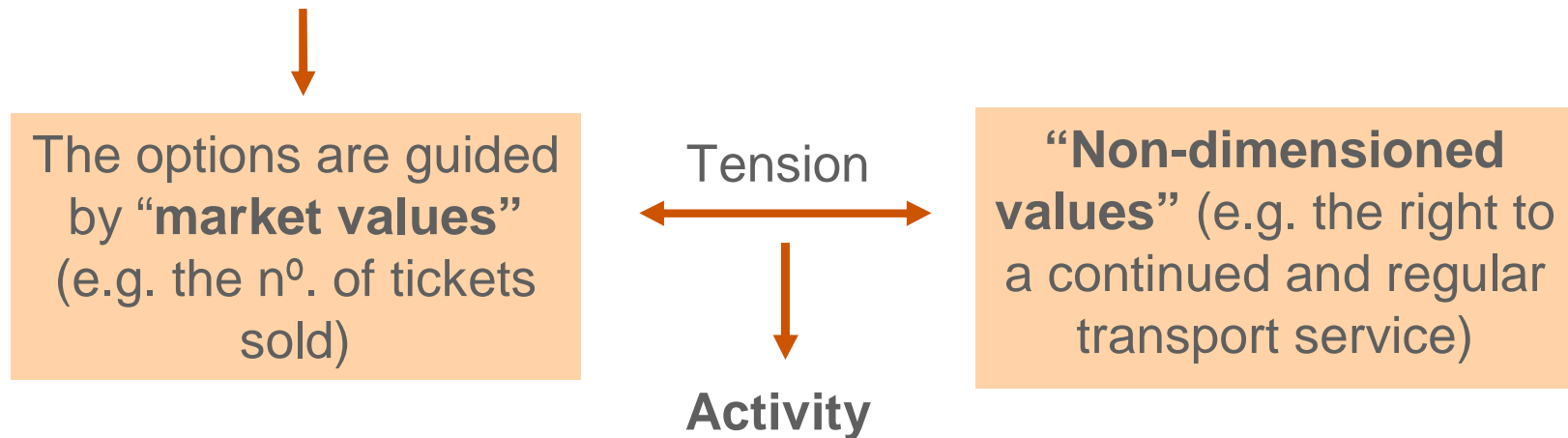
- The definition of public service contracts with private companies gave rise to a debate on the necessary “compromise” between public service and market principles.



**Is it possible to understand public services without going through the real activity of work?**

## The ergological approach (Schwartz & Faita, 1985)

The shift to a market orientation  
of work organization



**Debate of values** and **norms** in the activity, to establish commitments that allows the management of the goals of the activity and the real needs of the customers.

# The history of a bus line, its exploitation and its leading protagonists

## The bus line under analysis

It corresponds to an **urban bus line**,

that is exploited by three operators:  
two private and a public one.

The analysis focuses on drivers' activity at one of these **private** companies, which owns the exploitation of this line, according to an agreement of **public service**

This agreement requires, however, the acceptance of certain **public service obligations**.

The supplying company is **free to set its choices on work organization**.



Compensations for the public service mission: **rights over the obtained income of the tickets sold**

## Drivers' activity analysis

The analysis of drivers' activity in **real context** allowed us to observe that, sequentially to the right over the obtained income of the tickets sold, which was attributed to this company as a compensation for the “public service mission”, changes have been introduced on:

- the schedules;
- the selection of drivers that work in this line;
- the strategies of managing activity that came to be valued.

## The activity as a “values debate”


- The management of the activity is not made without **debating values – *market* and *non dimensioned values***
- **Some examples...**

## The costs of this commitment...

- The commitment that drivers seek to build in their activity between different goals includes, nevertheless, **costs to their health** that can not be neglected

## Conclusion: what can we realize from the public service activity?

- Redefining the boundaries of the notion of public service requires a different way to conceive and produce it: one can not only take into account the protection of its own purposes; it is essential to consider also the **organization of work and the conditions in which the service is provided**.
- The analysis of public service activity, in real context, gives visibility to the fact that **it is at the level of the activity that the commitment to public service is produced**: between the purposes of public service that one seeks to achieve and the means at its disposal, the “use of himself” is, frequently, the only strategy that allows this commitment.



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