

ONLINE APPENDIX

METHODOLOGY

Our review progressed in three sequential stages. In the first stage, we searched the Web of Science database, using the keywords “privatization” or “privatisation” within the title, abstract and keywords. We conducted six separate searches for Management, Public Administration, Political Science, Economics, Sociology and Finance. For each discipline, we downloaded the top 500 papers based on citations. In Management, we decided pragmatically to extend our search to the top 505, in order to include all papers cited at least once.

Next, we included all papers published in 2019 and 2020 to make sure not to miss potentially relevant papers that at the time of our search had not had sufficient time to collect citations. This additional search led us to include 60 more articles. Finally, we used recent reviews (Estrin & Pelletier, 2018; Megginson, 2017) of research on privatization in the field of economics to identify relevant work that the application of our criteria might have overlooked (for a total of 14 additional articles).

As we selected papers, in line with the focus of our review, we only included research that explored privatization as ownership change, and thus removed studies that focus on privatization as delegation or used the term to describe the broader “withdrawal of the state”. When reviewing economics journals, we removed articles that explored the impact of privatization (as public policy) on country-level macro-economic variables (GDP, employment levels, etc.), as these outcomes tend to fall outside the interest of management scholars; we retained instead those that examined the impact of privatization (as a specific event) on organizational performance. Similarly, we removed articles published in sociology and political science that used privatization as a broader concept to explore neoliberal policies (e.g. privatization of social care) and kept only those that focused on ownership changes and its effects. The final sample comprised 316 papers.

In the second phase, we coded each article based on the timing of privatization (that is the period covered by the study or when the focal privatization occurred), country where privatization took place, the temporal lag (how many years before/after privatization the study was conducted), the content (what was being privatized) and the methods (how it was privatized) of the privatization, the methodology used in the study, and the theoretical lens adopted by the authors.

Finally, building upon our coding, we developed a preliminary framework to organize the scattered body of work on privatization around four broad areas: *antecedents* (literature examining the factors that lead to the decision to privatize), *outcomes* (literature focusing on the outcome of privatization), *mediating processes* (organizational changes associated with privatization that generate the observed outcomes), and *moderators* (internal and external factors that affect its outcomes) (see Figure 1 in the paper).

THEORETICAL ARGUMENTS FOR (AND AGAINST) THE DIVESTMENT OF STATE-OWNED ORGANIZATIONS

Arguments for State Ownership of Organizations

Most arguments for state-ownership rest on the fundamental idea that direct state intervention in the economy may be desirable in the presence of a market failure – a set of circumstances that make a free market unable to supply an optimal amount of goods or services (Greenwald & Stiglitz, 1986). A notable case of market failure are so-called *pure public goods*: goods, like defense or environmental quality, the supply of which cannot be restricted to citizens who pay for them (non-excludable), and the use of which does not make them less available for others (non-rivalrous). Because of these reasons, no profit-oriented, private investor would be incentivized to provide pure public goods. Market failures also occur in so-called *incomplete markets* – where demand for a good or service is not met, for instance, because of the capital

investments required are too high for private investors to afford – or *natural monopolies* – where technical conditions make it impossible or uneconomic for more than one producers to operate. In these circumstances, state-ownership has been advocated to prevent undersupply or overpricing (Musacchio & Lazzarini, 2014, p.60). Market failures also manifest in the form of *externalities*. Negative externalities occur, for instance, when producers do not financially incur part of the costs arising from their production (e.g. environmental pollution); positive externalities occur when producers are not able to monetize all the benefits that they deliver. Externalities are usually addressed through regulation or incentives; however, they may also motivate state-ownership under the assumption that citizens suffering from negative externalities (or benefiting from positive ones) would be able to punish (or reward) political authorities through voting behavior (Musacchio & Lazzarini, 2014, p.61).

Literature highlighting the benefits of state-ownership largely draws on these ideas to develop arguments that can be grouped into what scholars have labeled as the *social* and the *industrial policy* perspective (Musacchio & Lazzarini, 2014, p.4). Arguments adopting a *social perspective* propose that state ownership of organizations will enable these organizations to address market failures because their actions reflect the pursue of multiple commercial and non-commercial objectives rather than the exclusive maximization of profits (Christiansen, 2013; Shapiro & Willig, 1990; Shirley, 1999). SOEs, for instance, are seen as necessary to overcome the difficulties of regulating natural monopolies such as infrastructural grids, railways, and water supply, under the assumption of incomplete contracts (Schmidt, 1996; Hart, Shleifer, & Vishny, 1997) – or, in other words, the assumption that in these markets quality of service cannot be fully specified in a contractual agreement. The use of SEOs has also been advocated to deliver positive externalities such as regional development, job creation, and redistribution of income through choices (about location, size of workforce, etc.) that

purely profit-oriented, private firms would not make in the absence of economic incentives (Shirley & Nellis, 1991).

Arguments adopting an *industrial policy perspective* view SOEs are an important tool to address market failures that lead to suboptimal productive investments (Musacchio & Lazzarini, 2013). For instance, when capital markets are less developed or private sources of investment capital are scarce, state-owned banks can help alleviate credit constraints and promote projects and ventures with positive net present value that might otherwise not be pursued (Bruck 1998; Yeyati, Micco, & Panizza, 2004). Similarly, from a perspective of industrialization and economic development, SOEs have been used as a tool to industrialize regions that otherwise might attract little investment (Reinert, 2000). Finally, it has been argued that SOEs can support technological development, especially for technologies that have “high discovery costs” because of the enormous research budgets that they require (Mazzucato, 2011, p.40).

Arguments in Favor of Privatization

Arguments in favor of privatization largely draw on the application of micro-economic theories to the analysis of managerial and political behavior, namely property rights theory, agency theory, and public choice theory.

Property rights theory. Property rights theory is interested in determining how ownership of a resource or economic good affects how it is used (Alchian, 2008). It examines how individual incentive created by the structure of property rights affects the functioning of organizations (Alchian 1965; De Alessi 1987). A fundamental tenet of this theory is that ownership of assets incentivizes individuals to nurture and extract value from these assets (Hart & Moore, 1990). Based on this theory, some scholars have argued that the benefits of privatization arise primarily from the fact that public ownership “dilutes” property rights and reduces incentives to manage assets efficiently, because managers in SOEs benefit less (and

suffer less) from the economic consequences of their decision compared to managers that own stakes in the private firms they manage (Arocena & Oliveros, 2012). The existence of soft budget constraints may also effectively keep SOEs from pursuing efficiency, as gaps between income and expenditure may be systematically covered by the government (Kornai, 1980). If an enterprise can effectively survive without being liable for their rising costs, price mechanisms may no longer guide the behavior of managers, potentially encouraging overstaffing, overinvestments, excessive salaries, etc.

Agency theory. Agency theory (Jensen & Mackling, 1976) complements property rights theory in that it focuses on issues arising when ownership, control and management are separated, and examines the governance mechanisms through which owners of economic assets – or “principals” (i.e., shareholders) – induce managers of those assets – or “agents” – to act in their interests (Fama & Jensen, 1983). An application of agency theory to the analysis of state ownership has highlighted potential distortions caused by principal-agent conflicts (Megginson & Netter, 2001). First, because governments have multiple objectives (e.g. social welfare, political interests) other than profitability, a public shareholder is unlikely to press managers to prioritize the efficiency of operations, expecting them instead to attend to a broader set of goals (Megginson & Netter, 2003; Vickers & Yarrow, 1988, 1991). Shifting to private ownership, this argument maintains, will ensure that managers keep focus on the long-term maximization of shareholders’ wealth (Megginson & Netter, 2001). Secondly, governments are thought to have weak incentives to properly monitor managers’ pursuit of economic performance, thus leaving them more latitude to pursue personal goals (Vickers & Yarrow, 1991). A shift from public to private ownership, this theory maintains, will place managers under stricter control, because private investors will have a stronger incentive to closely monitor decisions that directly affect their wealth.

Public choice theory. Public choice theory, finally, comprise a body of work that applies economic theories to the analysis of institution and political behaviour (Dunleavy, 1986). According to this perspective, it is impossible to determine what constitutes “common good” or “public interest”, because all individuals (voters, legislators, bureaucrats, and other political actors) pursue their material self-interest (Buchanan & Tullock, 1962). Most voters are generally ignorant about the implications of choices they back and tend to support choices the cost of which is carried by other citizens (either through taxes or externalities) (see Caplan, 2007). Governments, therefore, might be tempted to pursue policies that are inefficient, further their own political agendas (Buchanan, 1978; Niskanen, 1971), and/or reflect the interests of small influential lobbies (Becker, 1983; Macey, 1986). Trade unions might use their political influence to pursue their members’ interests (e.g. higher employment levels or higher salaries), beyond levels that firm level performance warrants. Because of these reasons, public choice theorists argue that the pursuit of what others refer to as societal goals should be primarily left to the free interaction of producers and consumers in the market – an institution that is better apt at handling self-interested behaviour.

Citizens, this theory maintains, express their personal preferences more efficiently through market exchanges (that is through their purchase and/or investment decisions) than through political participation (Hodge, 2000; p.36). A privatized economy will therefore more accurately represent collective preferences than a system which is politically controlled. The same holds true for privatized firms. Managerial decisions (Shleifer & Vishny, 1994), workers’ efforts (Haskel & Sanchis, 1995), salaries (Haskel & Szymanski, 1993) and the overall headcount (Boycko, Shleifer, & Vishny, 1996) should come to better reflect the needs of the organization and the reality of the labor market under private control.

An Institutional Perspective

Research adopting an institutional perspective to the study of social, economic, and political phenomena spans the fields of organizational sociology, economics, and political science (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991). This large body of work looks at how formal and informal rules and conventions shape the behavior of individuals and organizations. Scholars adopting a sociological perspective – or neo-institutional theorists – draw attention to how institutions induce organizations to adopt commonly accepted structures and behaviors that are considered appropriate and desirable in their field (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Scott, 1995). Applied to privatization, neo-institutional theory highlighted the different taken-for-granted beliefs and assumptions about appropriate governance structures and managerial behavior that characterize state-owned and privately-owned firms (e.g. Alford, 1993; Johnson et al., 2000).

Some scholars have argued that these beliefs and assumptions reflect distinct “institutional logics” (Thornton & Ocasio, 1999, p. 804) or internally coherent sets of “organizing principles” prescribing legitimate ends for an organization and appropriate means to pursue those ends (Friedland & Alford, 1991). Institutional scholars adopting an economic perspective – or institutional economists – have looked instead at how economic transactions are shaped by formal (e.g. property rights, contractual arrangements, regulation) and informal institutions (e.g. customs, traditions) (North, 1990; Williamson, 1985). Applied to privatization, this approach has been used, for instance, to examine how institutions influence the functioning of organizational hierarchies in public and private sector organizations, as they shape the capacity of shareholders and civil society to effectively monitor decision makers (Estrin et al., 2016).

Scholars adopting an institutionalist lens on privatization have remained relatively neutral on the relative superiority of public vs. private ownership, using instead the broad

theoretical apparatus of institutional theory to point out that the implications of privatization may be more complex than the relatively straightforward adjustments in managerial behavior predicted by micro-economic theories. Scholars adopting a sociological perspective, for instance, have argued that in recently privatized organizations different “templates” – reflecting general assumptions of appropriate conduct in the public and the private sector respectively – may co-exist for a while, as managers shed old assumptions and gradually “learn” to operate according to different goals and principles (Johnson et al., 2000).

Others have observed that the consequences of privatization may be more transformative than economic theories predict, as the adoption of a new template may lead to organization-wide transformation in structure, systems, strategies, values, and behavior (Zahra, Ireland, Gutierrez, & Hitt, 2000). Still others, have observed how partial privatizations have led to the diffusion of “hybrid” organizations that combine elements (goals, governance structures, control mechanisms, behavior, etc.) of public and privately-owned enterprises (Bruton et al., 2015; Greve & Zhang, 2017). Scholars adopting an economic perspective, instead, have primarily explored how country-level institutions influence the outcome of privatization. Work in this tradition, for instance, has highlighted the necessity to build institutional foundations for privatization in transitional economies to display its full benefits (Spicer, McDermott, & Kogut, 2000), as the performance of newly privatized firms will be largely shaped by formal governance mechanisms available to private investors and informal governance practices (Filatotchev, Buck, & Zhukov, 2000).

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