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Progressing the conceptualisation of value co-creation in public service organisations.

Abstract

Value and how it is produced/created in public service organisations (PSOs) represents a current and significant issue for those researching and working in public sector management as well as public service users. Most recently, Osborne (2017) suggests value in PSOs is co-created rather than co-produced, defining value co-creation as a relationship between the service user and the service provider based on the service user's wider life experience. Importantly, this definition shifts the emphasis from the PSO (the focus of value co-production), to the PSO service user and their wider life experience. This is by no means an agreed conceptualisation; there are many and varied definitions of value and its creation process. In this paper we develop a philosophical foundation for the value creation process in PSOs, something we argue is fundamentally missing from current conceptualisations. To do this we draw on the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1987), repositioning the basis of value co-creation from a service logic to a logic of assemblage. We then apply this framework to a practical example of public service use to show how it can be used to make sense of reality.

Introduction

This paper develops the conceptualisation of the process of value co-creation in public service organisations by providing a philosophical foundation based on the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1984 and 1987) from which the process of co-creation can be analysed. In a service culture predicated on user inclusion and experience, co-production and co-creation now represent common approaches to public service delivery. Specifically, it is the experience of value that is the focus of such approaches. What value actually is and how it emerges through public service provision and interactions is subject to ongoing debate (See Meynhardt 2009, Osborne and Strockosch 2013, Osborne et al 2015, Osborne et al 2016, and Osborne 2017). Discussion regarding epistemology and ontology, however, are fundamentally missing from these debates. Here we seek to fill this gap, offering an ontological framework based on the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1984 and 1987). Importantly, the argument made here is theoretical; the intention is to provide a strong philosophical foundation for the conceptualisation and consequent practice of public value and its creation process. We do this through summarising in two conceptual statements. First however, by way of introduction, we provide an overview of the ongoing debate addressing value in public service organisations (PSOs).

PSOs represent unique settings in comparison to private service organisations in that they function to serve the public need. In this way it can be said public services offer 'true' or 'pure' services in that they are not commodities or products. In addition to this PSOs include a wide range of services such as education, healthcare, public health provision, social care, welfare, and town planning to name but a few. These are services offered on a public-wide basis and so the service users of a public service are also unique in that they represent the public as a

whole and all the heterogeneity this includes. Despite this, the last 30 years have seen a plethora of management techniques taken from the private sector and applied to public services in order to improve efficiency and quality. New Public Management (NPM) marked the beginning of these changes.

As highlighted in Osborne et al (2013) the NPM movement argued for a more managerial and market-oriented framework for public services delivery   Over time there has been a range of critiques some of which focus on a comparative evaluation of managerial as opposed to administrative models for the delivery of public services and others arguing against the basic premise of the suitability of the market as a mechanism for the allocation of public resources in terms of the comparable nature of private and public sector management (Osborne et al, 2013).

A focus on the creation of value experiences for both the PSO and the service user emerged out of resistance to NPM (Osborne et al, 2015). In contrast to this, public service delivery focused on public value management prioritises inclusivity and service experience in order to ensure efficient, effective and ultimately valued services. Consequently approaches that include service user voice in the planning, implementation and evaluation of services are now commonplace, particularly in health and education services (Voorberg et al 2015). Indeed, co-production and co-creation represent two of the dominant approaches found in public service delivery. Before these approaches are introduced it is necessary to pay attention to the thing they aim to produce/create – value. Value as the outcome of co-creation/production is somewhat variously defined. Indeed Meynhardt (2009, p.196) asserts value is 'one of those ambiguous container terms with enormous promise of insight but no widespread consensus'.

Within literature addressing public value, moreover, value is often described in terms of public value (Moore 1995) and public values (Bozeman 2007). For Moore (1995) public sector management extends beyond the delivery of statutory duties and fundamentally includes the delivery of value to the public. Moreover, public value, in this context, is a consequence of a range of conceptualisations of value as utility or worth (Alford et al 2017). In this way public value acts as an ethos for the organisation and delivery of public services, in that these services work to deliver value to the public (Moore 1995). In contrast to this, public values pertain to shared ideas about citizen rights and benefits, their duties to society and the state, and the basis of government decision-making and policy provision (Bozeman 2007). Meynhardt (2009, p.193) furthers these approaches to advocate what he refers to as a 'non normative approach to understanding public values delivered by an institution independently of its legal status'. Building on this position, Meynhardt (ibid) asserts that public value is a thing that emerges from a combination of factors, including the public themselves but also the business and social sectors. For Meynhardt (2009, p.199), 'Value is bound to evolving relationships and ongoing processes of subjective evaluations and revaluations'. Indeed, in his first proposition he consolidates this stance by further stating 'value expresses subjectivity and is bound to relationships'. We will return to this approach later. The point is there are varying approaches to conceptualising value and despite this, what value or public value actually is, is rarely considered. Rather the practice of co-creation/production as 'best practice' approaches to service provision, is often implicitly considered beneficial (Voorberg et al 2015).

Co-production and co-creation are often terms used interchangeably to refer to public service initiatives which aim to include the service-user in some element of service provision in order

to create public value. This synonymous use of terms to refer to the same thing has been found to be particularly evident in practice (Voorber et al 2015). Despite this, conceptually, each approach has its own distinct, albeit linked, theoretical orgin. Indeed, co-production is based on a combination of Service Dominant Logic (SDL) (Vargo and Lusch 2004), Public Administration Management (Ostrom 1974 and Alford 2014) and service management (Osborne et al 2016) approaches, resulting in a concept that places an emphasis on the PSO as the value producer. Building on this, Radnor et al (2014) explicitly outline co-production is part and parcel of public service delivery due to the nature of the services being delivered requiring a relationship between the PSO and the end user. The concept of co-production has been useful, in that it moved PSOs away from industrial approaches to value creation such as Fordism, that formed the foundation of New Public Management towards a public service logic which embraces value from the perspective of PSOs rather than products for consumption.

Most recently, in a developmental editorial, Osborne (2017) progresses the debate addressing value in PSOs by advocating a move away from value co-production, towards value co-creation. Defined as 'a process where the PSO is dominant and where the logic is linear' Osborne (2017, p.1) argues co-production does not reflect the processes and focus of PSOs. In an effort to progress our understanding of value and its conceptualisation in a PSO setting, Osborne (2017, p.1) offers the concept of value co-creation as a better fit, defining co-creation as 'an interactive and dynamic relationship whereby value is created at the nexus of interaction. Value for the service user and the PSO thus are created not by linear production but rather by this interaction occurring within the context of the service users' wider experience of life'.

Osborne's (ibid) conceptualisation of value that underpins this definition is rooted in Service Dominant Logic (SDL) and Gronroos' theorisation of value. While writing from a marketing perspective, rather than a public service perspective per se, Gronroos (2011), positions the customer rather than the service provider as the primary producer of value. Working to Vargo et al's (2008 p.148) SDL approach, whereby value is thought to be co-created 'though the combined efforts of suppliers, employees, customers, stockholders, government agencies, and other entities', for Gronroos (2011), the reciprocal relationship between the service user/customer and the service provider is key. Progressing this, Osborne (2017) proposes value co-creation as offering a better fit for understanding value in PSOs. For Osborne (2017 p.1) co-creation is 'an interactive and dynamic relationship where value is created at the nexus of interaction'. Thus, the public service user is positioned as the value producer rather than the PSO. Further to this Osborne's (2017) theorisation of co-creation argues value creation is fundamentally linked to the service user's 'wider life experience'.

While Osborne's (2017) contribution progresses the conceptualisation of value co-creation, it is far from a finished position. Indeed, Osborne (ibid) outlines fiver conundrums that require development to aid conceptual clarity. These include: (1) the nature and dimensions of value in the context of public services; (2) the balance between individual and social/public value in public services delivery; (3) the impact of the multiple stakeholders involved in public service delivery upon the determination of value; (4) the processes through which service users and citizens learn to create value and how these might be supported; and (5) the extent to which value creation is a meaningful term in the context of unwilling and/or involuntary service users. We return to and address these issues using our particular approach later.

Missing from this ongoing debate is any detailed consideration of ontology or epistemology, indeed the concepts of value co-creation and co-production are largely devoid of any explicit philosophical starting point. Within co-creation, a foundation based on the ideas of phenomenology could be suggested owing to the focus on 'wider life experience' (Osborne 2017) and the phenomenological roots of SDL (Vargo and Lusch 2004, 2008), however, no such starting point is explicitly referred to. We argue the philosophical stance taken by those doing the theorising, modelling or discussion of value co-creation underpins the discourse and structure of the concept itself, whether this is a conscious decision or not. For example, those approaching value creation from an essentialist perspective will favour discourses that infer objectivity, defined characteristics and a focus on truth. Those who adopt constructionist approaches will favour discourses which pertain to the social, the environmental and the cultural with a focus on subjectivity, and those who approach from a deconstructionist perspective will favour discourses which invoke the body and the flesh as non-dualistic, experiencing phenomena, with a focus on fluidity. See table 1 for more detailed application.

***** Insert table 1 around here) *******

While co-production and co-creation have been developed theoretically and practically from their origins in service dominant logic (SDL) to better fit PSOs (Osborne 2017, Osborne et al 2016, Osborne et al 2015 and Osborne et al 2013), this adaptation has been largely a-philosophical. We argue this lack of philosophical grounding provides a possible reason why the concepts addressed here lack theoretical and practical clarity.

Without a clear starting point that sets out how knowledge and being in the world are thought to be constructed, concepts can suffer from uncertainty and consequently can lack meaning.

Indeed, value and the concepts addressing its production have frequently been discussed in this way. Osborne et al (2016 p.640), for example, describe co-production as a 'woolly concept'. We argue this is also currently the case for value co-creation due to its lack of an explicit philosophical foundation. Additionally, as seen, 'value' itself is also notoriously outlined as an ambiguous concept.

We apply a Deleuzoguattarian perspective (outlined below) to provide a clearer foundation for understanding value co-creation in the public sector. We have chosen this description as opposed to stating we are beginning from a post-structural perspective, because post-structuralism is a large philosophical genre and we are specifically interested in the ideas of Deleuze and Guattari. This means we reject essence in favour of multiplicity and we reject unity in favour of fluidity and connectivity (Nail 2017). When using the term essence we refer to the hegemonic logic of 'the one' whereby 'things' are afforded singular status. In contrast to this, multiplicity infers the related and fluid nature of 'things'. In this way we understand being in the world to emerge from a changeable, temporal and heterogeneous arrangement of diverse factors that exist in an ever-changing, connected relationship. Specifically here, we apply Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) concept of assemblage to value co-creation in order to better understand this process in PSOs, to develop the concept and to address Osborne's (2017) five 'conundrums' that he outlines require attention if co-creation is to progress. To do this we first provide an overview of the general logic of assemblage and apply this to the process of value co-creation in PSOs, we then use this logic to provide a philosophical starting point for value co-creation, drawing on an anonymised service experience to do so. Finally we use this philosophical starting point to address the 'conundrums' (Osborne 2017) that have been outlined as necessary to the development of the conceptualisation of co-creation.

Assemblage

As stated, the argument made in this paper is informed by the collective work of the French philosophers Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, specifically their two-volume work, *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Deleuze is often described as one of the most influential thinkers of the 20th century and Guattari was a prominent psychoanalyst. Their work together is often linked to post-structuralism although they themselves refuted this. Their work together and also Deleuze's independent work such as Difference and Repetition (1994) has been influential across the social sciences. Specifically within management and public management research their ideas have been used to explore a wide range of issues most notably in organisation theory (see Thanem and Linstead, 2006, Thanem, 2004, and Sorensen, 2005).

In *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* Deleuze and Guattari propose an alternative ontology based on the rejection of dualism in favour of multiplicity, their thought processes being influenced by thinkers such as Hume, Spinoza, and Bergson. Divided into the two volumes, *Anti Oedipus* (1984) and *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987), *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* aims to transcend the dominance of a logic predicated on essence by providing an ontology based on fluidity, productivity and change (Fox 2002). When seeking to understand 'things' they do not ask what a thing is but what a thing can do, what it connects with, how it is inserted into other multiplicities and how it is then changed. Fundamental to this is their concept of the rhizomatic assemblage (Deleuze and Guattari 1987).

The term assemblage, is the somewhat problematic English translation of the French word *agencement*, used by Deleuze and Guattari (1987). Rather than inferring a collection of united parts that form a whole, as the English definition of assemblage does, the meaning of *agencement* is to lay out or to connect (Nail 2017). *Agencement*, moreover, emphasises the connections between things/concepts. As Phillips (2006 p.108) states within the definition of *agencement*, 'it is in fact the arrangement and connections that gives the concepts their sense'. In this way, an assemblage does not prioritise any of the elements involved in the production of a thing/experience, the focus is on the relationship between the elements. The meaning of each element is not the priority, rather the focus is their coming together, what is then produced by this and the change this invokes (Phillips 2006). An assemblage, therefore, is not a thing, it is the process of making and unmaking the thing (Nail 2017). It is also important to note that an assemblage is not teleological, there is no destination or end point (Thanem 2004).

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) employ the image and construction of a rhizome to show how assemblages function. In nature, a rhizome is a type of root system that is multiplicitous and ever growing, typically associated with weeds and potatoes. Indeed, Deleuze and Guatarri (1987 p.21) tell us 'The rhizome is reducible to neither the one or the multiple. It is not the one that becomes two or even directly three, four, five etc. It is not a multiple derived from the one, or to which one is added (n+1). It is comprised not of units but of dimensions, or rather directions in motion. It has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle (milieu) from which it grows and which it overspills. It constitutes linear multiplicities with n dimensions having neither subject nor object, which can be laid out on a plane of consistency, and from which the one is always subtracted (n-1)'.

In viewing the world through the lens of assemblage, moreover, our understanding of things must begin from the idea that nothing is final, that things do not exist independently of the network of diverse elements to which they are connected (Nail 2017). In this way, nothing is constantly fixed (territorialised), even things that appear to be fixed can be changed (de-territorialised). Added to this, the elements involved in producing a thing, an experience, and event, are heterogeneous and variable. Assemblages may contain a range of objects, environments, agents, machines, and an ever-changing array of other phenomena, none of which is prioritised or afforded essence. This fits well with the diverse and unique organisations that public services are and the 'iterative' relationships that combine to deliver public services (Radnor et al 2014). As Radnor et al (2014) state, public services are complex service systems that include multiple and changeable human, technical and organisational factors and consequently 'addressing the complexity of this iterative and interactive system is at the core of effective services'. It is also readily relatable to Osborne's (2017) theory of co-creation, in that the fluidity and diversity Osborne identified can be embraced without recourse to experience alone. Necessarily and importantly, however, this changes Osborne's (2017) primary focus on the service user, in favour of a focus on the assemblage of all of the elements involved in the value co-creation process as a fluid whole without prioritisation.

Assemblages are heterogeneous in nature. They will all have a different combination of elements involved in producing what it is they serve to produce. Equally, what is produced is a subjective and changeable entity. If we think of value in PSOs as an assemblage, for example, we can see that the process of creating value for service-users accessing the same service will be different in composition for each service-user because of their differing needs, backgrounds and experiences of each service-user as well as the varying combinations of other elements involved in the co-creation process, such as the role of service providers, the environment the

exchange takes place in, and the objects involved in this exchange such as telephones, seating arrangements etc.

Held together in an assemblage, all phenomena produced/created – physiological bodies, objects, events and experiences such as value co-creation – are in a constant state of becoming or change. The constant potential for change within an assemblage is key to this. Elements/factors can be removed or added to an assemblage at any time, which in turn affects the thing it serves to produce/create. In this way becoming rather than being is the focus in that being pertains to a logic of the one while becoming infers multiplicity. There is no pre-set direction or destination for becoming, rather becoming is nonlinear in direction, it is a state of change, or being in between (Youngblood Jackson 2010). As Deleuze and Guattari (1987 p.323) tell us, 'a becoming is neither one nor two, nor the relation of the two; it is the in-between, the border or line of flight, or descent running perpendicular to both'. In this way becoming can be seen as a continuous process of change that does not imitate, replicate or indeed end.

Despite their heterogeneous, ever-changing nature, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) outline three set characteristics that define rhizomatic assemblages. These characteristics are the abstract machine, the concrete assemblage, and the personae. The abstract machine represents the network of support that facilitates the relationship between each element within the assemblage. In this way, the abstract machine is not a tangible thing, rather it exists as the connection between the elements (Deleuze and Guattari 1987). The concrete assemblage represents the elements that are part of the abstract machine. This is the 'real' part of an assemblage. In the case of value co-creation this would be the exchange between a service

user and a service provider that takes place in a public building or elsewhere and all of the factors that come together to facilitate this. When the elements of an assemblage change, so too do the relationships that hold them together. In this way the abstract machine and the concrete assemblage are co-dependent (Nail 2017). Finally, Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) concept of the personae, represents the agents involved in the assemblage. Key to the concept of the personae is the reframing of actors as collective subjects as opposed to individual rational actors. In this way, bodies and minds that fall outside of the normative assumptions of rational action are included. This is particularly important when thinking about value in PSOs where service-users have a diverse array of needs and abilities.

The focus of Deleuze and Guattari's logic of assemblage is change. Assemblages are ever-changing and effect change at a variety of levels. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) talk about this in terms of what they call, de-territorialisation: 'the process by which assemblages continually transform or reproduce themselves' (Nail 2017 p.34). Assemblages, moreover, have the potential to create molar states (this could be identities, social norms, bodies) that appear fixed, however, assemblages always also have the potential and capacity to be de-territorialised. As Deleuze and Guattari (1987 p.307) state, 'everything ties together in an asymmetrical block of becoming, an instantaneous zigzag'. Their logic of assemblage, thereby, is an optimistic ontological framework. Molar identities are never final. Their being can and will change through processes of de- and re-teritorialisation. Some reference to value co-creation in public services has been made throughout this brief overview, we now elaborate on this by drawing on an anonymised example of a service experience. This example is taken from a wider project addressing the lives of people with learning disabilities.

Using a logic of assemblage to better understand co-creation

If co-creation is framed in terms of an assemblage, we can see co-creation is a fluid and heterogeneous process that is subjective, contextual and temporal. In this way the value co-creation process will involve different elements in differing relationships to one another for different types of PSO and the different services they offer. Rather than seeing value co-creation as something that either lies with the service user (Osborne 2017, Gronroos 2011 and Vargo and Lusch 2008) or with the PSO (Osborne et al 2016), value co-creation is reframed in terms of multiplicity. The elements involved in the assemblage of value co-creation will be variable and without essence. Framed in this way, value is the changeable thing produced by the assemblage of elements. Knowing this will be different for different services, people and settings, due to the focus on connectedness and multiplicity, allows value to be reframed as something temporal, heterogeneous and subjective as opposed to something bounded and measurable. In this way the value created can be different for different people involved in the same service provision.

Thought about in terms of a logic of assemblage, therefore, the value co-created in PSO settings can be defined as '*the phenomenon (this could be a feeling/emotion, a physical effect, a material object or an event) that emerges and is assessed through the interaction of all elements (human, material, environmental, political, cultural, experiential) involved in the relationship between a service user and a public service organisation'.* In this way, value is not a product or an outcome, it is a continuous and changeable phenomenon that continues beyond and reaches further than the initial service user/public service interaction. Value also has the potential to change due to it being something constructed and assessed by those involved. Indeed, the assessment of value will be predicated on the wider lived experience of both the

service provider and the service-user (Osborne 2017). The value creation process, moreover, is not teleological, it is fluid; what is value for one may not be for another and what is value in one context may not be in another. The value creation process, moreover, is not teleological, it is fluid. While this is a broad definition, it is not intended that value is everything, rather, that it could be anything depending on circumstances/arrangement of the assemblage of elements involved. Importantly, a broad definition of value as opposed to a delimited definition, is necessary to reflect the diversity and uniqueness of public services and their users. A more closed definition would have the effect of treating the services offered and the relationships involved in terms of commodities or products. This is an important departure from other definitions of value applied to PSOs whereby emphasis is either placed on the PSO (Osborne et al 2016) or the service user (Gronroos 2011, Osborne 2017). Essence is removed from any one factor and the emphasis is placed on the multiplicity of elements involved and the relationship they exist in, in order to reflect the openness and diversity of PSOs.

Applying a logic of assemblage in practice

Let us think of a scenario on which to apply the logic of assemblage to the process of value co-creation in PSOs. Our scenario involves a woman with learning disabilities who is housed in a local authority-provided group home. This decision was arrived at through a co-created decision-making process that involved all key stakeholders, as is now popular in social care provision. We will call our service user Ann. Ann was born with profound and multiple learning disabilities which mean she can't walk, talk, feed herself or perform any acts of self-care such as going to the toilet and bathing alone. Ann has mainly been cared for by her parents and has attended special school. Now she is 19 and has finished school, Ann's parents who work full-time and also have three other younger children have decided she will receive better

care if she moves to a group home. The group home is commissioned by the local authority and her stay there is funded through continuing healthcare funding provided by the NHS and the local authority. At the group home, Ann has her own bedroom, her meals are provided and she is cared for 24/7 by a team of care professionals. Ann's friends and family can visit her any time and can take her out and on holiday. The group home also takes the residents out frequently and organises regular activities. After a month of living at the group home, Ann's parents are happy with their choice. Ann seems to have settled well and they don't have to worry about finding care services for her while they are at work. Their home life is also different now because they are no longer spending as much time caring for Ann. They have found they now have more time to care for their three other children. Ann's mother also has more time for the garden, and her father has more time for fishing. While Ann cannot verbally communicate her feelings about the group home, her behaviour alludes to this – she has been calm, has slept well, and has laughed and smiled a lot. Ann, however, has not 'chosen' to move to the group home, nor has she chosen the specific group home she has moved to, or anything much else about her experience because Ann lacks the cognitive capacity to do so. Ann visited the group home with her parents on a number of occasions and stayed over at one of these visits which she seemed to enjoy. The choices made for Ann have been mediated choices, made by those who know her best, based on her behaviour over the course of the visits and her family circumstances.

Ann's residency, thought of in terms of current approaches to value co-creation raise a number of questions such as: what is the value created? who produces the value? who receives the value? Is Ann part of the creation process? and what is the process of value creation dependent upon? If thought of in terms of a general logic of assemblage, there are many and varied elements that exist in a relationship to produce the experience Ann has and the value created

through this. In this scenario the elements held together by the abstract machine (the network of support that facilitates the relationship that holds the elements together) are multitudinous and would likely include: material objects such as buildings (Ann's family home and new group home, as well as local authority offices where meetings, emails and telephone calls take place); the bodies/flesh and the experiences of the personae involved (Ann, Ann's friends and family, Ann's teachers, local authority social care providers, local authority administrative staff, group home staff); the current political and economic climate; technologies (for communication, for transportation and movement of Ann); and myriad other elements all existing together in a collective and co-dependent relationship that in turn produce Ann's experience. In this way, although, Ann is involuntarily involved in the co-creation process or assemblage due to her impaired cognitive capacity, she is part and parcel of the process. In thinking of the personae in terms of a collective, whether or not those who are included have the cognitive ability to engage in the process, is neither here nor there because cognitive ability is not the focus. The focus is the personae as a collective and acting group. Ann is part of this regardless of her cognitive capacity.

In this way, it can also be seen that the value created, if co-creation is thought of in terms of an assemblage, can be different for those involved, in this case for the PSO, Ann's family and Ann herself. Thinking about value co-creation in terms of an assemblage allows value to be thought about from different perspectives rather than focusing on either the PSO or the service user or thinking about value in terms of the individual or the public. This is something that is called for by Radnor et al (2014) albeit in relation to co-production. Indeed, their example of service blueprinting also shows the benefits of addressing public value from a variety of perspectives. Similarly, in service blueprinting, service-user interactions are viewed as multifactorial processes (Radnor et al 2014).

In our scenario, value from the perspective of the PSO includes filling a place in the group home, the achievement of statutory housing and social care duties, and the inclusion of families/service users in service decision making to ensure personalised care. Ann's family and Ann represent the service user/individual in this scenario, by virtue of Ann's cognitive disability, Ann leads a mediated life (Cluley 2017). Choices that impact on her health and wellbeing are made on her behalf between those who know her best and those who have expertise in the services Ann requires. Ann's parents now have peace of mind that their daughter is being cared for appropriately and that she is happy. They have also been included in the decision-making process, affording them agency in an important life change. Additionally, they are able to direct some attention to themselves and their own interests. From a wider public perspective, value is also created – for example, group homes work towards the inclusion of people with disabilities in mainstream settings. Viewed in terms of an assemblage, therefore, value co-creation in PSOs is reframed in terms of a dynamic process of multiple and connected elements, with a focus on the relationship that they exist within – the assemblage. In this way value, as the thing that is created by the assemblage, will be both different for the different people and organisations involved and will likely change over time. Moreover, value becomes a subjective assessment by involved or affected stakeholders. Using our broad definition of value allows this reality to be seen. We demonstrate how this scenario could be seen through the lens of other value approaches in table 2 to show how the approach to value effects its creation process.

********(Insert table 2 around here) ******

In applying a logic of assemblage to the scenario outlined, moreover, the foundation of co-creation is repositioned from a service logic to a logic of assemblage, whereby, essence is rejected in favour of multiplicity. This revised starting point also allows the 'conundrums' outlined in Osborne's (2017) call for further development of the conceptualisation of co-creation to be addressed. Each of these issues is now discussed in turn.

1. <u>The nature and dimensions of value in the context of public services.</u>

As seen in the scenario above, if value in public services is seen through a logic of assemblage, value in this context becomes a subjective phenomenon which emerges through the interaction of all elements involved in the relationship between a service-user and a public service organisation. In this way value co-created in PSO settings is temporal, changeable, fluid and subjective. The co-creation of value that results from the connectedness of a multiplicity of elements can and will be different for those involved, including the service user, the PSO and others involved such as families, friends, and external providers.

2. <u>The balance between individual and social/public value in public services delivery</u>

This issue is in part dealt with above in that if value co-creation is thought about in terms of an assemblage, value is the thing that is being created. In this way value is always becoming and its becoming is dependent on a heterogeneous arrangement of elements/factors, none of which are the primary focus. The value created will likely be different for those involved and can change. Value in PSO settings is varied and includes both individual and social/public value. This need not be considered problematic, indeed, the emphasis of the logic of assemblage is becoming and the potential for change latent within this. While practitioners will likely focus on particular elements of the assemblage, positioning value in this way, allows value to be seen

from a variety of perspectives, providing a better understanding of its becoming in PSO settings. In other words, the multiplicity of value in PSO settings can be embraced for what is and the application of the general logic of assemblage allows this.

3. <u>The impact of the multiple stakeholders involved in public service delivery upon the determination of value</u>

In thinking of the agents involved in value co-creation in terms of personae, all agents involved in the value co-creation process can be included. For Deleuze and Guattari (1987) the personae involved in an assemblage do not act autonomously but rather individual acts are part of the collective action that is part of the assemblage. In this way agents involved in an assemblage and the thing it creates can be seen in terms of a collective, acting in connection with one another. The inclusion of multiple stakeholders involved in value co-creation is of particular importance to PSOs, for the reason that joint/partnership working is now the norm (Mann et al 2004). Indeed, PSOs now work alongside a wide variety of providers and commissioners to deliver their services. In addition to this, PSO service users, as stakeholders in the value co-creation process, represent a heterogeneous group. There will be service users with physical, cognitive and sensory impairments, there will be wealthy service users and low wage service users, there will be service users with different ethnic and cultural heritages, there will be male, female and transgender service users, and there will be heterosexual and LGBT service users, to list but a few demographic groups. It is imperative the discourse that underpins value co-creation acknowledges this. Thinking of the stakeholders involved in value co-creation in PSOs as a collective, rather than individual rational actors, avoids the risk of making assumptions regarding the identity and ability of those involved.

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4. <u>The processes through which service-users and citizens learn to create value and how these might be supported</u>

Viewed as an assemblage value co-creation is shown to be a heterogeneous process that will be different for all involved and will result in the creation of different value experiences for those involved, as seen in our example of Ann and her family. Owing to this, the learning process will also be different for different people. Additionally, learning is not framed in terms of a cognitive process, but rather, in terms of a connected and relational process that is co-dependent on a multiplicity of heterogeneous factors. In this way, service users and citizens do not cognitively and actively learn to create value and the value creation process is not something that can be supported in terms of a traditional, linear conception of learning. The co-creation of value, moreover, can be thought of in terms of a learning or changing process whereby those involved learn/change from each other and the learning/value that results is something that can be improved upon and consequently will change time and again. Elements of the assemblage that produces value might change slightly, new actors might become involved and particular elements might leave the assemblage. If we take people with profound and multiple learning disabilities, for example, the dominant PSO approach before the 1990s was institutionalisation, following social reforms, however, this approach changed to include integration into the community. In this way, institutions and the elements that upheld them were removed from the assemblage and community settings and their facilitating elements were added. Other elements remained the same such as people with profound and multiple learning disabilities, local authority control, and modes of communication.

Practically, the fluid and changeable learning process that is part of the co-creation process, therefore, could be supported by practical approaches that advocate a holistic approach to knowledge acquisition, such as Patton's concept of developmental evaluation, and the Gateway

Review process (Cluley, Radnor and Salvatori 2018). The acknowledgement of complexity is fundamental to developmental evaluation and a continuous and multi-stakeholder approach to evaluation and the learning this generates is encouraged. Similarly, a Gateway Review takes a whole system approach to capture learning points and make recommendations for improvement (Cluley, Radnor and Salvatori 2018).

5. <u>The extent to which value creation is a meaningful term in the context of unwilling and/or involuntary service users.</u>

The scenario of Ann and her family provides us with an example of how involuntary service-users are part and parcel of the value creation process. In thinking of agents in terms of Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) concept of the personae, those who lack the cognitive capacity or rationality to engage in the co-creation process in the same way that those who do not can still be included as meaningful players in the value creation process. In terms of involuntary service-users such as those being imprisoned against their will for the public good or those being sectioned against their consent but for their own safety and possibly the safety of others, value creation, seen as an assemblage, remains meaningful. Those involved in the process need not be willing to be involved but they are still included within the personae by virtue of their presence and vital role in the process. Unwilling service users, thereby, are reframed as actors with the capacity for change rather than a disruption or a problem to be solved.

In responding to these conundrums using a logic of assemblage, it can be seen that in providing a philosophical framework that reflects the diverse and changeable nature of public services and their equally heterogeneous service users, the lack of conceptual clarity and the practical and theoretical problems this has created for making sense of public value and its creation process, can be addressed. Moving from a service logic to a logic of assemblage moreover

provides a stronger philosophical foundation for the understanding and practice of public value management.

<u>Conclusion</u>

In our conclusion we make two conceptual statements. First we provide a clear definition of value on which the conceptualisation of value co-creation as an assemblage can be hinged. Second, in applying a Deleuzoguattarian perspective to value co-creation we shift the theoretical focus from the previous applications of logics of production and service logic, to a focus on the relational composition of co-creation, and the diversity of experience and value this can create in public service settings. We do this in to address the lack of conceptual clarity within the theorisation and consequent practice of public value-based approaches to PSO delivery and management (Voorberg et al 2015) by providing a strong philosophical foundation on which the concepts of public value and in turn its creation practices can be based.

Conceptual statement one: To think about value co-creation, it is imperative value is clearly defined from the outset; we must know what value is in order for us to understand its process of creation. Thinking about value in terms of an assemblage allows us to define value clearly, indeed throughout this paper we have defined value as *the phenomenon (this could be a feeling/emotion, a physical effect, a material object, or an event) that emerges and is assessed through the interaction of all elements (human, material, environmental, political, cultural, experiential) involved in the relationship between a service user and a public service organisation.* This is not to say that value will be the same for all involved in the creation process nor that value is everything. Rather, value can differ depending on circumstance. Indeed, through the application of a logic of assemblage change and multiplicity (key features of PSOs) can be embraced.

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Conceptual statement two: In applying Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) logic of assemblage to the value co-creation process in PSOs we simultaneously work towards overcoming the conundrums Osborne (2017) presents and develop the concept. Seen in terms of an assemblage value co-creation is positioned as a multiplicitious, fluid and connected process whereby no single element in the process is prioritised or focused on. Importantly, this refocuses value co-creation from the public service-user to the dynamic relationship they are included in as elements of the co-creation process. Thinking of value co-creation in terms of an assemblage, also allows value co-creation to better reflect its process in PSOs. As outlined, PSOs bring a particular and varied perspective to value co-creation in that PSOs do not deal with customers/consumers and products to be purchased, rather they deal with service-users/members of the public and services to be provided and received. If thought of as an assemblage, the value co-creation process in PSOs is seen to be a process of becoming/learning. Those involved in the process can be seen in terms of the heterogeneous and changeable group they are, and value can be seen from a variety of perspectives. In this way, the conundrums that faced co-creation can be addressed and the unique nature of PSOs in terms of value creation can be fully reflected.

In addition to our two concluding statements we would also like to draw attention to the power of molar identities. Previous theories of co-production and co-creation, our own included, have been in danger of operationalising the molar identity of able-bodied, able-minded and rational, individual actors. While no theories of co-production/creation explicitly set out to make exclusive assumptions about the bodies of those involved in the value creation/production process, the discourse that upholds these theories are often implicitly based on the assumption

of rational action, cognitive ability, and individual lives. As seen in our example, this is not the case for all PSO service users. Some actors do not fit current discourses of co-production/creation, some do not act individually but are co-dependent on the actions of others, some do not act rationally and some lack the cognitive ability to choose. This lack of fit is particularly exclusionary and therefore requires rethinking. Rationality, cognitive ability and individual action need not be exclusive criteria for value co-creation, nor need involvement in the co-production process be considered in terms of voluntary or involuntary action. As seen in our example, Ann leads a mediated life, without which she would not be able to continue living. As part of the assemblage of value co-creation, Ann is included as a concrete element in the abstract machine, connected to other concrete elements, acting collectively. In this way, viewing the value co-creation process in terms of a general logic of assemblage avoids the risk of assuming capacity to act and how this action is performed, and allows for a discourse of inclusion and acceptance of other ways of becoming.

We do not claim to have provided the answer to all of co-creations developmental issues, we have, however, provided a philosophical framework for co-creation that both reflects and embraces the complexities of PSOs and their service users that simultaneously allows for flexibility and change. We further address the implications for practice and provide an empirical example of how this framework can be used to understand public value co-creation in public service organisations in a forthcoming paper (Cluley and Radnor, forthcoming). Here we outline that viewing public value co-creation in terms of multiplicity and fluidity can have practical benefits across public service delivery, including planning services, the design of new services, and the implementation of personalised services and in consultation and engagement exercises.

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