

'Public Value - Above and Beyond: The Contribution of Strategic Management'

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Introduction

Much recent scholarship in public management has explored the influence, strengths, and weaknesses of both the bureaucratic and paternalistic Traditional Public Administration (TPA) and the business-orientated New Public Management (NPM) approach. It is the weaknesses of these approaches that have led academics, managers, and politicians alike to seek approaches more engaged with communities. We argue that a turn to these bottom-up models in public agencies will not happen 'by itself' (Torfing et al 2021) and that a strategic management informed approach may be needed.

There are some well-known criticisms of both TPA and NPM. Weberian bureaucracies at their worst become inward-looking and excessively rule-following, devoid of initiative or innovation and remote from citizens and service users alike. In the NPM wave, citizens roles were redefined as active customers able to exit these failed services. Yet, it seemingly overpromised and underdelivered (Hood and Dixon, 2015). In addition, it failed to address the important yet interdependent 'wicked problems' (e.g. social equity, global pandemics, the environmental crisis, gendered violence, and poverty) that required interagency coordination (Osborne et al 2013). Concurrently, its focus on efficiency rather than social value led to questions around the role of public managers and professionals (Bryson et al 2017). The recasting of citizens as consumers also eroded public participation in decision-making and weakened the deliberative element of the public policy process thus decreasing democratic legitimacy.

Of course, the NPM approach is no longer new. Various writers have proposed new models which might address the myopic and fragmented governance systems that emerged as an unintended consequence of earlier NPM reforms. In this paper, we firstly review potential post-NPM models, with a special focus on Co-Creation and Public Value before presenting a strategic management informed approach. After discussing our research design and methods, we present an overview of the 15 case studies from our present EU funded study plus two vignettes from especially interesting cases which explore these models in action. Implications are drawn out in the conclusion.

Post NPM Models

A Range of Approaches

Various post NPM models of government have been advanced as promising for better futures. Osborne (2010) coined a range of these approaches New Public Governance. All of these advocate for a more integrated form of inclusive governance through collaborative, cross-sectoral or organisationally networked approaches (Ansell and Torfing 2020; Osborne et al 2013).

A major problem with both TPA and NPM models is their impoverished concept of public participation including democratic influence in public policymaking and service delivery, there has recently been a search for alternative models of public management that can revitalise public agencies, increase their downwards looking orientation to local users and reconnect them with publics especially in a world characterised by declining trust in government, lower voter turnout, and the rise of ‘anti expert’ populist movements. Such accounts have some similarities with these other post-NPM models but at the same time extend and develop them further.

The Emergence of a Co-Creative Approach

Torfing et al (2021: 192) argue that: ‘today the public sector is gradually being recast as an ‘arena for co creation’ that invites elected politicians, relevant public agencies and private actors and affected citizens to contribute to public service production and societal problem solving’. Co-creation may also involve the production of innovative solutions that can potentially add public value and include a range of individuals and groups (Alves 2013). Torfing and Ansell (2021) argue that this approach is increasingly being used in the public sector to redesign service systems and to tackle ‘wicked problems’ that go beyond the jurisdiction of a single agency and which involve complex behaviour changes (Torfing and Ansell 2021). Concurrently, key international institutions providing public policy advice have also promoted such collaborative and co-creative processes indicating that these approaches are having major real-world applications.

The Public Value Approach

Some authors argue that the move to co-creation can be closely linked to the attempts of public managers, professionals, and politicians to create so-called public value (Sørensen et al 2021; Torfing et al 2016). The Public Value School’s core argument is that through broadening the doctrine of shareholder value seen in the private sector to that of

'public value' in the public sector that public sector managers can promote better public services and by so doing rebuild public trust in government and its legitimacy (Moore 1995).

Public Value enhancing innovations should both result in greater value for service users as well as be recognised by those service users as creating greater value. Important to the creation of this value is managers' recognition of the 'strategic triangle'. This key PV heuristic (Moore, 1995; Benington and Moore, 2011, p5) combines in its three axes: (i) the production of public value outcomes as mediated by (ii) strong internal agency capacity and (iii) wider support in the 'authorizing environment'. A key question within this is who makes up the authorising environment and in particular the extent to which it goes beyond elected politicians to include other stakeholders.

Other questions have been raised about the appropriateness and applicability of the PV school, sparking a lively academic controversy (Rhodes and Wanna, 2007; Rhodes and Wanna, 2008). It has been argued to fit best within American local government (where many of Moore's case examples are indeed drawn from) or a relatively restricted federal government. Thus, researchers question whether it can transfer readily to more centralised settings.

Finally, early Public Value writings linked to entrepreneurial approaches to public management (Moore 1995) and are rather ambiguous concerning participatory governance perspectives. Many examples in Moore's early work focus on CEOs with strong visions; though it is the case that more recent literature now address the question of leaders who have power and who should also 'distribute' it (e.g. Bryson et al 2014, 2016; Sørensen et al 2021). Yet, the early focus on entrepreneurial managers as authors of public value propositions remains. Such public managers may mask bureau-maximizing behaviour under normatively accepted and attractive concepts such as public value (Regal and Ferlie 2020). While 'Public Value' has captured and inspired scholars and some practitioners of public administration as the possible next evolution beyond NPM, questions remain on how individuals can seek to address the questions around public value innovations in more collective and democratic ways generating a strong deliberative process in the wider authorising environment.

Can Co-Creation and Public Value Reinforce Each Other?

With the rise of co-creation as a tool to address wicked problems and policy solutions, a question arises in whether co-creative processes are at odds or can usefully inform the design of public value promoting innovations. Public value theory indicates that innovations need to be recognised as value-creating by those who use them, so the implications are that user involvement in the policy process, design and/or implementation stages may be helpful and important. Torfing et al 2021 (p193) argue that public value-seeking innovators often seek to involve a range of different public and private actors, so they should be receptive to co-creative approaches.

There are also some burgeoning examples of how such linkages between PV and co-creation might be developed. Bennington and Hartley (2019) advocate for the use of action research methods to develop the theory and practice of public value as a 'contested democratic practice'. While Entwistle et al's (2019) examined how public value might be promoted in a local government context focusing on various participatory and citizen involvement methods. These two chapters, therefore, explore processes of citizen involvement in the public value creation process which are much broader than the original model of CEO-led change. Yet they do not answer the question of what role PV as a model plays or how these inclusive co-creative processes themselves can be achieved or managed.

The Need for Support from Strategic Management Approaches

While many researchers have argued for the potential benefits of co-creation (Ansell and Torfing 2020; Bryson et al 2017; Torfing et al 2016), fewer have considered wider implications for the design and management of public agencies and support from managerial efforts which may be needed to make co-creation successful (Ansell et al 2020). Yet an organizational-wide change across a large public agency to novel principles of public value and co-creation does not 'happen by itself' (Torfing et al 2021). Such a major shift may require support from a strategic management approach which can assist large scale and agency-wide change that can also achieve substantial societal impact. This leads to a few integral questions.

First, what is strategic management? Strategic management can be distinguished from operational level management by being: (i) long- rather than short-term; (ii) influential across the organisation rather than being confined to vertical or horizontal pockets; and (iii) reaching across and informing all its lower-level functional strategies,

including finance, human resource management and operations. Because of their long-term and organisation-wide approaches, strategic management approaches, models and tools can analyse and support major organizational transitions (Ferlie, 2021). Concurrently, organisations may adopt procedures and documents that are ‘strategic’ and reflect upon the necessity of co-creation yet not implement any long-term influence across the organisation necessary for the adoption of (successful) co-creation processes. Thus, an understanding of the managerial efforts in strategic management is needed (Ansell et al 2020).

Second, why might a strategic management approach be helpful? Co-creation and public value innovations may for instance be confined to local pilots and struggle to ‘upscale’ and effect agency-wide change. These principles may also co-exist with other embedded models (such as TPA or NPM) in a confusing hybrid that blunts any radical impact. They may be adopted only rhetorically to impress external funders, but real internal commitment may be shallow. Thus, an important question is how public managers and leaders might seek to use strategic management approaches to overcome the barriers to and stimulate the enablers of co-creation processes to create more public value.

An Extended Approach to Considering Different Models of Strategic Management

In assessing the contribution of strategic management, we surely need to consider the relevance of different models of strategic management (Ferlie and Ongaro 2015). The strategic management literature has broadened considerably over the last two decades and various perspectives are now evident which go well beyond firm based and competitive models of strategy.

As visualised in Table 1, a broader approach to various models of strategic management may supply the building blocks for understanding the managerial efforts needed to make co-creation successful through supporting transformations in current approaches to working with citizens and partners. Table 1 outlines some key possible models.

Table 1: Models of Strategic Management

Strategic Design	The SDe agency’s strategy drives its design of a formal organizational structure. The agency seeks to achieve a strategic fit between itself and the analysis of the wider external environment. Strategy making is led by senior managers and
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	<p>their advisers and then handed to middle management to implement. The strategic plan is written and data-informed based on well-known analytic techniques to assess the external environment.</p>
Strategic Planning	<p>SPla represents a greater formalization of the SDe planning processes. Strategic making remains the domain of senior managers but now includes specialist planning staff that use long-range forecasting and operation management techniques and then passes these plans to middle management. SPla is characterized by the presence of long-range plans, a planning process and planning unites and elaborates strategic planning documents with long term projections.</p>
Strategic Positioning	<p>SPO is also characterised by a highly rational and analytic top-down approach to strategy formulation which is then given to middle management. However, SPO underlines the importance of market or sector structure within its analysis. As well, SPO emphasizes value production across the whole delivery service process.</p>
Mintzbergian Strategy	<p>This approach to strategy is characterized by more emergent processes wherein patterns of decisions form a stream that influences the long-term plan. Here, strategy making is viewed as involving a plurality of actors rather than solely senior managers. Organizations with this approach will have short and general mission statements or interim position statements rather than formal plans and will use workshops, away days and deliberative processes to involve staff and learn. Strategy is also seen as sector or context-specific rather than generic.</p>
(Social) Entrepreneurial	<p>A founder or entrepreneur has strong influence over the strategy-making process rather than formal planning systems. This approach is characterized by a search for new opportunities rather than examining existing planning operations.</p>
Cultural School	<p>This approach is characterised by the culture which is seen as fundamental to both strategy and formal structure. Here, strategy is viewed as less short-termism and action-orientated as well as is more collectivistic.</p>
Resource-Based View	<p>This approach is characterized by examining the internal capacities of the organization which is seen in terms of tangible and intangible resources. Knowledge mobilization and management are integral, and the organization uses its strategy to present itself as highly distinctive within the sector.</p>
Corporate-Governance	<p>This approach is characterized by a powerful board that includes both senior managers and independent directors. Here, the board leads the overall governance of the organization, set strategy, assess performance and shape organizational culture.</p>

Strategy as Practice	Like the Mintzbergian approach, SPrac is characterized by a more pluralist focus including middle managers, management consultants and boundary spanners. The focus of the strategy is micro activities that influence wider decisions. This approach is characterised by away days and task forces at the bottom of the organization where strategy is bottom-up and unmanaged.
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(Adapted from Ferlie and Ongaro 2015)

Research Questions

Following this initial review of the literature, core questions to be explored in this paper are as follows: First, does PV readily diffuse beyond its origins in American public agencies, especially local government, to other settings more internationally and specifically in Europe? Second, what is the role of strategic management in co-creation efforts? Third, how can the Public Value framework (explicitly the strategic triangle) help us to understand how managers use strategy in process (models of strategic management) to address operational capacity and the authorizing environment to co-create public value outcomes? Fourthly and finally, can the use of approaches to strategic management within public agencies increase the scope and hopefully outcomes of public value and co-creation processes?

Methodology

This paper is based upon research completed for a Deliverable in the EU Horizon 2020 funded project, COGOV (Collaborative Government), under grant agreement No 770591. The COGOV consortium examines the possible emergence of more participative forms of public management across Europe, including co-creation. Research teams conducted 15 case studies on ‘promising agencies’ engaged in such activity in six participating EU countries, based mainly on semi-structured interviews but also with some observations and documentary sources. In total, 205 interviews were conducted.

The six countries included have diverse national traditions of public administration. The researchers were all asked to work on a common and detailed case study template to facilitate later comparative analysis. The template included a question on the range of models of strategic management and public management present in the cases, along with a brief on their key features. All the researchers were asked to indicate which models were

present in their cases within the case study reports. The research teams produced 15 such case studies initially.

Below, the cases and results are laid out.

Table 2: COGOV Cases

Country	Case	Strategic Management Models	Models of Government
France	The Urban Renewal and Planning Agency (URPAM)	Strategic Design and Planning, Corporate Governance, Mintzbergian, Cultural School	Public Value, Network Governance
Denmark	ROMU and the co-created museum	Strategic Planning, Mintzbergian, Strategy as Practice	Public Value, Network Governance
England	Urban Green (Newcastle)	Strategic Design and Planning, Cultural School	Public Value
Netherlands	REGIONAL NETWORK GOVERNANCE (NL-RNG_01)	Mintzbergian ¹	Network Governance, New Public Management, Traditional Public Administration
England	Waltham Forest, London Borough of Culture	Strategic Design, Strategy as Practice, Mintzbergian	Public Value
Croatia	Rijeka 2020 (European City of Culture): Participatory Programme	Corporate Governance, Strategy as Practice, Cultural School	Public Value, Network Governance
Wales	Welsh Water's 'Water Resilient Community' Project	Strategic Planning, Corporate Governance, Cultural School	Public Value, Network Governance
Netherlands	Creating a Public Value Strategy – The Netherlands Enterprise Agency	Mintzbergian, Resource-Based View	Public Value, Traditional Public Administration, New Public Management, Network Governance
France	Participatory Budgeting – City of Brest	Mintzbergian, Strategy as Practice	Public Value, Network Governance
Slovenia	Administrative Consultation Wiki	Mintzbergian, Social Entrepreneurial, Resource-Based View	Public Value, Network Governance
France	An (original) Tandem of Concertation to Solve an Environmental Conflict about Industrial Pollution (Gardanne Case Study)	Mintzbergian, Strategy as Practice, Strategic Design and Planning	Network Governance, Public Value
Slovenia	Report on the digital innovative practice Mysuggestions.gov.si (Predlagam.vlad.si)	Mintzbergian, Cultural School	Public Value
Denmark	Cycle superhighways in the Capital Region of Denmark	Strategic Design and Planning, Strategic Positioning, Strategy as Practice	Public Value, Network Governance
Slovenia	Service for Citizens' Initiatives in the City of Ljubljana	Strategic Design and Planning, Social Entrepreneurial	Public Value, Traditional Public Administration
Denmark	The Climate Strategy in Copenhagen aiming for CO ₂ neutrality in 2025: A	Strategic Design and Planning, Cultural School, Resource-Based View	Public Value, Network Governance

¹ Case authors (van Gestel and Grotenbreg) reflected that at the organization and municipality level Strategic Positioning and Strategy as Practice were present.

	Collaborative Planning Process from 2009-2012		

(adapted from Turc et al 2020, Aagaard 2020; Daly and Chapman 2020; van Gestel and Grotenbreg 2020 a,b; van Elk 2020; Cvelić et al 2020; Pluchinotta et al 2020; Soldo et al 2020; Vrbek 2020 a,b,c; Boutin 2020; Hansen 2020 a,b)

Two of the current authors then looked at any patterns that emerged across the 15 cases to better understand the managerial efforts to make co-creation successful (Regal and Ferlie 2020) with particular attention paid to models of strategic management and government. The material contained in this report is further analysed in the current paper. The other two authors wrote two of the initial cases which are presented here. The two cases chosen are based in Slovenia and Denmark and from two sectors respectively local government and culture.

Illustrative Cases

In 2008, the Mayor of Ljubljana initiated a transformation of an ‘analogue’ channel of communication with the Office for Citizens’ Initiatives into an interactive digital portal for citizens’ initiatives. The goal of this innovation was to utilize the potential of digitalization to secure more transparent and efficient exchange with citizens. The roots of this collaborative practice date to 2003 when an Office for Citizens’ Initiatives was established to support communication and collaboration with citizens². However, it was not before the coming to power of the present Mayor of Ljubljana – Zoran Janković (in 2006) that the work of the Office got widely popularised and acknowledged. In 2018, the Service for Citizens’ Initiatives underwent an upgrade, initiated again by the Mayor. Although the upgrade of the system affected backstage processes – aimed to ease the work of the municipal administration and ensure production of consistent and relevant responses to citizens’ initiatives in a time-saving procedure – its effects had a much wider reach. The reform not only optimized internal processes – thus successfully addressing the problem of duplication, inconsistent and lost answers to citizens’ initiatives; but also improved the public image and credibility of the municipality. Overall, the Service is designed as an interactive digital tool providing a direct channel for citizens to participate and contribute to the work of the municipality. This is achieved through the submission of

² City of Ljubljana. 2021. Here for our citizens. Available at: <https://www.ljubljana.si/en/ljubljana-for-you/here-for-our-citizens/> (accessed on May 6, 2021).

citizens' initiatives and proposals for the solution of local problems under municipal authority. As such, the main goal of this collaborative instrument with a significant potential for co-creation is to improve the quality of life and wellbeing of citizens through better public services provided at the local level.

For many years it has been broadly recognized in Denmark that there is a need to address the high decrease in the number of visitors at Danish museums. For a long time, no one cared about who the visitors were or what they thought of the exhibitions. The museum branch did not tackle audience and user experience. In 2019, ROMU adopted a new strategy called "Historien er din" ("The history is yours") The strategy plan was created because the board wanted to adopt more co-creative methods in ROMU. According to the new managing director, the notion of 'your history' is to be understood as the history of citizens, users, and the audience. Overall, the plan reflects the need for ROMU to cooperate more externally, with local stakeholders and citizens. As such the plan is a novel attempt to launch an overall and general agenda of co-creation methods for ROMU.

The explicatory power of Public Value framework across traditions

Despite the lack of theoretical knowledge about Public Value as a concept, its core ideas are strongly present in the reasoning and legitimation of the Service among the public servants interviewed. Thus, the Service is unanimously recognised as one of the key instruments of the municipality enabling an open, participatory, and collaborative environment for citizens to work together with the municipal administration towards the improvement of the quality of life in the city of Ljubljana. This not only contributes to the practical creation of public value – in terms of a cleaner city, better and safer infrastructure etc., but also the further socialisation of future (internal and external) co-creators and deeper internalisation of this 'way of doing things' by the municipal administration. Eventually, this builds a positive public image of the municipality and contributes to stronger legitimacy.

Ideas related to the public value concept, are not only observed in the context of the Service for Citizens' Initiatives, but also the discourse of the strategic documents of the municipality. Their main feature is a prevalence of the public value narrative over other alternative narratives – e.g. the NPM and its emphasis on 'efficiency' and/or 'value for money'. The key reference for better understanding the public value milieu in the context

of this case is the Vision of Ljubljana 2025, adopted in 2007 for the period to 2025³. In this document, Ljubljana is imagined as an eco-friendly city; a city that will not spread at any cost; a city with fair and equitable housing policy, clean water, healthy environment, and less traffic in the central city area. Moreover, other strategic documents⁴ covering policy areas under municipal authority specifically point out equality, revival of democratic citizenship, social justice and inclusion, intergenerational solidarity and welfare as the key public values pursued by the municipality. Their common denominator is the clearly stated openness of the municipality (and specifically the 'city leadership') to design a city according to the needs and desires of its inhabitants. Eventually, important to be noted is that some of these strategic documents are adopted in a co-creative process, which included a wide range of stakeholders (e.g. Comprehensive transport strategy of the municipality of Ljubljana 2018). On this basis, it can be concluded that the Service, as a promising co-creation practice emerged in a context featured by strategic management efforts towards the establishment of an environment conducive to public value ideas.

In the case of ROMU, respondents in the case do not explicitly mention Public Value as a heuristic. However, the model has a great deal of explanatory power when it comes to the orientation of the management at ROMU. This orientation seems embedded within the case due to the perception that the overall challenge for ROMU is a lack of public legitimacy. This perspective is strong amongst the board and the managing director as well as having a stronghold in the audience engagement department of ROMU. The ROMU managers act more as stewards of public value rather than loyal agents of politicians. Public value as the increased and experienced value of local/regional (and national music) history is closely related to the new strategic plan framing as "History is yours", which is history as personal, important, and relevant in the eyes of the individual citizen. As such the ROMU product aims to produce significant collective value. Both managers and employees in the communication branch endorse the belief and importance of strategic management to fulfil the ambition of a higher level of public legitimacy. Though the very structure of ROMU as

³ Municipality of Ljubljana. 2007. Vision of Ljubljana 2025. Available at: <https://www.ljubljana.si/sl/o-ljubljani/vizija-ljubljane-2025/> (accessed on May 14, 2021).

⁴ E.g. Environmental Report for 2017; Comprehensive transport strategy of the municipality of Ljubljana 2018; Strategy for Development of Culture in the Municipality of Ljubljana 2016–2019; Strategy for Development of Culture in the Municipality of Ljubljana 2020–2023 (Draft); Strategy for the Development of Social Care in the Municipality of Ljubljana for the period of 2013–2020; Strategy for the Development of Social Care in the Municipality of Ljubljana for the period of 2021 to 2027 (Draft); Youth Strategy of the City of Ljubljana 2016–2025; Sports Strategy of the City of Ljubljana until 2028.

an institution, where three municipalities have pooled their visiting sites into one organization would lead one to believe that the overall focus would be on improving value for the municipality committees. Instead, the focus among respondents is on improving public legitimacy.

The utility of Public Value as a framework for both cases highlights its relevance beyond the United States or similar governance traditions where it has been previously applied such as England.

Hybridized approaches to strategic management in the case of implementing co-creation

Approaching the Ljubljana case from the perspective of different models of strategic management, we note a hybrid setting has emerged reflecting the Strategic design, Strategic planning and (Social) Entrepreneurial models. The municipality features a clearly defined formal organisational structure and legal framework that defines in detail its authority, scope, and decision-making procedures. The organisational structure presumes a strong hierarchy, where the top (political) leadership has the key decision-making role, while lower instances are responsible for implementation. This also implies a clear definition of roles, the scope of work and division of responsibilities at both departmental and individual levels within the municipality.

Moreover, strategic planning is an area where the Strategic design and the Strategic planning models intertwine. The municipality of Ljubljana has an extensive list of formal strategic documents – general long-term strategic plans and sectoral strategic acts at the level of specific policy areas – which systematically define broad and specific goals and priorities at the municipal level. The main documents defining the general strategic goals are the Vision of Ljubljana 2025 and the Sustainable Urban Strategy of the City of Ljubljana adopted from 2014 to 2030. Moreover, the municipality has sectoral strategic plans, which operationalise the general strategic goals at the level of specific policy areas, such as culture, sport, environment, traffic, social policy, rural development, education, public safety, and youth policy. The main feature of all these documents is that they are adopted in a formal and clearly defined planning process relying on different analytical tools and a significant amount of official quantitative data. An additional feature is their strong alignment and content consistency.

In the end, the presence of the (Social) Entrepreneurial model is evident in the impact of the charismatic personality of the Mayor and his role as an 'entrepreneur' of innovative ideas. Namely, he has been the 'ideational father' and 'sponsor' of the Service for Citizens' Initiatives. An interesting observation here is that the strong formalisation of the organisational structure and processes have not undermined his influence. On the contrary, the hierarchical and centralised environment has enabled him as an 'entrepreneur' of new ideas allowing him to implement them by successfully neutralising potential barriers from a position of power.

Although at first glance, this constellation of strategic models does not look promising for co-creation – which is usually associated with decentralisation, a lack of formalisation and 'non-traditional' style of leadership – in the Slovenian context this was the 'magic formula' that led to the establishment of a promising practice of co-creation. Thus, the Service has been a product of 1) a strong political figure (the Mayor) who recognised collaboration and co-creation as a priority of (his personal) interest (Social Entrepreneurial model); 2) a traditional hierarchical structure that enabled efficient implementation of the Service (Strategic design model); and 3) a strong presence of a public value narrative at the strategic level which set a favourable normative environment (Strategic planning model). Precisely, the combination and mutual reinforcement of the Social Entrepreneurial model and Strategic design models seem to have secured efficient and fast implementation of this promising co-creation instrument within a predominantly traditional administrative setting. Although paradoxically, a promising innovative instrument for co-creation is implemented in a rather top-down manner, this seems to be the right approach for the Slovenian context. However, its substance – in terms of goals to be achieved, and its design – presuming inclusion of citizens, were to a great extent shaped by the Strategic Design model and the public value narrative contained in the municipal strategic documents.

At ROMU, none of the respondents refer to any specific strategic school, models, or formal management textbook. Neither is there an explicit and conscious adaption of such models. The ROMU strategy is a much more pragmatic response to the problem of public legitimacy. However, elements, values and thinking associated with several models can be found in the case study. Overall, the ROMU strategy cannot be estimated to one specific school of strategic management. However, the ROMU story contains a clear shift in the

strategic approach. Previously, the Entrepreneurial School was dominant but has now lost priority like elements of the Cultural School, the Resource-Based View and the Corporate Governance school which all remain part of the process, but not as strong as before. Today, the Strategic Planning School is the most dominant strategy, mixed with emerging elements of Mintzbergian School and the Strategy of Practice School.

All respondents emphasize the importance of the new, top management driven strategic plan, which mainly heads of sections are supposed to implement. Where previous ROMU strategy plans have been detailed and long, the new one is brief and much more general. The emphasis is on the vision of ROMU as a museum that is relevant and useful in the lives of citizens.

The Cultural School line of thought is expressed through the strong ideas and high commitment to the vision of the co-created museum. However, this school of thought was stronger earlier. After a whistleblower scandal, there was a clear need for evaluating and changing the organizational culture of ROMU, from a harsh, hierarchical, and fear-based culture to a more inclusive and open one. That change also remains the task of the new managing director. Also, there remains a transformational task related to the role of rather conservative-minded curators. However, for many of the respondents, the focus seems to be more on the creation of new, daily routines and on formal organizational features that can support the vision of the cocreated museum. Their focus is not on a need for change of cultural beliefs and values. There might be a slight bias in our material here, based on our choice of respondents and the respondent's loyalty towards ROMU.

Both cases demonstrate that no one model of strategic management was used (consciously or in the process) to achieve successful co-creation implementation. Instead, it was a range and constant evolution.

The role of Public Value's as a framework strategically managed co-creation

Across both cases, we can refer to the public value strategic triangle (Moore 1995) to better understand the cases and the conditions that led to the success [or failure] to implement co-creative processes through the deployment of models of strategic management.

In the case of Ljubljana, the public value proposition (and later outcome) of the work of the Service is noted as improving the quality of life for the inhabitants of the city.

Although the public servants interviewed were not familiar with the theoretical concepts of Public Value and co-creation, they identified the roots of the Service in the internal urge and desire of the municipality to better respond to citizens' needs and improve their quality of life. Therefore, the Service was recognised primarily as a collaborative tool for the achievement of the strategic goals of the municipality.

In addition, regarding the second element of the triangle, a key role for the establishment of an 'authorising environment' for the implementation of the Service, was played by the Mayor. Although this task of building a coalition of different actors to legitimise an action is usually ascribed to public service managers (Bromell 2012), in the case of the Service this was completely assumed by a political figure – the Mayor. The Mayor was both the necessary and sufficient factor for the establishment of the 'authorising environment' crucial for the implementation of this promising practice of co-creation. Namely, from a position of power, he secured legitimacy for the implementation of the Service, ensured that all relevant actors are on board and neutralised any potential barriers that could have hindered its implementation.

Two issues need to be pointed out to better understand the leverage the Mayor has to legitimise and implement a promising instrument for co-creation. The first one is the centralised and hierarchical internal organisational structure of the municipality, featuring a clear division of tasks and responsibilities across vertical and horizontal lines. This also implies top-down decision-making, where the Mayor has the keyword and often comes up with ideas for new projects (as in the case of the Service). Although municipal civil servants feel encouraged to propose solutions to specific problems based on consultations, experts' opinions and conclusions adopted at the departmental/interdepartmental level, they understand it is the political leadership that decides whether an idea is 'worthy' for further consideration. This chimes with arguments made by Rhodes and Wanna (2007) around the necessity of recognising political players to create public value. In such a context, the municipal administration presumes mainly a role of an executor – responsible to operationalise and implement ideas and decisions adopted at the highest political level. The second issue is that he is described as an 'atypical leader' who actively endeavours to get closer to citizens – to hear and address their needs.

Eventually, the last element of the strategic triangle – operational capacity, was easily secured as the Mayor's support translated into sufficient financial resources for both

the establishment and the upgrade of the Service. Differently from the general perception that finances are the most common barrier to introducing novelties in the public sector, this was not the case with the Service. Once finances were secured, operational capacity, in the beginning, was easily achieved due to external factors, such as the low number of citizens' initiatives – 2 to 3 per day. The relatively low level of workload did not pose a need for new employments or reorganisations within the municipal administration. However, the problems started with the popularisation of the Service and the increase of citizens' initiatives to around 100 per day. The increased workload not only challenged the very system of the Service but also endangered the achievement of the goals and values set. This became a prominent problem after few 'incidents' when the Service came up publicly with different answers to the same problem, which negatively affected the credibility of the municipality.

Thus, the 2018 upgrade of the system aimed to (re)establish operational capacity to secure effective performance of the Service. Interestingly, the reform did not foresee drastic ruptures and organisational transformations – besides the technological improvement of the system and a reorganisation of available human resources. Namely, the Office for Citizens' Initiatives took the role of a focal point determining which department within the municipality is the most competent to answer a specific initiative. Then, within each department, a moderator was appointed to coordinate the division of tasks at intra-departmental level and secure preparation of responses in a due time.

Besides support from the political leadership, building an operational capacity was facilitated by the strong desire among public servants, on the one hand, to improve the level of citizens' satisfaction, and, on the other, to ease their administrative work. Thus, the municipal administration easily embraced the reform as a solution to both their concerns. Eventually, the very format, i.e. digitalisation of the Service should be mentioned as a factor contributing to the operational capacity – by enabling easy access of citizens' initiatives and effective response by the municipal administration.

The analysis of the strategic triangle indicates that theoretical knowledge of the concepts of co-creation and public value is not a precondition for practical realisation of these ideas on the ground, especially when public value narrative is present at strategic and normative level. Namely, the interviews tacitly discussed ideas related to public value, referred to collaboration with citizen and innovative ways of getting closer to them,

without articulating their strategic efforts as co-creation. Moreover, the role of the Mayor indicates that co-creation initiatives can derive from personal interest (e.g. for the preservation of power and popularity), as well as that in 'traditional' administrative settings certain 'unfavourable' strategic models (e.g. Strategic design model) and top-down strategic approaches are not necessarily incompatible with co-creation. On the contrary, the case of the Service shows that precisely this strategic orientation enabled the Mayor to impose as an 'entrepreneur' and secure the establishment of a favourable environment and later proper infrastructure for co-creation activities.

Returning to ROMU, as mentioned above, the respondents do not use the concept of Public Value. Instead, they use words like 'staying relevant' or 'legitimacy'. Overall, the focus among respondents is on improving public legitimacy, which can be related to stakeholders and citizens experience of public value. In that sense, Moore's triangle can be considered implicit in the strategic thinking surrounding ROMU.

Currently, the museum is having an internal discussion on what public legitimacy is alongside if and how it can be measured. Simultaneously, the sales department and audience engagement department have different notions of the nature of the public value product that ROMU should provide. While the sales department wants a fixed product, which could lead to increased revenue, the communication department wants a dynamic product that changes depending on the audience. The latter of which resonating more closely with co-creation processes. It continues to be a major challenge for ROMU to secure economic resources for daily operations. Lack of financial resources is persistently the most substantial barrier for fulfilling its role as a public value contributor. Due to this economic pressure, the manifest KPIs, like visitor numbers, seems to have the upper hand in this discussion of how to measure public legitimacy and relevance, on behalf of more qualitative measures like visitors' experience.

The internal discussion chimes with one of the key points on the strategic triangle wherein managers must address, question, and challenge their operational capacity. Many of the respondents are aware of the need not only for cultural change but also new operational procedures necessary to implement the "History is yours"-plan and the vision of the co-created museum. However, these discussions remain at their earliest stages. The Strategic Planning school is the most dominant strategy because the co-creation

orientation is very much a top-down driven initiative (represented by The History is yours-strategy plan) - in the attempt to create public legitimacy/relevance/public value. However, at ROMU an operational capacity that aims for co-created public value cannot be top-down planned and implemented as it is also a matter of transforming culture, mindsets of employees and managerial procedures.

Another key aspect of the strategic triangle around the authorizing environment is present as sources of legitimacy are indirectly addressed in the internal discussions. To maintain the basic source of legitimacy it is pivotal for the management to satisfy, not only the board but also the cultural committees in the three stakeholder municipalities and the groups of local volunteers. For the employees, it seems more important to build and maintain legitimacy among citizens, but in rather different forms. The sales department seems keener on building a source of legitimacy among the local companies (for them to use ROMU as a place for events and conferences). The communication and audience engagement department seem to focus on building a source of legitimacy among citizens, not only to engage them as an audience but also to engage them in co-created projects. Once more this attention to the authorizing environment is nascent. It is mostly rhetoric among board members and managers and to a lesser degree among employees. No new operational capacity and no new sources of legitimacy have been built, and no agreement on proper measurement or understanding of how to increase public legitimacy or political legitimacy has been reached. Elements of the Mintzbergian school and the School of Practice also becomes relevant in the strategic reorientation of ROMU. Mintzbergian School because the top management knows that the vision of the co-created museum can only be realized through the cooperation of staff, users, and stakeholders. According to several respondents, inclusion; dialogue; and relations are essential for the way the managers must achieve their goals. Top managers do not claim that they know the answers to specific problems in advance. The managing director also attempted to introduce a new leadership style that is more open and inclusive to new ideas. The School of Practice is visible as the manager of the audience engagement department believes that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to the co-created museum. The partners, professionals, users, and stakeholders that are asked to get involved depends on the task at hand. However, the strategic thinking connecting the Mintzbergian School and the Practice School effort is not very strong. All in

all, these deficits illustrate the lack of operational capacity to do co-creation. ROMU hasn't found the ROMU way of doing cocreation.

Consequently, the synergy-effects among the elements of the triangle has not manifested. The intentions are present among management and employees, often driven by a co-creation ideology. So far, ROMUs strategic reorientation has been a rather centralized and top-down driven process by the board and shifting management directors. Currently, the vision of the co-created museum is most evidently maintained by the managing director and the head of the audience engagement department. Bottom-up processes involving staff at all levels, as well as user groups, partners and stakeholders have not yet evolved. No new forums or places, inside or outside the formal hierarchy of ROMU have been authorized as the source of legitimacy. No significant bottom-up co-creation processes or methods can be found in ROMU that represents a new co-created public value-oriented dynamic, though some new employees in the communication branch support the idea. Consequently, the synergy-effects among the elements of the triangle has not manifested. The intentions are present among management and employees, often driven by a co-creation ideology. To create the wanted co-created and public value-oriented synergy, ROMU must develop new internal and external operational procedures that involve both staff, volunteers, and external collaborative partners. These operational procedures must be driven by a mix of strategic management schools like the Planning school, Mintzbergian and School of Practice. The greatest obstacle to this is the economic pressure, worsened by the Covid19 pandemic, that forces ROMU to secure a higher degree of revenue through sales or business conferences.

These cases illustrate that the strategic triangle (Moore 1995) can be an important tool for politicians, managers, and educators hoping to better understand how strategic management models can be deployed to successfully implement co-creative processes.

Discussion

Theoretical contribution

We now present the contribution of these findings adopting Carlile and Christensen's (2006) concern for practicality identifying implications for managers.

Theme 1: Public Value's widespread impact across different traditions and sectors

Across 14 of the cases, cause authors consistently highlighted the importance of 'public value'. Critics of Public Value have noted its lack of consistent approach and application (see Rhodes and Wanna 2007) and this was noticeable across the cases. While there was no explicit use of Moore's approach to Public Value strategy, there was a pervasive presence of all sides of the strategic triangle across the cases. This is unsurprising perhaps in the Anglo-Saxon contexts. However, Public Value was seen across multiple historical public administration traditions demonstrating its relevance and utility as a framework. Its presence may be a result of several contexts facing resource constraint. The development of Public Value within the United States coincided and explained how public managers sought to become 'stewards' of public value under constraints of limited resources (Moore 1995, 2013). Thus, it is the shift away from a pure focus on efficiency towards the creation of public value that is novel to New Public Management. The cases from France also highlighted how long-standing values of public administration have shifted wherein managers were more away from their role in the creation of value and the necessity of an enabling environment. While the case of ROMU also demonstrated the importance of responding to limited resources (under operational capacity) when thinking about the creation of Public Value.

The cases also highlighted an interesting impact of co-creation processes on the framework of the strategic triangle. A key debate within the Public Value literature is around the notion of where value lies -individually or collectively- and the role that public managers play in its creation. The paternalistic role of public managers becomes increasingly important especially concerning cases such as the Rijeka 2020 Participatory Programme (Cvelić et al 2020) or Brest's Participatory Budgeting (Soldo et al 2020) where one goal is to increase participation of disenfranchised communities. While the original triangle focuses on the authorizing environment which consisted of people who can approve or deny the 'public value proposition' and those who can influence these authoritative figures (Moore 1995, 2013), co-creation expands this to focus on public legitimacy and thus an enabling environment rather than solely an authorizing one. This was seen across the cases wherein managers sought public legitimacy for their decisions beyond those who could politically approve or hinder their work. Finally, it also led to more nuanced work. Public managers working in the Waltham Forest Borough of Culture not only needed approval from political offices but also local organisations and community members. Thus, they hosted both large scale events, as well as more hidden and

community, empowered events. Balancing the two were tricky and led many times to conflict of values (van Elk 2020). Thus, there is widespread utility in the Public Value framework to understanding how public managers seek to co-create.

Theme 2: A mixed-model approach to strategically managing change towards co-creation

Our findings replicate prior research demonstrating the importance of strategic management in public, third sector and private agencies (Berry 2007 Bryson et al 2010, 2021; Ferlie and Ongaro 2015). But in public administration, research has almost exclusively featured levels of government and non-profits, whereas here, we evidence the use of strategic management within networks (van Gestel and Grotenbreg 2020b; Vrbek 2020b) and across policy and project implementation (van Elk 2020, Soldo et al 2020). This extension signals the potential relevance of this research to understanding how organisations seek to strategically manage internally and across partnerships.

A key contribution is to demonstrate that a mixed approach to strategic management is an effective enabler of the co-creation process, across a range of contexts, and despite adverse conditions. All the cases of mixed approaches produced positive movement towards more inclusive practices with citizens, other organisations, or networks. Contrary to suppositions that would argue for more explicit bottom-up approaches (Sørensen et al 2021; Torfing et al 2016), the persistent influence of Strategic Design and Planning highlights the abiding impact of austerity and New Public Management across public administration traditions. Other hierarchic approaches include influences from the private sector such as Corporate Governance and (Social) Entrepreneurial. Yet, these were commonly mixed with more inclusive approaches such as Cultural School, Mintzbergian or Strategy as Practice. In particular, the learning element of the Mintzbergian approach previously highlighted by Bryson and others (Bryson et al 2010, 2021) played an integral role in the capacity of the organisation to attempt new ways of working. While the influence of Strategy as Practice highlights a shift of policymaking to be more place-based (Kline 2010). It is the deployment of each in tandem that is interesting and highlights the role that strategic management plays in not only linking solutions with problems or aspirations and capabilities (Ackermann and Eden 2011; Gaddis 2018) but in cultivating environments in which these processes can occur fruitfully. As well, where the focus is not on organisational or policy change (van Gestel and Grotenbreg 2020; Vrbek 2020a Soldo et al 2020) a completely bottom-up approach is visible underpinning

arguments made by Sørensen et al 2021 and Torfing et al 2016 of the necessity of distributing or sharing power. Our findings thus demonstrate the importance of understanding not only how public agencies strategically manage co-creation internally but also how they must balance what may be different approaches to strategic management in partnership.

Theme 3: Understanding Public Value's role as a framework to understand public management & the impact on co-creation

One of our primary contributions is demonstrating the relevance of Moore's strategic triangle in understanding how models of strategic management are deployed to move towards co-creation processes or within these processes themselves. The heuristic of the 'strategic triangle' (Bennington and Moore 2011: 3) has been used by scholars to demonstrate different aspects necessary to the co-creation process (see Sørensen et al 2021) yet overall it has proven difficult to operationalise PV heuristics as well as understand how widespread and sustainable adoption of PV ideas are ([Ferlie et al 2020](#)). However, across fourteen cases, public managers utilised a range of processes to both monitor their operational capacity and also ensure that there was an 'authorizing environment' in which their work could attain success. In many instances this included a more top-down approach internally combined with a more open approach externally (see Cvelić et al 2020, Pluchinotta et al 2020) Moreover, all the cases, even, the one where Public Value was not considered an overarching framework (see van Gestel and Grotenbreg 2020b) highlighted the role of public managers seeking to create public value. As well, it illustrated the explicatory power of this heuristic even when applied to political figures such as in the Services case (Vrbek 2020c) addressing a criticism that it ignores the role of politicians (Rhodes and Wanna 2007).

Second, these cases help clarify the role of the 'authorizing environment', a key component of the strategic triangle. The 'authorizing environment' itself is contentious. Political scientist scholars criticise it for ignoring the steering role of politicians while dressing up public managers as 'platonic guardians' (Rhodes and Wanna 2007). In contrast, public managers accord a leadership role to senior public managers (Sørensen et al 2021). At the least, public managers must develop public value propositions to be authorised by

politicians (Moore 1995; Bennington and Moore 2011). Across the fourteen cases, public managers did attempt to influence and respond to external authorising environments. The impact of authorizing environments also had long term ramifications if a political leader changed and interest waned (see Hansen 2020a, Hansen 2020b).

Third, these cases highlight the shift from a public service-centric authorizing environment (Moore 1995) to the 'active assistance' of outside actors (Moore and Bennington 2011). Each of these cases where Public Value was present demonstrated the importance of carrying out the work with communities, especially regarding democratic legitimacy. Finally, some cases highlighted the importance of recognising the difference between an 'authorizing' environment and an enabling one. An authorizing environment alludes to the ability to sanction an action. On the other hand, citizens or local communities cannot always overturn a decision made by public managers. Thus, it is important to expand the authorizing environment to focusing on an 'enabling environment' as solely adding citizens or local communities into the authorising environment masks power dynamics.

Overall, Public Value has become widespread with the strategic triangle becoming a key tool to illuminate how public managers (and leaders) have deployed models of strategic management seeking co-created public value.

Concluding Thoughts

Implications for research and limitations

When designing the work package that was the basis for this paper, Pluchinotta and Ferlie (2019) sought to better understand the key themes from the literature review that formed the basis of the COGOV project. Thus, the original selection criteria for cases was purposely broad and sought to find interesting examples of Public Value, Network Governance, Co-Creation, Co-Production, Digitalisation, and collaborative forms of public leadership. This paper, therefore, focuses on two of these cases to provide a more nuanced reflection on these overall criteria while also narrowing the focus on the remaining 13 cases. As case authors selected and wrote the cases, they also deployed different perspectives such as organisational, city-based, project-based, and policy-based. Thus, this paper focused on two cases that took the organizational perspective while noting how these different lenses impacted the remaining cases. Additionally, the existence of further

deliverables led to quality checks and comments on case drafts (Regal and Ferlie 2020) simultaneously clarifying the focus over time. Finally, the fact that it is a large cross-national and sectoral database of 15 longitudinal case studies means that the resultant cases demonstrate the importance of Public Value and co-creation bears report.

Second, it is difficult to assess the 'performance' of the different agencies within the cases. There is a lack of reliable measures for co-creation processes and their assessment requires further research. We addressed this by asking case authors to reflect and rank their cases movement towards co-creation.

Third, there is only a rather indirect assessment of the presence of co-creation and strategic management by the case writers. We have attempted to address this by including two of the cases which makes these connections more explicit. As well, the clear and detailed template provided to all case writers (Pluchinotta and Ferlie 2019) created a clear structure for comparative analysis.

This research also raises questions concerning temporal dimensions of co-creation processes. What is the 'average' time taken to effectively implement these processes? Two cases particularly highlight the importance of this question. While the Bicycle Superhighway (Hansen 2020b) started with significant participation, a change in political leader led to a precipitate fall in participatory practices. On the other hand, the case of Urban Green Newcastle (Daly and Chapman 2020) went from consultative to collaborative governance.

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