ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Unpacking value destruction at the intersection between public and private value

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Abstract

Public services do not always create value. Rather, when poorly organized and/or delivered, they can destroy value and make service users' lives worse. However, such "value destruction" is presently weakly conceptualized in public management theory. Consequently, this paper is devoted to the empirical examination of value destruction and hence its conceptualization. At the heart of the paper, we recognize the multiplicity of public value and private value objectives in complex public service environments and the dyadic tension between these two value constellations. Drawing upon qualitative data derived from public carbon reduction projects, we establish a conceptual framework. This framework accounts both for the types of value destruction and for the tension between public and private value. Subsequently, the framework disentangles the value destruction concept into four categories: value ignorance, value disproportion, value backlash, and value exploitation. Finally, the implications of this new conceptual framework for public management theory and practice are explored.

Abstract

公共服务并非必然创造价值。相反，失序的服务可能破坏价值，降低服务对象的生活水平与质量。然而，相较于近些年来日趋火热的'价值共创' 研究，'价值破坏'这一概念并未在公共管理学界得到应有的重视。基于对四个城市碳减排项目的质性分析，本文力图添补这一研究不足。在对复杂情境下

价值目标多元性的充分认识的基础上，我们著重探讨了公共价值目标与私人价值目标之间的潜在冲突，分析了由这一冲突所引发的 '价值破坏' 后果。作为研究发现，我们构建了一个概念框架。该框架厘清了解读 '价值破坏' 现象的两种维度，进而将公共服务中的 '价值破坏' 现象解构为四种具体情形: '价值失灵'、'价值失衡'、'价值抗争' 与 '价值牺牲'。文章的最后，我们针对以上四种情形提出了一系列应对策略，系统的讨论了这一概念框架的理论贡献和现实参考，并在此基础上为未来研究指出了方向。.

1 | INTRODUCTION

Public administration and management (PAM) theory and practice have latterly begun considering the implications of service management and marketing (SMM) theory for its own development. Starting with the seminal paper in ARPA by Osborne et al. (2013), a growing body of research has evolved that explores public services as "services". This body of knowledge has latterly been brought together as *Public Service Logic* (PSL) (Osborne, 2021). Integrating the PAM and SMM literature, PSL examines public services through the lens of value creation. It examines what such value creation implies for public services and their management, the nature and elements of value for public service users and citizens, and the processes through which such value can be created.

PSL has evolved alongside the important debate about Public Value (PV) (Bozeman, 2007; Bryson et al., 2017; Moore, 1995). While PV has focused primarily upon value creation at the societal level, PSL has focused principally upon the private level, for individual service users and citizens. Inter alia, this latter body of work has explored

- the nature of value propositions for public services (Eriksson et al., 2020),
- the microprocesses of value creation (Hardyman et al., 2019; Osborne et al., 2021a),
- the implications and application of the co-design approach to public services (Trischler et al., 2019; Lindqvist & Westrup, Lindqvist & Westrop, 2019),
- the nature of value creation for multiple stakeholders across public services (Powell et al., 2019),
- the nature of public service ecosystems (Osborne et al., 2022; Petrescu, 2019),
- public service innovation from a service perspective (Skålén et al., 2018), and
- the implications of this ongoing debate for PAM theory and practice more broadly (Alford, 2016; Dudau et al., 2019; Grönroos, 2019; Hodgkinson et al., 2017).

Two areas have suffered from a dearth of research and theory building in this literature. The first is the concept of *value destruction* in public service delivery—that services are as capable of destroying value and making service users' lives worse as they are of enhancing users' lives (Engen et al., 2021). The second is the potential for dyadic tension between value creation at the public and private levels. The potential for such tension has been noted in both the PV and PSL literature (Benington, 2011; Osborne, 2021), but has not been explored in any depth in either literature (Cluley & Radnor, 2020).

Consequently, this paper is devoted to the empirical examination of value destruction at the intersection between public and private value. It extends PAM theory on value destruction by integrating the previously separated considerations of value tension and value destruction into a novel typological framework. At the heart of this framework is the recognition of the dichotomous tension between public and private value: these two value

constellations can contest and/or conflict with each other in a shared PAM setting. Our work offers the opportunity both to recognize and evaluate the impact of this tension and to resolve it.

The empirical basis of this paper is conducted in an under-research field in PAM—public carbon reduction projects in response to the challenges of climate change. Unlike many traditional public projects, public carbon reduction projects entail potential societal value creation in the future and individual value creation/destruction in the present (Gardiner, 2011; Stern, 2007). Particularly, in an urban area, public carbon reduction projects are mostly fragmented and decentralized, which increases the likelihood of conflicts over divergent public and private value interests (Betsill & Bulkeley, 2013). Drawing on 18 months' fieldwork in Edinburgh, we evaluate four cases that embody such value conflicts. These cases are thence analyzed to produce theoretical elaboration and extension.

This paper is in five sections. The first section reviews current PAM discourses on public and private value creations/destructions, while the second section outlines the methodology and empirical context of our study. Section three elaborates the research findings and section four discusses how our analysis contributes to PAM theory. The final section considers the implications for practice and directions for future research.

2 | LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 | Public value

The exploration of PV derives from Moore (1995). He articulated public managers' responsibility for creating something "substantively valuable for the society (p.71)", following a doable, sustainable, and legitimate strategy. Wallmeier et al. (2018) have concluded that this articulation "shifted PA research in a different, and for that time controversial, direction (p. 490)".

PV theory has evolved into a cluster of theories about the nature of public value, its creation, and substance (e.g., Stoker, 2006; Alford & O'Flynn, Alford & O'Flynn, 2009; Bryson et al., 2014, 2017). We argue that three basic conceptualizations of PV have gradually emerged, understanding it as "what the public values" (Talbot, 2009), as adding "value to the public sphere" (Benington, 2011), and as "meeting pre-established PV criteria" (Bozeman, 2007). These multiple streams of conceptualization partially lead to expanding critiques that PV remains a "fuzzy idea" rather than a stable "umbrella" concept and that this ambiguity and elasticity of definition have contributed to its ongoing popularity (Rhodes & Wanna, 2007; Hartley et al., 2017). This debate about the rigor and significance of the PV framework continues (e.g., Bozeman, 2019; O'Flynn, 2021; Van de Walle, 2016).

Despite these critiques, PV theory was the first well-developed strand of PAM that attempted to shift the NPM's emphasis on public service organizations (PSOs) and their markets and to public services' external impacts on society (dos Reis & Gomes, 2022; Osborne et al., 2021a). It has also paralleled the exploration of *collective* benefits compared to *individual* ones in public service delivery (e.g., Nabatchi et al., 2017; Ostrom & Ostrom, 2019; Sorrentino et al., 2018). Both literature agree that public/collective value is different from public goods: "the former includes the *outcomes* made possible by the latter (Bryson et al., 2014: 451)". Both approaches also concern how public offerings are valued by the citizenry—one public project can thereby involve multiple public value expectations and evaluations. Both strands of theory are significant. For simplicity, though, this paper adopts the PV concept through which to explore the broader impact of public services on society and the collective good.

2.2 | Private value

PSL has articulated the case for value creation at the individual level to be understood as the foundation of public service delivery, while acknowledging the potential for societal value creation (Osborne et al., 2021a). This work draws significantly upon the innovative work on service-dominant logic in SMM of Lusch and Vargo (2006) and

Grönroos (2012). These scholars have been devoted to shifting the attention of SMM research from the production of services to their use/consumption and how this creates "value" in the lives of customers. As the central notion, "value" refers to "the positively or negatively valanced change in well-being or viability of a particular system/actor (Vargo & Lusch, 2018: 740)". It is also conceptualized as being co-created between customers and service firms rather than produced by firms in isolation. As a change in their "well-being" (for good or ill), value is uniquely determined by customers, in comparison with the monetized financial value, interests, or profits of a firm (Grönroos & Voima, 2013).

Adapting these insights to the public service setting and integrating them into PAM research and theory, PSL researchers have increasingly explored the diversity of private value captured not only by service users but also by the wider constellation of stakeholders (e.g., Eriksson et al., 2020; Hardyman et al., 2019; Powell et al., 2019). Osborne (2021) has argued further for three dimensions of such value creation, concerning the impact of engagement in the design and management/delivery of a public service (value-in-production), the experience of using a public service (value-in-use), and the relationship of these services to the individual life experiences, needs, and expectations of service users (value-in-context). Importantly, such value creation is argued to take place in *public service ecosystems* (PSEs) comprised of dynamic and interactive constellations of actors, values/beliefs, and processes (Kinder et al., 2020; Osborne et al., 2021b; Petrescu, 2019; Strokosch & Osborne, 2020). Subsequently, Osborne et al. (2021a) have examined the loci, elements, and processes of such value creation through public services and within PSEs.

2.3 | Value destruction

Public value destruction has received only limited attention in the PAM literature. Bozeman (2002) was the first to note, in contrast to Moore's pre-occupation with value creation, that it is possible to lose or destroy public value. He denoted this "public value failure". A small number of subsequent studies have examined the dynamics of such public value destruction (e.g., Alford & Yates, 2014; Bozeman & Johnson, 2015; Williams et al., 2016), while Steen et al. (2018) have explored manifestations of it (reinforced inequalities, distrust, loss of democracy, etc.) specifically in the context of co-production. Three sources of public value destruction have been identified in these studies. These are where

- some citizen groups may be excluded, rejected, or even sacrificed in the creation of value for the broader society (e.g., travelers or asylum seekers),
- public services are captured by individuals or groups, limiting access for the general population, and
- there is disagreement/conflict between different stakeholder groups about the nature of public value, where public value is ill-defined, or where the debate is captured by an elite group.

However, both Bryson et al. (2017) and Hartley et al. (2019) note that further work is required to develop this concept substantively.

The study of *private/individual value destruction* in SMM is also a comparatively recent development. This emergent literature argues that prior value co-creation research implicitly associated the service interaction with positive processes and outcomes. Such an "optimistic" view, though, constrains the exploration of "value co-destruction" (Plé & Chumpitaz Cáceres, 2010). Echeverri and Skålén (2021) have identified two subsequent and distinctive streams of value co-destruction research. The first, represented by Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres' (2010), solely focuses on the discussion of value co-destruction and labels the accidental or intentional "misuse" of resources as its trigger. In contrast, the second stream, originating from Echeverri and Skålén (2011), reveals a reciprocal relationship between value co-creation and co-destruction and explicates how the misalignment between interacting parties accounts for negative value results. Subsequent studies have further elaborated the likelihood of such misalignment

and its impacts and suggested a series of re-aligning strategies (Laamanen & Skålén, 2015; Skålén et al., 2015a, 2015b).

This growing SMM discourse on value co-destruction has recently spread into the PAM literature. Järvi et al. (Järvi et al., 2018; see also Laud et al., 2019) developed this approach further by differentiating between value destruction (through the poor design or delivery of a service) and value co-destruction (through the failure of interactions between the service user and the service organization and its staff). Within PSL, studies have also begun to emerge that explore the nature and dynamics of value destruction in public services (e.g., Engen et al., 2021; Espersson & Westrup, 2020; Straussman, 2020). Such scholars have identified three primary sources of private value destruction:

- power asymmetries between public service providers and users, particularly when certain user groups are exploited;
- resource misuse, when public service providers, users, and other actors cannot effectively use and integrate the resources they possess in a mutually and socially beneficial manner;
- misaligned behaviors between actors due to opportunistic behavior, lack of trust, and information failure.

Stand-alone case studies of value destruction in public services have also emerged in fields such as e-government (Uppström & Lönn, 2017), elderly care and robotics (Čaić et al., 2018), and health care (Keeling et al., 2021). This emergent body of research has led some to call for "constructive dis-enchantment" with the "co-word" in PAM, to prevent such work from being applied in a ritualistic approach (Dudau et al., 2019). Given these criticisms, we use "value destruction" to avoid confusion about terminology in this paper.

Further, despite these emerging discourses, the value destruction research in the PAM literature still remains sparse. This paper is a contribution to this emergent literature. Specifically, we argue that a significant research gap is the exploration of value destruction for public services in complex environments where there is the potential for public value and private value co-existence and/or conflict. In previous research, the interplay between public and private value creations and its ramifications have been considered, but largely in a piecemeal fashion. Consequently, in this paper, we explore value destruction at the intersection between public and private value and investigate the potential that they can conflict with each other—to actually destroy, rather than create, value. While this research could be conducted under terms of collective and individual benefits, we rely upon the language of "public value" and "private value" in order to contribute to this emergent discourse on "value", above, within PAM. This leads to the research question underpinning this paper: *can the public-private value dichotomy lead to value destruction in public services delivery and what are its contingencies?*

3 | METHODOLOGY

We adopted an interpretivist research approach, viewing knowledge in social science as a result of subjective interpretation and sense-making (Morehouse & Maykut, 2002). This allowed us to enter the practical "field" and engage with respondents to collect rich empirical data (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). The qualitative methodology subsequently adopted enabled us to explore underlying mechanisms behind social "facts" and theorize from practical experiences into abstract frameworks (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

The overall study explored value creation across a number of dimensions. This paper draws together the evidence on the value destruction dimension. A multi-case study method substantively guided our research, which, compared with a single-case design, can provide more comprehensive data and allow cross-case comparison to improve the research reliability and generalizability (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). The case selection was based on theoretical sampling (Eisenhardt, 1989). We purposively chose four "archetype" cases that covered different city-scale carbon reduction fields. The geographic locus was Edinburgh, Scotland. The four cases were as follows:

i.   *Street Lighting project*. In 2018, Edinburgh Council started to replace old streetlights with LEDs. It required significant up-front investment but had the potential to reduce carbon emissions dramatically.

ii. *Active Travel project*. This is a continuing project since 2010, aimed at reducing carbon emissions by encouraging sustainable traveling modes, such as cycling. Specific policies included building cycling lanes and organizing marketing campaigns.

iii. *Community-owned Solar Panel project*. This project was initiated by a community cooperative in 2016, and 24 Council buildings were installed with solar panels to generate clean electricity.

iv. *Carbon Literacy pilot project*. This was a public-funded training project. In 2017, a Council-led partnership delivered accredited "Carbon Literacy" training sessions across Edinburgh to facilitate individual carbon reduction behaviors.

Our empirical research was conducted from July 2017 to December 2018. It collated 38 in-depth semi-structured interviews, 121 files of textual documents, 17 video documents, and 12 non-participative observations. Interview respondents were selected from across the public, private, and social/community sectors and included project directors/co-founders, Council leaders, senior/junior public officials, and project staff. They were asked three open-ended questions, with follow-ups, respectively, concerning the history of the project, the perceived public and private value objectives, and the stories about difficult situations in realizing these value objectives. The interviews lasted between 40 and 120 min, audio recorded and transcribed to text. The documentary data included policies, news reports, project reports, and other archival data. The observations took place in related public events, such as community cycling festivals. These multiple sources of data, together with multiple respondents, allowed the data triangulation, to enhance the research credibility (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Data analysis followed an iterative, open process in two stages: within-case analysis and cross-case analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). During the first stage, all the data transcriptions were coded in two rounds manually (open and axial codings), with the purpose of uniting data segments and thereby building concreate "categories" (Charmaz, 2014). For this paper, two-round coding enabled us to identify a series of *examples* (categories) that examined the processes of value conflicts and destruction. Thereafter, during the second stage, we compared, classified, and synthesized these examples across cases. Four value destruction *scenarios* were thereby concluded, which led to the creation of our theoretical framework eventually.

To sum, we applied several measures to enhance the research trustworthiness, including selecting a typical topic (urban carbon reduction) involving diverse public/private value objectives, adopting a multi-case design, triangulating data sources, and coding the data in stages through authors' collaboration and member check. Despite these efforts, nevertheless, the fact that this research draws on the evidence from only one geographic location and one empirical context is a limitation. Consequently, our findings need to be tested further and generalized in future research.

4 | FINDINGS

4.1 | An overview of the empirical evidence

We identified 14 examples of value destruction across our cases. By reference to Echeverri & Skålén (2021, see also Skålén et al. 2015a), we, respectively, outlined the "process" and "outcome" of these examples in Table 1. The process considers the mutual activities of the key actors with different value expectations, while the outcome refers to the type of public/private value results these actors perceived.

As it shows, the four cases, respectively, exhibited different patterns of public and/or private value destruction. The Street Lighting project was expected to create public value in terms of saving energy and reducing emission. However, the private value was exposed to risk, as the new LED lights were dimmer (example 1), no longer lit private areas (example 2), and their construction hampered the maintenance of existing streetlights (example 3). Active Travel project

TABLE 1 Overview of value destruction examples in cases

No.	Example	Process description	Outcome description
Street Lighting project – sacrifice of private value to create public value			
1	"Concern about dark areas."	The brightness of LED streetlights is criticized. Residents worry about community safety.	In all these examples, an element of private value had to be sacrificed in order to generate public value.
2	"Should the Council light private areas?"	LED streetlights can save energy by reducing light spillage. However, some private areas will no longer be lit.	
3	"Council's failure by keeping taxpayers in the dark."	Residents receive poor information about the project's progress. Also, existing streetlights cannot receive proper maintenance during the LED installation.	
Active Travel project – conflict between public value and private value creation			
4	"They do not see cycling spending as a vote-winner."	Local politicians do not support the project for fear of alienating key voters.	Public and private value creations were felt to be in direct conflict.
5	"Whether they could encourage more cycling?"	Delivering cycling campaigns can be "fun"; but did not change residents' traveling behaviors.	Private value was created through experiences, but no public value was derived.
6	"Feeling obligated"	Compulsory cycling campaigns made residents feel pressurized and engendered resentment.	The mandatory element of the scheme undermined both private and public value creations.
7	"The debate on tramline extension"	The conflictual debate across the city on a tramline extension project impeded its implementation.	Disagreement among the key actors jeopardized this public–private partnership and threatened both public and private value creation.
8	"Say no to cycle route in Roseburn"	Residents protested the building of cycling lanes nearby. They believed that these would destroy local businesses.	Public and private value creations in direct conflict.
Solar PV project – lack of agreement about the balance between public value and private value creations			
9	"We can do it by ourselves!"	Some local policymakers and public officers believed the Council should independently run this project rather than collaborating with other third parties.	While collaboration was seen as essential to public value creation, the Council preferred to focus on its own (private) value creation.
10	"Collaborating with us, you win."	The community group preferred to work independently.	The perspective that public and private value can be created synergistically was not accepted by all.
11	"Cautions in allocating public funds"	Project organizers believed they should be cautious when managing Community Benefit Funds to ensure it would not serve any individual purposes.	Public value can be in danger when public resources are misused for realizing private value.
Carbon Literacy pilot project – the process of value creation undermines its achievement			
12	"We cannot see the value."	Many private organizations hesitated to join the scheme as they did not want to "waste" their time and money.	Private value could not be identified by participants and this impeded private and public value creations.

(Continues)

TABLE 1 (Continued)

No.	Example	Process description	Outcome description
13	"Disruptive behavior resulting from feeling compelled"	When workplaces organized "collective learning", some trainees felt coerced into participating and behaved disruptively.	Compulsion undermined both private and public value creations.
14	"Carbon Literacy as rhetoric"	Some participants felt to be using the Carbon Literacy rhetoric as a tool of "reputation-washing".	Value creation is seen as a marketing device rather than a substantive endeavor, undermining its achievement.

involved multiple value objectives (reducing emission, mitigating traffic congestion, etc.). However, against these objectives, we found many signs of doubts (example 4), ignorance (example 5), and backlash (examples 6 & 7), especially when the project was perceived of as at the risk of destroying local businesses (example 8). The Solar Panel project encountered difficulties mainly at its initial stage (examples 9 & 10), when actors preferred to work individually rather than collectively. Implicit disagreement was also found on how to manage public funds to secure the maximum of public value (example 11). In the Carbon Literacy project, we observed a reluctance to participate and a resentment to mandated training (examples 12 & 13). Besides, the overall training idea was also felt to be manipulated by "somebody" as a "rhetoric" for their individual purposes (example 14).

Based on the within-case analysis, we examined and compared these examples across cases, with a focus on grouping them according to their similar occurring processes. We first differentiated examples 4, 9, 10, and 12 from the rest: they concerned the value destruction occurring at a project's commencement, when actors refused to participate, while the rest occurred at a project's delivery and use stage. We tagged these examples as Scenario 1.

Furthermore, we found that examples 5, 11, and 14 were analogs. They concerned situations where actors derived private value from their participation but ignored (example 5) or downplayed (examples 11 & 14) relevant public value targets. They constituted Scenario 2. By contrast, examples 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, and 13 exhibited an opposite situation where public value endeavors overwhelmed private value needs. In particular, examples 6 and 13 reflected actors' opposition to being mandated to contribute (scenario 4), while the others were related to dissatisfaction about government-provided public offerings (scenario 3).

These four scenarios are displayed in Table 2. In our subsequent discussion, we explore each scenario in more detail. These scenario analyses are subsequently integrated to develop an integrated conceptual framework of value destruction.

4.2 | A classification of value destruction experiences

4.2.1 | Scenario 1: Actors' unwillingness to participate in projects to create public or private value

Four examples (4, 9, 10, and 12) reflected that not all actors were willing to participate in public service delivery to create public or private value. In example 4 of the Active Travel project, despite the considerable investment, the actual cycling rate has grown slowly and remains far below the initial target. The leading officer of the Council's cycling survey admitted that public attitudes were rooted firmly in pre-existing societal values and were unlikely to be changed swiftly:

> "A lot of people see cars as the king [... They] have a strong feeling that cyclists are aggressive, especially when you give bike lanes to them (AT-180927)".

TABLE 2 The process of examples' categorization

Rational 1	Rational 2	Rational 3	Scenarios
Reluctance to participate			Scenario 1: Actors' unwillingness to participate in projects to create public or private value (examples 4, 9, 10, & 12)
Value destruction in the project's latter stages	Private value overwhelmed public value		Scenario 2: Actors' achievement of private value at the cost of public value (examples 5, 11, & 14)
	Public value overwhelmed private value	Discontent of public service offering	Scenario 3: Actors' dissatisfaction to achieve public value at the cost of private value (example 1, 2, 3, 7 & 8)
		Opposition to mandated participation	Scenario 4: Actors' opposition to mandated participation in projects to create public or private value (examples 6 & 13)

This argument was echoed by the co-founder of a local cycling lobby group. S/he added that the resistance to urban cycling was reflected in some politicians' boycott of the Council's cycling budget:

> "Policymakers only pay lip service…They do not see cycling spending as a vote-winner (AT-180906a)".

Similarly, the Carbon Literacy project encountered a lukewarm response. Several project organizers complained that private firms were generally unwilling to join the project because they "cannot see the value of the training, as least not as the priority (CL-180125a)". One organizer articulated this unwillingness as "not invented here syndrome" that firms generally "avoid doing something that is not fully come along with them (CL-171123)". One manager from NHS Lothian further explained that the time that they could devote was limited, although they had decided to participate:

> "We got our own job to do as well. And we hardly see the links about how the project could benefit us (CL-180322)".

Examples 9 and 10 reflected that some actors rejected the potential for public value creation through collaboration because they preferred to deliver the Solar Panel project by themselves, to enhance their private value creation. Several respondents argued that it may also be "less-risky" for government to work individually rather than collectively in public projects: "when facing something new, there were always some reservations (SP-180518)". This approach was questioned by others, however, who argued that the link here between private and public value creation required a collaborative approach. The manager of Energy4All (a community energy service company), for example, argued that community cooperatives lacked the "necessary knowledge and experiences" and thus needed to collaborate with Energy4All if the project was to be successful (SP-180219). Taken together, these examples evidenced a reluctance of actors to devote time to the projects because they were more focused on their other private value—even where additional public or private value gain could be demonstrated in the project.

4.2.2 | Scenario 2: Actors' achievement of private value at the cost of public value

Example 5 (Active Travel project) and 14 (Carbon Literacy project) both illustrated that service delivery does not always contribute to both public and private value creations. In example 14, a project manager observed that many

trainees regarded this training as an individual skill-building and networking opportunity and were less interested in the social and environmental objectives:

> "I think we had increased attendance [...but] I feel that many people are interested in it because by coming on it, for example, they can get a certificate (CL-171205)."

His argument resonated with an emerging concern that carbon-related accreditation was being misused by elite groups for their "reputation-washing" (documentary data - news reports). Example 5 also demonstrated that citizens valued the enjoyment (private value) that they gleaned from attending events such as the Cycling Festivals in 2018, but that they were less committed to the social objectives of changing peoples' mode of transport and thereby reducing carbon (public value):

> "I think people could have fun [at the Festivals], but I don't know whether they could encourage people to do more walking and cycling (AT-180917)."

Example 11 (Solar Panel project) demonstrated the growing awareness that private value can be created at the cost of public value. Several project organizers argued that they "should be careful in case some applicants [of the Community Benefit Funds, a fund generated by the Solar Panel project to support other community projects] using the money in the wrong way to benefit themselves (SP-180518)".

4.2.3 | Scenario 3: Actors' dissatisfaction to achieve public value at the cost of private value

Examples 1, 2, and 3 (Street Lighting project), and 7 and 8 (Active Travel project) all illustrated citizens' unwillingness to sacrifice private value to create public value. In examples 1 and 2, residents complained that the new LED streetlights were "too dim" (documentary data - Council report) (private value), while Council officers and Councilors complained that many citizens "only comment on what they see and do not think efficiency or carbon reduction (SL-181005)" (public value).

From 2013 to 2015, the Council subsequently received 331 resident's complaints about the new streetlights' brightness (documentary data - Council report). In March 2015, a petition signed by over 400 citizens was delivered. It articulated that:

> "To save a few pounds, the council have neglected the residents of Edinburgh [...] There are numerous safety reasons [...]; it makes people more vulnerable and scared to go out at night (documentary data-a petition)."

Facing these criticisms, the Council eventually relented and installed a brighter LED streetlight, despite the fact that this would cost more energy (video document - Council debate). The project's final report also emphasized that, although "LED lighting can affect some residents' *perceptions* of safety', statistics show that the crime rate has decreased" (documentary data-Council report).

Interestingly, one Council official argued that some citizens were expecting public resources to provide private benefit, with some residents complaining that the new LEDs' focused light made their garden areas darker than before:

> "Council doesn't have any *duties* to light private front gardens, but the old street lights used to do it. The LED technology can directly light the pavement without lighting somewhere else that doesn't *belong to the Council's responsibility* (SL-171027a)."

As another Council official opined, it was a common problem that, "if people get used of something when you change that, people will feel unsatisfied (SL-171027b)".

Examples 7 and 8 (Active Travel project) both revealed how public and private value creations required stakeholder negotiation of differential appreciations of public and private value. Example 7 led to a fierce debate about whether a tramline or existing cycling routes would best serve local communities. Both enhanced public value by reducing carbon emissions (compared to cars), but both privileged the private value of different stakeholder groups (cyclists or public transport users) (AT-181005). Similarly, example 8 exposed the private value conflicts between citizens as cyclists/environmentalists and small business owners. The former believed cycle routes would enhance local communities, while the latter argued that the removal of on-street parking spaces for building new cycle lanes would damage local businesses. The two projects privileged different constellations of public and private value benefits.

4.2.4 | Scenario 4: Actors' opposition to mandated participation in projects to create public or private value

This last scenario was exemplified by examples 6 (Active Travel project) and 13 (Carbon Literacy project). Both embodied citizens' resentment at mandated participation in public service delivery and its implications for value creation. In example 6, a project champion in Sustrans argued that when introducing cycling campaigns into large organizations (e.g., Edinburgh University), they sometimes made these campaigns "compulsory":

> "It is effective in terms of getting enough people, and it is good for the project's visibility [...However], this mandates some individuals must turn up. They sometimes feel obligated and not nominated themselves (AT-180827)."

Similarly, in example 13, when people were mandated to attend Carbon Literacy training by their managers, they felt "quite skeptical" throughout the training (CL-171205) or even behaved "disruptively":

> "It is like the CEO said: everyone has to go! But actually, they were very disruptive in the training because I do not think they actually wanted to be. They were forced to go (CL-180125b)."

In both examples, participation was mandated to enhance coverage. This was successful. However, participants felt that their private value had been diminished by the mandated element—and this made it less likely that they would embrace the public value aspirations of the training. One Council official also argued that it was almost human nature to seek a way around a mandated requirement:

> "It is almost like a tax dodge. It is mandated so organizations can look for ways to fulfill the criteria without actually being in the spirit of what the things about (AT-180927)."

4.3 | Data integration

The four scenarios above were characterized by differing processes of value conflicting, which resulted in divergent patterns of public/private value outcomes. By considering these different outcomes, two significant conceptual evolutions have been derived.

First, our exploration offers a useful typological refinement of value destruction. This is along two vectors: *value failure* and *value decline*. Scenarios 1 and 2, above, are consistent with value failure. Within them, the creation of public and/or private value was ultimately "hampered" or "blocked", on account of actors' non-participation (scenario 1)

or improper participation (scenario 2). By contrast, scenarios 3 and 4 reflected value decline, in which public and/or private value was actually "diminished" and "destroyed", as evidenced by residents' dissatisfaction (scenario 3) and the training participants' resentment (scenario 4). Although both "value failure" and "value decline" are examples of unsuccessful value creation, they are significantly conceptually different: "failure" denotes the "non-performance" in regard to the expected value targets, while "decline" relates to not only the suspension/prevention of "new" value creation but also the decay of "pre-existing" value. More importantly, both have different origins—the overlooking of potential value propositions (failure) and the perception of being sacrificed/mandated (decline)—and thereby require different countermeasures.

Second, our exploration discerns two types of relationship between the public and private value outcomes: the *value no-win* and *value disparity*. Scenarios 1 and 4 are consistent with value no-win. They capture the situation where the creation of *neither* public value *nor* private value was realized. For scenario 1, public and private value ultimately failed, due to citizens' non-participation. For scenario 4, coercive elements led to private value decline (shown as participants' resentment), as well as public value failure (the refusal of behavior change to reduce carbon). By contrast, scenarios 2 and 3 reflect value disparity, in which private value was created to the exclusion of public value (scenario 2), or the public value was created to the detriment of private value (scenario 3).

Bringing these two conceptual developments together, Table 3 creates a heuristic to situate the four scenarios. This heuristic also disentangles the nested concept of value destruction into four parsimonious categories, allowing their dynamics to be understood more clearly.

Quadrant 1 concerns the failure of both public and private value creations. It aligns with scenario 1, where actors refused to participate, as they undervalued certain projects (examples 4 and 12), or undervalued the collaboration and preferred to work independently (examples 9 and 10). We term this category *Value Ignorance*. Our empirical examination demonstrated that value ignorance is deeply rooted in the prevailing social values and stereotypes of the prevailing public service ecosystem (example 4, 9).

Quadrant 2 refers to private value creation at the cost of public value. It is embodied by scenario 2, where public resources were captured by a minority of residents in the pursuit of their private value, rather than enhancing public value gain across the broader community. Given the asymmetry between public and private value, we term this category *Value Disproportion*.

Quadrant 3 represents the reverse situation of quadrant 2, where the public value targets are realized, but lead to private value destruction. It is embodied by scenario 3, where residents complained or protested the delivery of certain public projects as their existing private value was (perceived to be) thereupon sacrificed. It is articulated as *Value Exploitation*. Our empirical evidence also evinces the incompatibility between different public/private value preferences owned by different citizen groups.

Finally, quadrant 4 aligns to scenario 4, where individual actors were mandated to be involved, which caused rising discontent among actors (example 6) and disruptive behaviors (example 13). Given the mandated-reverse

TABLE 3 A typology of value destruction

	Value Failure	Value Decline
Value No-win	*I. Value Ignorance* Meaning: Value is not/cannot be recognized by actors, resulting in both public and private value creation failure Exemplification: Scenario 1	*IV: Value Backlash* Meaning: Compulsory participation causes the decline of private value and the failure of public value. Exemplification: Scenario 4
Value Disparity	*II: Value Disproportion* Meaning: Public resources are used by the minority for private value creation, with the result of public value failure. Exemplification: Scenario 2	*III: Value Exploitation* Meaning: Public value creation leads to the decline of private value. Exemplification: Scenario 3

elements, we labeled it as *Value Backlash*. Differentiated with "value ignorance", value backlash happens during (rather than before) the service delivery, resulting primarily from compulsory mandate (rather than ignorance), and concretely involves the decline of pre-existing value in respect of, for example, satisfaction and mutual trust. It eventually damages the creation of both public and private value constellations. Our research further suggested that it may stimulate actors to participate in the training in a tokenistic manner, which is also harmful.

Table 3 thus disaggregates value destruction into four discrete enactments. This is an important conceptual development. On the one hand, it will allow both theoretical development and more focused research. On the other hand, it will offer a conceptual framework for practitioners to both map and try to avoid/ameliorate value destruction.

5 | CONTRIBUTION TO THEORY

In contrast to the expanding research on value creation, limited attention has thus far been paid to "value destruction" through public service delivery, as explored in our literature review, above. Consequently, more empirical evidence and conceptual development about the nature and impact of value destruction across public and private value are urgently required. This paper contributes to this gap. It has explored value destruction in the context of city-scale carbon reduction projects, which typically involved multiple and potentially clashing public and private value objectives. We hence asked: *can the public-private value dichotomy lead to value destruction in public services delivery and what are its contingencies?*

In response, we integrate and contribute to the PV and PSL literature, adopting their language of "public value" and "private value" consequently. We acknowledge that an alternate discourse could explore "individual" and "collective" value. However, the "public" and "private" formulations are at the core of the value discourse in this literature, and it is to this discourse that we contribute. They also represent a novel approach to interpret the effectiveness of public services: from the NPM's fixation on the efficiency of PSOs to the external value creation of public services for citizens and society.

Building on our empirical data, we distilled examples that embodied public–private value conflicts. These examples were thereafter categorized into "scenarios" and specified in detail. Finally, by examining the different value outcomes of these scenarios, the research has led to the presentation of a typological framework of value destruction in Table 3 that explored the dynamics between the type of value destruction (value failure - value decline dimension) and the balance between public and private value (value no-win - value disparity dimension). This is an important conceptual development for PAM for four reasons.

First, it discerns two substantially different types of value destruction: value failure and value decline. The former is about the failure to create something new, while the latter refers to the diminishment/reduction of pre-existing public and/or private value. In existing research, "value failure" has been primarily used in its largest sense, denoting opposition to value co-creation (e.g., Skålén et al., 2015b). Our research is the first to explicitly differentiate between these differing conceptualizations of value destruction.

Second, it connects two previously separated research strands, respectively, concerning public and private value. It does this by drawing together and building on insights from the PV and PSL literature. This connection is important. On the one hand, given the multiplicity of public and private value objectives that public services can have (e.g., Alford, 2016; Bryson et al., 2017; Osborne et al., 2021a), value destruction needs to be considered across both domains and not in relation to either in isolation. On the other hand, we found that the intents of creating public and private value may contest and/or conflict with each other, leading to one type of value created at the cost of another, or even a "no-win" situation for both. Exploring the relationship between public and private value in relation to value destruction is thence essential for the evolution of robust and parsimonious theory (Laud et al., 2019).

Third, along these two dimensions, we have elucidated four categories of value destruction - value ignorance, value disproportion, value exploitation, and value backlash. Value ignorance can be seen through the lens of "short-sighted"

behavior (Bozeman, 2002). However, we have proposed other alternative rationales, including the failure to recognize (private) value-creating opportunities, the undervaluation of collaboration, and the negative impact of prior societal values (Alon-Barkat, 2020; Gronow et al., 2020). _Value disproportion_ refers to actors' improper participation. It recalls the wider concept of "customer misbehavior" (e.g., Järvi et al., 2018), especially when customers occupy/misuse public goods/services and limit the distribution to the general public (Bozeman, 2002; Cluley et al., 2020; Peeters et al., 2020). We contribute by suggesting that the severity of customer misbehaviors can vary dramatically from the less-harmful ignorance of public value targets to more damaging "benefit hoarding" (Bozeman, 2002). Here, we concur with Plé & Cáceres (2010), who have nuanced the "accidental" and "intended" misusage of resources. Our empirical examination corroborates in particular "accidental" misusage, a topic that has received comparatively less prior attention in the PAM literature.

By contrast, value exploitation and value backlash, which actually account for the bulk of value destruction, have received only limited attention. A likely reason is that the existing PAM value destruction research has focused only on the provider–user interaction in conventional public service areas (e.g., Čaić et al., 2018; Engen et al., 2021), while this paper considers the multiplicity of value objectives and relationships within a complex public service ecosystem (Osborne et al., 2022). Specifically, value exploitation confirms Esposito and Ricci (2015), in that one type of value may be created at the cost of sacrificing another. Value backlash validates the argument that public services are not always voluntary based, but can include enforced/coerced engagement (e.g., Alford, 2016; Osborne, 2018). Our findings have also clarified that such forced engagement can be imposed not only by the government but also by other stakeholder organizations, and that the mandated actors can behave differently.

Fourth, we have mapped value destruction over loci of public service delivery. Previous research has suggested that value creation in services takes place across three interlinked spheres—the provider sphere (where value propositions are raised by providers, in the form of services promises and offerings/services), joint sphere (where value can be co-created between providers and users in the co-production of a service), and user sphere (where users can create value in their own right, in the context of their needs, expectations, and experiences) (Grönroos & Voima, 2013).

Building on this, we argue that these spheres can also be applied to explain the dynamics between the categories of value destruction. As Figure 1[1] demonstrated, value ignorance occurs in the provider sphere, when citizens rejected the service offering of PSOs. Value disproportion and backlash take place in the joint sphere, when citizens and other stakeholders participate in service delivery and production, but in an improper or coercive way. Value exploitation transpires after the project delivery, when citizens and other stakeholders can perceive their private value to be sacrificed (even if objectively it is not). This perceived value loss may subsequently, over time, generate new value expectations and hence trigger a new round value creation/destruction.

5.1 | Implications for theoretical development

Our paper offers four areas for theoretical development within PAM theory. _First, we have demonstrated that value destruction is not an aberration in public service delivery but an inherent element of it_. Public services are delivered within dynamic public service ecosystems. Further, they address multiple value creation objectives (often for multiple stakeholders), across the public and private value continuum, and at different loci in the service delivery process (Fowler, 2021). Given such complexity, it is unsurprising that destruction is normal rather than divergent. However, existing scholars have argued that value creation and destruction are alternatives during service encounters (e.g., Echeverri & Skålén, 2021; Engen et al., 2021; Järvi et al., 2018). In comparison, we have elucidated that value creation and destruction can occur concurrently with references to different value intents. Our findings, thus, affirm the applicability of previous SMM studies (e.g., Echeverri & Skålén, 2011; Laamanen & Skålén 2015; Plé & Chumpitaz Cáceres, 2010) to a public service context, and which denote value destruction as an inherent element of service
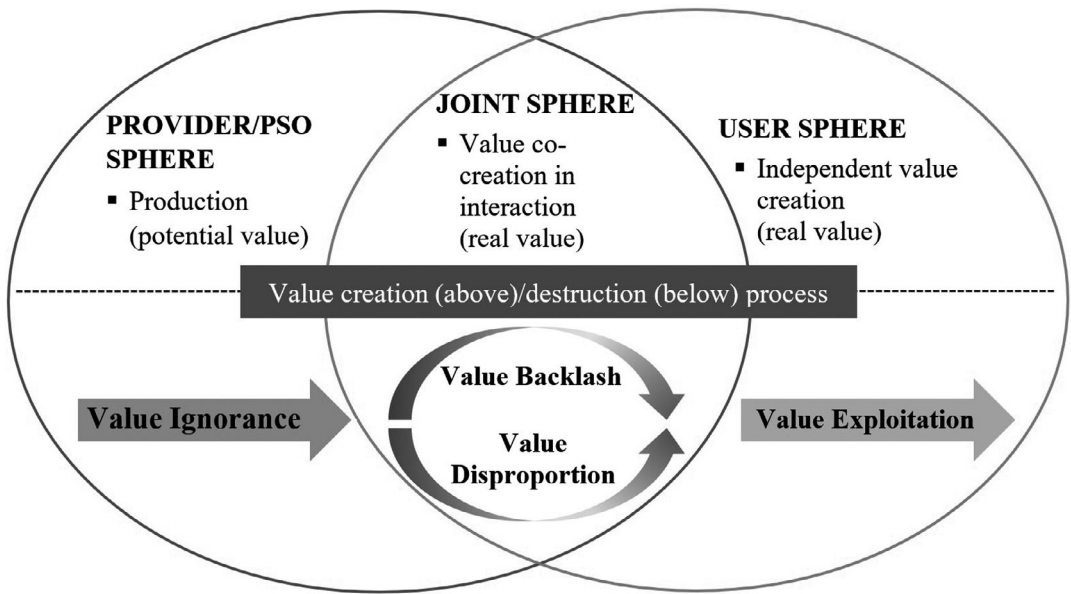
FIGURE 1 Value destruction (evolved from Grönroos & Voima, 2013)

delivery. Over the long term, if value conflicts and destructions can be well governed/negotiated, the overarching public value target (here, the mitigation of climate change) may be realized.

Second, we have adopted the PSL perspective on "value" as heterogeneous (different users create different value), experiential (different users create value based on their own life experiences), and interlinked (different value intents mutually influence) (Osborne et al., 2021b). It allowed us to synthesize a full landscape of the "dark side" of public services. Further work is now needed to explore the interactions between these value elements and their implications for value destruction.

Third, our paper also demonstrated a range of examples of inter-actor conflicts within value destruction. This contributes to the PAM literature and confirms previous research in SMM that has widely discussed the prevalence of actors' misalignment/conflict and its negative value outcomes (e.g., Skålén et al., 2015b). However, differentiated from SMM literature, we have denoted the public–private value dichotomy as the underlying rationale for this.

Fourth, our research emphasizes the dynamic interaction between public and private value formulations. While the PV paradigm implicitly privileges public value over private value (Benington, 2011), our research, by contrast, uses the exploration of value destruction to argue that it is not a simple normative choice. Rather, we have uncovered that diverse public and private value interests interact within complex public service ecosystems. When they conflict, value can be harmed in both the short and/or long term. This research, thus, has import in furthering our understanding both of value destruction within public service ecosystems in particular and of the relationship between public and private value in these ecosystems in general.

6 | CONTRIBUTION TO PRACTICE

This paper has presented a novel conceptualization of value destruction with important implications for theory. However, our approach also has significant implications for practice. We would highlight four contributions in particular. *First, our framework disaggregates value destruction into four modes*. This nuanced approach will provide

practitioners with a clearer understanding of value destruction occurrences that they might encounter and how to attempt to resolve them. Building upon the three strategies (e.g., compliance, interpretation, and orientation) proposed by Skålén et al. (2015b) for addressing value failure, each mode in our framework will require a different response as illustrated in Table 4.

Second, it focuses the attention of practitioners not on privileging either public or private value creation, but on the relationship between them. The question is not whether to seek public or private value creation in isolation (De Graaf et al., 2016). Instead, it is what the balance should be between public and private value creations for a public service—and what trade-offs may be necessary to achieve this balance.

Third, our framework emphasizes that value destruction can be part of a longer process of value creation. The implication for practitioners is hence not to see destruction as a full stop in service, but rather as an opportunity for learning and service development. Value destruction in the short term may actually lead to value creation in the longer term.

Fourth, our framework also offers a challenge to policymakers to understand public policy making and enactment as an essential element both of the public service ecosystem and of value creation both for society and for its members. Unless considerations of public and private value creations are embedded within public policy, value destruction will almost certainly occur in the production sphere of public services. Our framework offers an important warning to policymakers of the unintended, and often serious consequences, of public policy that focuses upon the forms of service delivery alone rather than the value that they are intended to create.

7 | CODA: RESEARCH LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

We would identify four significant limitations and directions for future research. First, this exploratory study is not without its limitations, including its distinct geographic locus. Further research is required to test this framework in other loci and comparatively. Second, this study has focused on examining value destruction within a temporally limited period. As we suggested, over time this may change. For example, the growing complaints about LED streetlights may be gradually mediated along with the evolution of relevant social attitudes. The long-term dynamics of value-related processes over time is a promising area for future research, which requires longitudinal investigation.

Third, this study has discussed value destruction within the scope of specific carbon reduction public projects. Further exploration across other public service foci and ecosystems is required. This might explore how varying public projects can influence each other, resulting in different types of value creation/destruction, and fouth, most importantly, how public service value destruction can be addressed. This paper is hence the start of a conversation and dialog, not its conclusion.

TABLE 4 Illustrative responses to different modes of value destruction

Mode of value destruction	Illustrative response
Value ignorance	Orientation strategy: Public and community education and/or social marketing
Value disproportion	Compliance strategy: Clarify the purpose of a project, reaffirm the need to comply with established rules when needed.
Value exploitation	Interpretation strategy: Open dialog and enhanced interpretation to nurture mutual understanding and shift the public debate from a choice between public and private value to the balance between them.
Value backlash	Balance and protection strategy: Minimize mandatory elements of programs wherever possible. Where unavoidable, expect resistance behaviors and plan to resolve them.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

ETHICS APPROVAL STATEMENT

Ethics approval was obtained - This study was approved by the University of Edinburgh Business School Research Ethics Committee.

ENDNOTE

[1] Importantly, this figure offers only a simplified illustration about the dynamics across four value destruction categories. In reality, they do not always occur sequentially, but can be iterative and/or contemporaneous.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available on reasonable request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

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