First, we take Manhattan – creating public value by changing the system from within?

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Abstract

Through associations evoked by the lyrics from Leonard Cohens song *First we take Manhattan*, the paper explores what public values are created in a co-creation processes between actors within a public organization and a coordinating researcher representing a university. Data for the paper comes from a project for researching collaborative innovation in a municipality as well as experiences made by the author in three interlinked roles as researcher, project manager and finally as process manager for sustainable development projects involving the university and public partners.

Four types of public values have been identified through the associative structuring approach. They are relational values, knowledge values, change values, and symbolic public values. The tension between these co-created public values reveal that existing organizational hierarchical power structures are ever present. Public values that correspond to dominating official agendas of the collaborating organizations are quite noticeable in the empirical account. Proof of the success of a formal collaboration between the university and its partners, are valued and asked for. Coordination thus favours constructions of implicit symbolic public values, where mediated symbols of the structures, processes and results appear as preferred outcomes.

The study thus mainly reveals public values associated with what is good for the people, but not so much what is valued by the people. Complementary practical contributions that more directly could be valued by the people, when and where researchers and public professionals build relations and knowledge in order to enhance the public organizations ability to deliver public value, are given less attention.

As a complementary contribution to method, the article introduces and discuss the pros and cons of associative structuring, that has been used in order to evoke an autoethnographic account of the researcher’s experiences of the collaboration.

Keywords: coordinators of public value; strategic triangle; metaphors; associative structuring, autoethnography
Introduction

Public value co-creation can be sought for and achieved in between many different actors in the public domain. One is between public organizations and universities, where research not only is done for advances in a particular field and for academic merit but also for the creation of knowledge with a more direct use that will enhance the public organizations ability to deliver public value. Most vital in these processes are coordinators of public value (Hoppe, 2017b), that have the ability to balance different interests in the strategic triangle (Moore, 1995, 2013), and by securing legitimacy and support, build operational capacity for the creation of public value.

Figure 1: Coordinators of Public Values (adaption based on Moore, 1995, Hoppe, 2017b)

Coordinating in this setting is though not an easy task, where the balancing act has to handle not only different interests between different organizations but also different interests upheld within each partner organization. These tensions also question the idea of mutual and easily defined values that all partners have agreed upon. The situation is
complex with no predefined nor correct perspective for analysing the value creation process.

Acknowledging this complex situation, an associative approach has been chosen for this paper, where associations evoked by the lyrics from Leonard Cohens song *First we take Manhattan*, give structure to the empirical description. Through this approach, the paper discusses organizational tensions in co-creation with the aim of answering the question: **what public values are created in a co-creation processes between actors within a public organization and a coordinating researcher representing a university?**

**Method, material and outline**

Material for the paper come from a project for researching collaborative innovation in a municipality as well as experiences made by the author in three interlinked roles as researcher, project manager and finally as process manager for projects involving the university and public partners; the latter position with a direct and formal role of coordinating projects and activities that will support a development towards social sustainability amongst involved partners (Hallin, Hoppe, Guziana, Mörndal, & Åberg, 2017; Hoppe, 2017a, b; Hoppe, Hallin, Guziana, & Mörndal, 2018).

The approach follows a pragmatic participative action research orientation, here described by Johansson and Lindhult (2008: 100).

We associate the pragmatic orientation with a focus on praxis and practical knowledge development, cooperation between all concerned parties, and the need for finding and constructing a common ground between them as a platform for action.

The material that grounds the associations of the paper includes transcribed interviews
Introducing associative structuring

The empirical narrative follows the lyrics of *First we take Manhattan* by Leonard Cohen, where each verse has been used to trigger associations from the study and other experiences, thereby allowing different aspects and perspectives to evolve into a linear text but without the detrimental influence from trying to fit a specific perspective or follow a specific scientific tradition. The associations and thus the construction became linear by following the linearity of the lyrics, which also made it possible to relate to earlier associations at the end of the reflective construct. In the process of later editing, a few amendments and changes were done in the empirical account for increased clarity where I understood myself, but without doing any major alterations. Instead, I claim that there is a value in letting the text be a bit rough and thus also appear as the authentic autoethnographic account it is (Boyle & Parry, 2007). As this approach to constructing an empirical account, at least to me is new, the paper also encompasses a possible contribution to method through the description and discussion of *associative structuring*, as I have chosen to call this approach.
Choice of lyrics

The choice of Leonard Cohens lyrics, arose from the collaborative research approach where I as a researcher got involved with people and processes in a partner organization. By doing this, I realized that the action sought actually meant that I engaged myself in order to change the system from within. This insight coincides with some of the phrasing of the first two lines in Cohens lyrics, that reads as follows:

They sentenced me to twenty years of boredom
For trying to change the system from within

Just these few words, made me reflect upon my data and experiences in a way that I found interesting (Weick, 1989), where questions about for example “being sentenced”, “twenty years” and “boredom” all inspired reflection upon the subject matter. It was an intuitive choice (no other lyrics were considered), where the decision to write this paper is the elongation of that thought and choice where I use this paper for developing and testing this approach.

Even though the lyrics were used as structure for provoking reflections through associations, the associations were at the same time guided by the theme of the paper – public values. I deliberately let my associations touch upon values under each verse with the goal of inductively identifying public values that came into play in the empirical milieu I experienced. By doing this, public values became part of the empirical account and made it possible to reconnect to existing theories of public values and value co-creation.

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1 Considering the lyrics, we might reflect how upon how the beauty of a theory works as a scientific weapon for guiding us towards a preferred perspective upon a phenomenon.
Using associative structuring

The associative structuring approach turns the analytical process around. Instead of letting coding inductively lead to patterns and subsequent themes that I would construct in order to make sense of the material, I used words and associations as themes for approaching the material in a novel way. Each verse, but also specific words, came to function as constructs which I used as means for building reflections, ideas and thoughts.

My development and choice of this approach has been inspired by a discussion on the deficits of how we usually construct theory (Corley & Gioia, 2011; Mintzberg, 2005; Van de Ven & Johnson, 2006) and ideas of what we at the same time find interesting (Davis, 1971; Weick, 1989, 1995). Building on these insights, one can argue that the value of academic texts lies in their ability to provoke critical reflections on the current collective understanding of a subject matter (Hoppe, 2017c). Associative structuring has a similar function in the previous step – the process of constructing an academic text - where the borrowed lyrics provoke reflections, whereof some can be described as more critical and hopefully also novel in line with an explorative approach.

Value co-creation in the public sector

Value co-creation can be sought for and achieved in between many different actors in the public domain. Among these are citizens, that are “quite capable of engaging in deliberative problem solving”, as Bryson, Crosby, and Bloomberg (2014: 446) puts it. In their view citizens now “move beyond their roles as voters, clients, constituents, customers, or poll responders to becoming problem solvers, co-creators, and governors actively engaged in producing what is valued by the public and good for the public”.
Citizens can consequently be seen as resources in the creation of public values, where different actors (not only public) can take on a role to unleash citizen potentials in order to create growth for both the individual and society. How this is to be achieved more practically, is less clear, where current theories do not give much guidance (Bryson et al., 2014). But, citizens are not the only actors that are capable of engaging in deliberative problem solving; researchers are too. Just as we redefine the boundary between citizens and public value creation, so can we redefine the boundary between researchers and public value creation, where those committed to participative approaches like action research has a long tradition of advocating (Coghlan, 2011; Dewey, 1897). Boundaries are, beyond juridical definitions, just figments of our imagination, where new ways of organizing successively free us from perceptions that bind us (Hoppe et al., 2018).

The demarcation of the public organization and what can be viewed as public value(s), is an item for discussion. Public Management Review (2017) focus on this in a special issue with e.g. different adaptions of “the strategic triangle of public value management” by Moore (1995, 2013). The strategic triangle revolves (as seen in Figure 1 above) around the relationship between a) Legitimacy and Support, b) Operational capacity and c) Public value, where the triangle challenges the idea of customer satisfaction as the bottom line for public organizations. Instead, it opens up for other types of organizational missions, quite different from private companies.

Maybe the most interesting part with the strategic triangle is that it (although designed for public managers) does not dictate that a public organization needs to be at the centre of the creation of public value. Instead, any actor can be involved as well as take lead in the creation, which of course also opens up for different kinds of networked
based approaches (Bryson, Sancino, Benington, & Sørensen, 2017), where any actor can take the role as *coordinators of public values* (Hoppe, 2017b).

At the same time, there is a need to shift perspective from public value to public values (note the plural), which is more suitable in a complex word but at the same time makes the concept less distinct. For now, we might satisfy ourselves with the definition by Bryson et al. (2014) where *public value* encompasses that which is valued by the public or is good for the public. But, then again, one might ask what is the public? Is it just the citizens or also any aggregation of citizens and actors in the public domain?

To follow this line of reasoning, we can identify an arena for public value creation in the relationship between public organizations and universities, where research not only is done for advances in a particular field and for academic merit but also for the creation of for example knowledge with a more direct use that will enhance the public organizations ability to deliver public value.

As different actors have different tasks they also have different perceptions of what public value is, and accordingly what is valued by the people and good for the people. Coordinators of public value must in these situations balance different interests in the strategic triangle (Moore, 1995, 2013), and by securing legitimacy and support, build operational capacity for the creation of different sorts of public values.

Coordination in general, but also in this specific case, is thus not an easy task, where the balancing act has to handle not only different interests between different organizations but also different interests upheld within each partner organization. These tensions also question the idea of mutual and easily defined values that all partners have agreed upon, where the empirical account that follows let us explore different kinds of public values that need to be handled in the relationship by a researcher functioning as a
coordinator of public values; active in between a research institution and a public organization.

**Exploring public values through structured associations**

In the following section I structure my reflective associations on the topic of this paper through the lyrics *First we take Manhattan*. Each section starts with a verse and is followed by the associations the lyric provoked at the time the text was constructed in February 2018.

**I'm coming now**

They sentenced me to twenty years of boredom  
For trying to change the system from within  
I'm coming now, I'm coming to reward them  
First we take Manhattan, then we take Berlin

It takes time to successively get engaged in a complex organization like a public municipality. There are several layers and parts that are interconnected, and in order to have some influence means that you need to develop many relations simultaneously or sequentially, as I came to do. I followed relations that my entry point supplied me with and worked from there. This took time and effort, where I at the same time belonged to another organization that gave me on one hand gave me the legitimacy for reaching out, but also supplied me with tasks to do in order to satisfy my employers demands.

Speaking with members of the municipality, I realized that I had knowledge and ideas to offer; some kind of rewards that potentially were good for them and thus valuable to the public organization, assessable through engagement with me. But as we did not share the same organizational language, goals and contexts, these rewards were not automatically viewed as something positive by them. Instead, the potential rewards
questioned their normality, where my share presence also disturbed their normality, diffusing ideas of organizational boarders and missions. Even if this was intended from my part, it was not a clear intention for those I came in contact with. They had not intentionally chosen to meet me. Hence, fitting in became important to me, but not for them. This was their home, their system. It meant change in me where I had to emphasize some of my personal traits and oppress others. It was a challenging process, where the value in this process could be labelled as relational, but with few if any explicit effects on public values visible in the municipalities processes and services. It was potentially valuable for both them and the people they served, but with no guarantees.

Sometimes it was just about being present, go to meetings; face time. First in one place, and then in another. To specify a specific start somewhere, is on the other hand quite easy as it is visible in my calendar. It was September 22, 2015, I first met with two representatives from the municipality in order to discuss a joint project. That was the first “now” when I came. After that, there has been several “nows” as I from time to time have met new representatives through the development of the study. I’m coming now is thus not so much something that has to be achieved and left behind, as a continuous process of gaining access to a complex organization. There are always new places and new persons to visit, where each “coming now” is an opening for something new to explore and new relational values to build. At the same time, existing relations grow over time, and with that the relational value with investments from at least two parties. There is thus a quality dimension in the relational value.

But where is the end? Is there “I’m leaving now” also? As I write this, some of my relations still develop, others have diffused into nothing. I have also come to meet new organizational members, both in planned meetings and by chance. Even though the
study formally ended December 31, 2017, I have arranged a new meeting (March 20, 2018) with two project managers in the municipality and two of my own research colleagues in order to discuss new ideas on how digitalization of society affect social sustainability and the work of the project managers. Through my successively embedded position, I have been able to help build new relational values for others.

So, was this three year-plus-project boring? No, not to me as I constantly learned more about the organization I was studying and the relationships within it. The boredom could instead be viewed metaphorically as the latency in whatever public values there were to be produced. The created public values were, and still are, not immediately visible. For those expecting something else, the time lag will of course be boring.

One can also view the implicit and the explicit as two interlinked values. The collaboration between a university researcher and employees of a municipality is first and foremost about sharing and building knowledge. Any change in the structures, processes and services at the municipality, as any change in theoretical knowledge within an academic field, would be a possible outcome but is again not guaranteed.

From what is covered so far, this give us a value creation process in three steps, moving from implicit to explicit: relational value, knowledge value, and potential change value. At this abstract level, as I reckon, the values are the same for both organizations concerned.

*The beauty of our weapons*

I'm guided by a signal in the heavens
I'm guided by this birthmark on my skin
I'm guided by the beauty of our weapons
First we take Manhattan, then we take Berlin

The starting point of the study can be traced back about ten years to a strategic
discussion involving high ranking representatives of the university and the dominating public organizations in our region, but also politicians. With goals of supporting each other and the intention of developing the region, an agreement was reached in 2009 called *The Social Contract*. Since then, funds of 1-2 million euro are annually set aside for different projects of mutual interest.

In several ways, it is a positive agreement for me as a researcher, constructed in the highest hierarchical levels of the university. It provides me with funds to carry out research that I find interesting but also access to interesting milieus to explore. On the more negative side, it also guides, not to say frames, what kind of research questions I can pursue. As a researcher I have also become responsible for building and upholding old and new relationships with other organizations. The free researcher, that I might have been in another context, is partly exchanged for a host organization representative.

To pick up the thread from the previous section, at strategic level, representatives at both sides have already invested and created relational value that I (as responsible for a small part of the funded research) indirectly need to adhere to and acknowledge in my own relationships. That said, my experience is though mostly positive as I also have been helped in gaining access to the social contracts participating public organizations. In a way, the agreement has had the effect that organizational boarders have become less rigid.

Building on this, I realize that relational values between the university and public organizations also has complementary *symbolic public values*. Official proclamations, structures and processes, along with a specific mutual organization for administrating the funds and the research, supply all parties with symbols that makes the contract and the relationships visible, real in a way and appear as valuable. They also function as proofs that participating organizations are carrying out tasks in line with
their public responsibilities and what can be argued is good for the public. Metaphorically, these symbols function as weapons in the public domain for securing legitimacy for participating organizations.

This need for upholding legitimacy also have interesting effect on the research carried out. When the symbols of joint research become more important than the content of the research, as a researcher I am quite free to do whatever I please as long as I, on one hand, contribute to the symbols by producing reports, communiques, press releases, seminars, conferences, meeting etcetera, and, on the other hand, do not rock the boat too much. In a way, the value lies in the beauty of the symbols, where I am in the business of creating weapons for those that have had the privilege to frame the project. In this respect, I am not free as a researcher, where participation is a trade-off between what I find interesting to research and the framing context. Then, one can also question if any researcher ever is free from his or her framing context. Just following a certain scientific tradition in order to get articles accepted by reviewers and hopefully published, is just as much a framing context or birthmarks on our skins.

That line there moving through the station

I'd really like to live beside you, baby
I love your body and your spirit and your clothes
But you see that line there moving through the station?
I told you, I told you, told you, I was one of those

In an organization you are caught in structures already in place. These structures are intertwined where any change challenge the existing normality, including what kind of values are pursued and how values are created. In order to move resources from something that has proven to deliver some kind of public value to something that not yet has proven to do so, you need good arguments and support from advocates at different
levels. Those you convince to get engaged do this despite their job descriptions, their normality. Moving away from their normality creates tension, and consequently will possibly make it harder for others to do their normal work too. As social beings, upholding a sense of belonging is important, no matter what organizations you formally belong to. Arriving at the station, I disrupted the line already there and their movement through the station.

What I found was that my presence in discussions and other social meetings, quite often resulted in remarks of something interesting, but it ended there. The knowledge and ideas I supplied provoked novel knowledge constructions and ideas among those I met, and vice versa. It was stimulating and we could at both sides see the value in these discussions, and the beauty in what was uttered by others. I also loved the engagement and the words many of the civil servants used to clothed their descriptions of their work, how they in many respects bent rules and structures in order to do their job as good as possible. But in their descriptions, this was a personal endeavour. They broke free as individuals and not as a joint visible movement, thus not rocking the boat in their turn. “Organization as normal”, was important (Hoppe, 2017b). They had a self-interest to claim that they did their job the way it was supposed to do, which at the same time proved that existing structures and processes were functioning and delivering the public values sought for. In this respect they were in the business of creating implicit symbols of public values along more tangible values in their relationship with their clients and others. The line was upheld as a joint idea and idealized picture, although individuals in their actions strayed away from it. Employees of the municipal organization were both part of the normality as well as not. Formally it still looked good, but that was because people did what needed to be done informally. The line both existed and did not.
To this, I was a bystander, admiring individual descriptions. Still, I would never become part of that particular line at that particular station nor did I have the history to say that I was one of those. Instead, I stayed in another line, formally upholding ideas of how research was supposed to be done and what values it should create. Informally though, I acted with the hope of creating something of more substantial value to the organization I studied as well as the organization I represented, the research community and last but not least, to myself. My train would leave from another station. I was one of those.

*Let my work begin*

Ah you loved me as a loser, but now you're worried that I just might win
You know the way to stop me, but you don't have the discipline
How many nights I prayed for this, to let my work begin
First we take Manhattan, then we take Berlin

Symbols for action are easier to implement than action itself. In the municipality there were good policy support for changes and actions in order to make the municipality better and develop towards social sustainability. What I experienced though was that work related to social sustainability was treated as something different in relation to the normal way of doing things, instead of a dimension that coexist in all work, whether we want it or not. Designated work for social sustainability in the municipality began in 2016, but then as a project detached from the normal organization. In another paper I described the project as a satellite orbiting earth – the rest of the organization (Hoppe, 2017a). In a way, work began for creating an organization for social sustainability, but on the other hand, it did not. The rest of the organization, that is almost everybody else in the municipality, was more or less unaffected. Personnel had been drawn from their normal working positions in order to work with the project, but they still upheld their
normal working positions and were expected to carry out their work as normal. In a way, the projected was disciplined through the normality of the rest of the organization that it had to work with, and by that it was also bound to the same normality that it was supposed to challenge. To the host organization the project should develop something new, but at the same time function as a normal project and follow existing logics, structures and processes. It was thus not really stopped but hindered to reach other potentials by the discipline of the host organization.

Likewise, we can notice that the host organization did not have the discipline to give the project the support and leverage needed in order to win; that is to break free of more suppressive organizational structures. Winning would also mean that the host organization should start to change immediately through the project, dismantling existing structures, disrupting any power relation present. Normality would be challenged. The project was thus optimized for producing knowledge values and through its instigation and existence communicate symbolic values of an organization working for social sustainability. It was not optimized for creating change values, even though this was a specified goal. Indirectly, it also framed my chances of succeeding in creating explicit change in the studied organization. As explicit change in structures and processes was limited, so were my chances of enhancing explicit change values.

The implicit public values in the symbols of participation and change as well as in the knowledge created, can from this account be viewed as easier to accept and arrange for, than more explicit values that would be possible to meet through actually letting those engaged in the project take lead into new organizational forms, structures and processes.
I don't like your fashion

I don't like your fashion business mister
And I don't like these drugs that keep you thin
I don't like what happened to my sister
First we take Manhattan, then we take Berlin

Of course, there were a lot of things that did not work that well inside the host organization, the project as well as the study, together with things different stakeholders did not like. It was not a big issue though. Frustration is part of any public work I guess, when one cannot expect to be getting perfect working conditions, and one might ask whatever is perfect? When it comes to me, I felt frustration when I could not name any more explicit results.

Naming one episode, I got very frustrated with dealing with a public servant working with innovation in the municipality. He was quite satisfied with having an explicitly named processes in place for this which claimed to support innovation through a model of specified steps from ideas to implementation. But, having the formal process in place seemed to be enough for him, where the produce and effects were of less importance. That meant that other types of innovations, stemming from other types of initiatives in the organization, possibly from the project I studied, could not count on any real attention and support from this person nor the existing formal process. Again, the symbolic value of having a named and described process was given priority over other type of public values possible to achieve through the organization. The two of us met once, and that was it. No lasting relational value was created, and I turned my attention elsewhere.

I guess he did not like my fashion, as my way of understanding innovation, as much as I did not like his fashion. What irritated me the most was what this did to my sister – the project I studied but also sympathized with. No relational value was created
between us, but maybe this was good? Maybe the lack of relations also is a public value in certain circumstances?

What we could agree on, I guess, were that cutbacks presented in 2016, were troublesome for a project that was launched simultaneously for developing the organizations capability of delivering values connected with social sustainability. It meant that there were no room for expanding the organization, instead it had to stay fit or, favourably, become slimmer, at least thinner. Even though the project was not designed to cut costs, the presented cutbacks gave it a complementary goal – any change coming from the project had to save money at the same time. I, along with all those I met, did not like this. New values were supposed to develop, but without any investments in new processes.

*The monkey and the plywood violin*

I'd really like to live beside you, baby  
And I thank you for those items that you sent me  
The monkey and the plywood violin  
I practiced every night, now I'm ready  
First we take Manhattan, then we take Berlin

In a previous paper about this project (Hoppe, 2017b), referring to Crosby, ‘t Hart, and Torfing (2017), I described my role as a researcher in the public orchestration for innovation collaboration as a *catalyst* disturbing existing organization by provoking change. By this description, a researcher has an indirect influence on change processes by functioning as a catalyst. In this paper, the researcher’s role become more direct as the perspective change towards public value creation and a researcher’s who takes the role as coordinator. But what is coming out of this coordinating process?
Metaphorically, it depends on what kind of organ the monkey is grinding and what tools (violins) one has to work with. In respect of what has been covered above, when it comes to relational public values and knowledge values, researchers could very well work as coordinators of public values. Researchers both have and produce legitimacy as they muster operational capacity for creating different actions and artefacts. More critical, the research monkey also come in very handy for creating symbolic values (plywood violins) in the form of artefacts arising from the research process. Research, for research sake, give at least potential legitimacy to those participating, at least when one part is a university. Legitimacy and support works, in these collaborative processes, both as tools and produce. It could very well be the music score for the organ. The researcher could function as a catalyst for developing these particular values in the collaboration but also coordinate these processes.

These associations also raises questions about the strategic triangle (Moore, 2013) and how it works. If we accept that plywood violins (symbolic values) are okay for the monkey to grind as something good for the people, legitimacy is present as guarantying the produce as well as the produce itself, where the operational capacity for supporting this is created by me in my ape-like roles as both researcher, catalyst and coordinator of these values.

**Remember me**

Ah remember me, I used to live for music  
Remember me, I brought your groceries in  
Well it's Father's Day and everybody's wounded  
First we take Manhattan, then we take Berlin

The study is over, but remnants of the time are still present, visible in e-mails sent as well as coming meetings, where groceries from the past are recalled for todays and
future use. My presence is thus remembered in the remnants of man, and with that
ideas, perspectives and language that arose from another context than the municipality.
Echoes of my coordination and catalyse, reach me on and off. If I had control and more
direct influence of the music in any way before, it is now lost for a more indirect
influence. Memories and songs change and take a life of their own, depending on what
is being discussed and what and how new catalysts disturb the present order.

In a way, I leave a scar as a memory in the organization, as people have done
before me. Over time, the wounds of different encounters add up and build the
knowledge present practice is formed by. Everybody is wounded, but maybe more
important, they were already wounded in a most personal way at our first encounter.
Everyone was and are still fighting his or her own battles, where Father’s day uphold
both positive and negative memories that shape us as well as our organizations.

It strikes me know, as I write this, that I approached organizational members as
functions, that is as quite equal, almost without personal histories and memories. I
expected them to be representatives of the organization I was to research. Gaining
access was in the light of this both about being allowed to approach people as initiating
a common exploration of the present, along with a more hidden exploration of each
person’s personal memories of what the organization was, is, could and should be.

These are all aspects of the relational value, possible to build and build upon in
the research process, that very well could be enhanced by addressing it more directly.
Complementary to exploring the organization as a social institution, it would be
valuable to explore and develop the social in any research interaction. The better the
relationship the greater the chance to leave lasting memories … or wounds.

**First we take Manhattan, then we take Berlin**

In several roles in between the university and public organizations, I came in some
respects to work as a coordinator of public value. The empirical account above give insights into what kind of public values were induced through my work and the processes I became part of. Summarising these, there were relational values, knowledge values, change values and symbolic public values. I also started to structure them in different ways, for example from the implicit to the explicit, but also started to explore different aspects of each value and how they related. I experienced a qualitative dimension in the relational value, but also a possible public value in the lack of relations. There is most likely much more to do about this, but at this time I have not yet decided how to approach this. Instead, with the previous sections as a base, I would like to turn to the question: did we take Manhattan? Did the public organizations public value creation change in any way?

Referring to the values identified through this paper, there were changes in relations, knowledge and symbols. That is to say, change was apparent in vaguer dimensions of the public organization. So far, and to my knowledge, there are no major changes in organizational forms, structures or processes where one could claim that any of the participating organizations have become better at delivering services and produce that are valued by the people - their main principal. Even though the coordination of public value has had this aim, it was constructed as part of an official relationship between the university and four major public organizations in the region. Bearing this in mind, it might not come as a surprise that the values created has mostly strengthen these relationships as well as produced knowledge values that are part of the organizations missions (not least for the University). In this way, the project has strengthened and added new symbolic values, that all participating parts need in order to uphold legitimacy in the public domain as well as support faith in the social contract. Taking Manhattan was thus not so hard through the project, considering that it was already
taken when the research project started, but by others and with other agendas where more implicit values were, and still are, of utmost importance.

Turning to more explicit changes, which we may view as Berlin, we might not only say that we in some aspects have taken Manhattan; we might even say that one most likely have to arrive in Manhattan and take Manhattan first before one can take Berlin. In order to influence an organisation more profoundly through research, you must first penetrate its boarders and arrive somewhere where you can build a bridgehead of relationships before you can advance any further.

Furthermore, the results reveal that existing hierarchical power structures are ever present, where values that correspond to dominating official agendas are given verbal priority in order to build clusters of constructed proof for the success of the co-creation. High ranking public officials invest their prestige in the co-creation and will expectedly favour actions and results that are aligned with their agendas. It is thus reasonably expected that they are interested in the creation of symbolic public values when they strengthen both their positions and the part of the organization they are responsible for. More practical values for the good of the people, when and where public professionals meet the public, are at the same time expected to be given less attention. It can be speculated that this might explain why more fundamental change in structures and processes of the public organization, in order to increase the organizations ability to deliver more explicit public values, are rare. If high ranking officials are satisfied with symbols of change that can be described as good for the public, why would they risk venturing into more profound changes?

Stating this, a complementary question arises if and then how a coordinator of public value, such as a process manager, can counteract the detrimental effects of current power structures on change and value creation, and by changing the system
from within, create other types of public values? My reflections do not support this, but it should be quite possible to research through other complementary studies.

**The pros and cons of associative structuring**

This was the first time I engaged in associative structuring, where my experiences and use of it were quite free of any preunderstanding. It became, as I intended, an explorative journey where I did not know what to expect or how to go about. In this respect it was successful; I had to construct something that was new to me, as well as something I found interesting to do. Even though I had chosen the lyrics, I had not decided what I should write. Still, I could not stop spontaneous reflections on the subject while thinking of how to structure the paper. The lyrics were consciously present from the very first time I started to think about this possibility until I actually put down in words the associations I made for this paper.

In retrospect, as I have written my associations, I notice that I followed the linear structure of the lyrics from the first verse to the last, where my associations thus built on previous sections. Reading them now, I also note that I successively used the metaphors and associations more freely. The language changed, where the metaphors became more a language of my own, instead of something I needed to explain. It is possible that the central use of metaphors creates scientific ambiguity, but maybe it also invites the reader into forming his or her own interpretations of the text, thus also allowing both practitioners and fellow researchers to use the text more freely. My associative account adds some sort of structure, that might be labelled as “prescience” for further use, not only by me to others (Corley & Gioia, 2011). In the later editing of the associations, I sometimes could not fully understand myself. Instead of taking these parts out, I let them stay in order to allow readers to interpret my words in their own
fashion (business mister) and build their own understanding free of me as an author of an adjusted streamlined text.

When the associative text developed and terms were named, the empirical account become more analytical, using what already has been said in order to structure insights of identified public values but also what could be reflected upon by using these values. Through this development of the text, it has becomes clear that current organizational power structures frame what kind of public values can be created and that there is a tension between the good of the people and the good for those in power in the public organizations but also other stakeholders. In this respect, the associative structural method used, at least do not hinder more critical reflection.

On this note, one might wonder how much the lyrics have influenced the construct. Leonard Cohens text is rich in metaphors with no definite interpretation. As I read it though, it airs a cynic frustration with a malfunctioning societal system. The mentioning of weapons and conflict will quite naturally drive reflections towards this. Therefore, it is not to wonder that my account of my experiences will air something similar. Depending on the tools and metaphors we use for our interpretations, we will come to note different aspects of a phenomena (Morgan, Gregory, & Roach, 1997). It would thus be interesting to use other lyrics for provoking different associations that most likely will evoke a different empirical account. When I write these lines, I happen to listen to Summertime from the musical Porgy & Bess by George Gershwin, which starts with “Summertime; And the livin' is easy; Fish are jumpin'; And the cotton is high”. Using this text for associations would most certainly drive a more positive account, where one might wonder what associations of public values would jump like fish and come to mind as the cotton is high?
Hence, it is understandable that the text is biased, not only through the personal account in the text but also in the choice of reflective source that builds the empirical structure. Bearing this in mind, associative structuring becomes an even more interesting tool, as it might be deliberately used to provoke novel reflections where current accounts are quite one-sided. To counteract a noted tendency one can choose an associative text that could help challenge this specific tendency. Providing one knows about this method's limitations, and also reflect on them, there should be more advantages than disadvantages, as long as the process leads to some interesting results that help us to build theory better (Corley & Gioia, 2011; Davis, 1971; Van de Ven & Johnson, 2006; Weick, 1989, 1995).

**Conclusion**

Four types of public values have been identified through the associative structuring approach. They are relational values, knowledge values, change values, and symbolic public values. The tension between these co-created public values reveal that existing organizational hierarchical power structures are ever present. Public values that correspond to dominating official agendas of the collaborating organizations are quite noticeable in the empirical account. Proof of the success of a formal collaboration between the university and its partners, are valued and asked for. Coordination thus favours constructions of implicit symbolic public values, where mediated symbols of the structures, processes and results appear as preferred outcomes.

The study thus mainly reveals public values associated with what is good for the people, but not so much what is valued by the people. Complementary practical contributions that more directly could be valued by the people, when and where researchers and public professionals build relations and knowledge in order to enhance the public organizations ability to deliver public value, are given less attention.
References


