



**Value co-creation in social marketing: Functional or Fanciful?**

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Review

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### Introduction

The move from goods-dominant logic to service-dominant logic, with an accompanying emphasis on the co-creation of value (see Lusch and Vargo, 2006; Vargo and Lusch, 2008a; 2008b; 2008c), is reshaping our understanding of markets and marketing. A central and fundamental concept of service-dominant logic is that value is only created when a product or service is consumed or used (Vargo and Lusch, 2004); as such it challenges directly the last 200 years of goods-dominant 4P thinking underpinning marketing exchange and conceptions of value as embedded in a product or service (Ballantyne and Varey, 2008). Greer and Lei's review of studies from several disciplines including: innovation, strategy, management, marketing and information technology, shows the increasing importance of various forms of collaboration (Greer and Lei, 2012) whereby co-creation of value has become the prevalent approach (Bilgram *et al.* 2011). For marketers and consumer researchers, the term has come to represent the many ways in which consumers and producers might collaborate to create value for mutual benefit (Schau, Muñiz, & Arnould, 2009).

The move to value co-creation is not the only antecedent for the recent interest in more collaborative, participatory ways of working in social marketing (Collins *et al.*, 2012; Bryant, *et al.*, 2007). A rich and instructive heritage is woven through a variety of disciplines in the social and health sciences, such as education (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2005; Freire, 2000), public health (Israel *et al.*, 1998), community development (Fals-Borda and Rahman, 1991), theology (Berryman, 1987) and international development (Chambers, 1997; Hickey and Mohan, 2005). In the UK, policymakers' attention is turning ever more to concepts such as Community Engagement, which assumes public services that involve their users are likely to be of higher quality and more relevant to the communities they serve (SCDC 2010), and Co-production, which posits that "people who use services contribute to the production of services" and is based on the insight that service users bring expertise and assets which can help improve those services (Needham and Carr 2009, p.4). There is also growing interest in what has been termed the Assets Based or

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3 Community Capacities approach (El-Askari *et al.*, 1998; Kretzman and McKnight,  
4 1996; Assets Alliance Scotland, 2010), focusing on a community's resources, skills,  
5 talents and ideas for generating change, rather than on their needs and deficits  
6 (Sharpe *et al.*, 2000).  
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10 So what can be said of value co-creation for the social marketer? How can value be  
11 co-created in social marketing, if at all? Is the concept of value co-creation  
12 compatible with the social marketing principles of being client-led and collectively  
13 orientated? What might a value co-creation model look like in social marketing? And  
14 what are the challenges of adopting value co-creation in social marketing? This  
15 paper sets out to address these questions. Our aim is to contribute to the conceptual  
16 development of the field by highlighting some of the opportunities and dilemmas  
17 associated with using value co-creation to underpin behavioural and social change.  
18 We begin with a review of relevant literature to frame value co-creation in social  
19 marketing, much of which is optimistic about the potential for cross fertilisation.  
20 Next, we present an emerging social marketing value co-creation model, following  
21 which we discuss three substantive challenges in adopting value co-creation  
22 thinking. These challenges are: (1) ideological compatibility, (2) explanatory  
23 completeness, and (3) ethical conformity. We conclude that value co-creation in  
24 social marketing can be functional; it can represent an alternative to the prevalent  
25 goods-dominant, campaign oriented approach. However, we caution that current  
26 conceptualisations may be overly fanciful and advocate further construct  
27 development, especially from a collective and societal stance for 'solo social  
28 marketing flights'.  
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#### 44 **Framing Value Co-creation in Social Marketing**

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46 At first glance, value co-creation seems to be highly compatible with social  
47 marketing, both in theoretical terms and as an approach for designing and  
48 implementing programmes. According to Vargo and Lusch (2008), value co-creation  
49 may be "not only accommodative but potentially foundational" (p.6) to theory  
50 development in social marketing and is likely to have direct relevance to more  
51 general societal issues as well.  
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3 Value co-creation in social marketing is, according to Kotler and Lee (2008, p. 7), “a  
4 process that applies marketing principles and techniques to create, communicate,  
5 and deliver value in order to influence target audience behaviours that benefit  
6 society as well as the target audience”. Thus, participants are engaged in joint  
7 analysis, development of strategy and structured learning to achieve behavioural  
8 change. Participants in co-created projects are assumed to partake deliberately in  
9 exchange instead of being “passive consumers of messages and programs”  
10 (Lefebvre, 2009, p.143). Further, conceptually value co-creation precedes and  
11 permeates every aspect of behavioural exchange (Lefebvre, 2012; Hastings and  
12 Domegan, in press). In simple terms, the social marketer is theorised as co-creating  
13 value in the form of dialogue, interaction, communication and collaboration with the  
14 target audience, in order to enhance the output value of favourable and desirable  
15 behaviours that the public are willing to adopt.  
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18 In addition to the fertile conceptual lens for theory building and testing offered by  
19 value co-creation, the potential benefits accruing from the active participation of the  
20 targeted communities are starting to attract increasing levels of interest from social  
21 marketers and from policymakers and programme designers in other fields. These  
22 benefits include ‘consumer proofing’ of interventions and an assumption of greater  
23 commitment to behavioural change (see Lefebvre, 2012; 2009; Holbrook 1999;  
24 Lacznia, 2006; Jackson 2005 and Hastings and Domegan in press). To this end it has  
25 been argued that third sector programmes “designed and directed by community  
26 members, are far more likely to succeed than those planned and executed  
27 exclusively by outsiders” (Bryant *et al.*, 2000, p.61).  
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30 Value co-creation theory in social marketing rests upon people becoming direct and  
31 active participants in the change process. Hastings and Domegan (in press) break this  
32 down into:  
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34 i) Processes for value co-discovery (uncovering and exploring new types of value).  
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36 Value co-discovery is founded in relationship marketing theory, which posits  
37 dialogue, interaction and mutual learning as core to value co-discovery. As Marques  
38 and Domegan (2011) explain, the intent is to build shared meanings and gain insight  
39 into what the parties can do together and for one another: thus, processes are used  
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3 to give participants an active voice and research is conducted *with* and not *on* the  
4 participants.  
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7 ii) Processes for value co-design (designing valued products and services). Value co-  
8 design takes co-created knowledge from the value co-discovery process and  
9 translates it into jointly designed offerings. As part of the value co-design process,  
10 the social marketer and participant consider the appeal, affordability, availability and  
11 appreciation of the offer, and collaborate on ways to exemplify and enable the  
12 desired behaviour. These service-dominant logic ideas of co-production, co-  
13 packaging, co-promotion and co-pricing recognise the important role of the  
14 participant.  
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17 iii) Processes for value co-delivery (taking i) and ii) to scale in a collectively co-  
18 ordinated strategy). With value co-delivery, the new, shared values between  
19 marketer and participants are brought together in a co-ordinated system [of  
20 delivery. The role of front-line staff is emphasised at this stage. The relevant system  
21 or combination of systems (for example, health, education, food, water, waste,  
22 transportation) has to facilitate, not block or hinder, the manifestation of the new  
23 initiatives for realising value, or they and the new behaviours cannot come into  
24 being. In its simplest form, value co-delivery processes should create value for all  
25 societal stakeholders (Ballantyne and Varey, 2006, Domegan, 2008 and Lusch and  
26 Webster, 2010).  
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### 46 **The Challenges of Adopting Value Co-creation Thinking**

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48 Theoretically, then, value co-creation in social marketing would appear relatively  
49 straightforward, transferring easily as the literature and figure 1 above shows. But  
50 does value co-creation thought have (1) theoretical compatibility (2) explanatory  
51 completeness and (3) ethical conformity with social marketing principles and  
52 practice? To answer this question, we now turn our attention to these three distinct  
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3 issues (see also Hasting and Saren, 2003; Wilkie and Moore, 2003; Diamond and  
4 Oppenheim, 2004; Layton, 2007).

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7 Where relevant throughout the paper, we draw upon two examples of co-created  
8 projects where the authors have grappled with these challenges. Firstly, two linked  
9 projects in north and south Edinburgh in Scotland, seeking to combine social  
10 marketing with community development philosophy and practice (Stead *et al.*,  
11 2013). Each project was located in a low-income area identified for priority funding  
12 to promote healthier lifestyles, particularly in relation to diet and physical activity.  
13 Overseen by a steering group of health and local government practitioners, the two  
14 projects ran for 18 months and were coordinated by two community development  
15 workers, neither of whom had prior expertise in social marketing or public health.  
16 The projects were committed to using social marketing in a manner compatible with  
17 community development principles. This meant, for example, that local community  
18 members were integral to needs assessment, agreeing project objectives and  
19 developing project activities. The second example was commissioned as a 'social  
20 marketing intervention' by a Primary Care Trust in Gloucester, South West England,  
21 and has more recently been absorbed into wider community development work in  
22 the locality. The project aimed to understand why adults in two low-income  
23 neighbourhoods engaged in risky drinking practices and to co-create interventions to  
24 help them cut down. At the outset, it was assumed that providing information about  
25 safe drinking levels or attempting to educate people about the dangers of heavy  
26 drinking would probably be ineffective, even if this were done in a relevant and  
27 creative way. Instead, it was supposed that many factors in the social, economic and  
28 physical environment (such as access to employment) would influence drinking  
29 levels and that any intervention would need to acknowledge these. The next three  
30 sections deal with each of the three challenges of adopting value co-creation for  
31 social marketing.  
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### 51 52 53 54 *The Challenge of Ideological Compatibility*

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56 Two areas of potential incompatibility are identified and discussed in this paper. The  
57 first relates to the risks of an uncritical transfer of value theory from commercial to  
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3 social contexts, while the second deals with empowerment rhetoric and  
4 conceptualising the role of the expert in co-creation. Firstly, we suggest that making  
5 a simple, direct transfer of ideas about value and related conceptual developments  
6 from commercial to social marketing, without a thorough review of the implications  
7 of such a transfer, may be overly simplistic. To date, this question appears to have  
8 received little attention in the literature. Value is thought to be foundational to  
9 commercial marketing thinking because: a) value is created as an offering and  
10 delivered through recurrent transactions; b) value is created through mutually  
11 interactive processes and shared through negotiated agreement within the life of a  
12 relationship; and c) value emanates from interactions within relationships networks  
13 (Ballantyne *et al.*, 2003). Thus, value is a consequence of openness, co-  
14 determination of the desired outcomes and the process of mutual and reciprocal  
15 learning. Tzokas and Saren (1997, p. 111) propose that value is “a relativistic  
16 (comparative, personal, situational) preference characterising a subject’s experience  
17 of interacting with some object”. Russell-Bennett *et al.* (2009) identify two  
18 approaches to conceptualising value in the marketing literature: economic and  
19 experiential. Economic value is the outcome of a cost-benefit analysis focused on the  
20 utility gained while experiential value is an interactive, relativistic preference  
21 experience. Grönroos (2004) argues that exchange should be considered relational  
22 and that value is both a determinant and a consequence of these relationships.  
23  
24 Value in social marketing is “highly individualised, subjective and based upon  
25 experiences, actual and perceived” (Hastings and Domegan, in press) as Hastings and  
26 Lowry (2010, p.15) remind us, “values ascribed to the marketer's offering during an  
27 exchange may be tangible (e.g. monetary) or psychological (e.g. status); immediate  
28 (e.g. nicotine now) or deferred (e.g. better health later); but they will always be  
29 subjective”. However, much of the behaviours social marketers are asked to tackle  
30 are in fact extremely complex with a multiplicity of inter-related system factors,  
31 what Domegan and Hastings (2012) present as ‘wicked problems’. For example, with  
32 the alcohol work in Gloucester, participants in these very low income  
33 neighbourhoods would have *valued* having enough money to feed their children,  
34 feeling that they would be safe to walk outside at night and being provided with a  
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3 doctor's surgery within walking distance. We could not in good conscience claim that  
4 our co-created social marketing programme could achieve these things. In fact, a  
5 critical reflection upon what value we actually did co-create in that project suggests  
6 that people valued the feeling that they had been listened to, their views taken  
7 seriously. Perhaps that is sufficient, and it is certainly better than leaving participants  
8 feeling that their lived experiences had gone unnoticed or unrecognised (as was the  
9 case with the iconic "5-a-day" campaigns so despised by the participants in this  
10 project). Nevertheless, this suggests that social marketers need to reflect critically  
11 upon the implications of adopting an ideology of value in their work, particularly  
12 when tackling complex societal threats such as inequality, obesity and sustainability.  
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14 Secondly, there appears to be somewhat of a paradox in social marketing: for all its  
15 concern with 'customer orientation' and putting the consumer at the centre of the  
16 programme, most interventions appear to be designed and managed by experts  
17 rather than by the participants and communities who are their intended target  
18 groups and beneficiaries (Stead *et al.*, 2013). Community members may be involved  
19 in intervention development as research participants (consulted about the  
20 acceptability and feasibility of the planned intervention, perhaps) or, less often,  
21 recruited to assist in programme implementation (for example, where 'lay people'  
22 are trained to facilitate particular activities or to act as recruiters for difficult-to-  
23 reach target groups). Communities may also be involved in advisory and steering  
24 groups as lay or community representatives, but it is relatively rare for social  
25 marketing interventions to be designed and managed primarily by participants  
26 themselves (see also Middlestadt *et al.*, 1997). In other words, despite apparent  
27 ideological compatibility between co-creation and social marketing, genuinely and  
28 fully co-created social marketing programmes are actually relatively rare. This may  
29 be reflect a reluctance to surrender the expert mindset (Chapman, 2004) or a fear  
30 among policy makers and managers of losing control over the intervention. More  
31 pragmatically, the perceived difficulty of mobilising communities to get involved may  
32 also be a factor. It must also be acknowledged that there is some risk that  
33 community members may decide to adopt an approach that experts believe will  
34 simply be wrong or ineffective. For example, members of the community who put  
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3 themselves forward to participate may not necessarily be representative of the  
4 community as a whole or may have particular 'agendas' of their own, leading to the  
5 design of programmes which are potentially less appropriate and equitable than  
6 those led by professionals who have a commitment to equality practices. A  
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8 community (or a vocal portion of one) may espouse approaches at odds with public  
9 health goals, social justice principles or evidence of effectiveness: what is the role of  
10 the expert in this situation? Do they assert their authority and intervene to steer the  
11 community towards more desirable and evidence-based activities? Finally, the  
12 language of co-creation implies that community members want (or ought to want)  
13 to be involved in the design and delivery of services. But, they may feel that this is an  
14 abdication of responsibility by professionals who are paid to do this work, or may  
15 suspect (perhaps rightly in some cases) that their unpaid involvement is being used  
16 as a way of cutting costs. Does empowerment include giving people permission to  
17 express a desire for the expert or service provider to take on the responsibility and  
18 effort to help individuals and communities? Can ordinary community members  
19 develop the same knowledge or expertise that professionals have (and if not, can  
20 they be said to be fully empowered)? It may be necessary for social marketers to  
21 accept that empowerment can only ever be partial, constrained, compromised. This  
22 may in fact be a more honest (and perhaps ultimately more empowering) position  
23 than embracing the belief that total empowerment is possible. If so, (and we think  
24 that this view has much to recommend it) we contend that the discourse should  
25 recognise and attempt to account for this complexity.  
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#### 45 *The Challenge of Explanatory Completeness*

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47 While value co-creation points to discursive and collaborative processes, these are  
48 situated theoretically at the downstream or individual level; consequently, value co-  
49 creation can be said to possess individualist explanatory power in the context of  
50 commercial marketing. But what of social marketing's collective orientation and  
51 explanatory insights to inform scalability? We question the apparent juxtaposition of  
52 claims that co-creation involves close collaboration with participants to co-design  
53 valued solutions suitable for their particular circumstances with the requirements to  
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3 develop social marketing theories and models of scalable strategies for change.  
4 Scaling up participant or community co-created interventions is extremely difficult,  
5 because the interventions are often so specific to the context in which they have  
6 been created. Consequently, another participant or community may have different  
7 priorities or prefer a different exchange. It can be contended that conceptually,  
8 replicability and scalability do not have relate to a particular co-created programme  
9 but instead any 'roll out' should be underpinned by successful processes of  
10 collaboration and co-design. However, value co-creation theory is rarely used to  
11 advocate mass customisation in its source domain of commercial marketing; instead  
12 this line of reasoning about scaling up participatory methods could suggest a greater  
13 similarity to Community Development than to marketing. There should always be  
14 room for alternative perspectives, but failing to appreciate this implication of  
15 transferring value co-creation from commercial to social marketing leaves  
16 proponents vulnerable to the charge that they are simply reinventing a Community  
17 Development wheel. This issue of whether value co-creation is considered to be a  
18 comparable or superior approach and in what circumstances has not been dealt with  
19 adequately in the literature. Finally, a more practical issue with scalability is the likely  
20 reliance, at least to some extent, on lasting sustainable structures for participation.  
21 As a consequence, funders may become somewhat dependent upon the willingness  
22 of community participants to commit to long-term involvement, which can be  
23 problematic because typically such participants are volunteers.

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Between co-created social marketing programmes underpinned by theories of co-creation and the more established discipline of Community Development, several other areas of potential conflict exist: for example, the task of setting a precise behaviour change objective – one of Andreasen's (2002) six benchmarks of social marketing – is at odds with the principle of communities and individuals determining their own priorities, as well as with the emphasis placed in community development on wider, less measurable outcomes such as empowerment and social capital (Billings 2000). Unease about imposing project objectives may reflect wider conflicts in community development, such as the potential irreconcilability of community needs and funding agency expectations (Legge *et al.*, 2007). In Edinburgh for

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3 instance, funders initially wanted to see activities linked to diet and physical activity  
4 with clear outcomes to be achieved within a short period of time. Developing a logic  
5 model, which specified that the main desired behavioural outcome was  
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8 'engagement' in community activities concerned with diet and physical activity  
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10 rather than stipulating actual changes in diet and physical activity, helped to  
11 negotiate the tensions between the funders' requirements and community  
12 development principles. This made sure that the project had realistic goals and also  
13 made sense in terms of recognised evaluation frameworks like the Medical Research  
14 Council's framework for evaluating complex interventions, see Craig *et al.*, (2008),  
15 which place the emphasis on assessing feasibility and engagement where  
16 interventions are exploratory or unpredictable, rather than on measuring behaviour  
17 change (the latter only applies where an intervention has been fully tested and  
18 tightly specified and rolled out on large scale). However, it should be recognised that  
19 such negotiations may not be successful; funders may be reluctant to finance  
20 programmes for more than a short period unless satisfactory results that  
21 demonstrate behaviour change are forthcoming.  
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32 In other respects, however, strong areas of complementarity are evident, with  
33 certain social marketing concepts thought to resonate strongly with a community  
34 development ethos. For example, 'consumer orientation' and 'mutually beneficial  
35 exchange' are seen as highly compatible with the community development  
36 principles of 'starting where the people are' (Lindsey *et al.*, 2001). Equally the notion  
37 of addressing 'competition' in the form of structures and policies which are  
38 undermining of health – In Edinburgh, such issues included local retail practices and  
39 poor green space provision – sits comfortably with community development's  
40 concern with increasing disadvantaged communities' control over resources and  
41 services (Legge *et al.*, 2007).  
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### 51 52 *The Challenge of Ethical Conformity*

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54 Equating participation with empowerment, as value co-creation tends to do, has a  
55 number of implications for both theory and practice. Firstly, in a social rather than  
56 commercial context, methods that advocate participatory working may be chosen  
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3 deliberately as a way to empower “surplus” (Hickey and Mohan, 2005, p.239) or “at-  
4 risk” populations (Pechmann, *et al.*, 2011, p.23), i.e. groups that are likely to lack  
5 power, such as young people, inhabitants of deprived neighbourhoods, homeless  
6 people or sex workers for example. Thus, a methodological decision to collaborate  
7 with participants may arise from an aspiration to challenge inequalities in knowledge  
8 production (i.e. the formative research that so often underpins decision making  
9 when developing interventions) by giving voice to people normally excluded from  
10 the process (Gaventa and Cornwall 2001). Knowledge is considered by some to be an  
11 important source of power in post-industrial society (Ozanne and Saatcioglu, 2008),  
12 perhaps because research can serve as a metaphor for power and truth (Denzin and  
13 Lincoln, 2005); it is ‘scientific’; its outputs are reports and representations of ‘the  
14 Other’. Further, the premise that participation leads automatically to empowerment  
15 is not uncontested; indeed criticism that participation has failed to achieve this has  
16 been mounting over the last decade (e.g. Cooke and Kothari, 2001). It has been  
17 suggested that mainstream participatory methods may be hampered by inattention  
18 to issues of power and politics (Hickey and Mohan, 2005) exacerbated by the  
19 problem that such methods may be underpinned by an unsophisticated  
20 understanding of the mechanism and constitution of power (Mosse, 1994; Kothari,  
21 2001). Also criticised are an overemphasis on local concerns to the detriment of  
22 pervasive problems of inequality (Mohan and Stokke, 2000) and a conceptualisation  
23 of the relative functions of structure and agency that is inadequate (Clever, 1999).  
24 Further, it has been argued that mainstream participatory approaches may be too  
25 voluntaristic in regarding any form of participation as superior to non-participatory  
26 practices (Chambers, 1997) without considering the risk that those with  
27 disempowering agendas may adopt (or co-opt) initiatives that serve their purposes  
28 (Rahman, 1995).

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49 Finally, given the relatively short-term nature of many social marketing projects,  
50 Hickey and Mohan’s (2005) caution against methodological individualism (Frances,  
51 2001) that can arise from treating participation as a technical method of project  
52 work may be of concern. Participatory methods ought to be, they counsel, a political  
53 methodology of empowerment (Carmen, 1996; Rahman, 1995) and as such must  
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3 include an appreciation of the issues that impede participation for marginalised  
4 groups. In the case of the alcohol work in Gloucester, participation was hampered by  
5 a number of factors: cynicism or 'participation fatigue' created in part by the number  
6 of short-term projects that had been set up and then disappeared once funding had  
7 been withdrawn, exacerbated by the feeling that outsiders with their "5-a-day"  
8 messages didn't understand what it was like to live in the community. Distrust of  
9 authority in general and an almost pathological fear of social services' involvement  
10 in their children's lives was a further barrier to participation. Underlying this, many  
11 local people were simply indifferent to the project and to the social marketers.  
12 Consequently, value co-creation requires very hard work to engage with a range of  
13 local people and even then, proponents must acknowledge that several years  
14 working in the community is needed before an empowerment claim can be made.

### 25 **Conclusions and implications**

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27 For commercial marketers, value co-creation has represented somewhat of a shift in  
28 perspective from a goods-dominant logic towards a more collaborative  
29 understanding of value creation. In this paper, we have highlighted that the  
30 cooperative ambition suggested by co-creation theory seems to be highly  
31 compatible with social marketing in many ways. However, we have also noted some  
32 significant conceptual and practical obstacles in the path of a value co-creation  
33 theory for social marketing: Firstly, we have questioned whether a direct transfer of  
34 theories of value from commercial to social marketing is helpful. We have remarked  
35 that the notion of 'value' is somewhat rhetorical as in it carries with it an assumption  
36 of a positive outcome for all participants. We make no comment upon this question  
37 in the context of commercial marketing, but have noted that attempting to co-create  
38 value in social marketing situations frequently results in compromise of some sort,  
39 particularly when working within complex situations like the examples in this paper.  
40 That is not to say that value co-creation theory cannot or should not be used in  
41 social marketing, simply that more work is needed to explore the implications of the  
42 construct when co-creating social marketing strategies: does the idea of 'value'  
43 move closer to metaphor in more complex situations and if so what are the  
44 theoretical and practical consequences?  
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3 Another compatibility challenge stems from a consideration of the role of the expert  
4 in co-creation. Similarly, the issue is concerned somewhat with the adoption of  
5 language from other disciplines and the related implication that co-creation is  
6 empowering for the individuals and communities involved. Arguing that participation  
7 is empowering isn't revolutionary (it is foundational to Community Development, for  
8 instance) but we have noted that social marketing interventions in which control  
9 over decision-making has been ceded to communities are relatively unusual. This  
10 may be due to well-founded concerns about whether those that volunteer for such  
11 projects are truly representative of (and should ethically be allowed to represent)  
12 their respective communities, whether participants have appropriate knowledge to  
13 co-create the most effective solution, whether funders are delegating responsibility  
14 inappropriately and whether volunteers are being exploited to help deliver services  
15 more cost effectively. A related issue concerns ethical considerations associated with  
16 the choice of participatory methods, particularly when a methodologically informed  
17 decision to collaborate is founded in a desire to co-create with people who may be  
18 disempowered, such as those living in deprived neighbourhoods. It has been  
19 suggested that empowerment ideals can be undermined by an inadequate  
20 consideration of the impact upon people of being disempowered, of the role of  
21 political and policy related factors and the danger of regarding any form of  
22 participation as automatically superior to non-participatory practices. Consequently,  
23 social marketers need to be sensitive to the reasons why people may not wish to  
24 participate, acknowledging that it can take considerable time to build relationships  
25 and trust to overcome an 'outsider' status (Sixsmith *et al.*, 2003). Co-created social  
26 marketing should build in receptivity to power relations and politics, which can be  
27 complex and difficult to uncover, allied to a self-reflexivity among practitioners to  
28 guard against myopic judgements (e.g. see Lindridge, 2012). Finally, social marketers  
29 should empower themselves to negotiate with commissioners for adequate time, as  
30 well as to seek a commitment from commissioners that they will make long-term  
31 plans for the future of initiatives. To support this, evaluation should be multi-faceted  
32 and designed to reflect this long-term perspective upon change, as happened in  
33 Edinburgh.  
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3 A further challenge relates to replicability and scalability of co-created social  
4 marketing programmes. We have pointed out that the very aspects of such  
5 programmes that make them attractive (that they are co-created with communities  
6 to serve their particular needs and aspirations) also make them very difficult to scale  
7 up. One solution might be to replicate successful processes for collaboration and co-  
8 creation, rather than rolling out a specific solution. However, scaling up participatory  
9 methods could suggest a greater similarity to participatory research or Community  
10 Development than to marketing. A half-way house between full scale community  
11 development and a traditional expert-led social marketing campaign could be to  
12 assume that social marketing strategies co-created by one group should probably  
13 work for people with similar characteristics: so the ideas co-created with the  
14 deprived neighbourhoods in Edinburgh and Gloucester should work in another  
15 deprived neighbourhood in, say, Manchester. The issues with this middle ground are  
16 twofold: firstly, the hypothetical community in Manchester will have had no say in  
17 the development or implementation of their programme, rendering the language of  
18 value and empowerment somewhat hollow. Secondly, experience suggests that  
19 almost inevitably, co-creation is influenced by local factors such as the presence (or  
20 absence) of amenities and services and the community's history. Even something as  
21 simple as the layout of the high street from one village to the next can result in  
22 completely different ideas.  
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39 An alternative may be to distinguish between participation in community  
40 development, an ongoing and very long-term process, and participation in time  
41 limited programmes and projects. In the latter case, imperatives and constraints are  
42 very likely to influence the nature of the participation, and not necessarily in a  
43 negative way. Arguably, the imperatives of a n initiative subject to time and  
44 budgetary constraint can inject energy and bring people together in a more  
45 purposeful way; this was the case in both Edinburgh and Gloucester, where activities  
46 were structured around events and activities with very tangible outputs (for  
47 example, primary school children collectively producing a children's book in  
48 Edinburgh, Various, 2011, and a mobile service hub with street café in Gloucester,  
49 Collins and Manning, 2012) does seem to generate and focus energy. Perhaps the  
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3 notion of value as the underpinning construct can serve to restrict social marketers  
4 to delivering a variety of small-scale programmes to reflect varying conceptions of  
5 value as part of a wider multi-disciplinary team?  
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9 These speculations leave a question that we are unable to answer satisfactorily at  
10 present: If we conclude that co-created social marketing is very similar to other ways  
11 of stimulating change through participation, why is co-created social marketing  
12 needed, why not just use Participatory Action Research or become an Asset Based  
13 Community Development practitioner? Emergent thinking has hinted at social  
14 marketing's creativity, flexibility and pragmatism (Collins, 2013) as worthwhile  
15 contributions to multi-disciplinary working aimed at tackling wider social issues.  
16 Further, we suggest that value co-creation in social marketing is not fanciful; rather it  
17 represents a promising alternative to the goods-dominant, campaign oriented  
18 approach prevalent in so much of mainstream social marketing literature and  
19 practice. However, current conceptualisations are vulnerable to accusations of  
20 narrow functionality, of an overly simplistic conceptualisation of value co-creation at  
21 the individual level. A more sophisticated model would seek to understand multiple  
22 levels and multiple perspectives; going beyond 'who' is involved in value co-creation  
23 to 'what' and 'how' value is exchanged from a collective and societal perspective  
24 (McHugh & Domegan, in press). Perhaps this is where value co-creation has most to  
25 offer to a discipline that has reached adulthood. Thus, we are optimistic that value  
26 co-creation has the potential to provide focus and energy to what can otherwise be  
27 fairly slow moving processes of social change.  
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