



# LUND UNIVERSITY

## User Orientation in Welfare Services

### Challenges from a Public Service Logic Perspective

Danielsson, Pernilla

2026

*Document Version:*

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*

Danielsson, P. (2026). *User Orientation in Welfare Services: Challenges from a Public Service Logic Perspective*. [Doctoral Thesis (compilation), Department of Service Studies]. Institutionen för tjänstvetenskap, Lunds universitet.

*Total number of authors:*

1

*Creative Commons License:*

CC BY-NC

**General rights**

Unless other specific re-use rights are stated the following general rights apply:

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal

Read more about Creative commons licenses: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/>

**Take down policy**

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

LUND UNIVERSITY

PO Box 117  
221 00 Lund  
+46 46-222 00 00



## User Orientation in Welfare Services



# User Orientation in Welfare Services

Challenges from a Public Service Logic Perspective

Pernilla Danielsson



**LUND**  
UNIVERSITY

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

Doctoral dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) at the Faculty of Social Science at Lund University to be publicly defended on 24 of April at 10.15 in U203, Department of Service Studies, Campus Helsingborg

*Faculty opponent*

Professor Per Skålen

Service Research Center, Karlstad University Business School

**Organization:** LUND UNIVERSITY

**Document name:** Doctoral Dissertation

**Date of issue:** 2026-03-04

**Author(s):** Pernilla Danielsson

**Sponsoring organization:**

**Title and subtitle:** User Orientation in Welfare Services – Challenges from a Public Service Logic Perspective

**Abstract:**

In today's welfare services, how the user is viewed has increasingly been shifting away from a passive recipient towards an active participant in value creation. This shift is reflected in policy reforms, organisational strategies, and academic discourse, with all of these placing a growing emphasis on user orientation. Within the theoretical framework of Public Service Logic (PSL), user orientation is presented as a way of enhancing value creation through closer engagement with users and the more integrated use of resources. Despite these aims, less is known about how such intentions are understood and enacted in everyday welfare practices, and under which organisational conditions they can be sustained. This thesis examines the organisational challenges entailed by user orientation in Swedish welfare services, based on PSL. The thesis consists of five articles drawing on qualitative and quantitative studies of Swedish welfare services.

The results show that professionals express a strong motivation to engage with their users, but that recurring organisational barriers are collectively creating a situation in which they only have limited organisational scope to act on that motivation. User orientation remains conditional and uneven rather than developing into an integrated and enduring professional orientation. Unless issues such as the early termination of exploration, limited opportunities for professional skills development, obscured value, and individualised responsibility are addressed as barriers, user orientation will likely persist as a superficial and reactive practice rather than becoming a long-term orientation in welfare services. Using a multi-level analytical perspective, the thesis demonstrates that user orientation spans organisational levels, roles, and responsibilities beyond frontline practice. In conclusion, this thesis argues that numerous organisational challenges must be addressed in order to support user orientation in practice.

**Key words:** user orientation, public service logic, service studies, welfare services, value, resource integration

Classification system and/or index terms (if any)

Supplementary bibliographical information

**Language:** English

**Number of pages:**

**ISBN:** 978-91-8104-925-1 (print)  
978-91-8104-926-8 (electronic)

I, the undersigned, being the copyright owner of the abstract of the above-mentioned dissertation, hereby grant to all reference sources permission to publish and disseminate the abstract of the above-mentioned dissertation.

Signature

Date 2026-03-04

# User Orientation in Welfare Services

Challenges from a Public Service Logic Perspective

Pernilla Danielsson



**LUND**  
UNIVERSITY

## Copyright

Pages 1-101 © 2026 Pernilla Danielsson

Paper 1 © 2022 The authors. Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.

Paper 2 © 2026 by Imprint. Reproduced by permission of Taylor & Francis Group.

Paper 3 © 2019 The authors and School of Public Administration

Paper 4 © 2026 by Pernilla Danielsson (Manuscript unpublished)

Paper 5 © 2026 by Pernilla Danielsson (Manuscript unpublished)

Cover image by Viktoria Hallenius, "On the cliff"

Published by:

Department of Service Studies

Faculty of Social Science

Lund University

Lund 2026

ISBN 978-91-8104-925-1 (print)

ISBN 978-91-8104-926-8 (electronic)

Printed in Sweden by Media-Tryck, Lund University,  
Lund, 2026



Media-Tryck is a Nordic Swan Ecolabel certified provider of printed material. Read more about our environmental work at [www.mediatryck.lu.se](http://www.mediatryck.lu.se)

**MADE IN SWEDEN** 

*To Therese, Anna and Lina*

# Table of Contents

List of figures .....	10
List of tables .....	10
Acknowledgements .....	11
List of Papers .....	12
<b>1 Introduction .....</b>	<b>13</b>
1.1 An increased emphasis on user orientation in the welfare sector.....	13
1.2 Why user orientation may give rise to organisational challenges ....	15
1.3 User orientation in service logic .....	16
1.4 Aim, research questions and studies .....	18
1.5 Outline of the thesis .....	20
1.6 Authors' contributions .....	21
<b>2 Theory .....</b>	<b>22</b>
2.1 Introduction .....	22
2.2 User orientation in a broader social science context .....	22
2.2.1 Conceptual models of user participation .....	23
2.2.2 Reported benefits across sectors .....	26
2.2.3 Practical and professional barriers .....	27
2.2.4 Summary and theoretical positioning .....	29
2.3 User orientation in public service logic .....	31
2.3.1 Why use PSL for this study? .....	32
2.3.2 Key PSL concepts: value and resource integration .....	33
2.3.3 Applying PSL to the empirical analysis .....	36
2.4 The analytical framework .....	37
2.4.1 Ambidextrous structures as an analytical model .....	37
2.4.2 A multi-level perspective on welfare services .....	39
<b>3 Methodologies and materials .....</b>	<b>42</b>
3.1 Introduction .....	42
3.2 Methodological reflections .....	42
3.2.1 My relationship with Public Service Logic .....	44
3.2.2 Ethics statement .....	46

3.2.3	Validity, trustworthiness and reflexivity .....	47
3.3	Research design and methodological strategy .....	48
3.3.1	Mixed-method rationale .....	49
3.3.2	Qualitative Method.....	50
3.3.3	Quantitative method .....	54
3.4	Summary of methodologies and materials .....	55
<b>4</b>	<b>Contribution of articles .....</b>	<b>57</b>
4.1	Introduction .....	57
4.2	First article: Clarifying value as a thick concept .....	57
4.3	Second article: Demystifying resource integration .....	59
4.4	Third article: Management affecting value creation .....	60
4.5	Fourth article: User orientation in Social Services.....	62
4.6	Fifth article: Organisational factors shaping user-oriented practice.	63
4.7	Summary of the articles.....	65
<b>5</b>	<b>Discussions and conclusions .....</b>	<b>66</b>
5.1	Introduction .....	66
5.2	User orientation through organisational barriers.....	66
5.2.1	Asymmetric resource distribution .....	67
5.2.2	Cultural resistance .....	69
5.2.3	Fixed cognitive frameworks.....	71
5.2.4	Reluctance at the top .....	73
5.2.5	Structural constraints.....	74
5.3	User orientation in a multi-level perspective.....	78
5.4	Conclusions and contributions .....	82
5.5	Limitations and future research.....	84
<b>6</b>	<b>Appendix.....</b>	<b>86</b>
6.1	Tables of empirical material.....	86
	<b>References .....</b>	<b>88</b>

# List of figures

Figure 1: Overview of how the articles contribute to the research questions and aim of the thesis. ....	19
Figure 2: Idealized overlap between user participation models .....	25
Figure 3: Organisational barriers reproducing surface-level user orientation .....	77
Figure 4: Multi-level, multi-actor perspective on user orientation.....	82

# List of tables

Table 1: Comparison between different types of service logics.....	34
Table 2: Taxonomy of the innovation levels in the public sector.....	40
Table 3: Overview of materials, methods, techniques, participants and the author's role .....	53
Table 4: Multi-level taxonomy of organisational roles and responsibilities .....	78

## Appendix

Table 5. Participants and duration in the material "Research Circle 1:.....	86
Table 6. Participants and duration in the material "Service Innovation in Welfare Services".....	86
Table 7. Participants and duration in the material "Research Circle 2: The Coordinator's Role".....	87
Table 8. Participants and duration in the material "Service Innovation.....	87
Table 9. Participants and duration in the material "Social Service and Organisational Transformation".....	87
Table 10. Survey Dataset and Respondents in "Service Perspective in Social Services".....	87

# Acknowledgements

A doctoral thesis may look like an individual achievement. It is not. This one began because someone had the courage to suggest I should do it. My supervisor, Dr Ulrika Westrup, encouraged me not merely to ask questions, but to seek the answers myself. Ulrika, without you I would never have begun this journey, nor enjoyed it as much, and certainly never finished it. Your intellectual generosity, curiosity, and constant encouragement have meant more to me than I can express. You have also filled this process with laughter, something I will always be grateful for. A simple thank you hardly captures my gratitude. Your supervision has been truly outstanding.

A year into the process, Dr Magnus Lindén joined as co-supervisor. His involvement broadened our discussions to include quantitative perspectives and brought valuable psychological insights into the supervision. Magnus, I have greatly appreciated our conversations, your thoughtful guidance, and your encouragement throughout this process. Working with you has been a real pleasure.

Several colleagues have contributed to this process and to the development of the thesis in different ways: Anette Svingstedt, Charlotte Simonsson, Alina Lindén, Marcus Knutagård, Mikael Bergmash and Erika Andersson Cederholm. At various stages, you offered valuable feedback and critical reflections that strengthened both the individual studies and the thesis as a whole. Thank you. The remaining shortcomings are, of course, entirely my own.

When I embarked on this journey, I confidently told my daughter Amelie and my husband Roger that it would be a breeze. After all, I had done this before; This was my second PhD. “You will hardly notice that I am doing it”. That prediction did not age well. I owe you an apology for the many evenings, weekends and even holidays spent with data, drafts, proofs and a glowing laptop screen. Yet despite my frequent mental absence, you responded with encouragement, chocolate, patience and humour. Your love, support, and gentle reminders that there is life beyond a dissertation have meant more to me than I can put into words. You are, quite simply, the best.

So why undertake a second PhD at all? Part of the answer lies in my professional life as an innovation manager. Together with three remarkable colleagues and co-creators at my former workplace, PART, we have been able to develop methods and models and deepen our shared understanding of the work we do, drawing on insights from this research. In my experience, it has made us better. Much of what I have written has therefore been written with you in mind: to understand our challenges more clearly and approach them more creatively. You pushed me, encouraged me and believed in me throughout this journey, often more than I believed in myself.

This thesis is dedicated to you.

Helsingborg, 4 March 2026

# List of Papers

## *Paper 1*

Danielsson, P., & Westrup, U. (2024). User orientation in public service organisations: Making use of value as a thick concept. *Public Management Review*, 26(4), 1013–1032. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2022.2136398>

## *Paper 2*

Danielsson, P., & Westrup, U. (2026). Demystifying resource integration in welfare services. In S. Osborne & C. Bianchi (Eds.), *Public service logic and public service reform: State of the art, new perspectives, and future directions*. Routledge.

## *Paper 3*

Westrup, U., & Danielsson, P. (2019). A service perspective on work with vulnerable children: Frontline staff's perceptions of how management affects value creation. *Scandinavian Journal of Public Administration*, 23(3–4), 3–21.

## *Paper 4*

Danielsson, P. (Manuscript). User orientation in social services: Challenges facing everyday practice as perceived by social workers [Manuscript submitted for publication to *Public Management Review*].

## *Paper 5*

Danielsson, P. (Manuscript). Enabling user orientation in social services: Exploring organisational conditions from a frontline perspective [Manuscript submitted for publication to *Public Money & Management*].

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 An increased emphasis on user orientation in the welfare sector

In modern welfare services, the role of the service user is evolving. Once seen primarily as passive recipients of services, users are now increasingly being recognized as active participants whose experiences, needs, and resources are shaping service offerings. This evolving aim is reflected in policy reforms, academic discourse, and organisational strategies (Swedish Government Reports, 2020:47; 2018:32; 2023:52; 2021:6; 2018:11, Grönroos, 2019; Osborne, 2018; Skålén, 2022), which all emphasize co-creation, responsiveness, relations and user orientation.

Yet, despite these aims, much remains unknown about how such policy orientations are understood and enacted in welfare services. While expectations regarding increased user orientation are clearly articulated at the strategic level, less is known about how these expectations interact with existing organisational routines, institutional logics, and professional practices. This creates an important field of enquiry: How, and under what organisational prerequisites, are such strategic aims taking shape in everyday service delivery?

Over the past decade, the pressure to become more user-oriented has been intensifying in welfare services. International human rights frameworks, such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the European Social Charter, have enshrined the importance of involving users in service design and decision-making processes (UN2015; Swedish Government Report (SGR) 2020:63). These conventions, ratified by many countries worldwide, mandate the development of welfare systems that respect the autonomy, dignity, and agency of the individual. The push for user orientation is not only a moral imperative but also a legal obligation that reinforces the need for service providers to align their practices with these global norms (SGR 2019:29; SGR 2018:11; SGR 2020:53). However, compliance with statutory involvement alone does not specify how services should be designed and offered. Legal mandates can require participation, but they do not determine the organisational capabilities needed for demand-led, proactive service design.

Person-centric and needs-based principles are embedded in Sweden's core legislation. The Education Act requires schools to take account of pupils' differing needs (Swedish Code of Statutes (SCS) 2010:800, Chapter 1 Section 4). The Health

and Medical Services Act emphasises patient autonomy and continuity (SCS 2017:30, Chapter 5 Section 1) and, furthermore, mandates have coordinated individual planning when support involves both health care and social services, based on the user's needs and life situation (SCS 2017:30, Chapter 11 Section 4). In the new Social Services Act, a corresponding commitment to user orientation is explicit: Interventions must be designed and carried out together with the individual (Social Services Act, SCS 2025:400, Chapter 10 Section 3).

Jointly, these statutes signal a strategic-level policy orientation towards more user-oriented welfare services (SCS 2025:400; SGRs, 2020:47; 2018:32; 2023:52; 2021:6; 2018:11). However, while they articulate clear expectations regarding user orientation, they offer limited guidance on how such aims should be translated into everyday organisational practice. As a result, local welfare services are expected to interpret and operationalise these high-level commitments without any detailed direction on the organisational prerequisites required to support them.

In practice, however, these statutory commitments often surface as discretionary, case-by-case adaptations made by frontline staff rather than as routinized, system-level designs. For example, individual teachers strive to tailor their tuition to the needs of the students, individual healthcare professionals adapt care plans to individual patients, and individual social workers collaborate with clients to find sustainable solutions. Such day-to-day examples from welfare services reveal user-oriented practices carried out by individual professionals. Thus, it appears not to be the case that user orientation is absent, rather that it appears uneven, perhaps arising more from individual initiatives than from organisation-level capabilities. As such, what remains unclear is the degree to which such practices reflect broader organisational support, or whether they emerge despite structural constraints. This raises the question of how welfare services position user orientation within their systems; using individual discretion or as an organisational commitment.

This remains a key challenge: Despite sustained, externally driven pressure exerted by legislation, policy frameworks, and national innovation initiatives (e.g., from VINNOVA, the Swedish government agency for innovation and sustainable growth), these legal and political directives alone do not create the organisational prerequisites of user-oriented practice. Without a clear understanding of what user orientation requires in practice, even well-intentioned mandates risk resulting in inaction, rather than meaningful change. In other words, legal and policy directives can trigger involvement, but they cannot act as substitutes for the organisational design work required to embed user orientation (Nasi & Choi, 2023). This tension is easier to see when considering how the welfare sector is organised: Public sector organisations are politically governed and operate under hierarchical structures, legal frameworks, and strong demands regarding accountability. These features shape both management and service delivery, often placing more weight on control, standardization, and measurable outcomes than on flexibility, responsiveness, and collaboration (Greve, 2022; Walsh, 1995; Hood, 1991; Hjärpe (2022)).

When increased user orientation is articulated as a broader aim, this introduces new and different considerations concerning welfare services. If user orientation extends beyond isolated acts of professional discretion, it becomes relevant to examine how it relates to organisational arrangements. Such considerations not only concern individual professional judgement, but also the systems, routines, and structures that govern practice (Strokosch & Osborne, 2024; Bromark et al., 2024). This raises a key question: How do organisational structures and cultures relate to the presence and variation of user-oriented practices? Despite the increasing emphasis on user orientation in policy and research, there is still only relatively limited knowledge of its organisational dimensions. Viewed like this, user orientation becomes a multifaceted organisational question, intersecting with existing traditions of professionalism, administrative control, and political governance. Understanding how these different demands interact, and the space they make available to user-oriented practice, thus warrants closer examination (Bromark et al., 2024; Strokosch & Osborne, 2020).

## 1.2 Why user orientation may give rise to organisational challenges

Welfare services are expected to meet a multitude of often conflicting demands (Björck & Tengblad, 2023). They are expected to be service-oriented, cost-efficient, legally compliant, and politically accountable, while simultaneously responding to complex and often unpredictable human needs (Greve, 2022). Taken together, this may create tensions between professional autonomy, administrative control, and the growing emphasis on user participation. Moreover, the drive to provide efficiency sharpens these tensions, compelling organisations to align professional judgement and user-oriented practice with cost-effective performance targets. In welfare, efficiency is often pursued through managerialism, with the expectation of enhancing both frugality and effectiveness (Neo et al., 2022, pp. 3-4). In doing so, balancing individual needs with organisational directives represents a persistent structural tension. For example, during recent decades, New Public Management (NPM) reforms have significantly influenced public sector management, using balanced scorecards, quality management, management by objectives, and later models like lean production or lean management (Christensen & Læg Reid, 2007; Karlsson, 2017; Walsh, 1995; Eriksson et al., 2020). These reforms were introduced to address various challenges, like those listed above. They were specifically intended to enhance efficiency (Hood, 1991), featuring performance measures focusing on the organisation's internal value production, thus deflecting attention from user orientation (Kinder et al., 2022).

However, these NPM reforms often fell short of expectations in the public sector. For the human-centric and needs-driven welfare sector, in particular, such

management models posed substantial challenges, often diverting the focus away from the professionalism expected in welfare service work. As such, the effects of these reforms have proven paradoxical, underscoring the need for a comprehensive analysis of their outcomes to guide future public sector transformations (Hood & Peters, 2004). Moreover, criticism of NPM included its tendency to amplify an internal focus, thus moving further away from user orientation (Osborne, 2018; Eriksson, 2019). While many public sector organisations are often said to have moved beyond NPM, its principles continue to linger (Pollitt, 2016). This persistence is testament to how historical choices made in public administration often endure, even in the face of evolving societal attitudes, expectations, and challenges (Neo et al., 2022).

In parallel with this, a persistent challenge facing welfare service provision is the fragmentation of responsibility across multiple organisations and governance levels (Quist & Fransson, 2014; Eriksson et al., 2020). While welfare services are intended to provide holistic support, they often operate in parallel rather than in collaboration. Different authorities manage education, healthcare, and social services with limited levels of coordination, resulting in inefficiencies and gaps in service provision. For citizens navigating the system, this often means repetitive assessments, conflicting information, and a lack of seamless support. As a result, this structural fragmentation hinders user orientation, due to organisations primarily focusing on their own mandates rather than on integrated service delivery (Grönroos, 2021).

Even where pilot projects and innovative initiatives demonstrate success in adopting user-oriented methods, lessons learnt once projects have ended often remain siloed within specific projects or departments, without being more broadly institutionalized across welfare systems (Moberg, 2021). Evaluation of these initiatives is also limited, making it difficult to either assess their long-term impact or replicate them in other contexts. Consequently, it appears that only a limited number of welfare services systematically evaluate, or integrate, user orientation into their regular activities, suggesting that its potential may not have been fully realised yet. An alternative approach, whereby the user's needs and participation represent the focal point, is offered by service logic and its public sector development, public service logic.

### 1.3 User orientation in service logic

The idea that public services should be oriented towards the user's needs and life situation long predates the emergence of Public Service Logic (PSL). Early public administration scholars, notably Stewart and Clarke and their notion of a *public service orientation* (1987), were already emphasising that public services exist for the public and that their value ultimately depends on their value to the user. In this sense, PSL does not introduce user orientation as a new concept, instead providing

a more developed conceptual language for analysing a longstanding principle in public service thinking.

Nowadays, PSL has emerged as a key framework for understanding user orientation in welfare services. PSL advances a design paradigm in which user orientation is both seen as intrinsic to services and situated within public service ecosystems, with value emerging through interaction and resource integration (Osborne, 2021; Grönroos, 2019; Vargo & Lusch, 2004; Grönroos & Voima, 2013; Eriksson & Hellström, 2021; Skålén et al., 2018). Core tenets here include the simultaneous production and use of services, the key role of users in value creation, and the embedding of service provision in multi-actor systems, rather than within single organisations, and situating it within public service ecosystems (Grönroos and Voima, 2013; Vargo and Lusch, 2004; Skålén et al., 2018. Osborne, Nasi, et al., 2021; Petrescu, 2018).

In this way, PSL offers a strong conceptual vocabulary for analysing service processes from an external, value-centric perspective, including distinctions between different forms of value, e.g. value in production, in use, and in context (Osborne & Strokosch, 2022; Osborne, 2018), including broader articulations of value encompassing short-term outcomes, medium-term consequences across the life course of public service users, and longer-term societal capacity (Osborne & Ishihara, 2026). At the same time, PSL builds on longstanding observations in the field. Despite decades of reform narratives advocating user orientation and co-production, translation into practice has often remained limited. Strokosch and Osborne (2020) argue that these limitations partly stem from treating participation as an add-on to linear service production models rather than as an integral dimension of public services. PSL is offered as a corrective to such partial conceptualisations by positioning user orientation at the centre of public service design and delivery (Osborne and Strokosch, 2022; Osborne, Nasi, et al., 2021). This repositioning of user orientation has been further elaborated in subsequent PSL research, which refines the ecosystem perspective and clarifies how value, participation, and resource integration are understood across multiple actors and levels (Bianchi et al., 2026; Osborne, Nasi, et al., 2021; Rossi, 2026; Russo & Simoni, 2026; Skarli, 2026; Strokosch, 2022; Strokosch & Osborne, 2024).

However, while PSL provides important conceptual clarity regarding users' roles in value creation, it pays less attention to how welfare services generate the organisational prerequisites for such processes. Questions remain about how PSL accounts for organisational structures, constraints, and the mechanisms through which strategic aims regarding user orientation are translated into everyday practice. These aspects are less developed in the PSL literature and thus offer the relevant analytical space for empirical investigation.

This focus is a response to a recognised gap in the PSL literature. While PSL has largely emphasised the role of users in co-creation, considerably less attention has been given to the role of service professionals and the organisational arrangements that shape their practice (Osborne, 2021). Osborne explicitly notes that “*the role of*

*the service professional and service staff is equally important*” and that *“insufficient attention has been given to the latter element of co-production to date”* (Osborne, 2021, p. 65). This has sometimes resulted in an overemphasis on user-led or consumerist models, without sufficient examination of the professional and organisational preconditions required for user orientation to take root. By investigating how professionals understand and enact user-oriented approaches within institutional settings, this thesis explores the organisational and systemic conditions that enable or limit user orientation in welfare services. Taken together, these considerations point to an empirical and theoretical need to both examine how welfare services interpret, support, and enact user orientation in practice and assess how existing service logic frameworks, including PSL, capture these organisational dynamics.

The PSL theoretical framework has been interpreted and applied in different ways, and with varying emphases, in the literature. While the framework has been developed as both an analytical perspective and a normative framework for how public services may be organised, it is used here primarily as a conceptual and theoretical point of departure. In this sense, PSL provides a lens for examining both organisational capability and the prerequisites shaping professionals’ ability to work in user-oriented ways, rather than serving as a prescriptive model for practice. At the same time, the empirical studies create an opportunity to explore how well PSL captures the organisational dynamics of welfare services, where complementary perspectives may be needed to understand conditions that enable and constrain. In this thesis, it is primarily used as an analytical perspective. In the different parts of the thesis, nonetheless, there are examples of it being approached both as a model for understanding practice and as a model of how practice should unfold in reality.

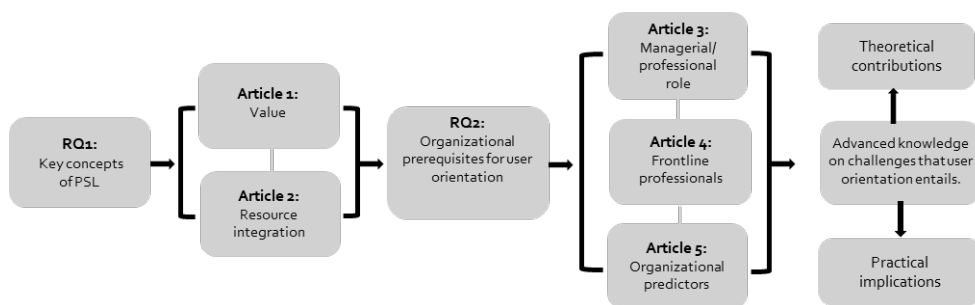
## 1.4 Aim, research questions and studies

Building on both the tensions and the PSL perspective outlined above, this thesis aims to advance knowledge of the organisational challenges that user orientation entails in Swedish welfare services, from a public service logic (PSL) perspective. To achieve this aim, the thesis takes a tripartite approach: First, the key PSL concepts of *value* and *resource integration* are clarified by examining how they are understood and explained in everyday welfare service practice. Second, the knowledge generated by means of this conceptual groundwork then provides the basis for examining what hinders and enables user orientation in practice from a PSL perspective. Third, two analytical frameworks are introduced as lenses (organisational ambidexterity and a multi-level innovation taxonomy), with these being used for a broader and deeper focus on organisational challenges at multiple levels. Two research questions (RQs) guide the five articles that structure the thesis:

**RQ1:** How can the key concepts of public service logic, *value* and *resource integration*, be understood in the context of welfare services?

**RQ2:** What organizational prerequisites emerge in relation to user orientation from a public service logic perspective?

Articles 1 and 2 are guided by RQ1 and explore how PSL concepts are interpreted and applied in daily practice. Articles 3 to 5 are guided by RQ2 and identify and analyse the barriers and enablers of working with user orientation in practice. Figure 1 (below) illustrates how each article contributes towards answering the research questions and, jointly, towards meeting the overall aim of the thesis.



**Figure 1: Overview of how the articles contribute to the research questions and aim of the thesis.**

While user orientation in welfare services must ultimately be rooted in the needs of citizens, this thesis focuses on the organisational level, thus examining the experiences and adaptations of employees, managers, and policymakers. In doing so, it answers Osborne’s (2021, p. 65) call for more research on the role of service professionals in co-production. He notes that PSL scholarship has tended to favour the perspective of the user, while both the contribution and agency of service professionals in shaping value creation remain underexplored. This thesis seeks to contribute to the development of Public Service Logic as a theoretical framework, and also to offer insights relevant to practice in welfare services, thus engaging with discussions in public service management from a service studies perspective.

The thesis is set in the Swedish welfare sector, with a focus on organisations within municipal agencies (education departments, social services) and regional agencies (primary healthcare, child and adolescent psychiatry, adult psychiatry). Furthermore, at the national level, it includes agencies such as the Swedish Public Employment Service and the Swedish Social Insurance Agency. While the term public sector may occasionally be used for contextual purposes, the primary focus remains on welfare services, excluding organisations primarily concerned with infrastructure or environmental services (for example, transport and waste management). The thesis does not claim to draw conclusions about the Swedish welfare system as a whole, as the five studies are confined to specific welfare

services. At the same time, the findings are interpreted in relation to the overarching theoretical framework, which may permit cautious analytical generalisation to other organisations and areas of welfare provision.

Before continuing, a brief note on terminology is in order. In this thesis, ‘user orientation’ denotes an organisational perspective on welfare services that base the development and provision of services on the user’s needs, experiences, and perspectives. Across levels, ‘user-oriented practice’ is used to refer to frontline work during everyday service encounters, while ‘user-oriented initiatives’ concern organisational designs or programmes that support such practice. Where relevant, ‘user-oriented approaches’ is used for the specific design choices that enable such practice. I use ‘value’ in the PSL sense, ‘what becomes better’ in the user’s lifeworld, acknowledging both individual and societal dimensions. ‘Resource integration’ refers to how users, professionals and organisations combine their resources (e.g., knowledge, competencies, infrastructures) within the service system in order to shape value.

## 1.5 Outline of the thesis

This thesis has the following outline: Chapter 2 presents both the theoretical point of departure and the theoretical and analytical frameworks of the thesis. The chapter begins by positioning the study within previous research on user orientation in welfare services. The thesis then introduces Public Service Logic as the overarching theoretical framework guiding it and constituting its main theoretical contribution. Finally, the chapter presents the analytical framework used to analyse organisational challenges related to user orientation, consisting of ambidextrous organisational theory and a multilevel innovation taxonomy. Both components of the analytical framework are further mobilised in the final chapter.

Chapter 3 outlines the material and methodology, including the methodological considerations underpinning the thesis, its epistemological positioning, and the methods employed in the included articles. Chapter 4 presents and discusses the contributions of the five articles in relation to the theoretical framework, PSL. Finally, Chapter 5 synthesises the findings across the articles by applying the analytical framework of ambidextrous organisational theory and the multilevel innovation taxonomy to analyse organisational challenges related to user orientation across multiple organisational levels. Further, this chapter also offers conclusions, contributions to PSL, and practical implications.

## 1.6 Authors' contributions

Among the five articles that make up this thesis, three (referred to as Articles 1, 2 and 3) have been co-authored with my supervisor Associate Professor Dr. Ulrika Westrup, and our individual contributions are clarified below. Articles 4 and 5 in this thesis have solely been authored by me.

**Article 1:** Danielsson, P., & Westrup, U. (2024). User orientation in public service organisations: Making use of value as a thick concept. *Public Management Review*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2022.2136398>

*Pernilla Danielsson:* material creation, conceptualization, methodology, formal analysis, investigation, writing – original draft

*Ulrika Westrup:* material creation, conceptualization, methodology, formal analysis, investigation, writing – original draft

**Article 2:** Danielsson, P., & Westrup, U. (2026). Demystifying resource integration in welfare services. In S. Osborne & C. Bianchi (Eds.), *Public service logic and public service reform: State of the art, new perspectives, and future directions*. Routledge

*Pernilla Danielsson:* material creation, conceptualization, methodology, formal analysis, investigation, writing – original draft

*Ulrika Westrup:* material creation, conceptualization, methodology, formal analysis, investigation, writing – original draft

**Article 3:** Westrup, U., & Danielsson, P. (2019). A Service Perspective on Work with Vulnerable Children: Frontline Staff's Perceptions of how Management Affects Value Creation. *Scandinavian Journal of Public Administration*, 23((3-4)), 3–21.

*Ulrika Westrup:* material creation, conceptualization, methodology, formal analysis, investigation, writing – original draft

*Pernilla Danielsson:* material creation, methodology, formal analysis, writing

# 2 Theory

## 2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents previous research and the theoretical and analytical frameworks that inform the thesis. It begins by positioning the study as regards previous research on user orientation in welfare services, drawing on literature from social work, health and medical services, psychiatry, and care science. This body of research provides empirically-grounded insights into how user-oriented approaches are understood, challenged, and enacted in everyday welfare service practice.

Building on this research context, the chapter introduces Public Service Logic (PSL) as the overarching theoretical framework of the thesis. As such, PSL constitutes the main theoretical point of departure and the primary theory to which the thesis contributes, offering a service-based understanding of value creation and user orientation in public services. To analyse organisational challenges to user orientation, the chapter then presents the analytical framework of the thesis, consisting of two lenses; an ambidextrous organisation lens, to structure the barriers and clarify organisational prerequisites, and a multilevel innovation taxonomy, to indicate the need to support user-oriented practice from a multilevel perspective.

## 2.2 User orientation in a broader social science context

This section reviews previous research on user orientation in welfare services in order to clarify its perceived benefits, to identify the known challenges, and to position this thesis in relation to current knowledge gaps. In this thesis, the concept of ‘user orientation’ denotes an organisational perspective in welfare services which base the development and provision of services on the user’s needs, experiences, and perspectives. Key to this concept is respect for the user’s experiential knowledge, which forms the basis for coordinated and personalized services (Bromark et al., 2024; Boxall & Beresford, 2013). User orientation is a widely researched field spanning multiple disciplines, especially in healthcare (Tørseth, 2025) and social work (Bromark et al., 2024), but also in servitization research and public administration and management (Osborne & Strokosch, 2021). Various terms, e.g. *user participation* (Muurinen, 2019; Gerli et al., 2021; Pestoff, 2014), *user centricity* (Mihovska et al., 2024), and *user involvement* (Storm & Edwards,

2013), reflect different emphases, focusing mainly on the interaction between professional and service user, while still sharing the overarching goal of increasing inclusivity and collaboration in service provision.

Equally, terms such as *patient-centred care* (Hansen, et al., 2002) and *client participation* (Wressle, 2002) can be seen as hyponyms of the broader concept of *user*. These terms have emerged in various fields, including mental health, social work, rehabilitation, and eHealth, reflecting both the diversity of welfare sectors and an evolving understanding of user orientation in service design and delivery. Scholars have noted that each label applied to individuals using welfare services carries its own potential challenge. For example, the term ‘service user’ is frequently associated with negative stereotypes and may contribute to stigmatization. One proposed alternative is ‘expert by experience’ (McLaughlin, 2009), which aims to emphasize agency and experiential knowledge. However, as McLaughlin argues, such terms do not describe the person, but the nature of the relationship. Although this complexity is acknowledged in this thesis, terminology debates will not be in focus here. Instead, ‘service user’, or simply ‘user’, will be used to refer to those for whom the service is intended, and who require the support of welfare providers.

A further aspect to consider is the fact that discussions of user orientation often rest on an implicit assumption that the user is a rational and autonomous decision-maker, capable of articulating preferences and exercising choice. This assumption resembles what Yeatman (1994) describes as a will-based conception of the subject of right. As Yeatman propose, alternative understandings emphasise the self as the subject of right, where agency is not defined by cognitive autonomy alone but also by the capacity for self-expression within relational and institutional contexts. This distinction is relevant to welfare services, where users’ agency is frequently shaped, mediated, or constrained by organisational arrangements. From this perspective, user orientation cannot be reduced to decision-making competence, it must be understood in relation to how organisations make space for different forms of agency (Duff, 2026; Skarli, 2026).

### **2.2.1 Conceptual models of user participation**

Different scholars have developed models for categorizing the levels of user participation, highlighting the spectrum between passive consultation and full power-sharing (Arnstein, 1969; Shier, 2001; Hart, 1991; Osborne & Strokosch, 2022). These frameworks illustrate the varying degrees of *institutional embeddedness* of user participation. While some emphasize *user voice* (e.g., being heard, expressing views), others focus on *structural power-sharing*.

Arnstein's seminal paper (1969) introduced a ladder of participation, categorizing involvement into eight rungs. These rungs range from non-participation (manipulation and therapy) via tokenism (informing, consultation, and placation) to citizen power (partnership, delegated power, and citizen control). Higher levels on the ladder represent more meaningful user involvement, where service users

transition from being passive recipients to active participants, sharing or controlling decision-making processes. This work was later complemented by Hart (1991), focusing on the participation of children. Building on both Arnstein's (1969) and Hart's (1991) child-focused ladder, Shier's (2001) pathway to participation concentrates specifically on children's involvement. Unlike the ladder metaphor used by his predecessors, Shier presented five levels of participation, ranging from minimal participation, where 'children are listened to', to maximum participation, where 'children share power and responsibility for decision-making'.

While Arnstein's and Hart's models focus on the user's level of influence, combined with various levels of how professional roles can enable user influence, Shier also includes some organisational features, although this study also predominantly focuses on user roles. Shier introduced three stages, i.e. openings, opportunities, and obligations, which emphasize both the degree of participation and the extent to which organisations are both ready and obligated to implement participatory practices. However, it is important to note that these participation models primarily conceptualise user involvement in terms of influence, voice, and power over decision-making. They describe the extent to which users can affect services while saying comparatively little about how services are organised and practiced in ways attentive to users' lived situations, needs, and experiences of everyday encounters.

Osborne and Strokosch (2022) provide a different perspective on user orientation, via a two-fold distinction between user participation in both service delivery and policymaking. In service delivery, users co-create value with professionals, directly interacting with welfare services. In policymaking, users engage in high-level discussions, shaping the strategic direction and policies of these services. This distinction highlights the importance of both operational-level participation, where users influence their own service experiences, and strategic-level participation, where users impact broader service design and policy frameworks.

Figure 2 seeks to illustrate how these different spectra of user participation relate to each other. While Arnstein (1969), Hart (1991) and Shier (1991) all focus on influence and power dynamics, Osborne and Strokosch (2022) distinguish between two domains of participation from a service perspective; service delivery and policymaking. This latter division may be used to explore what user orientation is claimed to bring to welfare services, how it conflicts with existing structures and processes, and how it is understood and articulated within welfare services. User orientation typically leads to less power-shifting in service delivery than in policymaking (Osborne and Strokosch, 2022). A service perspective introduces a different starting point. Rather than asking how much power users have, it instead asks how professionals and organisations interpret, respond to, and act upon users' life situations during the course of service provision. User orientation in this sense does not primarily concern user-led services, but how services can be organised so that professionals are able to guide, support, and work with, as well as lead, users in ways that create value in their everyday lives.

	Arnstein's ladder of participation	Hart's ladder of participation for children	Shier's pathway to participation for children	Osborne & Strokosch Dichotomy
Citizen Power	Rung 8: Citizen control	Child initiated, shared decision w. adults	Children share power and responsibility for decision-making	
	Rung 7: Delegated power	Child initiated and directed	Children are invited in decision-making	
	Rung 6: Partnership	Adult-initiated, shared decision w. children	Children's views are taken into account	
Tokenism	Rung 5: Placation	Consulted and informed	Children are supported in expressing their views	
	Rung 4: Consultation	Assigned but informed	Children are listened to	
	Rung 3: Information	Tokenism		
Non-Participation	Rung 2: Therapy	Decoration		
	Rung 1: Manipulation	Manipulation		

**Figure 2: Idealized overlap between user participation models**

This thesis is positioned within a service perspective rather than within traditions concerned with power-sharing or participatory governance. Thus, the focus is not on how users gain influence over decisions, but on how welfare services are organised in ways that allow professionals to attend to users’ needs, experiences, and life situations in everyday practice. In this sense, the study addresses a research gap concerning the organisational prerequisites associated with user-oriented practice in welfare services. Figure 2 illustrates how the concept of user orientation is open to multiple interpretations across these perspectives.

While the spectrum of user orientation spans between participation as passive consultation and full power-sharing, this thesis will focus only on the middle ground and in relation to a service perspective rather than matters related to power sharing and participatory governance.

This positioning is deliberate: While empowerment and participatory governance are important dimensions of user involvement, examining how power is formally transferred to service users, or how co-decision mechanisms function at the strategic level, are not in focus here. As such, citizen engagement events, community dialogues, and service user advisory boards lie outside the main focus of this thesis. Instead, this research remains grounded in the domain of service provision, investigating how frontline welfare services incorporate user perspectives and how prerequisites in welfare services provide the space for user orientation within existing institutional structures and norms. Here, there is an important distinction to be made: This thesis does not focus on user-led and reactive welfare services but aims to capture how an orientation towards users’ needs, experience and perspective may provide opportunities for leading the user towards more proactive, value-creating welfare services (Gromark and Melin, 2013; Hodgkinson et al., 2023). In doing so, the thesis intends to contribute to a nuanced understanding of the practical

conditions necessary for fostering meaningful user orientation in welfare service offerings without assuming full-scale participatory governance or radical shifts in power distribution.

Various theoretical frameworks have been used to understand user orientation in welfare services, e.g. social work, Public Service Motivation (Perry & Wise, 1990), models of co-production (Loeffler & Bovair, 2021), and service logics (Grönroos, 2019). These frameworks emphasize various aspects of involving the user in the service, being particularly relevant to understanding how welfare services can integrate user perspectives into service delivery. The following section deals with how user orientation has been shown to enhance service quality and responsiveness across welfare sectors.

### **2.2.2 Reported benefits across sectors**

This section summarises the reported benefits of user orientation, drawing on literature from healthcare, psychiatry, social services, and care of the elderly. Overall, this body of literature presents an overwhelmingly positive view of user orientation, primarily as a means of improving service quality and efficiency, and achieving closer alignment between user expectations and service delivery (e.g., Nykänen, 2020). Studies also claim that user orientation tends to produce more relevant and effective services (Liaaen & Söderström, 2024), while fostering a healthier working environment for professionals (Wolmesjö et al., 2022).

Many studies describe models that aim to increase users' agency and empowerment, potentially corresponding to the higher rungs of participation depicted in Figure 2. However, influence over the actual service being provided generally remains within the professional organisation, albeit informed by users to some extent, suggesting that the low- to mid-level rungs are the ones most commonly enacted. Accordingly, many empirical studies report group-specific benefits. For example, young people living with disabilities benefit from participation by means of skills development and improved self-advocacy (Liaaen & Söderström, 2024). Studies of young people moving to out-of-home care report better outcomes when participation makes services more responsive to individual needs, leading to better-tailored interventions during transitions from in-care homes to out-of-home settings (Liaaen & Söderström, 2024). In addition, both improved relationships with social workers and strengthened levels of trust are also reported, as is democratic co-creation with practitioners (Bromark et al., 2023; Bromark et al., 2024).

At the same time, the lack of evaluated methods in social services is presented as a challenge for practitioners. Several studies therefore emphasise the importance of using shared decision-making (SDM) as a key approach to empowering users (Nykänen, 2020). SDM is said to enable users to exert real influence over decisions affecting their lives, aligning with ethical principles such as autonomy and empowerment. It is also considered to improve service quality by ensuring that

interventions are designed with users' preferences and needs in mind. Furthermore, evaluated methods like SDM are associated with enhanced user satisfaction and potentially more effective interventions (Nykänen, 2020).

In care of the elderly, the reported benefits include increased responsiveness and the effectiveness of services (Bartlett, 1999; Kam, 2023), improved decision-making processes, and more equal partnerships between providers and users (Leung et al., 2020). These developments are linked to an improved quality of life in older people (Wolmesjö et al., 2022). By involving older people in decisions about their care, the approach promotes dignity, independence, and autonomy (Kam, 2023). Moreover, participatory methods can empower both staff and older individuals, fostering healthier working environments and shared responsibility (Wolmesjö et al., 2022).

Studies in mental healthcare highlight how user participation enables individuals to lead meaningful lives despite ongoing mental health challenges (Damsgaard & Angel, 2021; Storm & Edwards, 2013). Recognised benefits here include empowerment through the acknowledgement of lived experience, with associated improvements in service provision and support (Hall et al., 2020; Hansen et al., 2002). Personal recovery emphasises self-determination, social inclusion, and empowerment: It is also reported to contribute to policymaking and strengthening human rights and social inclusion (Hall et al., 2020). Further, studies of appropriate-adult schemes suggest that involving service users in design, delivery, and evaluation enhances the effectiveness of supporting vulnerable individuals in police custody, with user-led approaches better being able to address emotional and practical needs, thus improving outcomes (Peacock et al., 2022).

In sum, the literature portrays a wide range of benefits associated with user orientation: higher service quality and efficiency; greater responsiveness and closer alignment with users' needs; more relevant and effective interventions; increased user satisfaction; improved relationships and trust; empowerment and user agency through co-creation and shared decision-making; healthier working environments for professionals; and support for personal recovery and social inclusion in mental healthcare. At the same time, however, as the next section shows, realising these benefits in practice is not straightforward.

### **2.2.3 Practical and professional barriers**

While enabling a user-oriented approach has many identified benefits, the literature on user orientation also shows that user-oriented approaches in welfare services face both practical and professional challenges. One significant hindrance identified in mental healthcare is the discrepancy between patients' and professionals' assessments of need. Professionals often identify more needs than patients do, which may reflect a paternalistic stance. In some psychiatric contexts, patients may underestimate their own needs, resulting in their perspectives being overlooked (Hilton et al., 2002). This imbalance complicates efforts to enable truly user-

oriented care. Further, studies in mental health settings (particularly inpatient care) highlight challenges that include a lack of competence among care providers, poor communication, and insufficient information sharing (Storm & Edwards, 2013).

Tørseth (2025) finds that, although professionals in Norwegian outpatient mental health services perceive themselves as user-oriented, organisational and resource constraints limit meaningful participation. In response, professionals adopt coping strategies, e.g. routinising, that risk reducing participation to a formality, as well as rationing, where resources are prioritised based on the assessed need. These strategies lead to pragmatic adaptations of user orientation without altering organisational structures or addressing underlying barriers. Beyond these practical challenges, professional tensions also arise from differing motivations within the welfare sector. The theoretical framework of Public Service Motivation (PSM) (Perry & Wise, 1990) defines PSM as ‘an individual’s orientation to delivering service to people with the purpose of doing good for others and society’ (Hondegheem & Perry, 2009). Research in PSM highlights its role in job performance, satisfaction, and organisational commitment (Alonso & Lewis, 2001). In this literature, societal orientation and individual user orientation are both forms of prosocial motivation, albeit focusing on different recipients: Societal orientation focuses on the collective good, whereas user orientation focuses on individual needs. For instance, university teachers with a societal focus have been found to grade more strictly, while those with a user focus tend to award higher grades and have higher pass rates, reflecting closer attention to students’ immediate needs (Andersen et al., 2017).

In nursing, by contrast, societal benefit and individual care often align, yielding higher job satisfaction (Andersen & Kjeldsen, 2013). Further, studies show that time constraints and systemic pressures can create tension between serving society and addressing individual needs: In education, user orientation is often more closely linked to job satisfaction as teachers derive fulfilment from directly interacting with their students, especially in challenging environments (Andersen & Kjeldsen, 2013). Professionalism can further complicate the integration of user orientation into welfare services. Andersen and Pedersen (2012) suggest that user orientation, as an altruistic motivation, may clash with professionalism, which emphasises specialised knowledge and norms. In healthcare and education, professionalism may at times conflict with the empathy required for user-oriented approaches, as professionals are expected to rely on expertise rather than emotion. This dynamic can create barriers to adopting user-oriented models, particularly where decision-making is expected to be driven by professional standards rather than individualised care. These tensions indicate that user orientation is neither singular nor universally understood: Instead, it unfolds along a spectrum of participation. The following section outlines several models that conceptualise different levels and forms of user involvement.

Other hindering factors found in prior research include providers’ perceptions of users being unmotivated, or unable, to participate meaningfully in care decisions, in

addition to risk-management concerns, limited user capacity, and cultural differences. Additionally, insufficient inter-agency collaboration, particularly between primary healthcare and social services, leads to duplication and inefficiencies, impeding seamless, user-oriented care experiences (Storm & Edwards, 2013; Bartlett, 1999).

In sum, user orientation is not absent, it is uneven. Practical obstacles recur, including discrepancies between patients' and professionals' assessments of need, limited competence, weak communication and information sharing, and organisational/resource constraints that prompt routinising and rationing, as well as risk-management concerns, perceived limits to user capacity, cultural differences, and insufficient inter-agency collaboration that creates duplication and inefficiencies. Professional dynamics also matter: Within a PSM framing, prosocial motives may be oriented towards the collective good or individual users, and these orientations can point to different actions (e.g., stricter versus more lenient grading), while in some fields (e.g., nursing), they align. When subject to time pressure and strong professional norms, motivation may translate into formal rather than meaningful participation. Taken together, these practical constraints and motivational and professional tensions help explain why consistent user orientation remains challenging in welfare services.

#### **2.2.4 Summary and theoretical positioning**

The literature reviewed in this chapter reveals both the promise and complexity of user orientation in welfare services. On the one hand, a wide range of empirical studies across sectors such as healthcare, mental health, care of the elderly, and social services consistently point to the benefits of involving users in service design and delivery. Reported outcomes include improved service quality and responsiveness, better alignment between user needs and service delivery, more relevant and effective interventions, higher user satisfaction, strengthened relationships and trust, empowerment and user agency (including co-creation and shared decision-making), enhanced working environments for professionals, and (particularly in mental health) support for personal recovery and social inclusion (e.g., Nykänen, 2020; Liaaen & Söderström, 2024; Wolmesjö et al., 2022; Damsgaard & Angel, 2021; Bromark et al., 2023; Hall et al., 2020).

At the same time, this body of research also highlights considerable challenges. Many studies identify persistent tensions between professional norms and user perspectives, limitations in inter-agency collaboration, and structural and resource barriers that restrict organisations' ability to embed user orientation in practice (Storm & Edwards, 2013; Bartlett, 1999; Tørseth, 2025), alongside recurring practical issues (e.g., limited competence, weak communication and information sharing, and risk-management constraints). Several scholars also note a lack of evaluated, transferable methods, particularly in social services, as well as a tendency for user participation to only achieve low levels of influence.

Moreover, the literature also points to a deeper tension between individual and societal value in public services (Andersen et al., 2017). Welfare services must navigate the dual imperative of responding to individual needs while also serving societal goals, often when subject to constrained budgets and rigid institutional frameworks (Osborne, 2021; Alford, 2016). While frameworks such as PSM (Perry & Wise, 1990), co-production models (Loeffler & Bovair, 2021), and participatory ladders provide valuable conceptual tools, they offer limited guidance on how to address these tensions at the organisational level (Andersen & Kjeldsen, 2013; Andersen et al., 2017). Most studies focus on either individual user-level experience or professional practice. Many studies are also situated within what we can call user-led services, leaving a gap in our understanding of how organisations can structurally support and sustain user orientation over time, and pull the benefits of user orientation towards more proactive welfare services (Gromark & Melin, 2013; Hodgkinson et al., 2023).

This thesis addresses that gap by repositioning user orientation as an issue of organisational capacity. Rather than viewing user orientation as a matter of individual motivation, or high-level governance reform, this study explores the concrete organisational prerequisites (cultural, structural, and institutional) that shape whether or not, and how, user-oriented practices can take root in everyday welfare provision. Accordingly, the thesis focuses on the middle of the user participation spectrum; where users are listened to, their views taken into account, and their knowledge recognized as a legitimate resource in value creation. While it does not examine participatory governance, or radical power-sharing, it does move beyond frameworks that rely solely on individual professionals' discretion. In doing so, its intention is to investigate how welfare services can create the prerequisites enabling user orientation to become an embedded, supported, and sustainable aspect of welfare service processes.

In doing so, the thesis aims to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how user orientation is shaped, not only by means of ideals and intentions, but also by means of concrete organisational conditions. This shift in focus lays the foundation for the empirical investigations that follow. In examining user orientation in welfare services, I adopt PSL as the thesis' theoretical perspective. PSL reframes user orientation as intrinsic to service, locating it within public service ecosystems and thus placing it at the centre rather than on the margins (Osborne, 2021; Osborne & Strokosch, 2022; Osborne, Nasi, et al., 2021; Strokosch & Osborne, 2020, 2024). Such service ecosystems may be defined as configurations of actors, resources, and technologies, as well as the interactions among them, situated within a particular contextual setting (Strokosch & Osborne, 2020; Petrescu, 2019). The next section sets out PSL's core assumptions, and how they guide the analysis made in this thesis.

## 2.3 User orientation in public service logic

This section outlines the theoretical framework that informs the study's analytical approach. In this study, PSL serves as the theoretical framework. Rooted in service logic, PSL reorients analysis of welfare service from internally focused production to co-created value during the service encounter, foregrounding users as resourceful actors (Osborne, 2018; 2021; Grönroos, 2019; Skålén, et al., 2018). As such, the service user role is shifted away from the periphery to the very centre of public service delivery (Osborne & Strokosch 2022), understanding users as active and equal partners with a reasonably clear idea of their own needs and goals (Skarli, 2022; Skarli, 2026). In doing so, it positions users as competent individuals, capable of influencing the design and improvement of the services that concern them (Askheim, 2016; Askheim et al., 2017). However, in a welfare setting, it is important to keep in mind that this emphasis on users, as inherently resourceful individuals, has been criticised for overlooking situations where they only have a limited capacity to engage, are involuntary participants, or are constrained by legal and organisational structures (Skarli, 2026).

I use PSL to frame what counts as relevant dynamics, e.g. value, resource integration, user participation, and frontline–user interaction, and to guide the empirical studies of the organisational challenges facing user orientation in welfare services. This choice follows on from the literature reviewed in Section 2.2. In response to these challenges, PSL has been advanced as a theoretical perspective that places interactional value creation and resource integration at its core, recasting user orientation as intrinsic to services and locating it within public service ecosystems. In doing so, PSL advances an outside–in perspective, grounding value creation in users' lived experiences and in the collaborative integration of resources across organisational boundaries, thereby reframing public services (Osborne, 2021; Osborne, Nasi, et al., 2021; Osborne & Strokosch, 2022; Strokosch & Osborne, 2020, 2024). Yet, despite this conceptual reframing, PSL has been critiqued for only providing limited guidance on how organisations can construct the prerequisites enabling such interactional value creation to occur (Stenvall & Kinder, 2026).

In operational terms, PSL focuses attention on user orientation by describing it as “*the centrality of the user to the delivery of effective and sustainable public services*” (Osborne, Cucciniello, et al., 2021, p. 174), thus focusing on value creation through co-creation with users. However, this formulation implicitly assumes that users are the primary, or even the sole, creators of value, which risks underplaying the organisational, professional, and systemic contributions also shaping service outcomes. While PSL conceptualises user orientation as the centrality of the individual user to value creation (Osborne et al., 2021), this emphasis risks limiting analytical attention to a single locus of benefit. As Gyllenhammar (2024) illustrates, public services can be seen as producing value across several loci simultaneously: At the level of the individual user, related actors such as employers or family members, organisations, and the public at large. These loci often embody inherent

value tensions, whereby value creation for one actor may coincide with *value destruction* for another (Cui & Osborne, 2023; Adebajo, 2026; Engen et al., 2021) or, as it could also be described, *value failure* (Cui et al., 2026).

PSL acknowledges both the individual and societal dimensions of value (Osborne, 2021) i.e. a dual-value system: However, the conceptual tools it provides are considerably more developed when it comes to analysing value at the individual level rather than the societal. As a result, the broader patterns of value creation and loss that unfold across multiple loci risk remaining analytically under-examined. What is missing here is not the recognition that collective and societal value exists, rather the existence of a clearer framework for understanding how value emerges, shifts, and interacts across different levels of the service system. This limitation becomes especially visible in complex welfare services, where organisational, democratic, and system-level prerequisites shape service outcomes in ways that extend beyond individual user experiences. PSL therefore risks under-representing, rather than misrepresenting, the full spectrum of value generated in public services, particularly the value dynamics occurring at the organisational, inter-organisational, and societal levels.

This challenge is amplified by the fact that PSL still lacks a sufficiently refined conceptual vocabulary for analysing value empirically. Against this backdrop, the present study employs two key concepts for analysing organisational prerequisites that either open up or close down space for user-oriented practice; (i) value as something that emerges in use rather than being embedded in organisational outputs and (ii) resource integration across organisational and professional boundaries. These concepts provide an analytical scaffold upon which the interplay between user orientation, organisational prerequisites, and service system dynamics can be understood more fully.

### **2.3.1 Why use PSL for this study?**

Early service research emerged from the private sector where services were understood as a sequence of interactions aimed at satisfying consumer needs (Shostack, 1977; Normann, 2001). Service Management and Service Marketing distinguished services from goods by emphasizing their relational, intangible, and process-based characteristics (Zeithaml et al., 1985; Fisk et al., 1993; Gummesson & Grönroos, 2012). However, these frameworks assumed a consumer context featuring choice and competition, making them less applicable to the public sector.

The introduction of Service-Dominant Logic (SDL) by Vargo and Lusch (2004) marked a paradigmatic shift: Services were no longer seen as units of delivery but as platforms for value co-creation between providers and users. SDL emphasized that value emerges in use, not in production. Service Logic (SL), developed by Grönroos and colleagues, built on this by stressing that value is always created by the user in his/her context, and that providers can only offer value propositions (Grönroos & Gummerus, 2014; Grönroos, 2012; Grönroos & Voima, 2013; Skälén,

2018). Yet, both SDL and SL remained rooted in private-sector assumptions, not taking into account the institutional logics, legal mandates, and societal obligations that shape public services.

The applicability of SDL and SL to welfare contexts is thus limited, not only because these services are publicly-funded and politically-governed, but also because private-sector service logics rest on a simplified view of the user. In SDL and SL, the user is often assumed to be a single, clearly identifiable individual who can articulate his/her own needs. In welfare services, users often face complex, changing needs that they may not be able to articulate or translate into action without support, meaning that their agency is frequently mediated or built up via others (Skarli, 2026). This makes the user role far less straightforward and renders direct value co-creation more contingent and indirect.

Public Service Logic emerged in response to both these and other limitations. Developed by Osborne and colleagues (Osborne et al., 2013; Osborne & Strokosch, 2021; Osborne, 2018, 2021), PSL incorporates insights from SDL and SL but adapts these to the realities of public service delivery. Over the past decade, PSL has been further developed and applied to studies of welfare services (e.g., Alford, 2016; Skålen, 2022; Eriksson et al., 2020; Lindqvist & Westrup, 2020). In PSL, service is presented as a process whereby value is created through interactions between public service providers and citizens in a public service ecosystem. In Petrescu's (2019) terms, a public service ecosystem is a multilevel, actor-rich system where public value is co-created, shaped by social norms and institutions, making it more complex than private-sector ecosystems. Table 1 summarises how three service logics conceptualise the key elements of service delivery, with a particular focus on how the role of the user, value creation, and resource integration are framed (Vargo & Lusch, 2008; Normann & Ramírez, 1993; Grönroos, 2012; Grönroos & Gummerus, 2014; Osborne, 2018; Osborne et al., 2016).

### **2.3.2 Key PSL concepts: value and resource integration**

A key contribution of PSL is the introduction of a *dual-value system*: including both individual value and societal value (Osborne, 2021; Alford, 2016; Skålen, 2022). Individual value refers to the outcomes that matter in the life of the user; what becomes better from his/her perspective (Grönroos, 2019). Societal value, by contrast, encompasses broader benefits such as social cohesion, equity, and cost-effectiveness. In cases of conflict, PSL holds that societal value takes precedence (Osborne, 2021). Yet, critics note that the concept of societal value remains underspecified, raising questions about who defines it, how conflicting values between users and society are adjudicated, and how such judgments avoid becoming politically or normatively biased (Eriksson, 2021; Trischler et al., 2023). This critique aligns with broader concerns in service research: Brown (2007) highlighted, early on, the persistent linguistic ambiguity around foundational concepts such as value, arguing that conceptual clarity is essential for empirical verification.

**Table 1: Comparison between different types of service logics**

<b>Aspect/ View of</b>	<b>Service-Dominant Logic</b>	<b>Service Logic</b>	<b>Public Service Logic</b>
Focus	Cross-level perspective spanning the macro (societal), meso (organisational) and micro (service-encounter) levels.	Emphasis on organisation–customer relations and service processes (primarily micro/meso).	Dual focus on individual and societal value; services situated in the public domain and shaped by policy and institutional arrangements.
View of the user	Beneficiaries (individuals or organisations) as clearly identifiable actors who can articulate their own needs and interests and actively participate as resource-integrating actors and co-creators of value.	Users as clearly identifiable individuals who can articulate their own needs and interests and who act as the primary value creators, integrating resources into their own context	Users as both the recipients and co-creators of individual and societal value; users' position may be voluntary or involuntary (e.g., coerced, mandated or unaware).
Resource integration	Emphasis on integrating resources from multiple actors (users, providers, networks) in dynamic constellations.	Focus on users' ability to integrate the resources provided by the service provider into their own context.	Resources are integrated across organisational, professional, and community boundaries, including public institutions and citizens
Concept of value	Value is co-created through interaction between user and provider; differentiates between value in context, value in use, and value in exchange	Value is created and determined by users, for users, in their own context	Value includes both individual and societal dimensions; it can be created or destroyed through collaboration between users, providers and other actors.

Subsequent work has reinforced the need to examine value both holistically, within service ecosystems (Osborne et al., 2021; Petrescu, 2019), and in more fine-grained, operational terms (Alford, 2016). Even Osborne (2021) acknowledges that the field has yet to fully answer the basic question of “*what lies in the word value?*” Without greater semantic precision, PSL risks limiting both its empirical applicability and its ability to illuminate user-oriented practice within complex welfare settings.

Within PSL, value is created through interaction between users, providers, and other actors across a multi-level service ecosystem. However, as shown by Gyllenhammar (2024), such value does not emerge at a single point, instead unfolding across multiple loci of benefit that include users, family members, employers, organisations, and the public at large. Because these loci may either align or conflict, value creation for one actor can coincide with value destruction for another (Cui & Osborne, 2023). PSL acknowledges these complexities theoretically, yet it remains conceptually better equipped to analyse value at the individual level than at the organisational or societal levels. Thus, while the distinction between individual and societal value is one of PSL’s conceptual strengths, the mechanisms through which value emerges, shifts, or conflicts across levels remain underdeveloped.

Another foundational concept is *resource integration*. Rather than viewing service provision as one-way delivery, PSL frames it as a process whereby various actors (users, professionals, organisations) combine their resources to create value (Osborne & Strokosch, 2022). These resources can be tangible (e.g., funding, equipment, staff time) or intangible (e.g., knowledge, skills, relationships). Successful user orientation thus depends on how well organisations facilitate this integration across boundaries. However, although resource integration is positioned as a key mechanism within PSL, the concept itself remains only loosely defined. It often functions more as a ‘black box’ or a symbolic ideal than as a clearly specified analytical construct. This lack of conceptual precision limits its usefulness as regards understanding how integration actually occurs, or fails to occur, within the organisational, structural, and regulatory constraints that characterise many welfare settings. Thus, resource integration risks becoming more of an aspirational notion than a tool for practical implications, particularly in welfare settings characterised by high levels of regulation, scant resources, or fragmented responsibilities.

In light of these conceptual ambiguities, the present study employs two key concepts to analyse the organisational prerequisites of user orientation:

- (i) *value as emerging in use* rather than being embedded in outputs, and
- (ii) *resource integration across organisational and professional boundaries*.

These concepts operationalise the key tenets of PSL while responding to its unresolved definitional challenges, providing analytical traction for understanding how organisational structures and prerequisites either open up or close down space for user-oriented practice within complex welfare ecosystems.

### 2.3.3 Applying PSL to the empirical analysis

User orientation in PSL is grounded in the idea that public services should be structured to enable value to emerge in use, through interaction between users and professionals. From this perspective, the user is not a passive recipient but an active co-creator of value (Osborne, 2021; Grönroos & Voima, 2013; Grönroos, 2019).

This shift entails moving away from standardised outputs towards service processes that integrate users' capabilities, goals, and contextual knowledge. Empathy may support this process but does not constitute its conceptual core. Instead, user orientation in PSL refers to the organisational and relational arrangements that make co-creation possible (Skålen et al., 2018). Crucially, enabling user orientation is not the sole responsibility of individual professionals: It depends on whether or not the organisation creates the conditions that support interaction, responsiveness, and shared meaning-making. PSL thus proposes a way of conceptualising user orientation as a systemic rather than an individual capacity. This thesis therefore engages PSL as a fruitful theoretical perspective to examine how welfare services enable or constrain user orientation in practice. It introduces important concepts such as value and resource integration, and it also highlights the need to design welfare services that support active user participation.

However, while the theoretical perspective of PSL outlines what user orientation entails, it only offers limited empirical insight into the organisational capabilities required to realise these ideals (Eriksson & Hellström, 2021; Poblete et al., 2023). The practical implications of PSL's principles, how organisations create space for user orientation, how they support professionals, and how they navigate competing norms, remain underexplored (Eriksson & Hellström, 2021). Critics argue that this specifically concerns the balancing of individual and societal value (Kinder & Stenvall, 2023), which makes implementation uncertain. Further, several researchers argue that PSL has not prominently positioned the key concept, and given it meaning and definition, in relation to adjacent concepts such as public value (Stenvall & Kinder, 2026). Nor is it capable of including the purpose of public governance, due to largely ignoring policymaking (Sønderskov & Rønning, 2021). Much of this critique can be traced back to the lack of real-life testing of welfare services, positioning PSL 'in its infancy as a new research paradigm', and the fact that it 'is an emergent hybrid set of ideas' (Stenvall & Kinder, 2026, p. 249). Consequently, more empirical studies are needed to examine how value co-creation actually unfolds in complex welfare ecosystems with multiple actors, overlapping responsibilities and conflicting values (Foss & Pedersen, 2016; Poblete et al., 2023; Petrescu, 2019). Furthermore, consistent with PSL, Trischler et al. (2023) advocate a public ecosystem perspective rather than a purely user-centric lens when studying value creation in public services, emphasising co-creation across multiple actors.

Other aspects that have received little or no attention in PSL concern power-dynamics. Recent work has highlighted that street-level service encounters are permeated by power dynamics that shape what users are able and willing to

contribute, thus applying conditions to possibilities of resource integration and value creation (Rønshaugen et al., 2025). This critique points to a limitation of PSL-oriented accounts, which may implicitly assume a relatively symmetric interaction between providers and users, despite the institutional authority and discretionary capacity embedded in many welfare service settings. The critique that a power aspect needs to complement PSL is also acknowledged in Osborne (2021). The present thesis does not take power as its primary analytical entry point either. In line with a PSL orientation, the thesis remains centred on how value and resource integration are understood in practice, and also on the organisational prerequisites that shape user-oriented approaches. Power-related mechanisms are therefore acknowledged as relevant contextual features of welfare service interactions, but they are not theorised or examined as a distinct analytical dimension in this thesis.

To sum up, this thesis does not adopt PSL as a finished or prescriptive theory, but as a perspective that carries both normative ambitions and analytical potential. While PSL has partly been articulated in the literature as a framework for how public services may be organised, it is used here primarily as an analytical lens for examining the organisational prerequisites that shape user orientation in practice. By investigating these conditions, the study seeks to contribute to a more empirically-grounded understanding of how PSL concepts relate to the organisational dynamics of welfare services.

## 2.4 The analytical framework

While PSL provides a fruitful theoretical framework for understanding user orientation through value and resource integration in welfare services, it does not fully account for the organisational prerequisites that shape everyday practices in welfare services. As discussed above, the aim of making services more responsive to users' needs in a proactive manner is well grounded in theory, but its practical realisation is less clear.

To address these challenges, this section integrates the analytical framework of ambidexterity with multilevel innovation taxonomy, to be used as analytical lenses for understanding organisational barriers and multi-level perspectives of user orientation in welfare services. Together, these two analytical lenses extend PSL's theoretical framework by attending to the organisational prerequisites that shape user orientation in welfare services.

### 2.4.1 Ambidextrous structures as an analytical model

In studies of public sector reform, ambidexterity is linked to the growing emphasis on user-centricity and co-creation. It is described as an organisational capacity that allows public organisations to maintain internal alignment and performance while

simultaneously opening up to collaborative, user-oriented forms of innovation (see, for example, Favoreu et al., 2025). However, research on ambidexterity constitutes a substantial and well-established field, spanning both multiple disciplines and decades of empirical and conceptual development (Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996; Christensen, 1997; O'Reilly & Tushman, 2008; Favoreu et al., 2025). This thesis does not aim to provide a comprehensive review of this literature. Rather, it selectively draws on key dimensions that have been repeatedly identified across studies, as in the systematic review by Stoiber et al. (2023), in order to construct an analytical lens suitable for synthesising the findings presented in Chapter 5.

The persistent struggle to embed user orientation within welfare services suggests that organisational structures and professional norms do not naturally accommodate user orientation alongside established bureaucratic and professional frameworks. To further complement PSL with a more structural model of how organisations can enable these principles without disrupting an existing service delivery mechanism focusing on legality and equity, this study turns to ambidextrous organisations.

Research on ambidextrous organisations offers a potential approach to managing competing welfare approaches (March, 1991; O'Reilly & Tushman, 2008). Ambidextrous organisations are those capable of simultaneously maintaining operational stability and efficiency (*exploitation*) while exploring and supporting new approaches that may challenge existing routines (*exploration*). In the context of welfare services, this could be seen as referring to the ability to deliver standardized, policy-driven services while also enabling adaptive, user-oriented practices that respond to individual needs. Such dual capacity often requires differentiated structures, flexible leadership, and an organisational culture that legitimizes both continuity and change (Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996; O'Reilly & Tushman, 2013).

While ambidextrous structures may help facilitate the incremental integration of user orientation, service logic also introduces a fundamentally disruptive challenge to welfare services. Unlike bureaucratic routines and professional norms, which emphasize hierarchical authority, standardization, and expert-driven decision-making, service logic operates from an outside-in perspective that prioritizes user engagement and co-created value. As such, a service perspective may not simply be hybridized alongside existing perspectives, as it may be said to disrupt them. This perspective aligns with disruptive innovation theory (Christensen, 1997; Christensen & Raynor, 2003), which suggests that emergent models often challenge dominant paradigms rather than coexist with them. Welfare services face multiple barriers when attempting to create space for a service logic perspective, many of which are consistent with the challenges observed in ambidextrous organisations. A systematic review by Stoiber et al. (2023) identifies five key barriers to ambidextrous organisations, from the private sector. These will be used in the final chapter of this thesis to assess whether or not they resonate with the public sector:

*Asymmetric resource distribution* – Resource allocation is often shaped by internal priorities and established financial structures, which can limit investments

in customer-driven or innovative initiatives (Assink, 2006; Chesbrough, 2010; Cozzolino et al., 2018; Chen et al., 2021).

*Cultural resistance* – Deeply embedded professional norms and traditional operational models create inertia, making it difficult to adopt collaborative and co-creative approaches (Velu & Stiles, 2013; Iranmanesh et al., 2021).

*Fixed cognitive frameworks* – Employees and decision-makers frequently operate within established mental models that emphasize risk management and procedural compliance, which can constrain adaptability and customer engagement (Ahuja & Lampert, 2001; DaSilva et al., 2013; Kammerlander et al., 2018).

*Reluctance at the top* – Leadership often prioritizes stability and existing business strategies, making it challenging to embrace new paradigms such as service-oriented business models (Rumelt, 1995; Christensen & Raynor, 2003).

*Structural constraints* – Organisational frameworks, such as centralized decision-making and rigid operational processes, can limit the flexibility needed to implement co-creative and customer-centric strategies (Yu & Hang, 2010; Wan et al., 2015).

These barriers show that innovative units cannot just be bolted onto old machinery in the private sector, and perhaps the same may be said about welfare services. In welfare services, the tension is even greater: Unlike private firms, which can suspend or spin off their operations, welfare services must keep their core services running while they change. These organisations cannot ‘close welfare down for renovation’. Thus, making changes that enable user-oriented approaches has to happen under a full operational load. The key question, then, is which organisational prerequisite will affect such a change. Adding this ambidextrous organisational lens to the final chapter may help the thesis to achieve its aim.

## **2.4.2 A multi-level perspective on welfare services**

The second analytical lens, drawn from innovation studies, is used in order to offer a multi-level perspective on user orientation in welfare services. The need for a multi-level perspective has also been emphasised in recent developments in Public Service Logic, where the public service setting, if user orientation is to be meaningfully supported in practice, is described as a service ecosystem that requires orchestration across different levels (Braga et al., 2026; Adebajo, 2026).

While innovation has often been framed as a private-sector endeavour, current challenges require public organisations not only to adopt but also to shape service innovation, i.e. innovation from a service perspective (Haddad et al., 2022; Mazzucato, 2013). Recent research in the field emphasises service and social innovation, where value is co-created between providers, users and wider stakeholder networks (Skålén, 2022; Alford, 2016). In this vein, service innovation, understood as the new or enhanced value experienced by the user, demands an outward, user-oriented perspective (Witell et al., 2016) and aligns with PSL’s focus

on value and resource integration in welfare practice (Osborne, 2018; Sønderskov & Rønning, 2021).

Yet, in innovation studies too, structural, cultural and institutional constraints appear to continue to limit systematic adaptation. Windrum’s (2008) taxonomy is used here as a way of discussing multiple organisational levels in relation to user orientation (Rønning & Knutagård, 2015; Aflaki & Freise, 2019). In this thesis, the taxonomy is not adopted as an innovation model per se, instead being borrowed as an analytical structure for making visible how the different organisational levels within a public service ecosystem relate to the possibilities of user-oriented practice. The taxonomy helps specify how responsibilities and influences are distributed across levels and actors in relation to PSL-contingent user-oriented practice across services, processes, workplaces, concepts, policies and systems. Linking types of change (e.g., service, service process, workplace, conceptual, policy, systemic) to actors (users, professionals, managers, inter-organisational partners) provides a potential multi-level (micro, meso, macro) and multi-actor way of enabling the organisational prerequisites for resource integration and value as a means of user orientation. In this sense, the taxonomy helps articulate how user orientation, understood from a PSL perspective, may require orchestration across ecosystem levels rather than isolated adjustments within single organisational units (Braga et al., 2026; Adebajo, 2026).

**Table 2: Taxonomy of the innovation levels in the public sector**

Innovation Classification	Explanation
Service innovation	New services or improved service quality
Service delivery innovation	New or improved service delivery processes
Administrative and organisational innovation	Changes in organisational/administrative structures or routines, including managerial support
Conceptual innovation	New visions challenging old service processes or organisational assumptions
Policy innovation	Changes on the policy level
Systemic innovation	New or improved ways of interacting with other organisations.

However, while the taxonomy originally made comparisons between different types of innovations, it is used here to articulate how different ecosystem levels relate to user-oriented practice and how these levels may be understood in relation to one another when analysing user orientation. The original taxonomy highlights the key role of service innovation as the foundation for public sector transformation (Windrum, 2008; Rønning & Knutagård, 2015), having served as the basis for readaptations in various studies (Aflaki & Freise, 2019). For example, Hartley (2005) includes strategic innovation and governance innovation in the spectrum. This may be understood as underscoring the fact that innovation in welfare services must be understood not only as the introduction of new services but also as a

systemic perspective on how services are organised and delivered. The capacity for public organisations to innovate effectively often hinges on whether or not they can reconcile established procedures using user-oriented approaches.

To be analytically applicable to this thesis, the taxonomy is modified by means of redefining its original categories. The category of “service delivery” is reframed as “service process” to align more closely with a Public Service Logic perspective. Similarly, the level originally labelled “administrative and organisational” is reconceptualised as “workplace”, reflecting the fact that the taxonomy operates within an organisational level of analysis. In addition, the term *innovation* is deliberately omitted, not to question its relevance, but to avoid confining the analysis to an innovation-oriented discourse. This adjustment allows the analytical focus to remain on the situated activities, professional roles, and organisational conditions associated with user-oriented practice. In this sense, the taxonomy functions as an analytical structure rather than a prescriptive model, offering a more context-sensitive point of reference than a generic organisational chart.

As discussed earlier, this shift clarifies the fact that the analysis does not address system change through top-down transformation. Instead, it centres on examining the organisational capacities and constraints related to the presence and persistence of user orientation in everyday settings. Taken together, the taxonomy offers a way of structuring analysis of relating PSL concepts to empirical observations by indicating how different levels and actors are implicated in user-oriented practice across service processes, workplaces, and system-level arrangements. This also resonates with the service ecosystem perspective in PSL, where user orientation depends rather on how actors across levels are aligned and coordinated than on isolated professional efforts (Braga et al., 2026; Adebajo, 2026).

In summary, this section has explored how PSL is analysed alongside concepts from ambidextrous organisations and innovation studies, in order to better understand the organisational challenges of user orientation. While theoretical frameworks highlight the potential of co-created, adaptive services, the realities of welfare provision are shaped by institutional logics, structural barriers, and professional norms that limit flexibility and move welfare away from being demanded. This thesis does not address how change should be pursued, instead examining the organisational challenges that shape the prerequisites for user-oriented practices in welfare services. By integrating these perspectives, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of the structural and organisational constraints associated with user orientation in practice.

# 3 Methodologies and materials

## 3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological considerations and choices that underpin the thesis. It describes how the overall research strategy has developed over time, as well as the epistemological and theoretical assumptions guiding the process, and how these have influenced methodological decisions. As the methodological choices are closely intertwined with the empirical material, the chapter also presents the empirical data used in the five articles that comprise the thesis, situating each within the overarching research design.

In line with the theoretical foundation presented in the previous chapter, the thesis applies a mixed-methods approach that combines several forms of qualitative inquiry with a quantitative study. The qualitative studies mainly draw on co-creative approaches, especially research circles, although other qualitative methods, e.g. focus group interviews, have also been used. The quantitative component adds a complementary, organisation-level perspective. These methodological strands are connected using an abductive logic, which allows theory and empirical material to inform each other iteratively.

This thesis consists of five articles based on six pieces of empirical material. This material underpins the articles, jointly forming the empirical basis for the analysis presented in the thesis.

## 3.2 Methodological reflections

The research process of this thesis has developed over time, shaped by both academic training and professional practice. Initially, the research approach was characterised by a clear epistemically-oriented interest in knowledge, with a focus on conceptually understanding and analysing the service perspective in welfare services. During the early days of my research, I was still being influenced by a positivist understanding of knowledge, whereby objectivity, structure, and measurement were seen as key. This reflects my early background in computational linguistics and corpus-based analysis, where quantitative methods were standard, and the researcher's position was seen as separate from the data.

During this early, intervention-oriented phase, my attention was geared towards what organisations themselves describe as *service innovations*, aimed at improving outcomes for individuals. I began to explore these initiatives through a service innovation lens, assuming that they would represent practical expressions of a service-oriented approach. Yet, when examined more closely using theoretical definitions of service innovation and service logics, many of these initiatives did not align with what the literature would prescriptively characterise as either a ‘service’ or an ‘innovation’ in a strict sense. This created an analytical impasse: The initial empirical material was rich, but the conceptual framing did not adequately capture what was occurring in practice.

As a result, I was forced to step back and reconsider my analytical entry point. Rather than examining the innovation, I returned to a more fundamental question repeatedly raised by the practitioners themselves; i.e. the importance of being user-oriented during day-to-day work. This shift also marked a move away from analysing user orientation, at the level of the individual professional, towards examining it as an organisational phenomenon shaped by structures, logics, and prerequisites. In retrospect, this redirection represents a key abductive moment during the research process, when empirical observations prompted a reconsideration of the analytical focus within the PSL framework.

Over time, the study shifted away from an interpretive orientation towards a pragmatic approach. This shift was not planned from the outset, instead emerging when earlier analytical approaches proved insufficient to capture the complexity of the empirical material. The need to move iteratively between theory and observation became increasingly apparent. In brief, pragmatism treats knowledge as something judged on the merits of its practical consequences: It favours actionable insight, recognises the interconnection between experience, knowing and acting, and views inquiry as an experiential process (Kelly & Cordeiro, 2020). Pragmatism allows for different types of knowledge and acknowledges the fact that both the objective and subjective aspects of reality exist. It also accepts methodological pluralism, i.e. some phenomena are best measured while others are best interpreted, which fits with the aim of this thesis of advancing knowledge of the organisational challenges entailed by user orientation in Swedish welfare services, from a public service logic (PSL) perspective. On this basis, the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods is justified as complementary (Lidén, 2023).

Pragmatism also affects the role of the researcher. Rather than trying to stay completely neutral and external to the research study, I have often been involved in reflective dialogues and learning processes. Here, I was not just an observer but also a participant. This requires a reflective attitude throughout the research process. To reduce the risk of bias, I have regularly discussed my interpretations with my supervisors and co-authors, and my colleagues, both in academia and in municipal welfare services. While pragmatism and the use of mixed methods explain my overall methodological orientation, it is also important to clarify my underlying view of knowledge and how it has influenced the design and focus of this study.

This thesis draws on both epistemic and phronetic forms of knowledge. In Bornemark (2018; 2019), Aristotle's terms are used, where terms, episteme refers to generalisable, abstract, and often theoretical knowledge, whereas phronesis refers to practical wisdom; i.e. context-dependent, experience-based understanding rooted in situated judgment and action. Although Aristotle also distinguished *techne* as craft-based practical knowledge, this study does not address the procedural or manual aspects of welfare work.

While analytic frameworks, such as ambidextrous organisational theory and an innovation taxonomy, offer analytical lenses that reflect episteme, the main concern of this study lies in understanding the everyday, embedded conditions that shape opportunities for user orientation in welfare services, i.e. phronesis. Importantly, these theoretical lenses were introduced gradually as tools for making sense of patterns already appearing in the material. In retrospect, this trajectory can be described as abductive. Rather than applying theory to data, the research process involved repeated reconsiderations of exactly where within the PSL framework the analytical focus should lie, as empirical observations have redirected attention over time (Kristersson Ugglå, 2019).

### **3.2.1 My relationship with Public Service Logic**

The following section more explicitly elaborates my reflexive relationship with Public Service Logic (PSL) and how this theoretical framework has been approached and used throughout the research process.

I first came into contact with PSL when contributing to the book *Tjänstelogik i välfärden (Service Logic in Welfare)* (Danielsson et al., 2019). At the time, PSL appeared as a novel and promising approach to understanding and reforming welfare services. Having worked as an innovation manager since 2013, I encountered many of the organisational tensions and reform ambitions that PSL seeks to address. It was in this role that my interest in service logic first emerged and eventually led me to pursue doctoral studies.

PSL in its current form was introduced by Osborne (2018) as a further development of Public Service Dominant Logic (Osborne, 2013), with a stronger emphasis on value creation in public services. It must be acknowledged here that PSL is a theoretical framework with a dual nature: It can be used analytically, to understand and explain value creation in public services, as well as prescriptively and normatively, by articulating ideals concerning how public services ought to be organised and delivered. My own approach to PSL, and its dual nature, evolved while working on this thesis, in parallel with a shift in both the aim of the study and my understanding of how the framework relates to everyday organisational practice. At the outset of the research process, my aim was more explicitly intervention-oriented. This initial intervention-oriented aim was closely connected to my early focus on what organisations themselves described as service innovations. My initial point of departure was to explore whether or not a PSL perspective could inform or

illuminate ongoing reform initiatives in welfare organisations, with the intention of supporting learning processes that could subsequently be examined and evaluated. During this early phase, PSL was approached primarily as a normative and prescriptive framework, offering guidance on how welfare services ought to be organised in more user-oriented and value-creating ways.

However, at an early stage of the research, it became clear that translation from a normative, prescriptive understanding of PSL to everyday organisational practice was highly problematic. In the organisations initially studied, there was no clearly articulated or shared service perspective in use. Key concepts associated with PSL, e.g. value creation and resource integration, did not have a clear foothold in everyday practice, although practitioners were highly appreciative of reflections on the service perspective, while pointing to challenges where such a perspective did not align with prevailing organisational logics or routines. This early insight prompted a fundamental shift in my research approach. Rather than studying the introduction or implementation of a service logic perspective, I then redirected my focus and examined the organisational challenges associated with working in user-oriented ways in everyday practice. This shift marked a change in both the aim of the thesis and my relationship with PSL. Instead of treating PSL as a model to be applied or evaluated, I increasingly approached it as a theoretical point of reference against which organisational conditions, conflicting bureaucratic and professional logics, and everyday constraints could be examined and problematised.

As such, PSL functions primarily as a theoretical frame of reference rather than as a prescriptive model. It provides a conceptual vocabulary for understanding user orientation, value creation, and resource integration in welfare services, but it is not used as a benchmark against which empirical practices are evaluated. The analysis does not assess whether or not organisations or professionals act “in accordance with” PSL; rather, it seeks to understand the organisational conditions and constraints under which user-oriented work is made possible, or limited. In research circles and focus group discussions, concepts such as value and resource integration were introduced by researchers as reflective prompts to elicit participants’ own interpretations of value and coordination in practice. In these situations, PSL concepts were not used to guide participants towards predefined answers or normative ideals. Rather, they functioned as sensitising devices that helped structure dialogue and encourage participants to articulate their experiences, tensions, and everyday challenges, in their own terms. In some parts of data collection, PSL concepts thus served to support reflection and dialogue. It is important to note that this reflective use of theory is analytically distinguished from the subsequent interpretation and analysis of the empirical material.

To address the complexity of organisational practice, especially from the viewpoint of frontline professionals, and to avoid reducing empirical findings to normative ideals, PSL is complemented by other theoretical perspectives that may be better suited to analysing tensions, contradictions, and structural constraints. These perspectives are used in order to illuminate how different logics,

organisational arrangements, and prerequisites shape everyday work, rather than in order to propose solutions to practical problems. It is worth adding here that, while this thesis primarily focuses on frontline professionals and organisational conditions, users' perspectives are not entirely absent. In Article 1, children's voices are included to capture how different stakeholders perceive what is better, i.e. value, from a user perspective. These accounts are used to illuminate outcomes and the value experienced rather than to analyse organisational processes.

The analytical emphasis on frontline professionals and organisational arrangements is thus not a denial of users' importance, but a deliberate choice informed by calls in the PSL literature to pay greater attention to the professional and organisational preconditions enabling user orientation to take root (Osborne, 2021). The analytical frameworks, in the form of organisational ambidexterity, innovation theory, and institutional logics (used in Article 4), are all the result of doctoral courses undertaken during my PhD studies, being introduced as additional analytical lenses because I felt they provided the study with greater analytical strength. Throughout my analysis, I have thus attempted to be explicit about when the focus was on describing and explaining how work is carried out and experienced in everyday organisational practice, and when theoretical concepts were analytically used to frame or interpret these observations, especially in Chapter 4 when discussing the articles. This distinction is key to the transparency of the study and when it comes to clarifying how different theories are used for different analytical purposes within the thesis, rather than as normative benchmarks.

Public Service Logic is used in this thesis as one theoretical perspective among several possible approaches to welfare services that could have been used. Other frameworks would have foregrounded different dimensions of welfare provision. For example, perspectives such as New Public Governance would have emphasised networks, partnerships, and macro-level governance arrangements (Osborne, 2010), while critical perspectives could have highlighted issues of power, discourse, and inequality, shaping what counts as "user orientation" (Habermas, 1989). Actor–Network Theory could have drawn attention to how human and non-human actors jointly shape service systems and reveal hidden barriers in welfare delivery networks (Callon, 1986). By choosing PSL, the analysis foregrounds service interactions, value creation, and user orientation, while questions relating to power relations and broader governance structures receive less direct analytical attention. This is a deliberate limitation, reflecting the specific aim of examining the organisational challenges of user orientation from a service perspective.

### **3.2.2 Ethics statement**

An application was not submitted to the Swedish Ethical Review Authority because, based on the study design, the research did not meet the stipulations of the Ethical Review Act (SCS 2003:460). The studies involved adult professionals (and, occasionally, senior managers and elected officials) acting in their official roles: No

interventions were conducted, no vulnerable participants were recruited, and no sensitive personal data was processed. The focus was on professional judgement and organisational practice. Transcripts and survey data were pseudonymised; quotations were screened to avoid identifying third parties; and, in the quantitative study, demographic variables were omitted. Where elected officials participated, they did so as part of the governance chain, not in their party-political capacity, and no information about political opinions was recorded. Participation was voluntary and informed, data minimisation and secure storage were applied, and GDPR compliance was observed.

Despite this, I recognise that analyses of organisational practice can have unintended effects beyond generating knowledge of user orientation; e.g. reputational harm, the stigmatisation of units, or the misappropriation of findings to create blame rather than learning. To minimise such risks, results have been reported at an aggregate level wherever possible; quotations were carefully selected and de-identified; organisations and roles were contextualised rather than singled out; and preliminary findings were discussed with stakeholders during feedback sessions to check interpretations and potential consequences. Throughout, I have aimed to take a ‘do no unnecessary harm’ and proportionality stance, proceeding cautiously during dissemination and consulting supervisors when in doubt. My intention is to be formative and supportive of professional judgement and improvement, not evaluative or punitive, and ethical reflection has been treated as an ongoing process rather than approval on a one-off basis.

### **3.2.3 Validity, trustworthiness and reflexivity**

With respect to construct validity (i.e., the extent to which my measures truly capture the intended constructs), the key concepts were tied to the evidence-based choices in the theoretical framework: Value clarification and verification, together with resource-integration processes, guided the qualitative analyses, while the quantitative study used exploratory factor analysis as a data-reduction technique in order to identify two interpretable outcome dimensions related to user-oriented behaviour and attitudes towards a service perspective. Risks such as social-desirability bias and variable interpretations of PSL remain, but I attempted to mitigate these through repeated checks with practitioners, both within and outside the participating organisations. Regarding internal validity (the cause and effect), the qualitative studies identify recurring organisational patterns and barriers rather than causal effects, while the quantitative study estimates correlations without causal identification. Stronger claims about cause and effect would require longitudinal or experimental designs. External validity (generalisability) is, by necessity, bounded by the Swedish welfare setting: Transferability rests on analytic generalisation since recurring organisational patterns (such as resource misintegration and tensions between institutional logics) are observed in comparable systems. I have strengthened the overall level of validity by holding

continuous presentations and dialogue with multiple organisations, both in academia but, in particular, in welfare services.

These presentations and dialogues were enabled, in part, by my dual role as an industrial doctoral student and a municipal innovation manager, which offered me privileged access to an iterative dialogue and external validation across several welfare services. At the same time, this dual role entails a clear risk of power-related bias. As a manager within the wider organisation, my presence could plausibly inhibit candid responses, or prompt efforts to please me. Further, I might also favour professional wisdom that aligns with my own previous views. To limit these risks, I took care, of course, not to involve my own unit in the studies, and I tried to be explicit and transparent regarding my role and aims. I also used actor feedback sessions to challenge emerging interpretations. The interactive research approach enhanced relevance in practice, but the potential for role-related influence remains a limitation worth bearing in mind when interpreting the findings.

### 3.3 Research design and methodological strategy

Based on the pragmatic positioning described above, this thesis applies a mixed-methods design. The combination of qualitative and quantitative methods allows the capture of both the meaning and practice of user orientation (four qualitative articles), as well as the broader organisational patterns and prerequisites that shape it (one quantitative article). An overview of the research design of the studies featured in this thesis, including the methods, techniques, and stakeholder groups involved, is provided in Table 3. *Methods*, here, concerns the overall approach guiding the ‘why’ and ‘what’ of the study. In this thesis, the methods vary between qualitative approaches (focusing on words, texts, and subjective experiences) and quantitative approaches (centring on numbers, statistics, and objective survey measurements). While other methods do exist, e.g. experiments, they are not employed in this particular body of work. By combining both qualitative and quantitative strands, the thesis intends to capture in-depth insights (through research circles and focus group interviews) into organisational challenges facing user-oriented approaches alongside a broader overview (via surveys) of the organisational factors that enable a service perspective and user-oriented approaches. The techniques are the specific tools used in these methods, addressing the ‘how’ of the research. For example, within the qualitative strand, interviews, and focus group interviews are used, while surveys serve as the primary technique in the quantitative part. The ‘who’ dimension also becomes pivotal: The particular stakeholders involved directly influence the types of insights derived.

In addition to the general methodological rationale outlined above, it is also important to clarify how the different methods were applied to the specific studies included in this thesis. The five articles are based on six empirical pieces of material,

combining interactive qualitative approaches (research circles and focus group interviews) with one quantitative survey study. Across the qualitative studies, data was collected from multiple stakeholder groups, including frontline professionals, managers, coordinators, politicians, and, in one study, service users (children). Across these materials, I was actively involved in study design, data collection (e.g. interviews, research circles, focus group discussions and surveys) and analysis, either as principal investigator or as co-author, see my (heading Author's role) roles in Table 3. As Alvehus (2022) argues, engaging multiple levels (management, frontline workers, and service users) enriches analysis. However, in this thesis, there is a pronounced interest in frontline-user interactions, making the experiences of frontline professionals especially salient in most of the studies. There are several arguments in favour of this focus. Organisational change theory highlights the fact that successful and sustainable change requires broad acceptance among employees of new directions (Whelan-Berry & Somerville, 2010; Errida & Lotfi, 2021). In addition, insights from street-level bureaucracy (Lipsky, 1980/2010) suggest that it is ultimately frontline staff who implement, interpret, and adapt policies during their encounters with users, thereby shaping how services are actually offered.

Moreover, studies by Bromark et al. (2023), as well as Tørseth (2025), emphasise the key role of frontline professionals in enabling user-oriented approaches since these are the ones meeting users face-to-face and having the opportunity to listen, adjust, and respond in real time. These interactions are the primary site of societal value co-creation. However, while frontline engagement is essential, such work cannot succeed in isolation. Whether or not frontline professionals can act in user-oriented ways is ultimately determined by organisational prerequisites, leadership, and cultural readiness. By investigating how organisational structures and logics support or constrain frontline efforts, this thesis offers insights into the broader systemic prerequisites associated with user orientation in welfare services.

### **3.3.1 Mixed-method rationale**

As this thesis integrates both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, it constitutes an example of mixed-methods research (MMR) (Lidén, 2023; Moses & Knutsen, 2012). MMR is frequently associated with the goal of strengthening causal inference, but many scholars argue that this requires a carefully structured research design. However, from a different perspective, another key advantage here is that, by employing diverse data sources and methods, I can generate, as a researcher, a broader base of evidence, increasing the robustness of my findings. In this thesis, introducing a quantitative component into a predominantly qualitative field serves both an exploratory function, in revealing new insights, and provides evidence from a different epistemological standpoint, potentially enhancing the overall results (Sergianni et al., 2026). An attempt to do a literature review on quantitative studies within PSL indicates that few such studies exist. Even when expanding the scope to include Service-Dominant Logic and Service Logic, only a handful of quantitative

contributions were found (Vega-Vasques et al., 2013; Landi and Russo, 2022; Yu and Gerber, 2025). Hence, this thesis contributes methodologically to the empirical development of PSL by introducing a quantitative approach into a field that has so far been dominated by qualitative studies. Given this methodological positioning, the following section outlines how different methods and techniques were selected and applied.

### 3.3.2 Qualitative Method

The qualitative strand draws primarily on interactive research, which aligns with the phronetic aims of this study. Within the qualitative methods, two main techniques were used; i.e. research circles and focus group interviews with practitioners. Both approaches are grounded in collaborative, dialogic inquiry and serve to illuminate the situated organisational prerequisites shaping user orientation. This may also be referred to as utilizing an Interactive Research Approach (IRA), which simply emphasizes the co-creation of knowledge between researchers and practitioners (Aagaard Nielsen & Svensson, 2006).

In Article 1, the empirical material also includes interviews with service users, in this case children. These interviews were conducted by professionals who had already established relationships with the children, in order to create a safe and relational setting that enabled them to describe their experiences of what had improved. Although indirect in form, this material enabled the inclusion of children's own perspectives, thus broadening the understanding of value beyond professional interpretations.

#### *Co-creative approaches: research circles and learning circles*

Two of the studies apply an interactive research approach by means of research circles, a form of participatory action research whereby practitioners and researchers collaboratively explore specific issues (Persson, 2009; Danielsson et al., 2019). Rooted in a pragmatic perspective, these circles prioritize problem-solving and actionable knowledge, emphasizing the co-construction of insights that are both contextually relevant and practically applicable. Rather than seeking abstract theoretical contributions, the focus lies on generating knowledge that can inform and refine practice in real-world settings.

Research circles have widely been applied in education, healthcare, and social work, serving as a bridge between theory and practice (Persson, 2009; Holmstrand & Härnsten 2003). Through active participation, practitioners engage in research not merely as subjects but also as co-creators of knowledge, ensuring that insights remain closely tied to practical challenges and opportunities. From a pragmatic standpoint, the researcher's role extends beyond producing knowledge for academic purposes and involves facilitating change, refining professional practice, and

contributing to the continuous development of more effective service offerings (Danielsson et al., 2019).

Research circles function as arenas for systematic dialogue and collective inquiry, fostering reflective communities where participants critically assess existing practices and explore alternative approaches (Holmstrand, 2008; Otterup et al., 2013; Löfberg et al., 2019). As discussions evolve, new challenges and opportunities emerge, driving a continuous cycle of learning and adaptation. The researcher's role here is not only to support and analyse this process but also to ensure that emerging insights are systematically examined and translated into practical applications. Crucially, the knowledge generated by the research circle does not remain static: It is actively used by participants in their professional practice, while university researchers integrate it into their academic work, thus ensuring mutual knowledge exchange and long-term impact.

Within the two specific research circles featured in this PhD thesis project, the researchers (myself and a colleague) have played a crucial role as both a facilitator and a co-inquirer, guiding the process by posing critical questions and introducing theoretical concepts and models that expand perspectives and deepen dialogue. However, the participants (practitioners from municipal and regional welfare services, engaged in the research process) were the ones who possessed the experiential knowledge and who actively engaged in inquiry. In this sense, all the participants acted as researchers, exploring the subject matter with curiosity and an openness to new insights. The premise of the research circle is not to confirm pre-existing answers but to engage in a long-term process of jointly testing, questioning, and refining different ideas, possibilities, and solutions (Aagaard Nielsen & Svensson, 2006; Svensson et al., 2007). These research circles were used to inform Articles 2 and 3. In these research circles, I acted as a facilitator and a co-inquirer, planning the sessions together with a co-researcher (Dr Ulrika Westrup), guiding the discussions, and documenting the collective reflections later forming the basis for analysis. Across both research circles, it became evident that introducing concepts such as value and resource integration as dialogical entry points functioned methodologically as a way of eliciting practitioners' own reasoning. Rather than imposing theoretical definitions, the concepts triggered reflection and revealed the complexity of attempting to create value in structurally constrained welfare settings.

### *Focus group interviews*

Another method used during empirical material collection often involved focus group interviews, a method designed to overcome the limitations of individual interviews and to foster dynamic discussions. This informed the studies underpinning Articles 1, 2, and 4. One advantage of utilizing the data from focus group interviews lies in its ability to capture information generated through group interactions (Cyr, 2019; Morgan, 1996), enhancing the richness and contextual depth of the discussions (Wibeck et al., 2007).

Focus group interviews are widely used across various fields of social science research, including education, healthcare, social work, and policy studies. Their popularity stems from their ability to facilitate in-depth exploration of shared experiences, perspectives, and social dynamics in a given context. However, there is no one single way of conducting focus groups, with methods varying significantly in terms of their size, scope, composition, and purpose. Some focus groups function as self-contained methods for generating qualitative insights, while others are used to complement both qualitative and quantitative research designs. They can also be incorporated into multi-method studies, where they serve as a means of triangulating data from different sources. This flexibility makes focus groups a particularly valuable approach when exploring complex social phenomena and organisational practices.

Focus groups differ from individual interviews in that they leverage participant interaction to generate data. Through these interactions, participants may articulate tacit knowledge, insights and experiences otherwise difficult to express during structured interviews or surveys. The collective dialogue allows for clarification, negotiation, and sometimes even the contestation of ideas, making it a particularly valuable method for exploring complex professional practices and organisational routines (Dahlin-Ivanoff & Holmgren, 2017; Morgan & Krueger, 1993).

In enabling these dynamics, focus group interviews not only serve as a tool for data collection, they also act as a space where professionals collectively process and apply knowledge, reinforcing learning and potential practice development. In this way, focus groups do not merely document professional experiences, they also function as arenas for reflection, dialogue, and knowledge integration. The method has been widely adopted by various fields, demonstrating its versatility in capturing group-based knowledge production and collaborative sense-making. In addition to these qualitative efforts, a quantitative component was also added to capture the structural prerequisites at scale.

The focus group interviews were conducted by myself, often together with my co-researcher Dr Ulrika Westrup, and followed a semi-structured format whereby participants were invited to discuss their concrete experiences of everyday work. During the study underpinning Material 5, I conducted the focus group interviews on my own. I was responsible for the subsequent analysis of the interview material. An important insight emerged concerning how practitioners articulated the notion of value, especially in the second empirical piece of material. While formal definitions of value often reflected the normative formulations embedded in manuals and policy documents (e.g., BBIC – a social service manual), the dialogic setting of the focus groups revealed more experience-based and situated understandings of what had actually improved in children’s everyday lives. The contrast between policy-framed value and lived, practice-based value became analytically significant. Another example of how focus group interviews furthered my studies is given in Material 5 in discussion with social workers, where one recurring theme concerned the gap between identified user needs and the limited

**Table 3: Overview of materials, methods, techniques, participants and the author's role**

Empirical material	Methods	Techniques	Participants	Author's role
Material 1: Collaboration Between Welfare Services	Qualitative	IRA: Research circle	Practitioners from education, social services, and child and adolescent psychiatry. Frontline staff and managers.	This role involved contributing to the planning and launch of the research circle, but not to lead it. This material is used to explore how a service perspective is adopted in welfare services, identifying challenges in understanding and applying service logic. (Article 3)
Material 2: Service Innovation in Welfare Services	Qualitative	IRA: Focus group interviews	Practitioners from education and social services, including frontline staff. Some managerial and political representation.	This role involved participation in the Vinnova-funded project, contribution to the planning process, and the conducting of focus group interviews. The material is used to investigate how complex concepts such as value are operationalised in practice (Article 1).
Material 3: The Coordinator's Role	Qualitative	IRA: Research circle	Practitioners with coordinating roles in municipal welfare services (e.g., school health services, leisure services, social services) and regional development functions.	This role involved co-designing, planning, and conducting this second research circle. This material is used to analyse the role of coordinators in resource integration and collaboration across organisational boundaries. (Article 2)
Material 4: Service Innovation in Collaborative Financial Associations, referred to as FINSAM in Swedish	Qualitative	IRA: Focus group interviews	Representatives from municipal administrations, regional healthcare, the public employment service, and the social insurance agency. Frontline staff, managers, and politicians.	This role involved co-conducting the study of a collaborative financial association, including data collection and analysis. This material was used to examine how coordination and resource integration influence service innovation across organisational levels. (Article 2)
Material 5: Social Service and Organisational Transformation	Qualitative	IRA: Focus group interviews	Practitioners from a department in municipal social services. Frontline social workers	This role was to independently plan and conduct focus group interviews, with supervisory support during the research process. The material is used to investigate how institutional logics interact with service logic, also exploring the organisational prerequisites for user orientation. (Article 4)
Material 6: Service-Perspective Survey in Social Services	Quantitative	Survey study	Practitioners from an entire municipal social services department. Frontline social workers	This role was to independently design, administer, and analyse the survey, including data processing and statistical analysis, with substantial methodological support from supervisors. This quantitative material provides statistical insight into the organisational factors shaping service orientation. (Article 5)

range of service offerings available. Practitioners described the difficulty of enabling value creation for individuals in crisis when only a restricted set of initiatives could be offered. This tension became key to understanding user orientation as an organisational, rather than a merely individual, matter.

### **3.3.3 Quantitative method**

The thesis also incorporates a quantitative study, designed to broaden the scope of the findings by identifying structural prerequisites for the service-oriented transformation of welfare services. This study employs a survey tool to capture the experiences and perspectives of frontline social workers. The collected data is then analysed using statistical techniques, including factor analysis, to identify key predictors influencing the transition towards a service perspective.

While the qualitative materials provided depth and insight into how practitioners reasoned as regards value, resource integration and user orientation, the quantitative study was introduced to examine whether or not these patterns were associated with the identifiable organisational conditions at scale. The survey thus shifted the analytical focus away from meaning-making in dialogue towards the structural prerequisites shaping everyday practice.

#### *Survey*

The survey was conducted to explore how organisational prerequisites relate to attitudes and practices aligned with a user-oriented service perspective in social services. The questionnaire was constructed using SUNET Survey, Lund University's online survey tool, and distributed via email to 493 employees in a municipal social services organisation.

The survey design drew on key concepts from PSL, e.g. user as actor, value identification and verification, and resource integration (Osborne, 2021; Skålén, 2022; Danielsson & Westrup, 2026). Additional items regarding organisational context were drawn from validated instruments such as COPSOQ II (Berthelsen et al., 2020), Areas of Worklife Scale (Leiter & Maslach, 2004), with managerial expectations being assessed using six modified items from the ethical leadership scale (Brown et al., 2005) which assesses the extent to which employees feel their managers expect them to act in accordance with a user oriented approach to managerial expectations. An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was used as a data-reduction technique to derive interpretable outcome dimensions from the survey items. The two outcome factors, user orientation and attitudes towards a service perspective, form the basis of Article 5. These factors were used in linear regression models, with organisational variables entered as predictors, to examine how structural and psychosocial prerequisites relate to readiness for user-oriented practice.

The survey study was designed and conducted by myself. Development of the questionnaire benefited from the methodological support and feedback of Dr Magnus Lindén, particularly in relation to survey design and measurement considerations. I was responsible for data collection and all subsequent statistical analyses. Table 3 above provides an overview of the empirical materials underpinning the five articles in the thesis. Each piece of material corresponds to one or more articles, as indicated in the final column, while more detailed descriptions of sampling, data collection, and analysis are provided in the respective articles, and also in Tables 1–6 in the appendix.

### 3.4 Summary of methodologies and materials

The empirical materials used in this thesis reflect the methodological pluralism outlined above. Together, they operationalise the pragmatic foundation of the research, combining qualitative depth with quantitative scope. While each individual study has its own design, the overall empirical strategy has been guided by a common aim; advancing knowledge of the organisational challenges that user orientation entails in Swedish welfare services, from a PSL perspective, and examining how these organisational prerequisites are manifested in practice.

At the outset, the research was more explicitly intervention-oriented and closely aligned with organisations' own descriptions of service innovation initiatives. PSL was initially approached as a normative and prescriptive framework, assumed to illuminate and potentially strengthen these reform efforts. However, when the empirical material was examined more closely, a discrepancy emerged between formal, policy-framed definitions of value and practitioners' situated, experience-based accounts of what had actually improved in users' lives. This tension prompted an abductive shift in focus—away from evaluating innovation initiatives towards examining how user orientation was understood and enacted in everyday organisational practice.

The qualitative materials, research circles and focus group interviews, made visible the complexity of welfare services as well as the gap between identified user needs and the limited repertoire of available service offerings. Introducing PSL concepts such as value and resource integration functioned methodologically as reflective prompts that elicited practitioners' own reasoning rather than imposing predefined definitions. These dialogical settings brought depth and insight to meaning-making processes, but they also revealed structural tensions that could not be fully captured through qualitative inquiry alone. Thus, the subsequent quantitative study was introduced in order to explore whether or not these observed tensions could be associated with identifiable organisational conditions across a broader population. In this way, the methodological progression reflects a pragmatic and abductive research process, whereby shifts in design were driven by empirical

insights and the need to better understand user orientation as an organisational phenomenon.

This chapter has outlined the methodological foundation of the thesis, demonstrating how methodological choices are grounded in both epistemological considerations and practical inquiry. By taking a pragmatic stance, the study combines qualitative and quantitative methods when exploring not only what user orientation means in theory, but also how it can be enabled or constrained in everyday organisational life. Key to this approach is combining epistemic and phronetic forms of knowledge. While theoretical frameworks provide analytical structure (episteme), the study is ultimately concerned with the situated, value-laden, and context-sensitive judgements that shape welfare practice (phronesis). The use of interactive methods, e.g. research circles and focus groups, reflects a commitment to co-creation and learning in practice, while the quantitative component helps identify the broader organisational challenges that influence user-oriented practice. separate tables in the appendix.

Taken together, this methodological strategy supports the thesis' overarching aim; i.e. to advance knowledge of the organisational challenges that user orientation brings to Swedish welfare services, from a public service logic perspective. In the next chapter, the analytical focus shifts to how these prerequisites are manifested and contested in practice, drawing on the empirical materials introduced above.

# 4 Contribution of articles

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the five articles that form the empirical and theoretical foundation of this compilation thesis. Each article addresses one of the thesis' two research questions. Articles 1 and 2 are guided by the first research question concerning how the key concepts of public service logic (PSL), *value* and *resource integration*, can be understood in the context of welfare services. As such, Article 1 provides an empirical and conceptual exploration of the concept of value as a 'thick concept' in frontline practice. Article 2 develops a generic framework for understanding resource integration. While grounded in empirical insights, it uses illustrative examples rather than direct data excerpts.

Articles 3 to 5 are guided by the second research question in exploring which organisational prerequisites emerge in relation to user-orientation in welfare services from a PSL perspective. As such, Article 3 examines how frontline professionals perceive management to influence value creation, identifying barriers that restrict user-oriented practice. Article 4 shows that, although professionals support user orientation, their efforts are shaped and limited by conflicting institutional logics. And finally, Article 5 takes a broader quantitative perspective and investigates how organisational factors, e.g. professional autonomy, conflicting demands, and managerial expectations, relate to key service logic dimensions. Taken together, the articles provide a cumulative answer to the thesis's two research questions.

## 4.2 First article: Clarifying value as a thick concept

This article by Danielsson and Westrup (2024), titled 'User orientation in public service organisations: Making use of value as a thick concept', contributes towards exploring how the concept of value, according to PSL, can be understood and explained in the practice of welfare services. In this article, we argue that value should be seen as a thick concept, i.e. a concept that is both descriptive and normative (Van der Weele, 2021) and shaped by multiple stakeholder perspectives and timeframes. The empirical material used in this article is illustrated in Table 2, in the appendix. In this article, Public Service Logic is used as an analytical frame

of reference for exploring how value is understood and experienced in practice. The analysis is descriptive and explanatory in nature and focuses on how value is articulated and negotiated, rather than on how welfare services ought to be organised.

Although value is key to PSL (Osborne, 2021; Grönroos, 2019), its meaning is often assumed to be self-evident in everyday practice. This article challenges that assumption by showing how different stakeholders understand value in different ways. Using a corpus-based approach, the study illustrates how children, frontline professionals, managers, and politicians assign different meanings to value. As such, this is the only article that involves users: However, as described in Chapter 3, it draws on indirect material in incorporating users' perceptions. For example, children describe value as tangible improvements to daily life, e.g. better sleep, while managers and politicians often define value in more abstract terms, linked to long-term goals and collective outcomes. Frontline professionals are positioned in-between these understandings and are expected to navigate and reconcile them in practice.

A key contribution of the article is the important distinction between a user perspective (the professional's assumptions about what users need) and the user's perspective (what users themselves express as valuable). The article argues that genuine user orientation requires elevating the user's own view, rather than relying on generalized or assumed needs, in order to gain the benefits ascribed to user orientation, e.g. improved service quality and efficiency (Tisdall, 2016; Hilppö, Lipponen, Kumpulainen, and Virlander, 2016; Høibjerg, 2021; Pramling Samuelsson et al., 2013).

The article also highlights the fact that public service organisations rarely articulate what they expect from users during the co-creation of value (Alford, 2016). While Alford emphasizes that value is created through mutual contribution, this study finds that expectations placed on users are seldom clear or explicit. In addition, professionals rarely reflect on what is required to balance individual and societal value. Instead of focusing purely on users' roles, we argue that organisations should be better at defining what constitutes societal value, based on laws, political goals, and shared societal needs. We also suggest that individual value should only be considered legitimate when it falls within the broader frame of societal value (Christensen & Lægheid, 2011). This reciprocal understanding, whereby both users' contributions and organisational responsibilities are clarified, is crucial for advancing PSL in the context of complex welfare services. It also underlines the need for frontline professionals to understand and navigate the tension between individual and societal value.

Summing up, the article shows that value in public services is interpreted differently by different actors. Politicians and top managers tend to define value in broad, long-term definitions, while users express value in concrete and immediate ways. Frontline professionals are often left trying to bridge these two views. In other words, there are no signs of professionals making use of a dual-value concept from

a PSL perspective. A clearer understanding of value as a thick concept can help reduce the gap between what services intend to achieve and what users actually experience, thereby supporting more meaningful user orientation in practice. Consequently, this article lays the conceptual groundwork for Articles 3–5 as they address RQ2.

### 4.3 Second article: Demystifying resource integration

The second contribution to this compilation thesis is a book chapter by Danielsson and Westrup (2026), titled ‘Demystifying Resource Integration in Welfare Services’. This article is published in Osborne and Bianchi (Eds.), *Public Service Logic and Public Service Reform: State of the Art, New Perspectives, and Future Directions*. This article adopts a more explicitly prescriptive use of PSL. Drawing on empirical insights, the chapter both discusses how resource integration could be strengthened in practice and outlines principles regarding how welfare services may be organised to better support user-oriented collaboration. In contrast to the other empirically-grounded articles included in this compilation thesis, this article, in the form of a book chapter, allows a more flexible writing format. Although the book chapter is informed by two pieces of the empirical material (see Tables 3 and 4 in the appendix), the examples are not drawn directly from the data, instead being interpretative illustrations inspired by the findings.

The aim of this article is to deepen our understanding of the concept of resource integration, a further key concept in PSL, which concerns the bringing together of actors and their resources to facilitate value creation for users and society (Eriksson & Hellström, 2021; Skålén et al., 2018; Bianchi et al., 2021). While the concept has gained prominence in the PSL literature, its processual character has often been left unexplored, leading to it being perceived as something that takes place in a ‘black box’. This book chapter seeks to unveil this black box and to demystify the concept by proposing a framework that clarifies what is happening during resource integration, as well as what needs to happen in order to support the viable use of resources.

The framework rests on the insight that resource integration cannot be separated from value creation. The chapter therefore emphasises the importance of initial value clarification, defining both societal and individual value, as well as subsequent value verification, which assesses whether or not value has been achieved (Osborne and Strokosch, 2021). This dual understanding of value is crucial to PSL, serving as a starting point for identifying and organizing the use of resources and linking both to the distinction between individual and societal value and to intended and experienced value, as expressed in the first article. The framework identifies four generic processes during resource integration: identification, mobilisation, coordination, and utilisation (Mörndal 2023; Colurcio, Caridà and Melia 2023).

These are described and illustrated using examples inspired by empirical studies in education and social services. The chapter further suggests that effective resource integration depends on the presence of a knowledge system (Normann, 2001), whereby knowledge is generated throughout all the processes, enabling learning and improvement in practice.

In doing so, the chapter contributes to the theoretical refinement of PSL in three ways: (1) by making visible the generic processes of resource integration (Skålen, 2022; Skålen and Gummerus, 2023); (2) by clarifying the link between resource integration and value creation through value clarification and value verification; and (3) by highlighting the importance of a knowledge system for supporting the viable use of resources. Thus, this book chapter contributes to the first research question by deepening our understanding of resource integration within welfare services, emphasizing its dynamic, experiential and value-oriented character. Further, the analytical contribution of this article has also been recognised in recent PSL scholarship. In the concluding volume, *Public Service Logic and Public Service Reform* (Macfarlane et al., 2026), the chapter is discussed as an example of how resource integration can be conceptualised and supported through inclusive knowledge systems that facilitate learning during practice. This positioning illustrates how the framework developed here connects directly to ongoing theoretical development within PSL. Through an empirically-informed framework, the chapter refines PSL by clarifying how resource integration processes unfold in practice and how they must be linked to value creation, both in intention and outcome, to support user-oriented, adaptive welfare services. Also, this article contributes towards laying the conceptual groundwork for Articles 3–5 as they address RQ2.

#### 4.4 Third article: Management affecting value creation

The third contribution to this compilation thesis is an article by Westrup and Danielsson (2019), titled '*A Service Perspective on Work with Vulnerable Children: Frontline Staff's Perceptions of how Management Affects Value Creation.*' In this article, a service-dominant logic perspective is used analytically to explore how managerial practices shape professionals' perceptions of value creation in everyday work. The study is descriptive and explanatory in nature, focusing on how managerial influence is experienced rather than on normative recommendations.

The article constitutes the thesis' initial empirical investigation into how a service perspective, here grounded in the framework of Service Dominant Logic (SDL) (Vargo and Lusch, 2004; Vargo and Lusch, 2008; Vargo and Lusch, 2016), can be used to analyse frontline staff's perceptions of how management affects value creation during day-to-day work (see Table 1 in the appendix). Here, the service perspective is used as a framework for managerial applications (Quist and Fransson,

2014; Skålen, 2018; Storbacka, 2018; Trischler and Charles 2018). It should be noted that this early article does not include the term ‘user orientation’: However, it does clearly state that the study is based on a service perspective whereby the service user is ‘the one who creates his/her own solution as regards improved circumstances, and the one who obtains help with this when other resources are supplementing the service user’s own competence and activities’ (p. 5).

The article structures its analysis around three core statements from SDL: (1) the creator of value, (2) the value co-creation process, and (3) the service system. Based on empirical material in the form of a research circle, thus creating a systematic dialogue and a critical reflective community (Holmstrand, 2008; Otterup et al., 2013), the study reveals how current management-in-use creates a number of barriers to a service perspective taking root. Frontline staff describe how they are increasingly feeling restricted to delivering pre-defined, ready-made expert solutions, often with only limited involvement on the part of the child as an actor in his or her own development process. This is described as a shift away from being a professional with creative agency towards becoming a social administrator focusing on feeding administrative systems.

Furthermore, welfare services, viewed in the article as value creation processes, are perceived as being simplified and distorted by documentation practices that fail to capture the complexity, unpredictability, and collaborative nature of frontline professional practice in welfare services. Finally, the service system itself is described as disconnected, with organisational structures and internal administrative boundaries that impede collaboration across professional and institutional borders. Frontline staff refer to this fragmentation as *introvertism*, whereby each actor remains focused on internal processes rather than on forming part of a shared service system around the child.

Together, these empirical insights illuminate a number of organisational barriers that need to be addressed in order for welfare services to enable a user-oriented approach based on a service perspective. They point to the need for management models that support rather than constrain co-creation processes, and the need for organizing principles that acknowledge children and families as active actors within the service system. In doing so, the study illustrates how institutional routines and a lack of managerial support can constrain user-oriented approaches at the level of everyday practice, particularly through cultural resistance, professional rigidity, and structural fragmentation within the service system. While the theoretical framework used in this article is based on SDL, the findings help bring to the surface both the limitations of current managerial models and the types of organisational prerequisites necessary to support value creation in line with a service logic perspective.

## 4.5 Fourth article: User orientation in Social Services

The fourth, and sole-authored, article is titled ‘*User Orientation in Social Services -- Challenges Facing Everyday Practice as Perceived by Social Workers*’ (Danielsson, manuscript). This article has been submitted to Public Management Review and is in the process of being revised after recently receiving its second round of comments from reviewers.

This article draws on PSL, both as a prescriptive reference point and as an analytical lens. In contrast to bureaucratic and professional logics, which have long been studied as dominant institutional logics in welfare settings, PSL is introduced as a theoretically-grounded normative framework that articulates how value creation may be understood from a user-oriented perspective. However, in the empirical analysis, the framework is analytically used to examine how these logics coexist and interact in everyday practice, and how they contribute to the specific barriers and tensions experienced by frontline professionals.

Based on focus group interviews (see Table 5 in the appendix for information about the empirical material), the study explores how frontline professionals in a social service organisation perceive their ability to work in a user-oriented way, given the organisational constraints and prevailing institutional logics (Friedland & Alford, 1991; Brante, 2014; Walsh, 1995; Hood, 1991). The study was made possible by the introduction of Sweden’s new Social Services Act, which prompts local authorities to reconsider how preventative work should be conducted, based on the individual’s needs and in collaboration with both their own and other actors’ resources. This policy shift created a timely opportunity to explore how frontline professionals experience the prerequisites for user-oriented practice within a broader reform agenda that explicitly promotes such approaches.

The findings are grouped into three empirical themes that reflect the core tensions of everyday work: *unsolicited service offerings*, referring to the difficulty of supporting users who have not actively sought help; *organisational introversion*, highlighting how internal boundaries, siloed responsibilities, and resource priorities inhibit collaboration and resource integration; and *ambivalent agency*, capturing how professionals negotiate both their abilities and responsibilities in defining user roles, user participation, and the co-creation in practice, including the need to actively enable agency in users who lack the capacity, motivation, and knowledge to do so on their own. While the participants expressed a strong normative commitment to user orientation, these themes reveal how their everyday work is shaped, and often constrained, by structural prerequisites beyond their control.

Situated within the theoretical framework of PSL (Osborne, 2021), and using institutional logics theory as an analytical lens, the article shows how bureaucratic and professional logics continue to dominate decision-making, collaboration, and the definition of user roles. The service logic, emphasising responsiveness, shared problem definition, and value co-creation, remains comparatively weak and under-institutionalised. The article thus contributes to our understanding of the practical

challenges of enabling user orientation in everyday social service work by revealing how organisational structures, norms, and coordination mechanisms shape frontline discretion and opportunities for resource integration.

Rather than identifying discrete barriers, the article argues that the challenges of user orientation stem from a structural gap between macro-level policy aims and micro-level operational realities. In line with recent PSL scholarship (Osborne & Strokosch, 2022; Nasi & Choi, 2023; Trischler et al., 2023), the findings underscore that user orientation cannot be realised solely through individual professional engagement. Instead, meso-level organisational capacity, including leadership, coordination structures, and reflective spaces, are required that can translate policy ideals into workable practices and help professionals navigate competing institutional logics. Without such translation mechanisms, user orientation risks remaining an abstract policy aspiration that places unrealistic expectations on individual social workers.

In this way, the article advances PSL by showing that user orientation is not an intrinsic or automatic feature of public services, but a practice that is conditioned, negotiated, and often constrained by overlapping bureaucratic, professional, and service logics. The findings highlight the need for organisational routines and structures that interpret and balance these logics in ways that make user orientation legitimate, practicable, and sustainable within social service organisations.

## 4.6 Fifth article: Organisational factors shaping user-oriented practice

The final, and sole-authored, article is titled '*Organisational Factors Shaping User Orientation in Social Work – A Quantitative Study from a Public Service*' (Danielsson, manuscript), submitted to *Public Money and Management* and currently being revised after its first round of reviews. In this article, PSL provides a conceptual point of departure for analysing the attitudes and organisational factors associated with user orientation. The study is exploratory and seeks to identify patterns and relationships as they appear in the empirical material, rather than to formulate normative recommendations.

The theoretical field of service logics is predominantly qualitative in its orientation. This study complements that tradition by applying a quantitative design in order to examine patterns of association between organisational conditions and two empirically-derived outcomes; i.e. user-oriented behaviour and attitudes towards a service perspective. Building on knowledge and insights from previous research on organisational conditions in service organisations, this study adopts a quantitative design in order to investigate how organisational conditions relate to two service-related outcome factors among frontline social workers. The article draws on a survey conducted at the social services department of a Swedish

municipality (see Table 6 in the appendix). The organisation in question has positioned itself as undergoing a service innovation reform as an effect of the new Social Services Act. As such, it provides a relevant setting for exploring the organisational challenges facing user-orientated practice.

Previous research in adjacent fields has identified a number of organisational factors which appear to predict service-oriented capabilities and which may be used to conceptualize the underlying conditions that support user orientation (Strokosch & Osborne, 2024; Osborne & Strokosch, 2022; Bromark et al., 2024; Tørseth, 2025). In this study, predictors include organisational conditions such as conflicting demands in the workplace, professional autonomy and professionals' perceptions of managerial expectations, as well as professionals' perceived abilities to meet these expectations (Berthelsen et al., 2014; Leiter & Maslach, 2004; Brown et al., 2005). These recognised organisational predictors are tested against a set of outcomes conceptualized as 'service-related outcomes'. These 'service-related outcomes' were identified using an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) technique (Pallant, 2020) applied to the survey data, to reduce a larger set of survey items into a smaller number of coherent outcome dimensions. In this study, the two identified outcomes capturing 'professionals' attitudes toward a service perspective' and 'professionals self-reported user-oriented behaviour' are in focus. These two outcome variables were tested using multiple regression analysis against the predictors described above.

The findings show that job control (i.e., professional autonomy) and the ability to meet managerial expectations are strong positive predictors of positive attitudes towards a service perspective. At the same time, conflicting demands negatively affect such attitudes, indicating that role overload or ambiguous responsibilities may hinder professionals' openness to service-oriented thinking. Regarding perceived user-orientated behaviour, the results suggest that clear expectations on the part of management, along with professionals' sense of being capable of meeting those expectations, are positively associated with user-oriented practices. Interestingly, conflicting demands were also positively related to user orientation, possibly reflecting a compensatory effort made by professionals trying to maintain a user focus under pressure.

Closer investigation shows that the correlation between conflicting demands and user-oriented practice was more complex, as conflicting demands alone did not predict user orientation. In the absence of clear managerial expectations, conflicting demands were not statistically significant in predicting user-oriented behaviour. This suggests that managerial support plays a moderating role. This is an example of an understanding that was not visible in the qualitative study presented in Article 4, and which did not become apparent until a quantitative study was conducted.

The findings underscore the fact that enabling the space for user orientation requires not only individual-level motivation but also organisational readiness across cognitive, cultural, and structural dimensions. By identifying measurable organisational predictors, this study helps in examining how PSL-informed

orientations manifest themselves in a concrete welfare context, offering insight into the organisational conditions that enable or hinder the realisation of a service logic in practice.

## 4.7 Summary of the articles

This chapter has presented the five articles in this thesis constituting the empirical and theoretical basis for answering the two overarching research questions. Together, the articles build a coherent line of inquiry, beginning with the conceptual clarification of two key concepts of PSL, i.e. value and resource integration, in welfare services and moving towards the identification of the organisational prerequisites of user-oriented welfare services from a PSL perspective.

Taken together, the five articles show that, from a PSL perspective, user orientation in welfare services requires both clearer concepts and changed organisational prerequisites. First, value is not self-evident: Different actors use it differently and across different timeframes and treating value as a thick concept helps relate individual and societal value in practice (Article 1). Second, resource integration is best viewed as a process (identifying, mobilising, co-ordinating, using resources) that needs to be tied to both value clarification and follow-up verification in real cases (Article 2).

Across the studies, two cross-cutting conclusions stand out: (1) There are many organisational barriers that limit professionals' ability to take a user-oriented perspective; i.e. limited scope to act and weak inter-unit co-ordination; documentation and predefined procedures that draw attention away from relational work with users; and top-level decision-making and performance demands that rarely ask for value clarification or verification (Articles 3–4). (2) Professionals are positively-inclined towards user orientation but often lack an understanding of how to do it. In practice, user orientation is frequently reduced to goodwill or a few extra questions, rather than centring the user's value creation and resource integration throughout the service process (Articles 1–4). Quantitative results further show that job control and clear managerial expectations are associated with more supportive attitudes and self-reported user-oriented practice (Article 5).

To take the analysis a step further, the next chapter keeps PSL at the core but adds the analytical framework, in the form of two analytical lenses; i.e. an ambidextrous organisation lens for structuring the barriers and clarifying organisational prerequisites, and a multilevel innovation taxonomy for indicating the need to support user-oriented practice from a multilevel perspective.

# 5 Discussions and conclusions

## 5.1 Introduction

This thesis aims to deepen our understanding of the challenges that user orientation in Swedish welfare services entails. The approach to user orientation is based on the theoretical framework of public service logic (PSL). The thesis includes five articles answering the research questions as discussed in Chapter 4. In this final chapter, I take a step beyond the individual articles and carry out further analysis based on the analytical framework. As a basis for this analysis, the two analytical frameworks, reproduced in 2.4, are used as analytical lenses. Here, my analysis synthesises and reinterprets the findings from the five articles by moving away from study-specific results towards a higher level of abstraction. This analytical step identifies the recurring organisational patterns, conditions, and constraints related to user orientation across the studies. By applying the two theoretical models as analytical lenses, the chapter systematically examines how and why specific organisational prerequisites shape the possibilities and limitations of user-oriented approaches from a PSL perspective, thereby fulfilling the overall aim of the thesis.

The chapter is structured in three parts. The first section draws on ambidextrous organisational theory to identify empirical organisational barriers. The second section uses the innovation taxonomy as an analytical lens for examining how the organisational conditions relevant to user orientation are identified in a multilevel perspective. At the end of this chapter, the conclusions, contribution to PSL and practical implications are presented, followed by reflections on validity, reflexivity, limitations, and future research.

## 5.2 User orientation through organisational barriers

Outlined in Chapter 2, the model of ambidextrous organisations is applied here as an analytical lens for examining the organisational barriers to user-oriented approaches in welfare services. Across the articles of this thesis, it appears to be the case that whenever welfare services face attempts to work in more user-oriented ways, tensions tend to arise between established routines, bureaucratic and professional logics, and professional roles, on the one hand, and emerging

expectations regarding responsiveness, relational work, and engagement with users' situations, on the other.

These tensions do not seem to be confined to the service encounter alone, instead cutting across organisational levels and functions. They raise questions about the kinds of professional skills, organisational capacities, and governing conditions that may be required for user-oriented approaches to be sustained in practice. Drawing on ambidextrous organisational theory, this section analyses how such tensions may give rise to organisational barriers that constrain user orientation in welfare services (Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2009; Chesbrough, 2010; Schneider, 2019).

In their systematic literature review, Stoiber, Matzler, and Hautz (2023) identify the most prevalent barriers to established organisations introducing disruptive change. In this analysis, user orientation is approached as a potentially disruptive shift and examined through the lens of ambidextrous organisational theory. Drawing on the typology of barriers to disruptive change of Stoiber et al., the chapter examines how these recurrent barriers are both reflected and manifested in the empirical material deriving from welfare services.

### **5.2.1 Asymmetric resource distribution**

Across the studies, frontline professionals not only describe a lack of resources, but also a misintegration of them, as evidenced, for example, in Articles 2, 3, and 4. Resources such as time, budgets, mandates, and competencies are often described as pre-allocated to internal categories and administrative routines rather than aligned with users' evolving situations.

Asymmetric resource allocation becomes particularly visible in professionals' accounts of how time is prioritised in everyday practice. As one frontline professional describes it in Article 3, "*Our working time goes into feeding the administration, which is increasingly looking like the core.*" This illustrates how time, as a critical professional resource, is disproportionately being absorbed by administrative routines rather than user-oriented work. The practical consequences are familiar across the material: Administrative tasks absorb professional time, as discussed in Article 3; duplication occurs across units; access to each other's tools, skills, and locations remains opaque, as discussed in Article 4; and professionals tend to only ask questions corresponding to predefined interventions, also described clearly in Article 4:

I only ask questions that I know I can handle the answer to. Sex addiction is an example where we don't ask about the problem because we can't offer any interventions.

This asymmetry appears to be associated with several interrelated consequences. First, it narrows the scope of responsiveness. When professionals operate within frameworks where time and funding are tied to predefined service categories, they

feel discouraged or unable to explore users' actual life situations. Instead, their work becomes shaped by what fits into existing initiatives. As shown in Articles 3 and 4, this limits opportunities to support users in ways that are meaningful to them, i.e. to enable user-oriented practice.

Second, professionals repeatedly report that the organisation of resources is inefficient and fragmented, as visible in Article 2, which describes the welfare sector in terms of traditional hierarchical structures (silos), while in Article 4, social workers say that "*organisational silos hinder the integration of resources and competencies required by our users*". Overlapping services, parallel mandates, and siloed responsibilities make coordination difficult and reduce the potential for collaboration. One recurring concern is administrative demands taking precedence over direct user engagement, diminishing the ability to act even when relevant needs have been identified.

In addressing these challenges of misintegration and fragmentation, several of the articles point to the importance of designated coordinating roles (see Articles 2 and 3). As discussed in Article 2, coordinators can play a key role in facilitating collaboration by bringing professionals together across units, making each other's tools and mandates visible, and supporting joint sensemaking around user needs. These functions include convening forums for dialogue, shared case meetings, and facilitating mutual understanding of each actor's contribution to the shared effort. The coordinator role also serves as a relational node, helping to link fragmented capacities into more coherent service responses. While this role cannot resolve structural barriers on its own, it does represent an important step towards building more responsive and integrated patterns of resource use. However, as described by a psychologist in Article 3, "*It won't be until several efforts have been made, within the respective organisation, that co-workers will try to coordinate their work.*" Illustrating that, while coordination is important, it is rarely mobilised proactively, if at all, instead becoming relevant only once efforts confined to individual organisational domains have proven insufficient.

The concept of asymmetric resource distribution, as discussed by Stoiber, Matzler, and Hautz (2023), and Cozzolino et al. (2018), offers a useful lens for understanding not just why user-oriented approaches face constraints, but also how such constraints become structurally reproduced when exploitation and exploration coexist. Rather than representing an anomaly, asymmetric resource allocation appears as a recurrent pattern in organisations where established hierarchical priorities continue to dominate emerging collaborative initiatives. When resource structures are primarily designed to stabilise existing procedures, exploration-oriented efforts, e.g. user-oriented approaches, are not merely marginalised, they are systematically deprioritised.

While Stoiber et al. (2023) help to clarify how asymmetric resource distribution becomes a structurally-stabilised pattern when exploitation dominates, an ambidextrous organisational perspective also allows closer examination of the consequences of this pattern for professional practice. From this perspective, the

challenge is not only that resources are misintegrated, but also that existing arrangements predominantly support predefined routines and established ways of working, thus favouring exploitation over exploration. As a consequence, limited scope remains for professionals to engage in analytical work aimed at understanding users' situations beyond what fits existing service categories.

Over time, this not only has implications for what professionals are able to do, but also for how they learn to think about their work. When analytical engagement with changing or unarticulated user needs is not supported, such questions are less likely to be raised during everyday practice. User orientation thus tends to remain confined to surface-level adjustments within established frameworks, rather than developing into a more reflective professional orientation that balances individual and societal value.

In this sense, asymmetric resource distribution shapes professional reasoning just as much as professional action. When organisational arrangements predominantly favour exploitation over exploration, user orientation does not become embedded as a habitual way of thinking, an outside-in perspective, instead remaining fragile and difficult to sustain in practice.

### **5.2.2 Cultural resistance**

A second barrier is the cultural norms and professional traditions that shape everyday practices in welfare services. While many professionals express a willingness to engage with users in new and relational ways, the prevailing culture often appears to prioritise delivery, efficiency and legal compliance, crowding out curiosity about the user's needs and life situation, something which becomes visible in Articles 3–4. In this setting, a naïve reading of a generic 'service' perspective risks pushing the user's welfare towards a customer–supplier vocabulary and standardised service delivery, quietly reframing service users as service customers rather than citizens of a welfare society, as shown in Articles 1 and 3. At best, this may result in user-led (and reactive) services, rather than in services characterised by a leading-user (and proactive) orientation (Gromark and Melin, 2013; Hodgkinson et al., 2023). As Osborne (2018) and Grönroos (2019) argue, an expanded service perspective must be anchored in a PSL perspective that attends to both societal value and individual user value: Otherwise, user orientation will remain as rhetoric without practice.

Cultural resistance may thus manifest itself when professionals are primarily expected to act as experts and implementers, rather than as co-creators during relational and exploratory processes. This is illustrated thus by one social worker in Article 4:

The client's personal responsibility makes it difficult to offer a broader level of support. [...] a visit to the optician could lead to graduating from school.

In this example, professional expertise is not absent: On the contrary, this social worker demonstrates a clear understanding of how a relatively small, proactive intervention could support the user's broader life situation. However, the notion of *personal responsibility* appears to function as a legitimising rationale for non-action. Rather than enabling the professional to guide the user towards a potentially transformative step, the concept is mobilised to justify restraint and passivity.

This suggests that cultural resistance may not necessarily take the form of explicit opposition to user-oriented work, but may instead be embedded in everyday language and professional reasoning. Phrases such as *personal responsibility* allow established routines, predefined methods, and narrow interpretations of mandates to take precedence over more curious, relational, and responsive approaches that require flexibility and tolerance of uncertainty. As a result, problem definitions and service propositions tend to originate from internal organisational frameworks rather than from users' lived experiences. Similar patterns can be observed across the material, where cultural norms subtly reinforce professional distance and procedural compliance, thus constraining the scope for proactive engagement and co-creative work with users. This tension is articulated clearly by one frontline professional in Article 4, who describes the growing distance between professional logics and the administrative rationalities governing everyday work within a bureaucratic logic:

I must say that I feel they've thrown out all the humane parts of our work. What governs us today is an administration that has a different intelligibility and reality than the one we have.

This account illustrates how cultural resistance may not solely be expressed in terms of individual hesitation or reluctance, it may also be rooted in broader organisational cultures where administrative rationalities are increasingly displacing professional judgement and relational work. This dynamic may be captured as *locked expert roles*, reflecting how professionals are expected to comply with predefined roles and procedures rather than question, reinterpret, or expand them. Such patterns narrow the scope for challenging existing cultural assumptions or exploring alternative ways of working, as also demonstrated in Article 4.

Survey evidence further suggests that this cultural landscape may be characterised by ambivalence rather than uniform resistance. In Article 5, attitudes towards a service perspective are positively associated with job control, and with employees' perceived ability to meet managerial expectations, indicating that organisational conditions shape professionals' openness to alternative perspectives. At the same time, this receptivity remains constrained by the competing demands and institutional pressures typical of welfare services. Even where professionals express openness to new ways of working, cultural inertia tends to reassert established framings of value, roles, and responsibilities.

An important implication of this pattern may be the fact that frontline professionals function as key gatekeepers of user orientation in everyday practice. It is ultimately professionals who decide which needs are recognised, which questions are pursued, and which interventions are considered legitimate. When outside-in perspectives are not clearly valued or supported within the prevailing organisational culture, such perspectives are less likely to be prioritised in practice, even among professionals who express a willingness to work in more user-oriented ways.

While Stoiber et al. (2023) conceptualise cultural resistance as a central challenge facing ambidextrous organisations, their framework also allows deeper analysis of how such resistance is enacted and sustained in everyday professional practice. From this perspective, the tension is not only between professional and bureaucratic logics, but also between competing understandings of what constitutes legitimate expertise and responsibility, and how to interpret value in welfare services.

When entrenched cultural norms prioritise predictability, procedural compliance, and role-bound expertise, exploration-oriented practices, e.g. relational, dialogical engagement, may be subtly deprioritised. As illustrated above, professionals may recognise opportunities for proactive support yet refrain from acting when such engagement falls outside dominant cultural expectations regarding responsibility and mandate. In this way, cultural resistance operates less through explicit opposition and more through a routinised professional reasoning that renders alternative courses of action inappropriate or illegitimate. Over time, this may have implications, not only for how professionals act, but also for how they learn to interpret their roles and responsibilities. When exploratory engagement with the user's lifeworld is not culturally supported, such engagement may become less thinkable in everyday work. Questions that challenge existing service categories or rationalities are gradually filtered out, reinforcing established frames.

From this perspective, cultural resistance operates through shared assumptions about what counts as appropriate and legitimate professional practice. When exploitation-oriented norms are taken for granted, user orientation struggles to gain recognition as a central organising principle. Instead of becoming an internalised outside-in orientation, it is treated as supplementary and remains vulnerable to prevailing expectations about how work should be conducted.

### **5.2.3 Fixed cognitive frameworks**

The findings indicate that professionals often operate within narrow interpretive frameworks that restrict the scope of user orientation. While many frontline staff express an openness to working more relationally and user-oriented, their actual practices tend to default to predefined routines and assumptions. Several professionals describe feeling a gradual sense of resignation, explaining how their way of reasoning has been shaped over time by institutional expectations and productivity-oriented discourses. As one professional notes in Article 3: *"I feel a*

*sense of resignation. My brain has been moulded into thinking in a special way. My way of thinking is not particularly free.”*

As a consequence, professionals appear to focus on questions and challenges they already know how to act upon, while user concerns that fall outside established organisational categories are rarely pursued. This pattern is further illustrated in Article 4, where professionals describe how they limit their questioning to issues that fit existing interventions. This dynamic may be summarised as *predefined problems*. Under such conditions, attempts at user orientation risk being reduced to superficial gestures, such as asking a few additional questions rather than involving a deeper recognition of users’ own expertise and resources in defining needs and shaping services.

These patterns suggest that user orientation is not only constrained by cultural or resource-related barriers, but also by organisational prerequisites that shape how problems are defined and acted upon. The findings do not indicate any deficits in individual capability, rather limited organisational scope for reflection, experimentation, and alternative problem framing. As discussed in Article 3, opportunities to engage in dialogical and exploratory forms of reasoning appear to be structurally restricted. Under such conditions, established categories and routines become the primary reference points for action.

Importantly, these interpretive patterns are not confined to frontline professionals. Managers and political leaders appear similarly embedded in established framings linked to control, compliance, and productivity. This suggests that the reproduction of predefined problem definitions occurs across organisational levels, illustrated in this quote from a politician in Article 1:

You must have a clear vision before you start saving, saving can’t be the reason. But the vision can also be ‘us managing this even better’. But I think the danger is that politicians are under pressure to not raise taxes, we’ve put that pressure on ourselves.

When similar frames guide expectations at multiple levels, few organisational signals support exploratory, outside-in perspectives. As a result, professionals’ scope to act differently in practice remains limited, even where a willingness to work in more user-oriented ways is expressed. Stoiber, Matzler, and Hautz (2023) conceptualise fixed cognitive frameworks as a barrier to ambidexterity, emphasising how exploitation is stabilised through shared sensemaking processes. Their explanation partly draws on assumptions about cognitive rigidity and individual-level interpretive constraints. However, such a psychological framing falls outside of the analytical scope of this thesis.

However, the present study does not provide empirical access to individual cognitive capacities, nor does it aim to assess psychological predispositions. Instead, it adopts a consistently organisational perspective. Therefore, its findings point less to individual cognitive rigidity and more to the organisational prerequisites that reproduce established interpretations over time. In this thesis, the relevance of

“fixed cognitive frameworks” does not lie in assumptions about psychological constraints, but in how organisational structures, performance regimes, institutional expectations, and limited scope for reflection delimit what is recognised as legitimate problems and feasible courses of action.

From this perspective, interpretive stability becomes an organisational phenomenon rather than an individual one. When predefined categories, productivity demands, and established service logics dominate, alternative framings struggle to gain recognition. Exploration is not necessarily being actively resisted: Rather, it lacks institutional support and protected space. In this sense, what appears to be cognitive rigidity may instead reflect limited organisational conditions for reflection, reframing, and sustained inquiry.

#### **5.2.4 Reluctance at the top**

A further key organisational condition that appears to constrain the realization of user orientation in welfare services is the tendency, among top managers and politicians, to prioritise continuity, control, and established routines over experimentation and relational engagement, as illustrated in Articles 1, 3, and 4. While user orientation is frequently put forward in policy documents, legal frameworks, and strategic visions, the empirical findings suggest a limited willingness, at the higher organisational levels, to reconsider how management practices, accountability structures, and decision-making processes shape everyday work.

Rather than being treated as a shared organisational concern, user orientation seems often to be delegated to frontline professionals, with the implicit assumption that it can be accommodated within existing structures and routines. This positioning frames user orientation as an operational issue rather than as a matter of organisational judgement and governance. As illustrated in Article 1, political aims are articulated at a high level in terms of “*all children succeeding*”, without any corresponding clarification of how such an aim should be translated into everyday priorities and practices.

This delegation appears to create a gap between expectations and support. Frontline professionals report that efforts to work in more relational or collaborative ways receive little recognition or institutional backing from higher levels (Article 3). Across the material, there is a notable absence of routine top-level engagement with what professionals are actually observing in practice: i.e. which needs emerge, which resource combinations appear workable, and where existing arrangements fall short, discussed in Article 2 as demands for value clarifications, value verifications in practice, and evidence of the viable use of resources. As shown in Articles 1 and 2, systematic demands for such practice-based feedback from political and managerial levels appear to be largely missing.

Taken together, the findings suggest that reluctance at the top is not expressed as resistance to user orientation as such, but may be understood as a reluctance to allow

user-oriented work to reshape governance priorities. While user orientation is endorsed in strategic and policy documents, senior managers and political leaders rarely adjust decision-making structures, accountability systems, or performance criteria in ways that would support exploratory, relational practices.

Across Articles 1, 3, and 4, governance arrangements tend to favour internal efficiency, compliance with policy targets, and predefined service formats over responsiveness to users' lived experiences. This pattern may be captured as *output-dominant governance*. Within such arrangements, user orientation appears to be effectively delegated to frontline professionals, while core organisational priorities remain unchanged.

In ambidextrous organisation theory, Stoiber, Matzler, and Hautz (2023) describe this dynamic as *selective support for exploration*: Exploration is encouraged rhetorically but constrained in practice by governance systems designed to stabilise exploitation. Applied to user orientation, this may help explain why responsibility is pushed downwards without any corresponding changes in how value is defined, decisions made, or performance assessed. User orientation is thus permitted as an operational ideal, but rarely allowed to function as a governing principle, which may make it difficult to sustain over time.

### 5.2.5 Structural constraints

A final but fundamental organisational condition that appears to restrict the creation of scope for user-oriented practices is the structural setup of welfare services. Across the empirical material, bureaucratic organisation, hierarchical control, and siloed service formats seem to undermine the ability to work flexibly and relationally with users and other actors (Articles 2, 3, and 4). This is illustrated by the recurring concern that responsibility is formally divided but practically disconnected: *“Each respective organisation is solely responsible for its own part... but nobody is responsible for linking up endeavours based on the child’s perspective.”* These structural arrangements are not neutral. They can be understood in terms of reflecting historically-established mandates, legal frameworks, and governance models that prioritise internal order, efficiency, and standardisation over responsiveness and user orientation.

One prominent manifestation of these constraints is fragmentation. When responsibilities are distributed across specialised units, and when decision-making remains centralised, opportunities for collaboration and coordination tend to diminish. This is articulated particularly clearly in Articles 3 and 4, where professionals describe how everyday work becomes increasingly inward-looking:

Day-to-day work is becoming increasingly introverted. We're occupied with holding onto inner structures and routines... We talk more about how the internal process should look than about how we start out from the child's needs.

While professionals may express a willingness to work in more integrated ways, the structural environment rarely seems to support such efforts. Systems of coordination are often absent, weak, or designed around internal organisational logic rather than user pathways. As a result, users may experience discontinuity, professionals appear to face constraints in problem-solving across organisational boundaries, and resource integration often becomes an individual rather than a shared organisational responsibility (Articles 2, 3, and 4). Under these conditions, professional skills and agency are exercised within narrow organisational domains, limiting the capacity to respond to users' situations cutting across units or mandates. Moreover, decision-making processes tend to remain strongly oriented towards vertical accountability and compliance, leaving limited scope for contextual responsiveness. As illustrated in Article 4, roles and procedures are largely predefined, and deviations tend to be administratively burdensome. This may reinforce reliance on established routines, constraining professionals' ability to adapt their work to users' evolving situations, even when recognising the need to do so.

From an ambidextrous organisational perspective, these patterns can be interpreted in terms of what Stoiber, Matzler, and Hautz (2023) conceptualise as *structural constraints*; i.e. organisational arrangements that stabilise exploitation by embedding control, standardisation, and predictability into decision-making structures. Such constraints not only operate on the basis of formal rules and reporting lines, but also on the basis of taken-for-granted assumptions about legitimate action, decision-making authority, and appropriate problem framing. When applied to user orientation, this may help explain why exploratory and outside-in approaches struggle to become embedded in everyday practice. As long as organisational structures remain oriented towards maintaining established procedures and accountability logics, user-oriented initiatives will remain confined to the margins, dependent on individual efforts rather than supported as a routine way of working.

#### *Synthesis: barriers to user orientation*

Taken together, four out of the five organisational barriers identified across the articles (asymmetric resource distribution, cultural resistance, reluctance at the top, and structural constraints) appear to form a coherent and reinforcing pattern that may help in explaining why user-oriented approaches remain difficult to enact in welfare services. While analytically distinct, these organisational expressions operate across levels and jointly shape how professionals are able to engage with users in practice. The barrier labelled "fixed cognitive frameworks" appears to fall outside the scope of this study, as the present design does not allow for the direct examination of underlying cognitive processes.

A key insight emerging from this synthesis is that user orientation, as enacted under prevailing organisational conditions, often appears surface-level and reactive. Across the empirical material, professional work tends to be primarily oriented towards responding to expressed needs within predefined categories, established

interventions, and short-term targets. Opportunities to explore needs that are latent, evolving, or as yet unarticulated seem to be systematically constrained. In this sense, user orientation may be hindered from developing into a proactive and analytical practice. Figure 3 summarises the organisational expressions from which user orientation is either absent or is being enacted in a surface-level and reactive manner across the studied welfare services. More precisely, the analysis indicates that surface-level user orientation is produced and reproduced through organisational mechanisms that close down exploration, weaken professionals' analytical capacity, obscure value, and individualise responsibility. These mechanisms cut across the five organisational expressions identified above and may help to explain their cumulative effect.

First, organisational arrangements tend to close down exploration in advance. Decisions regarding time, budgets, mandates, and performance criteria are made prior to user–professional interaction, structuring practice around what can be delivered within existing service categories. This anticipatory closure may direct professional attention towards what fits with established interventions, rather than towards understanding users' situations as they unfold, thereby reinforcing reactive forms of user orientation.

Second, the findings point to a weakening of professional analytical capacity. While professionals express strong motivation to engage with users, they are rarely supported in developing the skills required to interpret complex situations when there is uncertainty. Instead, everyday practice tends to be shaped by routines, standardised assessments, and predefined solutions. Over time, this may limit the internalisation of user orientation as a professional way of thinking, constraining the ability to analytically balance individual and societal value in concrete cases.

Third, value remains largely obscured within organisational practice. Although long-term societal goals are articulated at the policy and strategic levels, everyday governance focuses on measurable outputs and target fulfilment. As a result, professionals may lack shared frames for clarifying what constitutes value in specific situations, or for verifying whether or not service responses are meaningful over time. This opacity of value can encourage reliance on what is already measurable and organisationally recognised, further reinforcing surface-level and reactive practice.

Finally, the responsibility for user orientation appears to be largely individualised. User-oriented work is delegated to frontline professionals without any corresponding changes in organisational structures, resources, or governance demands. Professionals are often left to navigate conflicting expectations on their own, making user orientation dependent on individual efforts rather than organisational support. Consequently, user orientation may become fragile, uneven, and difficult to sustain across contexts.

Importantly, this synthesis does not point to a lack of professional motivation. On the contrary, professionals across the studies consistently express a willingness to engage with their users in meaningful ways. What appears to be absent is the

organisational and professional conditions allowing user orientation to become a deeply-embedded mode of reasoning; i.e. one that supports proactive engagement with users' situations and legitimises acting under conditions of uncertainty.

From a PSL perspective, this synthesis suggests that user orientation in welfare services cannot be understood as a user-led or demand-driven practice. Rather, it emerges as a professional and organisational capacity to listen, interpret, and critically assess users' situations, including needs that may not have been articulated yet, while simultaneously weighing individual user value against broader societal considerations. Without the organisational conditions that support such analytical work, user orientation is unlikely to move beyond surface-level responsiveness.

From an ambidextrous organisational perspective, the persistence of conflicting demands becomes more intelligible. Welfare services are expected to uphold legality, stability, and efficiency while also responding to complex and changing social problems. When organisational arrangements favour compliance and standardisation, without creating the scope for reflection, learning, and analytical reasoning, professionals may be left to manage these tensions individually. As a result, user orientation may remain episodic, surface-level and reactive rather than organisationally sustained.

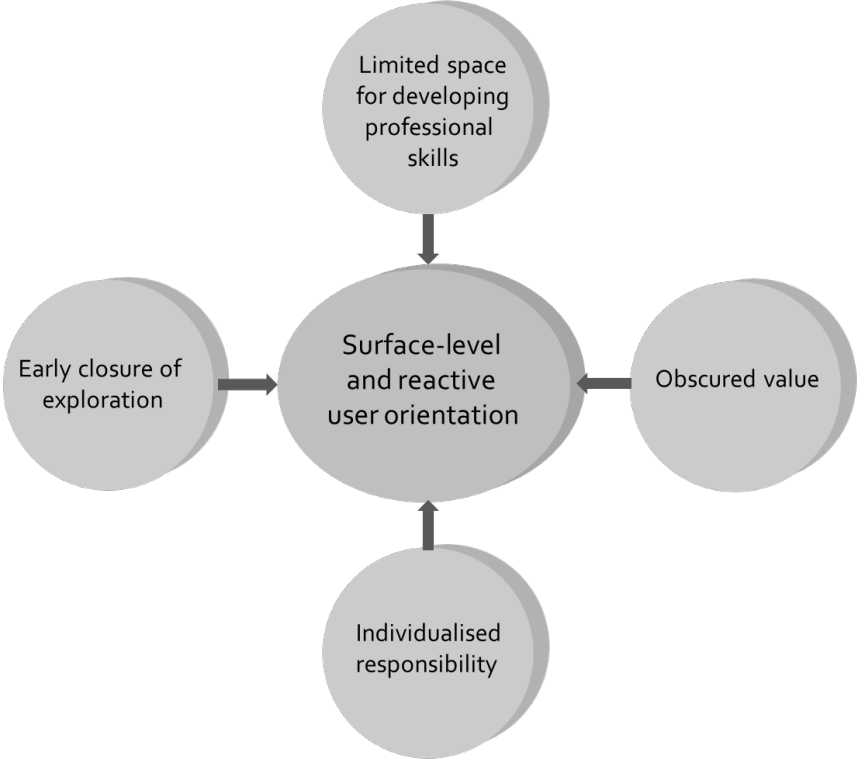


Figure 3: Organisational barriers reproducing surface-level user orientation

### 5.3 User orientation in a multi-level perspective

While the previous section focuses on identifying the key organisational barriers to user orientation, this section introduces the second analytical lens from the analytical framework, in order to further examine how the organisational prerequisites related to user orientation may be situated across a multi-level perspective on welfare services.

Drawing on a multilevel innovation taxonomy, my analysis explores how the activities, responsibilities, and forms of reasoning associated with user orientation are distributed across different organisational levels, and how these distributions may shape the conditions under which user orientation becomes, more or less, organisationally conceivable.

If ambidextrous organisational theory helps clarify why user-oriented practices are currently constrained, the model introduced here may provide a structured way of reflecting on where within the organisation such constraints are located, and how they relate to different levels of decision-making and practice. In this sense, the taxonomy supports analysis of how locally-situated, value-sensitive judgements are both framed and limited by organisational prerequisites, rather than how they ought to be developed.

To interpret and organise the findings with respect to organisational levels and actor roles, this section draws on an adapted version of a model originally proposed by Windrum (2008) and subsequently reproduced and applied by Rønning and Knutagård (2015) and Aflaki and Freise (2019). The taxonomy was first introduced in the summary chapter's theoretical framework, being used here as an analytical lens for examining user orientation in public welfare services from an organisational perspective.

**Table 4: Multi-level taxonomy of organisational roles and responsibilities**

Type	Primary Actors
Services	Service users and frontline staff
Service Process	Target groups, frontline staff, and other resource-integrating stakeholders
Workplace	Frontline staff, coordinators, project managers, and managers
Conceptual	R&D units, developers, researchers and staff from all the above categories
Policy	Politicians and top managers
Systemic	National and regional innovation agencies, alongside all participating organisations

Importantly, the taxonomy has been reinterpreted from a service logic perspective, with an emphasis not on innovation per se, but on the roles and contributions made by the different stakeholders in shaping the organisational conditions for user-

oriented practice. The taxonomy is presented in Table 4 above and is used to analytically examine how primary actors in organisations, in terms of roles, responsibilities, and expectations, are distributed across levels, and how these distributions shape the scope for user-oriented practice to become organisationally conceivable.

At the *service level*, it is primarily first-line professionals, e.g. social workers, teachers, and care staff, who are tasked to engage with users in ways that involve complex value considerations. Often, value is not articulated solely in terms of measurable outcomes, but as a relational and evolving thick concept, as described in Article 1, being shaped by both individual interests and aspirations to achieve a better society. Engaging with such a dual-value concept is described in the empirical material in terms of demanding structured opportunities for collegial reflection, shared meaning-making, and the collective development of professional skills. While professionals may develop an awareness of what user orientation entails, including the ability to identify and weigh individual and societal value, Article 4 suggests that such analytical insights often remain disconnected from everyday practice in the absence of the organisational mechanisms that support their translation into action.

Across the studies, however, these very opportunities appear to be unevenly available and weakly institutionalised. This may help explain why the dual aspect of value, as both individually-experienced and societally-oriented, often remains abstract or fragmented in practice. Thus, professional learning is framed less as a matter of individual insight and more as something dependent on organisational arrangements, including time, legitimacy, and arenas for engagement. One specific challenge noted in the material concerns users in vulnerable situations, who may not initially be able to articulate or act upon their own needs and preferences. In such cases, frontline professionals describe the need for legitimacy and protected time in order to support users in (re)building their capacities (Yeatman, 1994).

At the *service process level*, the focus shifts towards professional roles such as coordinators, innovation managers, project managers, and other mid-level strategic professionals who are responsible for designing and integrating service processes. These actors are described as translating individual user needs into more aggregated patterns across target groups and societal levels. Their work involves maintaining service pathways as systems of resource integration, where users, professionals, and other organisational actors contribute different resources. In this sense, service processes operate at a tactical, meso-level, where gaps between macro-level policy aims and micro-level operational realities become visible and potentially addressable, a challenge also highlighted in Article 4.

In the empirical material, sustainable user orientation is associated at this level with the presence of clear mandates for identification, mobilisation, and coordination, as well as opportunities for horizontal collaboration, all grounded in a shared understanding of users as co-creators rather than as passive recipients, as discussed in Article 2. Coordinating capabilities are not understood here as a

specific job title, but as sets of competencies and routines that (i) embed value clarification and follow-up verification in real cases; (ii) provide a continuous view of the viable use of resources (i.e. which combinations of time, mandates, competencies, and tools are viable for whom, as well as when and why); and (iii) allow misintegration—e.g. duplication, gaps, or resources pre-allocated to internal categories rather than users’ evolving situations, to be detected and articulated. Developing these capabilities may broaden collaboration beyond the ‘usual suspects’ and may link organisational infrastructure with practice-based user orientation by making resources visible and mobilisable in everyday casework.

At the *workplace level*, managers and team leaders are positioned as key actors shaping the cultural and organisational conditions under which user orientation is prioritised in everyday practice. This includes not only communicating expectations regarding user-oriented approaches (described as important in Article 5), but also the extent to which reflective routines, collective leadership, and open dialogue regarding competing institutional logics are supported, as discussed in Article 4. Workplace-level arrangements are thus analytically treated as part of the organisational infrastructure that frames professional skills, rather than solely as internal optimisation.

In the empirical material, professional identity is frequently described as being under pressure, as predefined protocols and compliance demands take precedence over the relational and reflective aspects of professional work, as discussed in Articles 2 and 4. Where the scope exists, professionalism is articulated in terms of curiosity, responsiveness, and the ability to both engage with complexity and negotiate values in collaboration with users. Managers are also linked to conditions concerning job control and clarity of expectation, associated, as shown in Article 5, with more positive attitudes towards a service perspective.

At the *conceptual level*, researchers and reflective practitioners are identified as contributing towards the development and maintenance of shared frameworks that support organisational learning over time. In many welfare services, R&D units and innovation units already exist, functioning as platforms for such conceptual work. These units may integrate experiential knowledge from practice with more abstract analytical work. From a PSL perspective, this level is analytically described as curating a knowledge system, including the shared language, templates, and routines (e.g., case schemas, brief post-action notes, recurring cross-unit dialogues) which anchor value clarification and follow-up verification during everyday work, and which allow cumulative learning about the viable use of resources.

This level is also described as enabling interaction with academic researchers; not primarily as evaluators, but as contributors to theory-informed categories, comparative evidence, and methodological discipline. Their role is framed in terms of articulating emerging practices, surfacing value tensions, and refining measures of value and viability, in doing so supporting both practice-based learning (phronetic knowledge) and empirically-grounded theory development (epistemological knowledge).

At the *policy level*, elected politicians and top managers at the municipal, regional, and national levels are positioned within the material in terms of shaping the governance context within which user-oriented practice is legitimised or constrained. While user orientation is often present in policy rhetoric, the studies suggest that parallel learning and the internalisation of a PSL perspective at this level are uneven. Politicians and top managers are analytically linked to performance management systems and accountability regimes, which often favour bureaucratic logic over trust, flexibility, and learning-oriented forms of accountability.

Concretely, the empirical material points to the relative absence of routine governance demands for value clarification, follow-up verification, and evidence of viable resource use, as well as limited attention to resource integration across organisational boundaries. Learning from everyday user–professional interactions is described as weakly institutionalised, with a reliance on predefined indicators and retrospective evaluations.

Finally, at the *system level*, national innovation agencies and coordinating bodies, e.g. Vinnova (Sweden’s Innovation Agency), Forte (the Swedish Research Council for Health, Working Life and Welfare), and Formas (the Research Council for Sustainable Development), as well as the National Board of Health and Welfare and the Swedish National Agency for Education, are largely absent from empirical accounts of everyday user-oriented work. This absence is interpreted analytically here as a perceived disconnect rather than as a lack of relevance, as these agencies are already funding initiatives aligned with user-oriented logics, including the SustainGov programme.

From a PSL perspective, the challenge may be analytically framed as one of resonance rather than intent: System-level initiatives risk remaining project-based add-ons if they are not connected to the cognitive, cultural, and organisational conditions shaping everyday welfare practice. The material suggests that, where such connections are weak, system-level strategies remain abstract rather than formative.

In sum, the taxonomy is used to synthesise how roles, responsibilities, and forms of reasoning related to user orientation are distributed across organisational levels. Rather than prescribing change, the model supports analytical reflection on how these distributions may shape the conditions under which user-oriented practice becomes, more or less, organisationally conceivable and sustainable within welfare services. See Figure 4 below for an illustration and summary of the taxonomy.



**Figure 4: Multi-level, multi-actor perspective on user orientation**

By combining ambidextrous organisational theory with a revised innovation taxonomy, to use as analytical lenses, the chapter aims to contribute a further analytical level for exploring organisational conditions beyond individual attitudes or isolated initiatives, highlighting instead the distributed and systemic nature of the conditions involved.

## 5.4 Conclusions and contributions

As outlined in the aim, this thesis sets out to contribute both to the theoretical development of PSL and to offer practically relevant insights to welfare services. By examining organisational challenges to user orientation, using a PSL perspective, it provides contributions that speak to both domains. Across the five studies, a consistent pattern appears: User orientation is widely endorsed in principle, but is often difficult to enable in practice. Professionals express a strong willingness to work in user-oriented ways, yet structures, cultures, routines and the design of resources often pull in different directions. Much of what is labelled as user orientation in everyday practice amounts to goodwill or a few extra questions. This falls short of PSL's understanding of value creation and resource integration during the encounter, when user orientation is not primarily user-led and reactive,

but also grounded in professionals' ability to interpret users' life situations and guide them towards more proactive improvements that align individual and societal value.

The thesis makes four main theoretical contributions: First, it clarifies two core PSL concepts in relation to organisational practice; i.e. value as a thick concept linking individual and societal value, and resource integration as a set of generic processes connected to value clarification and follow-up verification in real cases. In doing so, the thesis makes exactly what a PSL-consistent practice entails in welfare services more explicit. Second, the thesis identifies four recurring organisational barriers to user orientation in welfare services and shows how these barriers constrain value creation and resource integration in practice, while also restricting user orientation to the surface level. By bringing these barriers into focus, the study addresses aspects that the PSL literature has rarely examined in organisational terms.

Third, the thesis introduces a multi-level analytical perspective on user orientation by adapting an innovation taxonomy to show how user orientation relates to multiple organisational levels, roles, and responsibilities. This perspective highlights the fact that user orientation is not confined to frontline practice but involves the wider welfare service ecosystem. Finally, by bringing these insights together, the thesis contributes to service studies by clarifying why the common claim that "we work in a user-oriented way" infrequently aligns with PSL's understanding of value creation and resource integration.

Across the studies, it becomes evident that user orientation does not primarily fail due to a lack of professional willingness, but due to limited organisational and professional scope for articulating, reflecting upon, and developing how professionals engage with users. Key to this is the difficulty of handling PSL's dual value perspective in practice, where professionals must continuously balance individual user value with broader societal value. Professionals are rarely supported in formulating what they expect from users in terms of participation, responsibility, and engagement, nor are they provided with sufficient arenas for collective reflection on how users' situations should be understood, interpreted, and acted upon. Opportunities for professional learning, reflective dialogue, and shared sensemaking regarding complex cases appear unevenly distributed and weakly institutionalised. As a result, user orientation risks remaining an individual intention rather than a collectively-supported professional practice.

There are also some practical implications. The thesis identifies the organisational challenges associated with user-oriented practice from a PSL perspective: i.e. coordination capabilities that make resources visible and mobilisable around cases; knowledge routines that connect value clarification with follow-up verification; sufficient job control and clear managerial expectations; protected time for relational work; and governance that favours learning-oriented accountability and cross-boundary integration. At the same time, legality, equity, and professional standards must be preserved while creating room for phronetic judgement.

Recent developments within PSL further underscore the relevance of these findings. In the concluding chapter of *Public Service Logic and Public Service Reform* (Osborne et al., 2026), its authors emphasise the need for cultural change within public service organisations, alongside renewed learning and understanding on the part of professionals and citizens regarding the roles, functions, and intentions of public services. They also highlight the importance of training, knowledge development, and performance management systems capable of capturing both internal performance and external value creation and co-creation. These observations closely resonate with the patterns identified across this thesis, where limited arenas for reflection, weak support for professional learning, and governance systems primarily oriented towards output rather than value clarification and verification appear as recurring organisational challenges facing user-oriented practice.

One reflexive insight in this thesis concerns the initial aim of examining how PSL might be translated into everyday welfare practice. As the empirical material accumulated, it became clear that PSL had a weak explicit foothold in the organisational settings being studied and that its conceptual vocabulary did not readily align with how everyday welfare work was described and organised. This did not result in a rejection of PSL, but in a reformulation of the analytical focus. Rather than asking how PSL could be applied, the thesis asks why a service-oriented perspective such as PSL is difficult to recognise within existing organisational arrangements.

In parallel, the analytical emphasis gradually shifted away from episteme towards phronesis. Over time, abstract conceptual clarity faded in prominence, while situated judgement and the practical realities of professionals' work came more sharply into view. This underlines the importance of understanding organisational realities before theoretical frameworks can meaningfully relate to them. In sum, PSL remains a compelling theoretical lens: The added value here is to anchor it phronetically by showing how everyday practice enables or constrains user orientation in real cases.

## 5.5 Limitations and future research

This thesis has several limitations. Although the focus is on the service user, no users participated directly: The empirical emphasis is on professionals and organisational actors who interact with users in practice. This reflects the intention to examine organisational conditions, but it remains a clear limitation. The thesis does not assess system-level outcomes or the cost-effectiveness of user-oriented practice, and neither is causality established. The findings describe recurring conditions and patterns rather than effects or directions of influence.

Generalisability is also limited. The empirical work was done within one geographical region of Sweden and in specific organisational settings, where local cultures and policy contexts may shape the patterns observed. A further limitation concerns measurement and operationalisation. Some categories are study-specific, and, in Article 5, an initial quantitative operationalisation of service orientation has been developed from a PSL perspective. While conceptually-grounded, these operationalisations require further testing in larger and more diverse samples. Finally, much of the material relies on self-reports and interpretive analysis, which are sensitive to social desirability, contextual nuance, and alternative interpretations.

These limitations point to avenues for future research. Replication across municipalities, regions, and countries would strengthen the external validity. Longitudinal and comparative designs could help examine how organisational conditions relate to user-defined and societal value over time. Further studies could explore how organisational arrangements, learning-oriented accountability, and knowledge practices relate to user orientation in different welfare settings. The continued development and validation of measurement tools is also needed, as well as research designs that connect user-reported value with organisational practice in real time.

In closing, this thesis shows that user orientation is closely tied to organisational practice. By making these organisational conditions visible, the study clarifies how PSL's concepts relate to the everyday realities of welfare services.

# 6 Appendix

## 6.1 Tables of empirical material

**Table 5. Participants and duration in the material “Research Circle 1: Collaboration Between Welfare Services”**

Number of participants	No of meetings	Length of meetings	Total
8 practitioner + 3 researchers	15	2 hours	30 hours

**Table 6. Participants and duration in the material “Service Innovation in Welfare Services”**

Participant	#	Method	Time	Occasions
End-users Social services and education	8 children	Individual interview	30-60 minutes	8
Frontline professionals Social services	8 professionals	Focus group interview	2 hours	4
	92 professionals	Focus group interview	2 hours	1
Education	14 professionals	Focus group interview	2 hours	7
Frontline managers and middle managers Social services	15 managers	Focus group interview	2 hours	1
Education	5 principals	Focus group interview	2 hours	1
Top management Social services and education	5 managers	Focus group interview	15 minutes	1
Politicians Social services and education	7 politicians	Focus group interview	15 minutes	2

**Table 7. Participants and duration in the material “Research Circle 2: The Coordinator’s Role”**

Participants	#	Duration	Topics
Practitioners: 14 at the beginning 8 at the end 2 Researchers	11 meetings (of which 2 guest lecturers)	120 minutes	Identifying one’s own role in documents; driving resource integration; swift trust; listening in; spreading and encouraging collective leadership.

**Table 8. Participants and duration in the material “Service Innovation in a Financial Collaboration Association”**

Level	#	Minutes per meeting	Date
Operational assignment-leader meetings	8	120 (total: 960)	05/11/20, 03/12/20, 21/01/21, 18/03/21, 20/04/21, 03/06/21, 06/16/21, 28/04/22
Association management meetings	8	120 (total: 960)	05/11/20, 03/12/20, 21/01/21, 18/03/21, 20/04/21, 03/06/21, 14/10/21, 06/12/21
Closing presentations	1	120	21/04/21
Network meetings (of the operational project manager and collaborating stakeholders)	5	60-120 (total 360)	01/10/21, 03/11/21, 10/08/21, 06/12/21, 01/12/21
Management meetings, managers’ network	1	60	22/01/21
Board meeting	1	30	29/01/21
Focus group interviews with managers	2	120 (total 240)	11/02/22, 18/03/22
Interviews with board members	5	45-60 (total 240)	21/06/22, 22/06/22

**Table 9. Participants and duration in the material “Social Service and Organisational Transformation”**

Number of Participants	Length of workshop	Minutes of discussion
82	120 minutes	10-, 15- and 20-minutes discussion (45 minutes)

**Table 10. Survey Dataset and Respondents in “Service Perspective in Social Services”**

Dataset	Respondents receiving	Number answering	Percentage
Department General	94	53	56,4 %
Department Children	187	60	32,1 %
Department Adults	212	65	30,7 %
TOTAL	493	178	36 %

# References

- Aagaard Nielsen, K., & Svensson, L. (Eds.). (2006). *Action and interactive research: Beyond practice and theory*. Shaker Publishing.
- Adebajo, A. (2026). Value co-destruction dynamics in public service innovation ecosystems. In S. P. Osborne, C. Bianchi, & J. Macfarlane (Eds.), *Public Service Logic and Public Service Reform: State of the Art, New Perspectives, and Future Directions* (pp. 85–98). Routledge.
- Aflaki, I. N., & Freise, M. (2019). Challenging the welfare system and forcing policy innovation? Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Sweden and Germany. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 34(1), 264–284. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fez036>
- Ahuja, G., & Lampert, C. M. (2001). Entrepreneurship in the large corporation: A longitudinal study of how established firms create breakthrough inventions. *Strategic Management Journal*, 22, 521–543. <https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.176>
- Alford, J. (2016). Co-production, interdependence, and publicness: Extending public service-dominant logic. *Public Management Review*, 18(5), 673–691. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2015.1111659>
- Alonso, P., & Lewis, G. B. (2001). Public Service Motivation and Job Performance. *American Review of Public Administration*, 31(4), 363. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02750740122064992>
- Alvehus, J. (2022). *The logic of professionalism: Work and management in professional service organisations*. Bristol University Press.
- Andersen, L. B., & Kjeldsen, A. M. (2013). Public service motivation, user orientation, and job satisfaction: A question of employment sector? *International Public Management Journal*, 16(2), 252–274. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10967494.2013.817253>
- Andersen, L. B., & Pedersen, L. H. (2012). Public service motivation and professionalism. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 35(1), 46–57. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01900692.2011.635278>
- Andersen, L. B., Pallesen, & Solomonsen, (2017). Doing good for others and/or for society? The relationships between public service motivation, user orientation, and university grading. *Scandinavian Journal of Public Administration*, 17(3).
- Andriopoulos, C., & Lewis, M. W. (2009). Exploitation–exploration tensions and organisational ambidexterity: Managing paradoxes of innovation. *Organisation Science*, 20, 696–717. <https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.1080.0406>
- Arnstein, S. R. (1969). A Ladder of Citizen Participation. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 35(4), 216–224.

- Askheim, O. P., Andersen, J., & Guldvik, I. (2017). When the service users innovate – User-controlled personal assistance as a social innovation / Når brukerne innoverer - Brukerstyrt personlig assistanse som sosial innovasjon. *Tidsskrift for Omsorgsforskning*, 3(1), 27. <https://doi.org/10.18261/issn.2387-5984-2017-01-05>
- Askheim, O. P. (2016). Samproduksjon som velferdssektorens kinderegg. *Tidsskrift for omsorgsforskning*, 2(1), 24–36. <https://doi.org/10.18261/ISSN2387-5984-2016-01-06>
- Assink, M. (2006). Inhibitors of disruptive innovation capability: A conceptual model. *European Journal of Innovation Management*, 9(2), 215–233. <https://doi.org/10.1108/14601060610663587>
- Bartlett, H. P. (1999). Primary health care for older people: Progress towards an integrated strategy? *Health & Social Care in the Community*, 7(5), 342–349. <https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1365-2524.1999.00196.x>
- Berthelsen, H., Westerlund, H., Bergström, G., & Burr, H. (2020). Validation of the Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire Version III and establishment of benchmarks for psychosocial risk management in Sweden. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(9), 3179. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17093179>
- Bianchi, C., Nasi, G., & Rivenbark, W. C. (2021). Implementing collaborative governance: Models, experiences, and challenges. *Public Management Review*, 23(11), 1581–1589. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2021.1878777>
- Bornemark, J. (2018). *Det omätbaras renässans: En uppgörelse med pedanternas världsherravälde*. [The Renaissance of the Unmeasurable: A Critique of the Quantified World] Volante.
- Bornemark, J. (2019). Att utforska praktisk kunskap: undersökande, prövande och avtäckande metoder [Exploring practical knowledge: Investigative, probing, and revealing methods]. In M. Gunnarson (Ed.), *Att utforska praktisk kunskap: undersökande, prövande och avtäckande metoder [Exploring practical knowledge: Investigative, probing, and revealing methods]* (pp. 59–88). Södertörns högskola.
- Boxall, K., & Beresford, P. (2013). Service user research in social work and disability studies in the United Kingdom. *Disability & Society*, 28(5), 587. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2012.717876>
- Braga, A., Di Maso, A., Franceschi, L., & Sancino, A. (2026). Public service logic (PSL) and its practices: towards a new era for public services management. In S. P. Osborne, C. Bianchi, & J. Macfarlane (Eds.), *Public Service Logic and Public Service Reform: State of the Art, New Perspectives, and Future Directions* (pp. 160–174). Routledge.
- Brante, T. (2014). *Den professionella logiken: hur vetenskap och praktik förenas i det moderna kunskapssamhället* [The Professional Logic: How Science and Practice Are United in the Modern Knowledge Society]. Stockholm: Liber.
- Bromark, K., Knutsson, O., & Spånberger Weitz, Y. (2023). Co-designing a dynamic tool to enhance participation for young people: A participatory design project with young service users and social workers. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 147. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2023.106856>

- Bromark, K., Spånberger Weitz, Y., Erlandsson, S., & Schön, U.-K. (2024). Practitioners exploring intertwined challenges and possible solutions for user participation in social services. *Nordic Social Work Research*, 283–295.
- Brown, M. E., Treviño, L. K., & Harrison, D. A. (2005). Ethical leadership: A social learning perspective for construct development and testing. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 97(2), 117–134. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.obhdp.2005.03.002>
- Callon, M. (1986). *Some elements of a sociology of translation: Domestication of the scallops and the fishermen of St Brieuc Bay*. *The Sociological Review Monographs*, 32(2), 196–233.
- Chen, J., Miller, D., & Chen, M.-J. (2021). Top management team time horizon blending and organisational ambidexterity. *Strategic Organisation*, 19, 183–206. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1476127019883669>
- Chesbrough, H. (2010). Business model innovation: Opportunities and barriers. *Long Range Planning*, 43(2–3), 354–363. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lrp.2009.07.010>
- Christensen, C. M. (1997). *The innovator's dilemma: When new technologies cause great firms to fail*. Harvard Business School Press.
- Christensen, T., & Laegreid, P. (2011). Complexity and Hybrid Public Administration-- Theoretical and Empirical Challenges. *Public Organization Review*, 11(4), 407. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11115-010-0141-4>
- Christensen, C. M., & Raynor, M. E. (2003). *The Innovator's Solution: Creating and sustaining successful growth*. Harvard Business School Press.
- Cozzolino, A., Verona, G., & Rothaermel, F. T. (2018). Unpacking the Disruption Process: New Technology, Business Models, and Incumbent Adaptation. *Journal of Management Studies (John Wiley & Sons, Inc.)*, 55(7), 1166–1202. <https://doi.org/10.1111/joms.12352>
- Cui, T., Cucciniello, M., Gomes R. & Osborne, S. (2026). When service users say “no”: exploring value failure from a PSE perspective. In S. P. Osborne, C. Bianchi, & J. Macfarlane (Eds.), *Public Service Logic and Public Service Reform: State of the Art, New Perspectives, and Future Directions* (pp. 99–111). Routledge.
- Cui, T., & Osborne, S. P. (2023). Unpacking value destruction at the intersection between public and private value. *Public Administration*, 101(4), 1207. <https://doi.org/10.1111/padm.12850>
- Cyr, J. (2019). *Focus groups for the social science researcher*. Cambridge University Press.
- Dahlin-Ivanoff, S., & Holmgren, K. (2017). *Fokusgrupper [Focus Groups]*. Studentlitteratur.
- Damsgaard, J. B., & Angel, S. (2021). Living a Meaningful Life While Struggling with Mental Health: Challenging Aspects Regarding Personal Recovery Encountered in the Mental Health System. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(5). <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18052708>

- Danielsson, P., Johansson, R., & Westrup, U. (Eds.). (2019). *Tjänstelogik i välfärden: En modell för samskapande mellan professionella med barnet i fokus*. [Service Logic in Welfare: A Model for Co-creation Between Professionals with the Child in Focus] Studentlitteratur.
- DaSilva, C. M., Trkman, P., Desouza, K., & Lindič, J. (2013). Disruptive technologies: A business model perspective on cloud computing. *Technology Analysis & Strategic Management*, 25, 1161–1173. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09537325.2013.843661>
- Duff, G. (2026). Advancing PSL theory: a PSL value proposition for disability service ecosystems that support people with intellectual disability, their families and carers. In S. P. Osborne, C. Bianchi, & J. Macfarlane (Eds.), *Public Service Logic and Public Service Reform: State of the Art, New Perspectives, and Future Directions* (pp. 112–130). Routledge.
- Engen, M., Fransson, M., Quist, J., & Skälén, P. (2021). Continuing the development of the public service logic: A study of value co-destruction in public services. *Public Management Review*, 23(6), 886–905. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2020.1720354>
- Eriksson, E. M. (2019). Representative co-production: Broadening the scope of the public service logic. *Public Management Review*, 21(2), 291–314. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2018.1487575>
- Eriksson, E., Andersson, T., Hellström, A., Gadolin, C., & Lifvergren, S. (2020). Collaborative public management: Coordinated value propositions among public service organisations. *Public Management Review*, 22(6), 791–812. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2019.1604793>
- Eriksson, E., & Andersson, T. (2024). The ‘service turn’ in a new public management context: A street-level bureaucrat perspective. *Public Management Review*, 26(7), 2014–2038. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037>
- Eriksson, E., & Hellström, A. (2021). Multi-actor resource integration: A service approach in public management. *British Journal of Management*, 32(2), 456–472. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8551.12414>
- Errida, A. & Lotfi, B. (2021). The determinants of organisational change management success: Literature review and case study. *International Journal of Engineering Business Management*, 13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/18479790211016273>
- Fisk, R. P., Brown, S. W., & Bitner, M. J. (1993). Tracking the evolution of the services marketing literature. In A. Swartz, D. E. Bowen & S. W. Brown (eds.), *Advances in Services Marketing and Management*, Vol. 1, s. 1–61.
- Favoreu, C., Maurel, C., & Queyroi, Y. (2025). Influence of public innovation laboratories on the development of public sector ambidexterity. *Public Management Review*, 27(9), 2049. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2024.2322720>
- Flyvbjerg, B. (2001). *Making Social Science Matter: Why social inquiry fails and how it can succeed again*. Cambridge University Press.
- Gerli, P., Arakpogun, E. O., Elsahn, Z., Olan, F., & Prime, K. S. (2021). Beyond contact-tracing: The public value of eHealth application in a pandemic. *Government Information Quarterly*, 38(1), 101581. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2020.101581>
- Greve, B. (2022). *Rethinking Welfare and the Welfare State*. Edward Elgar.

- Grönroos, C. (2008). Service logic revisited: Who creates value? And who co-creates? *European Business Review*, 20(4), 298–314. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09555340810886585>
- Grönroos, C. (2012). Conceptualising value co-creation: A journey to the 1970s and back to the future. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 28(13–14), 1520–1534. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2012.737357>
- Grönroos, C. (2019). Reforming public services: Does service logic have anything to offer? *Public Management Review*, 21(5), 775–788. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2018.1529879>
- Grönroos, C. (2021). *Tjänstefiering: I kundens ögon är alla företag tjänsteleverantörer* [Servitization: in the eyes of the customer, all companies are service providers]. Volante
- Grönroos, C., & Gummerus, J. (2014). The service revolution and its marketing implications: Service logic vs service-dominant logic. *Managing Service Quality* 24(3), 206–229.
- Grönroos, C., & Voima, P. (2013). Critical service logic: Making sense of value creation and co-creation. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 41(2), 133–150. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-012-0308-3>
- Gummesson, E., & Grönroos, C. (2012). The emergence of the new service marketing: Nordic school perspectives. *Journal of Service Management*, 23(4), 479–497. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09564231211260387>
- Gyllenhammar, D. L. M. (2024). *Understanding improvements*. Chalmers University of Technology.
- Habermas, J. (1989). *The structural transformation of the public sphere*. Polity Press.
- Haddad, C. R., Nakić, V., Bergek, A., & Hellsmark, H. (2022). Transformative innovation policy: A systematic review. *Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions*, 43, 14–40. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eist.2022.03.002>
- Hall, T., Kakuma, R., Palmer, L., Minas, H., Martins, J., & Armstrong, G. (2020). Service user and family participation in mental health policy making in Timor-Leste: A qualitative study with multiple stakeholders. *BMC Psychiatry*, 20(1), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12888-020-02521-3>
- Hansen, T., Hatling, T., Lidal, E., & Ruud, T. (2002). Discrepancies between patients and professionals in the assessment of patient needs: A quantitative study of Norwegian mental health care. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 39(6), 554–562. <https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1365-2648.2002.02324.x>
- Hasenfeld, Y. (1983). *Human service organisations*. Prentice Hall.
- Hasenfeld, Y. (2015). What exactly is human services management? *Human Service Organisations: Management, Leadership and Governance*, 39(1), 1–5.
- Hilppö, J., L. Lipponen, K. Kumpulainen, and M. Virlander. 2016. Sense of Agency and Everyday Life: Children’s Perspective. *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction* 10: 50–59. doi:10.1016/j.lcsi. 2015.10.001.

- Hilton, C., Gallacher, J., & White, I. (2002). Needs assessment: can patients be reliably interviewed about their needs for care? *International Journal of Social Psychiatry*, 48(4), 277-287.
- Hjärpe, T. (2022). Measurable time is governable time: Exploring temporality and time governance in childcare social work. *Time & Society*, 31(2), 291–314. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0961463X211059022>
- Hodgkinson, I.R., Hughes, P., Leite, H. and Lee, Y., (2023). Entrepreneurial orientation, proactive market orientation and society: evidence from public service organizations in Brazil. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*.
- Hodgkinson, I. and Hughes, P., (2014). Strategy content and public service provider performance in the UK: an alternative approach. *Public Administration*, 92(3), pp. 707-726.
- Holmstrand, L., & Härnsten, G. (2003). *Förutsättningar för forskningscirkel i skolan. En kritisk granskning* [Prerequisites for research circles in schools: A critical review]. Swedish Educational Development Agency.
- Hood, C. (1991). A public management for all seasons? *Public Administration*, 69 (spring), 3–19.
- Hood, C., & Peters, G. (2004). The middle aging of new public management: Into the age of paradox? *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 14(3), 267–282.
- Høibjerg, G. R. (2021). *'If I get a job, I will just die here': An ethnographic public service study on refugee integration in Norway* (PhD dissertation). Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences.
- Iranmanesh, M., Kumar, K. M., Foroughi, B., (2021). The impacts of organisational structure on operational performance through innovation capability: Innovative culture as moderator. *Review of Managerial Science*, 15, 1885–1911. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11846-020-00407-y>
- Kammerlander, N., König, A., & Richards, M. (2018). Why do incumbents respond heterogeneously to disruptive innovations? The interplay of domain identity and role identity. *Journal of Management Studies*, 55, 1122–1165. <https://doi.org/10.1111/joms.12345>
- Karlsson, T. S. (2017). *New public management: Ett nyliberalt 90-talsfenomen*. Lund: Studentlitteratur.
- Kelly, L.M. & Cordeiro, M. (2020). Three principles of pragmatism for research on organisational processes. *Qualitative Research in Organisations and Management*, 13(2). DOI: 10.1177/2059799120937242
- Kinder, T., Six, F., Stenvall, J., & Memon, A. (2020). Governance-as-legitimacy: Are ecosystems replacing networks? *Public Management Review*, 24(1), 8–33. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2020.1786149>
- Kinder, T., Schttz, F., Karjalainen, J., Rhodes, M. L., & Brandsen, T. (2022). Service Ecosystems in Public Management: Implications for Value Creation and Service Innovation. *Public Management Review*.
- Kinder, T., & Stenvall, J. (2023). A critique of public service logic. *Public Management Review*, 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2023.2182904>

- Knutsson, O., & Schön, U.-K. (2020). Co-creating a process of user involvement and shared decision-making in coordinated care planning with users and caregivers in social services. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health & Well-Being*, 15(1), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17482631.2020.1812270>
- Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. Prentice-Hall.
- Kristersson Uggla, B. (2019). *En strävan efter sanning — Vetenskapens teori och praktik*. [A Quest for Truth: The Theory and Practice of Science] Studentlitteratur.
- Landi, S., & Russo, S. (2022). Co-production ‘thinking’ and performance implications in the case of separate waste collection. *Public Management Review*, 24(2), 301–325. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2020.1823726>
- Leiter, M. P., & Maslach, C. (2004). Areas of Worklife: A structured approach to organisational predictors of job burnout. In P. L. Perrewé & D. C. Ganster (Eds.), *Research in occupational stress and well being* (Vol. 3, pp. 91–134). Emerald Group Publishing. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1479-3555\(03\)03003-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1479-3555(03)03003-8)
- Leung, D. Y. P., Chan, H. Y. L., Chiu, P. K. C., Lo, R. S. K., & Lee, L. L. Y. (2020). Source of social support and caregiving self-efficacy on caregiver burden and patient's quality of life: A path analysis on patients with palliative care needs and their caregivers. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(15), 5457. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17155457>
- Liaaen, J. M., & Söderström, S. (2024). The interrelated process of becoming independent in user participation for young persons living with disabilities. *Disability & Rehabilitation*, 46(4), 714–722. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09638288.2023.2175385>
- Lidén, G. (2023). *Att använda mixade metoder [Using Mixed Methods]*. Studentlitteratur.
- Lindqvist, K., & Westrup, U. (2020). Non-voluntary service interaction from a service logic perspective: Children and value co-creation. *Public Management Review*, 22(12), 1781–1798. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2019.1648698>
- Lipsky, M. (1980/2010). *Street-level bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the individual in public services*. Russell Sage Foundation.
- Loeffler, E., & Bovair, T. (Eds.). (2021). *The Palgrave Handbook on Co-Production of Public Services and Outcomes*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Löfberg, N., Månsson Lexell, E., Nilsson, M. H., & Iwarsson, S. (2019). Exploration of the research circle methodology for user involvement in research on home and health dynamics in old age. *Journal of Housing for the Elderly*, 33(2), 85–102. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02763893.2018.1534176>
- Löfberg, N., Åkesson, M., & Skålén, P. (2025). Realization and unrealisation of servitization through everyday micro-level activities: The interplay between servitization practices, practitioners, and praxis. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 124, 195–211.
- Macfarlane, J., Osborne, S. & Bianchi, C. (2026) Conclusions – Future directions for Public Service Logic theory and practice. In S. P. Osborne, C. Bianchi, & J. Macfarlane (Eds.), *Public Service Logic and Public Service Reform: State of the Art, New Perspectives, and Future Directions* (pp. 313-317). Routledge.

- March, J. G. (1991). Exploration and exploitation in organisational learning. *Organisation Science*, 2, 71–87. <https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.2.1.71>
- Mazzucato, M. (2013). *The Entrepreneurial State: Debunking public vs. private sector myths*. Anthem Press.
- McLaughlin, H. (2009). What's in a Name: 'Client', 'Patient', 'Customer', 'Consumer', 'Expert by Experience', 'Service User'—What's Next? *The British Journal of Social Work*, 39(6), 1101–1117. <https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.1093/bjsw/bcm155>
- Mihovska, A., Vlahov, A., & Poulkov, V. (2024). 6G-based intelligent, context-aware, and trustworthy user-centric healthcare applications. *2024 Wireless Telecommunications Symposium (WTS)*, 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.1109/WTS60164.2024.10536689>
- Morgan, D. L. (1996). Focus groups. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 22, 129–152. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.22.1.129>
- Morgan, D. L., & Krueger, R. A. (1993). When to use focus groups and why. In D. L. Morgan (Ed.), *Successful Focus Groups: Advancing the State of the Art* (pp. 3–19). Sage.
- Moses, J. W., & Knutsen, T. L. (2012). *Ways of Knowing: Competing Methodologies in Social and Political Research*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Muurinen, H. (2019). Service-user participation in developing social services: Applying the experiment-driven approach. *European Journal of Social Work*, 22(6), 961–973. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691457.2018.1461071>
- Mörndal, M. (2023). *Att takta. Om organiserings av samverkan mellan organisationer* [To pace. Organizing cooperation between organizations]. *Studentlitteratur*.
- Nasi, G., & Choi, H. (2023). Design strategies for Citizen Strategic Orientation. *Public Management Review*, 1–20.
- Neo, Sheeling, Grimmelikhuijsen, S., & Tummers, L. (2022). Core values for ideal servants: Service-oriented, responsive, and dedicated. *Public Administration Review*, 1–25.
- Normann, R. (2001). *Reframing Business: When the map changes the landscape*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Normann, R., & Ramirez, R. (1993). From value chain to value constellation: Designing interactive strategy. *Harvard Business Review*, 71(4), 65–77.
- Nykänen, P. (2020). Shared decision making in the social services? Reasons to consider when choosing methods for service user participation. *Journal of Evaluation in Clinical Practice*, 26(2), 569–574. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jep.13323>
- O'Reilly, C. A., & Tushman, M. L. (2008). Ambidexterity as a dynamic capability: Resolving the innovator's dilemma. *Research in Organisational Behavior*, 28, 185–206. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.riob.2008.06.002>
- O'Reilly, C. A., & Tushman, M. L. (2013). Organisational ambidexterity: Past, present, and future. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 27, 324–338. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amp.2013.0025>

- Osborne, S. P. (2018). From public service-dominant logic to public service logic: Are public service organisations capable of co-production and value co-creation? *Public Management Review*, 20(2), 225–231. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2017.1350461>
- Osborne, S. P. (2021). *Public Service Logic: Creating value for public service users, citizens, and society through public service delivery*. Routledge.
- Osborne, S. P. (2010). *The new public governance?* Routledge.
- Osborne, S. P., Cucciniello, M., Nasi, G., & Strokosch, K. (2021). New development: Strategic user orientation in public services delivery — the missing link in the strategic trinity? *Public Money & Management*, 41(2), 172–175. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540962.2020.1758401>
- Osborne, S., Nasi, P., & Powell, M. (2021). Beyond co-production: Value creation and public services. *Public Administration*, 99(4), 641–657. <https://doi.org/10.1111/padm.12718>
- Osborne, S. P., Powell, M., Cui, T., & Strokosch, K. (2022). Value creation in the public service ecosystem: An integrative framework. *Public Administration Review*, 82, 634–645. <https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.13474>
- Osborne, S. P., Radnor, Z., & Nasi, G. (2013). A new theory for public service management? Toward a (public) service-dominant approach. *American Review of Public Administration*, 43(2), 135–158. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0275074012466935>
- Osborne, S. P., Radnor, Z., & Strokosch, K. (2016). Co-production and the co-creation of value in public services: A suitable case for treatment? *Public Management Review*, 18(5), 639–653. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2015.1111927>
- Osborne, S. P., & Strokosch, K. (2021). Developing a strategic user orientation: A key element for the delivery of effective public services. *Global Public Policy and Governance*, 1(2), 121–135. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43508-021-00008-9>
- Osborne, S. P., & Strokosch, K. (2022). Participation: Add-on or core component of public service delivery? *Australian Journal of Public Administration*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8500.12536>
- Otterup, T., Wahlström, A-M., & Andersson, S. (2013). Forskningscirkeln – en arena för kunskapsutveckling och förändringsarbete. ROSA (Reports on Swedish as a second language) Report no. 18. Dept. of Swedish as a Second Language, Dept. of Swedish, Gothenburg University.
- Pallant, J. (2020). *SPSS Survival Manual: A step-by-step guide to data analysis using SPSS* (7th ed.). Open University Press/McGraw-Hill.
- Peacock, D., Macdonald, S. J., Podd, W., & Cosgrove, F. (2022). ‘We capture their comments before we leave the station’: Service user involvement in the delivery of Appropriate Adult Schemes. *Social Work & Social Sciences Review*, 23(3), 2–26.
- Perry, J. L., & Wise, L. R. (1990). The motivational bases of public service. *Public Administration Review*, 50(3), 367–373. <https://doi.org/10.2307/976618>
- Persson, L. (2009). *Participatory action research in social work*.
- Pestoff, V. (2014). Collective action and the sustainability of co-production. *Public Management Review*, 16(3), 383–401. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2013.841460>

- Petrescu, M. (2019). From marketing to public value: Towards a theory of public service ecosystems. *Public Management Review*, 21(11), 1733–1752. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2019.1619811>
- Poblete, L., Eriksson, E., Hellström, A., & Glennon, R. (2023). User involvement and value co-creation in well-being ecosystems. *Journal of Health Organisation and Management*, 37(9), 34–55. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JHOM-11-2022-0339>
- Pollitt, C. (2016). Public management: performance, professionalism and politics, *International Review of Public Administration*, Taylor & Francis Journals, vol. 21(2), pp. 178-179, April.
- Pramling Samuelsson, I., D. Sommer, and Hundeide. K. (2013). *Barnperspektiv Och Barnens Perspektiv I Teori Och Praktik* [Child Perspective and Children’s Perspective in Theory and Practice]. Stockholm: Liber.
- Quist, J., & Fransson, M. (2014). *Tjänstelogik för offentlig förvaltning* [Service logic for public administration]. Liber.
- Rossi, P. (2026). Ecosystems in public service logic literature. In S. P. Osborne, C. Bianchi, & J. Macfarlane (Eds.), *Public Service Logic and Public Service Reform: State of the Art, New Perspectives, and Future Directions* (pp. 146–159). Routledge.
- Rumelt, R. P. (1995). Inertia and transformation. In C. A. Montgomery (Ed.), *Resource-based and evolutionary theories of the firm: Towards a synthesis* (pp. 101–132). Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Rønning, R., & Knutagård, M. (2015). *Innovation in social welfare and human services*. Routledge.
- Rønshaugen, M., Magnussen, S. F., & Sønderskov, M. (2025). Unveiling how power manifests in street-level interactions: implications for value co-creation. *Public Management Review*, 1–27. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2025.2536155>
- Schneider, S. (2019). How to approach business model innovation: The role of opportunities in times of (no) exogenous change. *R&D Management*, 49, 399–420. <https://doi.org/10.1111/radm.12302>
- Sergianni, C., Brozović, D., & Andersson, T. (2026). Public service logic: a systematic literature review. *Public Management Review*, 1–38. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2026.2631749>
- Shier, H. (2001). Pathways to participation: Openings, opportunities and obligations. *Children & Society*, 15(2), 107–117.
- Shostack, G. L. (1977). Breaking free from product marketing. *Journal of Marketing*, 41(2), 73–80.
- Skarli, J. B. (2026). An active and equal partner? Developing the understanding of the public service user as an actor in value co-creation. In S. P. Osborne, C. Bianchi, & J. Macfarlane (Eds.), *Public Service Logic and Public Service Reform: State of the Art, New Perspectives, and Future Directions* (pp. 201–213). Routledge.
- Skarli, J. B. (2023). Responsibilization and value conflicts in healthcare co-creation. *Public Management Review*, 25(7), 1238. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2021.2013070>

- Skarli, J. B., & Stokke, M. (2025). Fostering value facilitation through situated learning in communities of practice. *Public Management Review*, 1–27. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2025.2534721>
- Skålén, P. (2022). Public services and service innovation: A practice theory view. *Nordic Journal of Innovation in the Public Sector*, 1(1), 20–34. <https://doi.org/10.18261/njips.1.1.2>
- Skålén, P. (2018). *Service logic*. Studentlitteratur.
- Skålén, P., Felleson, M., & Fougère, M. (2006). The governmentality of marketing discourse. *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, 22(4), 275–291. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scaman.2006.07.001>
- Skålén, P., & Gummerus, J. (2023). Conceptualizing services and service innovation: A practice theory study of the Swedish music market. *Journal of Service Research*, 26(1), 83–102. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10946705211062693>
- Skålén, P., Karlsson, J., Engen, M., & Magnusson, P. R. (2018). Understanding public service innovation as resource integration and creation of value propositions. *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, 77(4), 700–714. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8500.12308>
- Stenvall, J. & Kinder, T. (2026). What homelessness in Finland reveals about PSL approaches to problem-solving. In S. P. Osborne, C. Bianchi, & J. Macfarlane (Eds.), *Public Service Logic and Public Service Reform: State of the Art, New Perspectives, and Future Directions* (pp. 239–251). Routledge.
- Strokosch, K., & Osborne, S. P. (2020). Co-experience, co-production and co-governance: an ecosystem approach to the analysis of value creation. *Policy & Politics*, 48(3), 425–442. <https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.1332/030557320X15857337955214>
- Stewart, J., & Clarke, M. (1987). The public service orientation: Issues and dilemmas. *Public Administration*, 65(2), 161–177.
- Stoiber, K., Matzler, K., & Hautz, J. (2023). Ambidextrous structures paving the way for disruptive business models: A conceptual framework. *Review of Managerial Science*, 17, 1439–1485. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11846-022-00589-7>
- Storm, M., & Edwards, A. (2013). Models of user involvement in the mental health context: Intentions and implementation challenges. *Psychiatric Quarterly*, 84(3), 313–327. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11126-012-9247-x>
- Strokosch, K., & Osborne, S. P. (2024). Understanding value creation from a public service logic. In I. Lapsley & P. Miller (Eds.), *The resilience of new public management* (pp. 237–254). Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198883814.003.0013>
- Strokosch, K. & Osborne, S. P. (2020) Debate: If citizen participation is so important, why has it not been achieved?, *Public Money & Management*, 40:1, 8-10, DOI: 10.1080/09540962.2019.1654322
- Svensson, L., Ellström, P. E., & Brulin, G. (2007). Introduction—on interactive research. *International Journal of Action Research*, 3(3), 233–249.
- Swedish Government Report (SOU [SGR]). (2013). *Att tänka nytt för att göra nytta: Om perspektivskiften i offentlig verksamhet* [Rethinking for usefulness: Perspective shifts in public administration] (SOU 2013:40). Government Offices of Sweden.

- Swedish Government Report (SOU [SGR]). (2016). *Barnkonventionen blir svensk lag* [The Convention on the Rights of the Child becomes Swedish law] (SOU 2016:19). Government Offices of Sweden.
- Swedish Government Report (SOU [SGR]). (2018a). *Vårt gemensamma ansvar: För unga som varken arbetar eller studerar* [Our shared responsibility: For young people who neither work nor study] (SOU 2018:11). Government Offices of Sweden.
- Swedish Government Report (SOU [SGR]). (2018b). *Uppdrag: Samverkan 2018. Många utmaningar återstår* [Mandate: Collaboration 2018. Many challenges remain] (SOU 2018:12). Government Offices of Sweden.
- Swedish Government Report (SOU [SGR]). (2018c). *Ju förr desto bättre: Vägar till en förebyggande socialtjänst* [The sooner the better: Pathways to preventive social services] (SOU 2018:32). Government Offices of Sweden.
- Swedish Government Report (SOU [SGR]). (2018d). *Med tillit växer handlingsutrymmet: Tillitsbaserad styrning och ledning av välfärdssektorn* [Trust increases room for manoeuvre: Trust-based governance and management of the welfare sector] (SOU 2018:47). Government Offices of Sweden.
- Swedish Government Report (SOU [SGR]). (2019). *God och nära vård: Vård i samverkan* [Good and close care: Care in collaboration] (SOU 2019:29). Government Offices of Sweden.
- Swedish Government Report (SOU [SGR]). (2020a). *Personuppgiftsbehandling vid antalsberäkning inför klinisk forskning* [Personal data processing for sample-size calculation prior to clinical research] (SOU 2020:53). Government Offices of Sweden.
- Swedish Government Report (SOU [SGR]). (2020b). *Barnkonventionen och svensk rätt* [The Convention on the Rights of the Child and Swedish law] (SOU 2020:63). Government Offices of Sweden.
- Swedish Government Report (SOU [SGR]). (2023a). *På egna ben: Utvecklad samverkan för individers etablering på arbetsmarknaden* [On one's own feet: Enhanced collaboration for individuals' entry into the labour market] (SOU 2023:7). Government Offices of Sweden.
- Swedish Government Report (SOU [SGR]). (2023b). *Samhället mot skolattacker* [Society against school attacks] (SOU 2023:28). Government Offices of Sweden.
- Swedish Government Report (SOU [SGR]). (2023c). *Ett stärkt och samlat skydd av välfärdsystemen* [A strengthened and consolidated protection of the welfare systems] (SOU 2023:52). Government Offices of Sweden.
- Sønderskov, M., & Rønning, R. (2021). Public Service Logic: An Appropriate Recipe for Improving Serviceness in the Public Sector? *Administrative Sciences*, 11(3), 64. <https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci11030064>
- Tisdall, E. K. M. (2016). Conceptualising children and young people's participation: examining vulnerability, social accountability and co-production. *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 21(1), 59–75. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13642987.2016.1248125>

- Tushman, M. L., & O'Reilly, C. A. (1996). Ambidextrous organisations: Managing evolutionary and revolutionary change. *California Management Review*, 38(4), 8–29. <https://doi.org/10.2307/41165852>
- Tørseth, T. N. (2025). User participation? Isn't that what I do all day? Implementing user participation in Norwegian mental health outpatient clinics: A street-level bureaucrat perspective. *Nordic Social Work Research*, 15(2), 284–300. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2156857X.2024.2394603>
- United Nations. (2015). *Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (A/RES/70/1). United Nations General Assembly.
- Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2004). Evolving to a new dominant logic for marketing. *Journal of Marketing*, 68(1), 1–17.
- Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2008). Service-dominant logic: Continuing the evolution. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 36(1), 1–10.
- Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2016). Institutions and axioms: An extension and update of service-dominant logic. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 44, 5–23. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-015-0456-3>
- Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2018). An overview of service-dominant logic. In S. L. Vargo & R. F. Lusch (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of service-dominant logic* (pp. 3–21). Sage.
- Velu, C., & Stiles, P. (2013). Managing decision-making and cannibalization for parallel business models. *Long Range Planning*, 46, 443–458. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lrp.2013.08.003>
- Vega-Vazquez, M., Ángeles Revilla-Camacho, M. and J. Cossío-Silva, F. (2013) 'The value co-creation process as a determinant of customer satisfaction', *Management Decision*, 51(10), 1945–1953. doi:10.1108/MD-04-2013-0227.
- Walsh, K. (1995). *Public Services and Market Mechanisms: Competition, Contracting and the New Public Management*. London: Macmillan.
- Westrup, U. (2018). The potential of service-dominant logic as a tool for developing public sector services. *International Journal of Quality and Service Sciences*, 10(1), 36–48. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJQSS-02-2016-0013>
- Wan, F., Williamson, P. J., & Yin, E. (2015). Antecedents and implications of disruptive innovation: Evidence from China. *Technovation*, 39–40, 94–104. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.technovation.2014.05.012>
- Whelan-Berry, K., & Somerville, K. (2010). Linking Change Drivers and the Organisational Change Process: A Review and Synthesis. *Journal of Change Management*, 10(2), 175–193. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14697011003795651>
- Witell, L., Snyder, H., Gustafsson, A., Fombelle, P., & Kristensson, P. (2016). Defining service innovation: A review and synthesis. *Journal of Business Research*, 69(8), 2863–2872. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2015.12.055>
- Wressle, E. (2002). *Client participation in the rehabilitation process*. Division of Occupational Therapy, Faculty of Health Sciences, Linköping University.
- Wibeck, V., Dahlgren, M. A., & Öberg, G. (2007). *Focus group interviews as qualitative research*.

- Windrum, P. (2008). Innovation and entrepreneurship in public services. In P. Windrum & P. M. Koch (Eds.), *Innovation in Public Sector Services: Entrepreneurship, Creativity and Management*. Edward Elgar.
- Wolmesjö, M., Jonasson, L.-L., Bångsbo, A. P., & Billhult, A. (2022). Co-production for shared value-based care to increase the quality of life of older persons in Swedish eldercare. *International Journal of Integrated Care*, 22. <https://doi.org/10.5334/ijic.icic22239>.
- Yeatman, A. (2007). The Holism of the Individual: Agency, Narration and Socialism. I M. Bevir (red.), *Encyclopedia of Governance* (Vol. 2, pp. 384–387). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Yeatman, A. (1994). *Postmodern Revisionings of the Political*. New York: Routledge.
- Yu, S., and B. J. Gerber. 2025. Understanding the Co-Provision of Disaster-Related Services in the United States: Universities and Colleges as Community Stakeholders. *Public Administration* 103, no.3: 855–873. <https://doi.org/10.1111/padm.13056>.
- Yu, D., & Hang, C. C. (2010). A reflective review of disruptive innovation theory. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 12, 435–452. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2370.2009.00272.x>
- Zeithaml, V., Parasuraman, A., & Berry, L. (1985). Problems and strategies in services marketing. *Journal of Marketing*, 49(spring), 33–46. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1251563>