



# Exploring the Acceptance of the Public Consumer in Scandinavian Governance: An Essay About Choice as Both a Right and an Obligation

Tom S. Karlsson<sup>1</sup>

Scandinavian Journal of  
Public Administration,  
Vol. 28 No. 4 (2024),  
p. 1 - 15

DOI:  
<https://doi.org/10.58235/sjpa.2024.23113>

## Keywords:

public consumer;  
Scandinavian governance;  
New Public Management;  
consumer choice;  
democratic participation


## Abstract

In this essay, I critically explore the acceptance of the “public consumer” concept within Scandinavian governance. The rise of neo-liberal policies and New Public Management has significantly influenced current governance models, emphasizing principles of competition and marketisation to enhance public sector efficiency. However, limited attention has been given to the public consumer concept, particularly within the Scandinavian context, despite the region's prominence in adopting new and innovative management techniques. Drawing upon Anglo-Saxon literature and Scandinavian administrative models, I explore why the public consumer concept has been so accepted in Scandinavian governance contexts. I argue that the existence of mixed administrative models has created a fertile ground for accepting the public consumer as a viable actor in Scandinavian governance. This is highlighted by understanding choice as both a right and an obligation. Furthermore, I argue that although the public consumer concept may be attributed to the rise of New Public Management, it is expected that the public consumer will play an even more intricate role as post-New Public Management comes into motion.

## Practical Relevance

- This theoretical essay highlights the practical need and necessity for public institutions to recognize that consumer choice can be situated both as a right and an obligation. Public sector organizations should, therefore, assess how the use of consumer choice and public consumer interactions impacts user satisfaction and democratic engagement.
- Public organizations and policy makers need to recognize that Scandinavian governance posits challenges for strategical alignment with the rule-oriented Rechtsstaat model and the flexible, user-oriented approach that respects citizen engagement and accountability.
- This study provides valuable insights for practice for how the change into a post-new public management era – that goes beyond new public management – fosters co-production and active consumer roles. These changes present a challenge for public organization not to rely too heavily on a consumer-driven approach that may overlook collective welfare.
- On a policy level, it needs to be highlighted that increased consumer choice in public organizations may cause negative side-effects. Public organizations, therefore, needs to safe-guard that these choice mechanisms do not reduce citizen's democratic involvement and that they, furthermore, are transparent and equitable.

---

<sup>1</sup>[Tom S. Karlsson](#) , is an Associate Professor in Public Administration at the School of Public Administration, University of Gothenburg. His research interests cover topics such as New Public Management, organizational control, and the effects of administrative reforms on public sector organizations. His work has been published in several academic journals, including *Public Management Review*, *Financial Accountability & Management*, *Journal of Public Budgeting, Accounting & Financial Management* and *Public Organization Review*.

---

## Introduction

Over the last 40 years, neo-liberal policy and neo-institutional economic theory have had an enormous impact on public governance models in almost all Western democracies (Dan, Læg Reid, & Špaček, 2024; Frederickson, 1997, 1999b; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017). Although the idea of governance paradigm is a contested concept (Hood & Jackson, 1991) most scholars agree that New Public Management has carried a paradigmatic status for the last three decades (Almqvist

& Wällstedt, 2013; Aucoin, 1990; Funck & Karlsson, 2023; O'Flynn, 2007). It has greatly affected how public services have been and are being produced and delivered to citizens. Perhaps the most salient feature of New Public Management resides in the idea of creating a more efficient public sector through principles of competition and marketisation. One argument from political and theoretical proponents of New Public Management is that free markets more efficiently allocate relevant resources as compared to their opposite, state-controlled monopolies (Dunleavy & Hood, 1994; Kaboolian, 1998). In the wake of such arguments, we have seen a veritable surge of market implementations and solutions, targeting the way that the public sector conducts its activities (Le Grand, 1991). Scholars focusing on these aspects have demonstrated changes in institutional logics (Lounsbury, 2007; Meyer & Hammerschmid, 2006a), accountability (Brodikin, 2008; Goddard, 2005; Gray & Jenkins, 1993), ethics (Frederickson, 1999a; Lawton, Rayner, & Lasthuizen, 2013), language use (Karlsson & Karlsson, 2020; Mautner, 2010), and identity (Karlsson, 2019; Meyer & Hammerschmid, 2006b; Waring, 2014), just to mention a few.

A key aspect of public sector marketisation has by tradition concerned the opportunity and ability of public service users to make choices. The freedom to choose has been widely discussed in different settings, often relating to the early writings of Milton Friedman (1962), who advanced the idea of *vouchers*, a mechanism that allows citizens to exercise (some) power over providers. Vouchers are controversial, and the system of implementing them in the public sector has been widely discussed. Within a Scandinavian context, the freedom to choose has been especially salient within public education (Eklund, 2024; Magnússon, 2020) and elderly care (Feltenius & Wide, 2019, 2024a, 2024b). The system of vouchers has been discussed in the shape of different consumer choice models (Forssell & Norén, 2013; Kastberg, 2005, 2010) or the existence of consumer orientation within government agencies (Edlund, 2022; Johansson, 2024; Kaluza, 2018; Karlsson, Garvare, Zingmark, & Nordström, 2016; Karlsson, 2020). Although much attention has been given to the existence of consumer relations and different choice models within the public sector, less attention has been given to the individual at the focal point of that relationship: the *public consumer*.

Most of the literature focusing specifically on the public consumer concept has stemmed from an Anglo-Saxon perspective, most often in the context of New Labour in the UK (Clarke, 2006; Clarke, Newman, Smith, Vidler, & Westmarland, 2007; Vidler & Clarke, 2005). However, surprisingly little attention has been given to the existence of the concept in a Scandinavian context. This is surprising as it has been established that Scandinavia in general, and Sweden specifically, have been portrayed as a front-runner of New Public Management reforms (Karlsson, 2017, 2024; Lapsley & Knutsson, 2017; Lapsley & Power, 2024) despite its traditionally leftist incumbency (Hood, 1995). By this, I mean that although there has been plenty of scholarly interest in the mechanisms and systems of choice (Anell, 2011; Feltenius & Wide, 2024a; Kastberg, 2005, 2010; Wejryd, 2018), most (but not all) research in the field seems to neglect the public consumer as an individual actor within that system (see e.g., Byrman, 2007; Clarke, 2006). More than that, there has been scarce interest from scholars to explore how and why concepts such as “customers” or “consumers” have been integrated into public sector organisations (Karlsson, 2020, 2024). Given this, there is a need to explore the public consumer concept’s viability in the Scandinavian governance context to problematize why the concept functions so effectively.

The purpose of this essay is to critically explore the public consumer concept within a Scandinavian governance perspective. As already stated, the Scandinavian context is an interesting backdrop for this exploration as the introduction and implementation of e.g., freedom to choose has been a very strong trend (Anell, 2011; Blomqvist, 2004; Wejryd, 2018) whereas other trends of restricting market competition and upholding strong monolithic states are challenging such settings. This essay is conceptual, meaning I will revisit literature – mostly, but not exclusively, Anglo-Saxon, as the question of the public consumer historically seems to have engaged scholars predominantly from the U.K. – to reflect on why the contemporary understanding of the public consumer fits with Scandinavian governance. The driving query in this essay concerns *why the public consumer concept has become so widely accepted in Scandinavian governance?*

The structure of this essay contains three additional sections. In the following section, I will outline my understanding of Scandinavian governance. I will discuss this in terms of differences in administrative models in Scandinavian countries and Anglo-Saxon contexts. An important part of this section refers to the rise (and possible fall) of New Public Management. I will thereafter discuss the public consumer from a conceptual perspective to outline what we know about this specific relationship between government and public service users. This includes a discussion about what a public consumer is, what the most common problems – from a conceptual perspective – are with this phenomenon, and how the public consumer relates to assumptions about market constructions. In the last section, I present a critical discussion of the acceptance of the public consumer and explore how a mixed administrative model promulgates public consumer choice both as a right and an obligation. Although the existence of the public consumer concept may be attributed to the rise of New Public Management, I argue that the so-called post-New Public Management will foster even stronger consumer relations between the public sector and its citizens.

## Scandinavian Governance and Administrative Models

Before I delve into what we know about consumers in public sector contexts, I want to spend a little time reflecting on what makes the Scandinavian governance context special. For this purpose, I will discuss two things: (i) the administrative differences between the *Rechtsstaat* and the *private interest model* and (ii) the rise (and fall) of New Public Management.

Without going into detail about what constitutes democracies and how these are delineated from other types of governance ideas I will merely state that democratic governance systems require that power emanates from the people and is governed through political representation based on open and free elections. Although this is a very broad definition, I believe that most scholars would agree with it. Within democracy, however, we will find a wide variety of different administrative models, which determine how public power and politics come to be exercised (Pierre, 1995; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011, 2017). The two perhaps most dominant forms are the *Rechtsstaat* and the private interest models.

The concept of a *Rechtsstaat* can be traced back to continental European governance traditions (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011) and is based on creating and maintaining the rule of law. The fundamental issue within the rule of law is that all citizens are held accountable to the same laws and regulations, independent of their social status or employment (Donnelly, 2006). From a philosophical perspective, this stems back to Locke's ideas that freedom in a society can be translated into individuals being bound only by the written laws constructed by legislators, which apply to all. From a governance perspective, the rule of law ensures that governance – and those in power – are bound by the written law and subject to judicial review (Bobbio, 1987). The *Rechtsstaat* dictates that public authority is not arbitrary but exercised within certain predefined judicial frameworks, laws, and regulations (Dahl, 2000). This principle emphasizes the importance of legal certainty, protection of individual rights, and the prevention of arbitrary use of power. The state should therefore focus on the work of “preparation, promulgation, and enforcement of laws” (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011, p. 63). The *Rechtsstaat* model is deeply ingrained in continental legal traditions, exemplifying a commitment to a systematic and predictable legal framework that guides administrative actions. This means that civil servants within this context are expected to prepare and construct laws and regulations and to educate users on what they can or should do, given the constitutional frameworks of the state.

The private interest model, in contrast, refers not to the strong state, but rather to the Government, which in turn is understood and seen as a necessary evil (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011). Public officials are constantly held accountable to the public and the representatives it elects for parliament. Although law is important within the private interest model, the purpose of governance is focused on strengthening the common good or welfare of citizens (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011). In contrast to the *Rechtsstaat* model, the private interest model focuses on a contribution to the greater good and the enhancement of citizens' overall life quality. Policies align with collective welfare and aim to advance common values and societal goals. A key issue within private interest concerns the balance between individual rights and the greater good and

to achieve this, a large degree of flexibility is presumed (Pierre, 1995). This means that civil servants (themselves viewed as ordinary citizens) are assumed to work towards increasing public service users' sense of being listened to, even though they may be wrong.

Traditionally, the *Rechtsstaat* model is more prominent in continental European governance contexts, whereas the private interest model is more so in Anglo-Saxon contexts (Pierre, 1995). The Scandinavian countries, however, have proven to be an interesting mix (Karlsson, 2019; Loughlin & Peters, 1997; Rhodes, 1999). It is from this perspective that we may understand how traditionally left incumbent Scandinavian states (Hood, 1995) have become transformed in resemblance to traditional Anglo-Saxon governance ideals (Blomqvist, 2004; Wolfe, 1989) and, more pressingly, have adopted and adapted to New Public Management (Hood, 1995; Karlsson, 2017). Although it is not the focus of this essay to delineate what New Public Management is, I feel inclined to point out that it involves several very different reforms in different contexts and periods, where it seems that the main commonality is the idea of increasing efficiency within the public sector (Hood & Jackson, 1991; Kaboolian, 1998; Lapsley, 1999). These reforms can be focused on either internal organisational traits or external relations (Funck & Karlsson, 2020; Hood, 1991, 1995), although it is perhaps more common that both occur at once.

From a public consumer perspective, New Public Management is of course very important. The strive toward increasing efficiency has included – among other things – the adoption of a language traditionally found within the private for-profit sector (Fairclough, 1993; Karlsson, 2019; Lapsley & Oldfield, 2001; Saint-Martin, 1998) and the rise of competition within the public sector (Mautner, 2010; Megginson & Netter, 2001; Walker, Brewer, & Boyne, 2010). The Scandinavian context is especially interesting. It happens to be the “best in show” in terms of adoption and acceptance (Hood, 1995; Karlsson, 2017; Lapsley & Knutsson, 2017; Lapsley & Power, 2024). There are several arguments for why this is the case. Some argue that what is presented as novel ideas within New Public Management reforms, is only a rehash of old reform ideas (Wockelberg & Ahlbäck Öberg, 2014) dressed in new garments (Karlsson, 2024; Pollitt, 2000). Others have argued that the Scandinavian countries have been especially susceptible to New Public Management, as it aligns with a long-standing history of social democratic hegemony, pragmatism, and rationality (Hood, 1995; Lapsley & Knutsson, 2017; Yliaska, 2015). From this perspective, accepting New Public Management has been a matter of incorporating it into an already existing rationale of the efficient and necessary state: new reforms and reform ideas will be layered on top of already existing governance traditions (Funck & Karlsson, 2023; Polzer, Meyer, Höllerer, & Seiwald, 2016).

Several scholars argue that New Public Management is very much alive and kicking (Hyndman & Lapsley, 2016; Karlsson, 2024; Lapsley, 2022; Lapsley & Miller, 2019; Lapsley & Power, 2024) even though some have claimed it to be dead for almost 20 years (Dunleavy, Margetts, Bastow, & Tinkler, 2006). From a scholarly standpoint, voices have certainly been raised about the validity of New Public Management as a viable governance model (Christensen, 2012; Dunleavy et al., 2006; Klenk & Reiter, 2019; Osborne, 2006). From this critique, post-New Public Management (Christensen, 2012; Funck & Karlsson, 2023; Klenk & Reiter, 2019) has surfaced as an alternative governance model. Although post-New Public Management is a broad and imprecise concept, it usually entails (normative) ideas of moving beyond New Public Management (Bryson, Crosby, & Bloomberg, 2014), offering collaboration through networks and co-construction of public values as key components (Alford & O'Flynn, 2009; Connolly & van der Zwet, 2020, 2021; Moore, 2013; Osborne, 2006, 2010, 2018; Osborne, Radnor, & Strokosch, 2016). The main discourse within this literature is that of offering an alternative to the production-focused approach of New Public Management (Funck & Karlsson, 2023) yet retaining ideas about competition and a plurality of actors producing public welfare.

## Who and What Is the Public Consumer?

Within public administration, the traditional recipient of public services has been the “citizen”. This concept is fundamentally a political construct that dictates a relationship between the state and an individual within that state's judicial sphere (Clarke et al., 2007; Vidler & Clarke, 2005). The citizen concept commonly involves ideas about certain rights and obligations that an

individual or a state has to the other and it is usually held that the citizen is a part of a collective of actors (Thomas, 2013; Vidler & Clarke, 2005). From this perspective, a citizen is an imaginary of liberty, equality, and solidarity (Clarke et al., 2007). Consumers, on the other hand, are conceptualized differently. Within the “consumer” concept, the primary relationship is economic. Macpherson (1962) uses the term “possessive individualism” which indicates not only that individuals themselves are responsible for all skills that he or she has but also that the individual has no debt to society associated with these skills. The economic relationship is a rational one, characterized by mutual exchanges between at least two parties: the consumer and the provider (Gabriel & Lang, 2015). The consumer part of this relationship is self-directing, meaning that they can make choices that will affect their own well-being (Clarke et al., 2007). The consumer is commonly associated with markets, individualism, and private decisions. From this perspective, the consumer may be understood as an imaginary of liberal Western capitalist democracies (Clarke et al., 2007).

The above description of the consumer is a simplified description, perhaps even a caricature. It is challenging to pinpoint exactly what a consumer is, and even more difficult to predict how they will act in different situations. Gabriel and Lang (2015) effectively describe twelve different types of consumers.<sup>1</sup> In an attempt to find a common characteristic between these different types they argue that it comes down to views of individuals with a privilege to make choices and that these choices inevitably are coloured and formed by self-interest. If the citizen and the consumer are distinctly different, as discussed above, the concept of public consumers becomes more problematic (Aberbach & Christensen, 2005; Vidler & Clarke, 2005). The public consumer is conceptually different from the consumer discussed on free markets. What makes the public consumer so special is that they are entitled to make choices about public services paid for by others than themselves. In the following section, I will present an overview of the conceptual discussions concerning public consumerism.

### **What is a public consumer?**

The conceptual discussion about public consumers (or customers) has been and still is a growing strand of literature. It is a political concept in that it has historically been used with the ambition of giving individuals bargaining power over public service providers. Osborne and Gaebler (1992) for instance claim that entrepreneurial government is about putting the customer in the driving seat and Levin and Normann (2000, p. 59) argue that a public consumer is someone who “makes demands and has the right to make demands”. Concerning these perspectives, Alford (2002) argues that the public consumer has a right to express preferences and to consume certain goods. What connects these discussions is that they portray individuals who want to make choices, can make them independently, and have the necessary and relevant knowledge to make those choices (Nordgren, 2008).

The presumption of public consumers making choices between different alternatives has been problematised by several authors. Fountain (2001) highlights three issues with the rational public consumer. First, consumers have problems making distinctions between the producer and the chosen product. Second, public service production, delivery, and consumption often occur simultaneously. Third, public consumers often enter the production and delivery of public services as co-producers. This means that there is a large degree of subjective perceptions at play when public consumers are making decisions. Nordgren (2008), coming from a health organisation perspective, furthermore, complicates the issue by stating that what people *need* is not equivalent to what they *want*. He argues that a patient may need a certain type of treatment based on medical judgment, but this is perhaps not what the individual wants. Choices made by non-professionals are predominantly characterized by the latter part – wants – and not necessarily needs. One reason that consumer choices are still prevalent in public sector contexts is that the (non-rational) choice implies a sense of control (Clarke et al., 2007). If we acknowledge that public consumption choices are heavily influenced by subjective perceptions and individuals’ wants rather than their needs, the argument that public consumers can be in the driver’s seat is fundamentally flawed.

## Common problems with the public consumer concept

In the literature, the idea and conceptualization of a public consumer have been focused on outlining the difficulties and obstacles to implementation. Fountain (2001, p. 442) calls consumerism in the public sector context “an inappropriate patchwork quilt of oversimplified private sector service management ideas” whereas Kettl (1994, p. 34) describes the public consumer<sup>2</sup> as “poorly developed and needs more attention”. The most common problem related to a public consumer is identifying what or who it refers to. Lucio (2009) for instance argues that if consumers are based on the way they participate, e.g. by making choices or paying for a service, what happens with all those who do not make any choices? She talks about these as *excluded customers* and warns of a paradoxical and dangerous situation of creating consumers that are undeserving or parasitic to available welfare services.

The idea of an actively choosing consumer, acting according to a given plan, has also been questioned. Jung (2010) argues that although choice is commonly portrayed as inherently good and positive, it can be disempowering within the public sector. The opportunity to make choices also presupposes the ability to make them. Not all people will have this ability, meaning that choice can result in increasing levels of inequality. Choice can also be an effect of the user’s socio-cultural background, which begs the question: is it a choice if the user is predestined or culturally inclined to make certain decisions (Hood, Peters, & Wollmann, 1996)? The seemingly simple task of making or exercising a choice thus implies that users have other, non-financial or non-economic, forms of capital at their disposal (Greener, 2002; Vidler & Clarke, 2005). Neglecting these aspects can exacerbate already existing social inequalities and fundamentally become a democratic problem (Brewer, 2007). Clarke (2006, p. 436) makes the case that choices are only advantageous for people who possess “appropriate calculating frameworks, knowledges and capacities”, which may lead to a rise of being an *expert consumer*.

A rising trend in literature discussing public services is to discuss the importance of co-production.<sup>3</sup> The fundamental idea of co-production is that the producer and user jointly create the value of a service. From this perspective, users’ status of being involved in the transaction of services becomes important. From a consumer perspective, it would also infer that users more actively engage in expressing preferences and making choices. However, the idea that public consumers are always co-producers of value has been contested and there are certainly instances where users become *passive consumers* (Alford, 2002, 2016). Alford (2016) exemplifies the passive consumer at a fine dining restaurant. In this context, the consumer is not involved in any distinct parts of the production of the meal; they do not participate (usually) in preparations, cooking, service, or washing up. The consumer makes a choice, but is not part of creating the values that are later consumed. As Nordgren (2003) accurately points out, merely making a choice is not equivalent to being part of the value-creation process. From a public sector perspective, the notion of a passive consumer needs to be revisited to problematise situations wherein this may play a role.

Another common problem concerning the public consumer seems to concern the remuneration that they make when claiming a public service: i.e. paying for the services. A normal presumption is that consumers make some form of payment as compensation for receiving a good or service. This is not always evident for public services. A more common situation is that of non-paying consumers, users who make a choice but do not pay anything for making that choice. Choosing to read literature from the local library is rarely accompanied by direct financial compensation and for most well-developed Western democracies, patients commonly only make ceremonial payments when seeking healthcare.

A final problem that seems to characterize literature focusing on public consumers concerns the effects on democratic participation. A common fear is that public consumers may become less inclined to involve themselves in democratic processes (Smith & Vawda, 2003; Wejryd, 2018) and that the concept itself may weaken representation and trusteeship (Fountain, 2001). One reason why this may happen is that the use of market metaphors obfuscates classic ideas of participation and collective representation (Brewer, 2007). Drawing on the now classic concepts of exit, voice, and loyalty (Hirschman, 1970), Brewer (2007) argues that too much focus on consumer satisfaction will strengthen choice and exit but weaken voice.

## Public consumers and the market presumption

A common presumption about the public consumer is that the concept – and indeed the phenomenon – is related to increased marketisation and use of (quasi-)markets in the public sector. There seems to be a growing trend of thinking about users as consumers within the public sector. This is often referred to as implementing a *consumer orientation* within the organisation. Consumer orientation is arguably relevant since the service relation – that between the producer and the user – requires substantial flexibility and adaptability, with the hope that the consumer experiences a good service situation (Karlsson et al., 2016). The presumption is that since consumers are the best-fitted individuals to make choices concerning their situations (Clarke, 2006) they are also fitted to define and decide what good and bad service quality is in any given situation. However, as Fountain (2001) has argued, public consumers are ill-equipped to be arbiters of quality. A reason for this, as I have already mentioned above, is that public consumers have an inherent problem separating the producer from the service or product, implying that consumers' subjective perceptions of a given service context override any other reality.

Consumer orientation is also flawed in that it presumes that organisations work toward high satisfaction as a goal. But this is rarely the case in competitive environments (Fountain, 2001). Consumer service and consumer satisfaction are not the ends, but rather the means towards another end: increased profits. By behaving in a manner that increases satisfaction, organisations will retain consumers so that they will return for additional purchases. The most important tool for the consumer is the choice to exercise the right to exit the relationship, which means that organisations in competitive environments will strive to deliver a consumer service that is just at the level of preventing consumers from leaving the relationship (Fountain, 2001). From this perspective, it becomes more reasonable to view the organisations' actions as maximizing stakeholder satisfaction, not consumer satisfaction.

We should also be careful of equating the rise of public consumerism solely with the use of neo-liberal market mechanisms. Trentmann (2006) reminds us of that consumption as a constitutive part of creating consumers has only been valid for the last 100–200 years. Historically, almost all societies have had some form of consumption without necessarily constructing the user as a consumer. Nonetheless, Trentmann argues that what markets can do is to construct so-called *active consumers*. The active consumer is creative, confident, and rational as compared to the *passive consumer* who is unsatisfied, restless, anxious, and bored.

Although markets have not *per se* constructed consumers, they often invoke several pivotal market metaphors which, by themselves, invoke a sense of competition and market orientation (Walker et al., 2010). A not uncommon part within such market orientation is the – often fallacious<sup>4</sup> – idea of increasing efficiency by mimicking private (for-profit) organisations (Walker et al., 2010). According to some views, market competition is a necessary part of ingredients in the strive towards increased flexibility and responsiveness among public service providers (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992) whereas others view competition as jeopardizing democratic representation (Fountain, 2001), initiating a move away from "citizen involvement" towards "consumer engagement" (Smith & Vawda, 2003) and weakening voice in favour of choice and exit mechanisms (Brewer, 2007).

## A Critical Discussion of the Acceptance of the Public Consumer

The focus of this essay has been one of exploration. I have explored the public consumer as a conceptually constructed actor in public sector settings. Although there certainly has been plenty of research on adjacent fields such as health care (Glenngård, 2013, 2016), elderly care (Glenngård, 2013, 2016), or public schools (Eklund, 2024; Madestam, Sundström, & Bergström, 2018; Magnússon, 2020), explorations of the acceptability of the public consumer in a distinct Scandinavian context remain scarce. This paper addresses the latter in some sense. The question driving this exploration is why the public consumer has been able to become accepted in Scandinavian countries given their historical roots in social democracy (Hood, 1995; Karlsson, 2024). In this concluding section, I connect the public consumer more closely with the acceptance of New Public Management as a paradigmatic governance idea within a mixed administrative model. My argument is that the public consumer has gained an unparalleled

opportunity to thrive in this context given the readiness for pragmatic and rationalistic approaches to modernizing government (Hood, 1995; Karlsson, 2017; Lapsley & Knutsson, 2017). In connection to this, I also claim that the public consumer is in no danger of being obsolete within the so-called post-New Public Management context. I predict that the public consumer will come to play an even more salient and present role in the future. I will come back to this argument further on.

I have above outlined two administrative models that may help us to understand modern public governance: the *Rechtsstaat* and the private interest models. These models offer different levels of acceptability of the public consumer. Within the *Rechtsstaat* model, there is a distinct separation between the state and its citizens. Civil servants, employed by the state, are expected to work towards educating users so that they can adhere to laws and regulations (Pierre, 1995). One implication of this is that the model creates a power asymmetry between those employed by the state and those subjected to the state's will. More simply put, citizens are expected to be guided by the state and follow its directions. From a conceptual perspective, the public consumer would be an odd figure in this context as the availability to choose between different alternatives is expected to be quite low, even non-existent. Not only can it be expected that the plurality of offered public services are lower, but it is also reasonably presumed that the bargaining power of individual citizens are low. One way to understand this is through the concepts of *exit* or *loyalty* (Hirschman, 1970). Hirschman accurately points out that “[u]nder monopoly, consumers would learn to live with inevitable imperfection and would seek happiness elsewhere than in the frantic search for the inexistent ‘improved’ product” (Hirschman, 1970, p. 27). Again, from this point of departure – under the *Rechtsstaat* model – it is likely that public service users would engage in *voice* to change or affect the system, provided that the citizens would desire (or be able to) change.

The second model – private interest – envisions civil servants as differently equipped compared to in the *Rechtsstaat* model. Pollitt and Bouckaert (2011, p. 62) write that civil servants in the private interest model are “simply citizens who work for the government organisations, not some kind of special caste or cadre with a higher mission to represent ‘the state’.” The private interest model is also more amenable to ideas about flexibility and receptiveness towards the needs and desires expressed by individual service users. This is evident, for instance, in the early entrepreneurial texts on public governance (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992). Civil servants within the private interest models are expected to enable positive user experiences. Although this in no way means that the state hands away power, it does imply that public service users gain more power within this model. From a theoretical perspective, we may therefore assume that the private interest model strengthens public service users' engagement in *exit* as a tool for affecting public service providers (Hirschman, 1970). This, of course, does not mean that voice or loyalty becomes redundant, but that the state's focus on flexibility and service perceptions opens for negotiations, competition, and market thinking in a way that the *Rechtsstaat* model does not.

Within a Scandinavian governance perspective, the above becomes highly interesting. Several scholars have argued that the Scandinavian countries are not characterized by only one of these models, but rather a mix of them (Karlsson, 2019; Loughlin & Peters, 1997; Pierre, 1995; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011, 2017; Rhodes, 1999). From a public consumer perspective, this means that we can expect two different but complementary factors for promulgating public consumerism. On the one hand, the mix of models will promote *consumer choice as a right*. On the other hand, the mix will also promote *consumer choice as an obligation*. The Scandinavian countries' mix of these two models – as described above – is particularly fertile for the public consumer.

Firstly, we need to understand the private interest model's focus on flexibility, maximization of citizen's user experience, and reduction of the state's role in governing its citizens. This connects to a neo-liberal discourse of developing citizens into rational human beings, who choose between a wide array of different alternatives (Clarke et al., 2007; Jung, 2010). Issues of flexibility, adaptability, and user-friendliness come to the forefront as consumers express individual preferences (Alford, 2002) as they make such choices (Nordgren, 2008). Strengthened by the global diffusion of New Public Management reforms (Funck & Karlsson,



2020; Hood, 1995; Lapsley & Knutsson, 2017) public consumerism fits within a general idea of pragmatic governance (Karlsson, 2017; Yliaska, 2015). Ideas about integrating market thinking as part of public governance have heavily influenced the Scandinavian countries (Blomqvist, 2004; Blomqvist & Rothstein, 2000).

Secondly, the *Rechtsstaat* model focuses on a dominant state where rule-following and the creation of regulations are highlighted. The state and its employees (the civil servants) can in this view be understood as facilitators for public consumerism. With an educational role, civil servants are in place to guide and even discipline citizens to make choices. And to circumvent drawbacks such as the disempowerment of society (Jung, 2010), the inability of citizens to understand and know how and why to make choices (Greener, 2002; Hood et al., 1996; Vidler & Clarke, 2005), or that citizens are ill-equipped arbiters of quality (Fountain, 2001), structures have had to be invented and implemented by the state. This means that the state and its civil servants actively engage in constructing, employing, and monitoring that citizens make choices (even though they may be reluctant to do so).

These two factors – consumer choice as a right and an obligation – are of course related to the rise of New Public Management. The prominence of New Public Management within the Scandinavian countries has been connected to these mixed models (Funck & Karlsson, 2023; Karlsson, 2024; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017; Yliaska, 2015).

One answer to the initial query of this essay – why the public consumer concept has become so accepted in the Scandinavian countries – may lie in their general reform willingness, historical tradition of pragmatism, and (seemingly) rational stance towards efficient government. The adoption of and adaptivity towards New Public Management (Karlsson, 2017) and the now rising interest in post-New Public Management (Funck & Karlsson, 2023; Klenk & Reiter, 2019; Reiter & Klenk, 2019) fuel ideas about user responsiveness, flexibility, and service orientation to new levels within the public sector. Although there has been accurate and severe criticism against New Public Management (Greve, 2015; Klenk & Reiter, 2019; Osborne, 2006, 2010; Steccolini, 2019) there is no indication that the public consumer will play a lesser role under post-New Public Management. A core idea herein concerns the relationship with the public service user (Funck & Karlsson, 2023; Osborne, 2010; Osborne et al., 2016). As the public sector is a service industry (Lusch & Vargo, 2006; Osborne, 2018), and value is subject to users' experiences and expectations, the public sector must be very receptive to when, how, and where those services are being delivered. This means that, under post-New Public Management, the service user becomes an important and powerful actor. As highlighted by Funck and Karlsson (2023), the public consumer will be ever important under post-New Public Management.

Following this line of reasoning, I argue that there is a need for scholars to engage themselves with the prevalence of public consumers. This is perhaps more relevant in the Scandinavian countries given the construction of choice both as a right and an obligation. Although previous research has been successful in discussing the systematic effects of public consumption (Kastberg, 2010), or how consumer orientation (Edlund, 2022; Johansson, 2024; Kaluza, 2018; Karlsson et al., 2016; Nordgren, 2003, 2008) affects organisations' service provision, it remains shrouded in mystery when and where a citizen becomes a public consumer. Being forced to choose does not necessarily imply that citizens become public consumers (Alford, 2002, 2016). We need to delve deeper into understanding in which contexts individuals become consumers and to what extent that gives rise to more use of exit rather than voice (Brewer, 2007; Hirschman, 1970) and how this affects democratic engagement (Wejryd, 2018). Although there has been a substantial amount of literature focusing on the public consumer from a conceptual perspective (Aberbach & Christensen, 2005; Clarke, 2006; Clarke et al., 2007; Gabriel & Lang, 2015; Jung, 2010; Trentmann, 2006; Vidler & Clarke, 2005) future research should engage more closely with understanding how people in general understand and conceptualize public consumerism. Central questions in these investigations could be that of what constitutes a public consumer, when and where it plays a role in public service provision, and if individuals acting as public consumers identify themselves as being that: consumers. Such research could usefully be conducted with a Scandinavian perspective in mind.

## Acknowledgements

This research was generously financed by the Erik Wellander Foundation, whose support made this study possible. I would also like to thank my colleagues at the SWEPSA 2022 conference for their valuable feedback, which greatly enriched the development of this work. Additionally, I am grateful to the two anonymous peer reviewers for their insightful comments and suggestions during the publication process, which helped to strengthen and refine the final manuscript.

## Conflict of interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> I will refrain from going through all these types in this paper but highly recommend that interested readers pick up their very informative book ‘The unmanageable consumer’ (2015).

<sup>2</sup> Kettl discusses the notion of a ‘public customer’ but for the sake of argument in this essay I have chosen to align these two concepts: the consumer and the customer.

<sup>3</sup> The concept ‘co-production’ is sometimes frowned upon as it apparently seems to be associated with a production logic. For this reason, some scholars prefer the concept ‘co-creation’. In a systematic review, Voorberg, Bekkers, and Tummers (2015) conclude that the terms are used interchangeably and could mean different things for different users. For reasons of simplicity, I have therefore chosen to use co-production as a collective concept in this essay.

<sup>4</sup> I here call out this presumption as fallacious as there are very few empirical evidence showing that public organisations are less efficient compared to private organisations (see Downs & Larkey, 1986, for an overview and critical discussion of this).

## References

- Aberbach, J. D., & Christensen, T. (2005). Citizens and consumers. *Public Management Review*, 7(2), 225-245. doi:<https://doi-org.ezproxy.ub.gu.se/10.1080/14719030500091319>
- Alford, J. (2002). Defining the client in the public sector: A social-exchange perspective. *Public Administration Review*, 62(3), 337-346. doi:<https://www.jstor.org/stable/3110217>
- Alford, J. (2016). Co-production, interdependence and publicness: extending public service-dominant logic. *Public Management Review*, 18(5), 673–691. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2015.1111659>
- Alford, J., & O’Flynn, J. (2009). Making sense of public value: Concepts, critiques and emergent meanings. *Intl Journal of Public Administration*, 32(3-4), 171-191. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/01900690902732731>
- Almqvist, R. M., & Wällstedt, N. (2013). Managing public sector organizations: Strategic choices within changing paradigms. In L. Strannegård & A. Styhre (Eds.), *Management: An advanced introduction* (pp. 203-230). Lund: Studentlitteratur.
- Anell, A. (2011). Choice and privatisation in Swedish primary care. *Health Economics, Policy and Law*, 6, 549-569.
- Aucoin, P. (1990). Administrative reform in public management: paradigms, principles, paradoxes and pendulums. *Governance*, 3(2), 115–137. doi:<https://doi-org.ezproxy.ub.gu.se/10.1111/j.1468-0491.1990.tb00111.x>
- Blomqvist, P. (2004). The choice revolution: Privatization of Swedish welfare services in the 1990s. *Social Policy & Administration*, 38(2), 139-155. doi:<https://doi-org.ezproxy.ub.gu.se/10.1111/j.1467-9515.2004.00382.x>
- Blomqvist, P., & Rothstein, B. (2000). *Välfärdsstatens nya ansikte: Demokrati och marknadsreformer inom den offentliga sektorn*. Stockholm: Agora.
- Bobbio, N. (1987). *The Future of Democracy: A Defence of the Rules of the Game*. Oxford: Polity Press.

- Brewer, B. (2007). Citizen or customer? Complaints handling in the public sector. *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, 73(4), 549-556. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/0020852307083457>
- Brodikin, E. Z. (2008). Accountability in street-level organizations. *Intl Journal of Public Administration*, 31(3), 317-336. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/01900690701590587>
- Bryson, J. M., Crosby, B. C., & Bloomberg, L. (2014). Public Value Governance: Moving beyond Traditional Public Administration and the New Public Management. *Public Administration Review*, 74(4), 445-456. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.12238>
- Byrman, Y. (2007). *Restaurangen har inga - Försäkringskassan har 9 miljoner: Bruket av och attityder till ordet kund*. Examensarbete. Stockholms universitet. Stockholm.
- Christensen, T. (2012). Post-NPM and changing public governance. *Meiji Journal of Political Science and Economics*, 1, 1-11.
- Clarke, J. (2006). Consumers, clients or citizens? Politics, policy and practice in the reform of social care. *European Societies*, 8(3), 423-442. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/14616690600821966>
- Clarke, J., Newman, J., Smith, N., Vidler, E., & Westmarland, L. (2007). *Creating Citizen-Consumers: Changing Publics & Changing Public Services*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Connolly, J., & van der Zwet, A. (2020). Public Value in Britain: A 'Post-New Public Management' Environment? In (pp. 15-44). Switzerland: Switzerland: Springer International Publishing AG.
- Connolly, J., & van der Zwet, A. (2021). *Public value management, governance and reform in Britain*: Cham : Palgrave Macmillan.
- Dahl, R. A. (2000). *On Democracy*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Dan, S., Læg Reid, P., & Špaček, D. (2024). NPM reconsidered: towards the study of enduring forms of NPM. *Public Management Review*, 26(9), 2531-2541. doi:10.1080/14719037.2024.2375561
- Donnelly, S. J. M. (2006). Reflecting on the Rule of Law: Its Reciprocal Relation with Rights, Legitimacy, and Other Concepts and Institutions. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 603(1), 37-53. doi:10.1177/0002716205282054
- Downs, G. W., & Larkey, P. D. (1986). *The search for government efficiency: From hubris to helplessness*: Random House (NY).
- Dunleavy, P., & Hood, C. (1994). From Old Public Administration to New Public Management. *Public Money & Management*, 14(3), 9-16. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/09540969409387823>
- Dunleavy, P., Margetts, H., Bastow, S., & Tinkler, J. (2006). New Public Management is dead—long live digital-era governance. *Journal of Public Administration Research & Theory*, 16(3), 467-494. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/mui057>
- Edlund, H. (2022). *Organizational and Individual response to hybridity in the public sector: A case study exploring the customer orientation of the Swedish Enforcement Authority*. Lund University,
- Eklund, S. (2024). Narrating the Client: How stories of parental influence impact teacher professionalism. *Journal of Professions and Organization*, joae012.
- Fairclough, N. (1993). Critical Discourse Analysis and the Marketization of Public Discourse: The Universities. *Discourse & Society*, 4(2), 133-168. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926593004002002>
- Feltenius, D., & Wide, J. (2019). Business as usual? Civil society organizations in a marketized Swedish welfare state. *Journal of Civil Society*, 15(3), 230-248.
- Feltenius, D., & Wide, J. (2024a). Abolishing the Act on System of Choice in Swedish eldercare: on arguments and replacements in the municipalities. *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, 37(2), 141-158.
- Feltenius, D., & Wide, J. (2024b). Approaching the private model? The public provider in the marketized Swedish elderly care. *Nordic Social Work Research*, 1-14.
- Forssell, A., & Norén, L. (2013). Kunden i kundvalsmodellen. Om konstitueringen av en kund i primärvården. *Scandinavian Journal of Public Administration*, 16(2), 25-43.

- Fountain, J. E. (2001). Paradoxes of Public Sector Customer Service. *Governance*, 14(1), 55–73. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1111/0952-1895.00151>
- Frederickson, G. H. (1997). *The Spirit of Public Administration*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Frederickson, G. H. (1999a). Ethics and the New Managerialism. *Public Administration & Management*, 4(2), 299-324.
- Frederickson, G. H. (1999b). The Repositioning of American Public Administration. *Political Science and Politics*, 32(4), 701-711. doi:10.2307/420159
- Friedman, M. (1962). *Capitalism and freedom*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Funck, E. K., & Karlsson, T. S. (2020). Twenty-five years of studying new public management in public administration: Accomplishments and limitations. *Financial Accountability & Management*, 36(4), 347–375. doi:<https://doi-org.ezproxy.ub.gu.se/10.1111/faam.12214>
- Funck, E. K., & Karlsson, T. S. (2023). Governance innovation as social imaginaries: challenges of post-NPM. *Public Management Review*, 1-20. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2023.2281981>
- Gabriel, Y., & Lang, T. (2015). *The unmanageable consumer* (Third edition, 20th anniversary edition ed.). London: SAGE.
- Glenngård, Anna H. (2013). *Objectives, actors and accountability in quasi-markets: Studies of Swedish primary care*. (Diss.). Lund University.
- Glenngård, Anna H. (2016). Experiences of Introducing a Quasi-Market in Swedish Primary Care: Fulfilment of Overall Objectives and Assessment of Provider Activities. *Scandinavian Journal of Public Administration*, 20(1), 71-86.
- Goddard, A. (2005). Accounting and NPM in UK local government—contributions towards governance and accountability. *Financial Accountability & Management*, 21(2), 191-218. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0408.2005.00215.x>
- Gray, A., & Jenkins, B. (1993). Codes of Accountability in the New Public Sector. *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal*, 6(3), 52–67. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1108/09513579310042560>
- Greener, I. (2002). Agency, social theory and social policy. *Critical social policy*, 22(4), 688–705. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/02610183020220040701>
- Greve, C. (2015). Ideas in Public Management Reform for the 2010s. Digitalization, Value Creation and Involvement. *Public Organization Review*, 15(1), 49–65. doi:10.1007/s11115-013-0253-8
- Hirschman, A. O. (1970). *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to decline in firms, organizations, and states*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Hood, C. (1991). A public management for all seasons? *Public Administration*, 6(3), 3–19. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9299.1991.tb00779.x>
- Hood, C. (1995). The "new public management" in the 1980s: Variations on a theme. *Accounting, Organizations and Society*, 20(2-3), 93–110. doi:[https://doi.org/10.1016/0361-3682\(93\)E0001-W](https://doi.org/10.1016/0361-3682(93)E0001-W)
- Hood, C., & Jackson, M. (1991). *Administrative argument*. Aldershot: Dartmouth.
- Hood, C., Peters, B. G., & Wollmann, H. (1996). Sixteen Ways to Consumerize Public Services; Pick'n Mix or Painful Trade-Offs. *Public Money & Management*, 16(4), 43–50. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/09540969609387944>
- Hyndman, N., & Lapsley, I. (2016). New Public Management: The story continues. *Financial Accountability & Management*, 32(4), 385–408. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1111/faam.12100>
- Johansson, M. (2024). *I samtal med Kronofogden: Hur myndighetsservice görs i språkliga möten mellan inringare och kundservicehandläggare*. Uppsala: Uppsala universitet.
- Jung, T. (2010). Citizens, co-producers, customers, clients, captives? A critical review of consumerism and public services. *Public Management Review*, 12(3), 439–446. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/14719031003787940>
- Kaboolian, L. (1998). The New Public Management: Challenging the boundaries of the management vs. administration debate. *Public Administration Review*, 58(3), 189–193. doi:<https://doi.org/10.2307/976558>

- Kaluza, J. (2018). *Sjukskrivnas arbetsbörda: arbetande medborgare möter en kundorienterad byråkrati*. Karlstad: Fakulteten för humaniora och samhällsvetenskap, Företagsekonomi, Karlstads universitet.
- Karlsson, M., Garvare, R., Zingmark, K., & Nordström, B. (2016). Customer orientation in a Swedish county council. *International Journal of Quality and Service Sciences*. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1108/IJQSS-06-2015-0053>
- Karlsson, T. S. (2017). Shaping NPM: Social Democratic Values at Work. In I. Lapsley & H. Knutsson (Eds.), *Modernizing the Public Sector: Scandinavian Perspectives* (pp. 53–68). London: Routledge.
- Karlsson, T. S. (2019). Public administration in transition: Studying understandings and legitimations amongst middle managers within a government agency. *Journal of Language and Politics*, 18(1), 107–130. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1075/jlp.17070.kar>
- Karlsson, T. S. (2020). Att vara kund till staten. In P. Ehn & G. Sundström (Eds.), *Statlig förvaltningspolitik för 2020-talet – en forskningsantologi*. Stockholm: Statskontoret.
- Karlsson, T. S. (2024). NPM 2.0 - A Blast From the Past. In I. Lapsley & M. Power (Eds.), *The Resilience of New Public Management*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Karlsson, T. S., & Karlsson, S. (2020). Higher Education Marketization: a Case of Language and Colliding Interests. *Public Organization Review*, 1–15. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11115-020-00476-3>
- Kastberg, G. (2005). *Kundvalsmodeller: En studie av marknadsskapare och skapade marknader i kommuner och landsting*. Göteborg: Förvaltningshögskolan, Göteborgs universitet.
- Kastberg, G. (2010). *Vad vet vi om kundval: En forskningsöversikt*. Stockholm: Sveriges kommuner och landsting.
- Kettl, D. F. (1994). *Reinventing Government? Appraising the National Performance Review*. Washington D.C.: Brookings Institute.
- Klenk, T., & Reiter, R. (2019). Post-New Public Management: reform ideas and their application in the field of social services. *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, 85(1), 3-10. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/0020852318810883>
- Lapsley, I. (1999). Accounting and the new public management: instruments of substantive efficiency or a rationalising modernity? *Financial Accountability & Management*, 15(3-4), 201-207. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0408.00081>
- Lapsley, I. (2022). Whatever happened to New Public Management? *Financial Accountability & Management*, 38(4), 471-482. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1111/faam.12346>
- Lapsley, I., & Knutsson, H. (Eds.). (2017). *Modernizing the public sector: Scandinavian perspectives*. London: Routledge.
- Lapsley, I., & Miller, P. (2019). Transforming the public sector: 1998–2018. *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal*, 32(8), 2211-2252. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1108/AAAJ-06-2018-3511>
- Lapsley, I., & Oldfield, R. (2001). Transforming the public sector: management consultants as agents of change. *European Accounting Review*, 10(3), 523–543. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/713764628>
- Lapsley, I., & Power, M. (2024). *The Resilience of New Public Management*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lawton, A., Rayner, J., & Lasthuizen, K. (2013). *Ethics and management in the public sector*. London: Routledge.
- Le Grand, J. (1991). Quasi-Markets and Social Policy. *The Economic Journal*, 101(408), 1256-1267. doi:10.2307/2234441
- Levin, B., & Normann, R. (2000). *Vårdens chans: en modell för morgondagens vård och äldreomsorg*. Stockholm: Ekerlid.
- Loughlin, J., & Peters, G. B. (1997). State Traditions, Administrative Reform and Regionalization. In M. Keating & J. Loughlin (Eds.), *The Political Economy of Regionalism*. London: Frank Cass.

- Lounsbury, M. (2007). A TALE OF TWO CITIES: COMPETING LOGICS AND PRACTICE VARIATION IN THE PROFESSIONALIZING OF MUTUAL FUNDS. *Academy of Management Journal*, 50(2), 289-307. doi:<https://www.jstor.org/stable/20159855>
- Lucio, J. (2009). Customers, citizens, and residents: The semantics of public service recipients. *Administration & Society*, 41(7), 878–899. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/0095399709344056>
- Lusch, R. F., & Vargo, S. L. (2006). Service-dominant logic: reactions, reflections and refinements. *Marketing theory*, 6(3), 281–288.
- Macpherson, C. B. (1962). The political theory of possessive individualism: Hobbes to Locke.
- Madestam, J., Sundström, G., & Bergström, G. (2018). Public or private – does it matter? How school leaders in public and private schools perceive their roles. *Scandinavian Journal of Public Administration, this issue*.
- Magnússon, G. (2020). Inclusive education and school choice lessons from Sweden. *European journal of special needs education*, 35(1), 25-39.
- Mautner, G. (2010). *Language and the market society: Critical reflections on discourse and dominance*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Meggison, W. L., & Netter, J. M. (2001). From state to market: A survey of empirical studies on privatization. *Journal of Economic Literature*, 39(2), 321–389. doi:DOI: 10.1257/jel.39.2.321
- Meyer, R. E., & Hammerschmid, G. (2006a). Changing Institutional Logics and Executive Identities: A Managerial Challenge to Public Administration in Austria. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 49(7), 1000-1014. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764205285182>
- Meyer, R. E., & Hammerschmid, G. (2006b). Public Management Reform: An Identity Project. *Public Policy and Administration*, 21(1), 99-115. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/095207670602100107>
- Moore, M. H. (2013). *Recognizing public value*: Harvard University Press.
- Nordgren, L. (2003). *Från patient till kund: intåget av marknadstänkande i sjukvården och förskjutningen av patientens position*. Lund: Lund Business Press.
- Nordgren, L. (2008). The performativity of the service management discourse: "Value creating customers" in health care. *Journal of Health Organization and Management*, 22(5), 510–528. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1108/14777260810898723>
- O'Flynn, J. (2007). From new public management to public value: Paradigmatic change and managerial implications. *Australian journal of public administration*, 66(3), 353–366. doi:<https://doi-org.ezproxy.ub.gu.se/10.1111/j.1467-8500.2007.00545.x>
- Osborne, D., & Gaebler, T. (1992). *Reinventing government: How the entrepreneurial spirit is transforming the public sector*. New York: Plume.
- Osborne, S. (2006). The New Public Governance? *Public Management Review*, 8(3), 377–387. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/14719030600853022>
- Osborne, S. (2010). Delivering public services: Time for a new theory? *Public Management Review*, 12(1), 1–10. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/14719030903495232>
- Osborne, S. (2018). From public service-dominant logic to public service logic: Are public service organizations capable of co-production and value co-creation? *Public Management Review*, 20(2), 225–231. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2017.1350461>
- Osborne, S., 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. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2015.1111927>
- Pierre, J. (1995). *Bureaucracy in the modern state: An introduction to comparative public administration*. Aldershot: Edward Elgar.
- Pollitt, C. (2000). Is the emperor in his underwear? An analysis of the impacts of public management reform. *Public Management*, 2(2), 181-199. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/14719030000000009>
- Pollitt, C., & Bouckaert, G. (2011). *Public management reform: A comparative analysis – New Public Management, governance, and the neo-weberian state* (3rd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Pollitt, C., & Bouckaert, G. (2017). *Public management reform: A comparative analysis - into the age of austerity* (4th ed.). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Polzer, T., Meyer, R. E., Höllerer, M. A., & Seiwald, J. (2016). Institutional Hybridity in Public Sector Reform: Replacement, Blending, or Layering of Administrative Paradigms ☆. In *How institutions matter!* (pp. 69-99): Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
- Reiter, R., & Klenk, T. (2019). The manifold meanings of 'post-New Public Management' – a systematic literature review. *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, 85(1), 11-27. doi:10.1177/0020852318759736
- Rhodes, R. A. W. (1999). Traditions and Public Sector Reform: Comparing Britain and Denmark. *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 22(4), 341-370. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9477.00023>
- Saint-Martin, D. (1998). The New Managerialism and the Policy Influence of Consultants in Government: An Historical-Institutionalist Analysis of Britain, Canada and France. *Governance: An International Journal of Policy and Administration*, 11(3), 319–356.
- Smith, L., & Vawda, A. (2003). *Citizen vs. customer: Different approaches to public participation in service delivery in Cape Town*. Paper presented at the Urban Forum.
- Steccolini, I. (2019). Accounting and the post-new public management: Re-considering publicness in accounting research. *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal*, 32(1), 255–279. doi:10.1108/AAAJ-03-2018-3423
- Thomas, J. C. (2013). Citizen, customer, partner: Rethinking the place of the public in public management. *Public Administration Review*, 73(6), 786-796.
- Trentmann, F. (2006). *The making of the consumer : knowledge, power and identity in the modern world*. New York, NY: Berg.
- Vidler, E., & Clarke, J. (2005). Creating Citizen-Consumers: New Labour and the Remaking of Public Services. *Public Policy and Administration*, 20(2), 19–37. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/095207670502000202>
- Voorberg, W. H., Bekkers, V. J., & Tummers, L. G. (2015). A systematic review of co-creation and co-production: Embarking on the social innovation journey. *Public Management Review*, 17(9), 1333-1357. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2014.930505>
- Walker, R. M., Brewer, G. A., & Boyne, G. A. (2010). How far has market orientation penetrated public organizations. In M. Ramesh, E. Araral, & X. Wu (Eds.), *Reasserting the public in public services. New public management reforms*. London: Routledge.
- Waring, J. (2014). Restratification, Hybridity and Professional Elites: Questions of Power, Identity and Relational Contingency at the Points of 'Professional–Organisational Intersection'. *Sociology Compass*, 8(6), 688-704. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12178>
- Wejryd, J. (2018). *On consumed democracy: The expansion of consumer choice, its causal effects on political engagement, and its implications for democracy*. Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis.
- Wockelberg, H., & Ahlbäck Öberg, S. (2014). Reinventing the Old Reform Agenda: Public Administrative Reform and Performance According to Swedish Top Managers. In Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Wolfe, A. (1989). *Whose Keeper*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Yliaska, V. (2015). New Public Management as a Response to the Crisis of the 1970s: The Case of Finland, 1970–1990. *Contemporary European History*, 24(3), 435. doi:<https://www.jstor.org/stable/26294067>