



## FÖRVALTNINGSHÖGSKOLAN

### Projects as interaction in context

#### Managing public health issues within public sector organisations

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Avhandlingen bygger på följande delstudier:

- I. Söderberg, E., & Wikström, E. (2015). The policy process for health promotion. *Scandinavian Journal of Public Health*, 43(6), 606–614. Published by Sage Publications, Ltd: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1403494815586327>
- II. Söderberg, E. (2020). Project initiation as the beginning of the end: Mediating temporal tensions in school's health projects. *International Journal of Project Management*, 38(6), 343–352. Published by Elsevier Ltd: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijproman.2020.08.002>
- III. Söderberg, E., Abrahamson, C., & Wikström, E. (Under review). The project team's efforts to embed a health promotion project into different arenas in the public sector.
- IV. Söderberg, E., Liff, R., (2023). Reframing practice through policy implementation projects in different knowledge contexts. *International Journal of Project Management*, 41(2). Published by Elsevier Ltd: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijproman.2023.102452>

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### Abstract

The increasing use of projects has been one of the most important developments in the public sector over the past decades. In tandem with the proliferation of projects, the traditional view of projects as demarcated from their environment using the four concepts of task, time, team and transition has, without attracting much attention, also trickled down to public sector organisations. This traditional view may be suitable for projects in an industrial or commercial context, where they are often designed for well-defined problems and in order to deliver a technical installation. However, public sector projects are often more value-driven, with the aim of creating ideological change. An example of this is public health initiatives to promote physical activity and healthy eating habits. The aim of this thesis is to contribute to the understanding of value-driven public sector projects by focusing on what characterises the interaction between a value-driven project and local public sector organisations in developing and embedding public health issues into everyday organising.

Different theoretical concepts have been used in the thesis's four papers to understand what characterises the interaction between a public health project and two local public sector organisations. Paper I uses the theoretical framework of Multiple Streams Theory to analyse the policy process, following the project's task. In Paper II and Paper III, boundary work is used to analyse the interaction between temporary and permanent organising. Paper II focuses on the interaction at the local level, at schools, while Paper III focuses on the project team's boundary work in different arenas. In Paper IV, the concept of frame is used to study how the policy was implemented. The field material consists of interviews, observations, field note documentation from meetings and activities, as well as textual documents illustrating the course of the project at different organisational levels during the three years.

The papers' findings demonstrate how important it is that value-driven projects in a public sector context are continuously engaged in interactions throughout the entire project as a way to achieve transition. This is in contrast to trying to demarcate projects in relation to the surrounding environment, and developing and embedding results at the end of the project. This leads to the conclusion that transition, instead of constituting a single concept, is also an important mean within the concepts of task, time and team. In fact, the results of the papers show how transition, through interactions between actors in the project organisation and actors in organisations involved, occurs through each of the three concepts of task, time and team. This perspective on creating transition by means of value-driven public sector projects requires another view of projects in interaction with their context, which can be an important consideration when planning and managing projects.