

THESIS FOR THE DEGREE OF LICENTIATE OF ENGINEERING

Purpose-Driven Strategic Renewal: An Organizational Design  
and Business Model Perspective

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Perspective  
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**ABSTRACT**

Corporate purpose has seen a resurgence of interest in recent years and is increasingly portrayed as a potential driver of innovation, adaptability, and renewal. At the same time, we still know little about how organizations organize for purpose in ways that make renewal possible. This licentiate thesis examines how corporate purpose shapes strategic renewal through organizational design and business model innovation. Drawing on two qualitative studies, the thesis finds that when purpose introduces multiple commitments, organizations face a performance–complexity trade-off in which they may choose between alternative design approaches with different implications for performance across commitments, coordination demands, managerial effort, and renewal potential. At the business model level, the thesis distinguishes between two patterns of purpose-driven business model innovation: reinforcing innovation within an existing value logic and renewing innovation involving broader business model reconfiguration around new value logics. Taken together, the studies suggest that purpose-driven renewal is influenced by how organizations translate multiple commitments into organizational and business model arrangements, and the trade-offs they make between performance towards goals and the complexity required to sustain it. The thesis concludes by outlining two directions for future research towards a systems understanding of purpose-driven strategic renewal: how purpose evolves over time, and how organizational actors interpret and mobilize purpose in pursuit of renewal.



## LIST OF APPENDED PAPERS

### **Paper 1**

Pregmark, J., Fredberg, T., Brandin, K. (Forthcoming). *Dual-aim purpose strategies and organizational design solutions*

This paper is as of January 2026 conditionally accepted to European Management Review (AJG 3)

**My role in the paper:** Writing the paper has been an iterative collaboration with my co-authors where I have been part in conceptualization and idea generation, data analysis and authoring of original draft and subsequent revisions together with my co-authors. All empirical data have been collected by Tobias Fredberg and Johanna Pregmark prior to start of my doctoral project.

### **Paper 2**

Brandin, K., Björck, A., Pregmark, J. E., Fredberg, T. *Purpose-driven business model innovation.*

Conference paper in preparation for submission to journal.

Earlier versions of this paper were presented at the Strategic Management Society's annual conference in San Francisco, 2025 and the R&D management conference in Pisa, 2025. The current version is accepted to the European Academy of Management conference 2026 in Kristiansand, Norway.

**My role in the paper:** I have been first author and taken part in conceptualization and idea generation, methodology, second round of data collection, data analysis and interpretation, and writing of the original draft with support from my co-authors. The initial round of data collection was done by Albena Björck.

### **Other published works<sup>1</sup>**

Björck, A., Pregmark, J. E., Brandin, K., Schoch, D. (2025). Corporate Purpose and Systemic Change: Exploring the links and future research agenda. *Swiss Journal of Business* 79 (3), 262-285.

**My contribution:** Early stage conceptualization and partial late stage revision of specific section.

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<sup>1</sup> During my doctoral project I have been involved in other works that are relevant to the topic of corporate purpose, but not included in this licentiate thesis.



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## INTRODUCTION

Recent years have seen corporate purpose become a prominent way for organizations to explain what they stand for and why they exist (Besharov & Mitzinneck, 2023). While the idea that organizations are guided by a purpose is not new (Brosch, 2023), corporate purpose has gained renewed interest from both executives (Harrison et al., 2020) and investors (Fink, 2018, 2019), while simultaneously attracting growing scholarly attention (Besharov & Mitzinneck, 2023; Chua et al., 2024; George et al., 2023; Henderson, 2021b; Ocasio et al., 2023; Tushman et al., 2024).

At the same time, purpose now carries expansive expectations: purpose is expected to provide strategic direction (Quinn & Thakor, 2019) and stronger internal alignment (Michael Beer et al., 2011; Bonchek, 2013; Pregmark et al., 2023), while also enabling innovation and renewal (Henderson, 2021b). Yet we still lack cumulative insight into the organizational mechanisms through which purpose becomes consequential in practice – especially in firms that strives to use purpose as a basis for strategic choices about innovation and renewal as well as the evaluation of the performance and outcomes of such initiatives.

This licentiate thesis represents the first stepping-stone in a broader doctoral project on purpose-driven strategic renewal. Within this broader project, the aim of the thesis is to explore how corporate purpose may become consequential for strategic renewal by focusing on the organizational mechanisms through which the multiple aims introduced by a purpose is translated into renewal efforts. More specifically, the thesis explores how organizations design for coordination and performance when purpose introduces multiple goals, how they enact purpose through business model choices, and how the goals introduced by purpose relate to the firms existing logic for creating, delivering, and capturing value.

Prior research associate corporate purpose with innovation and renewal (Besharov & Mitzinneck, 2023; George et al., 2023; Henderson, 2021b; Pantalena et al., 2026; Rindova & Martins, 2023; Tushman et al., 2024). Purpose is portrayed as shaping strategic direction (Rindova & Martins, 2023) energizing organizational change by clarifying priorities and motivating actors to pursue initiatives that extend beyond narrow financial criteria (Henderson, 2021b). However, this link between purpose and renewal remains underspecified in two aspects. First, corporate purpose is typically articulated at a high level of abstraction (Collins & Porras, 1991; George et al., 2023), while innovation and renewal depends on concrete decisions about what to prioritize, how to allocate resources, and how to evaluate alternatives

(Pantalena et al., 2026; Teece, 2007). Second, purpose extends performance beyond profit maximization (George et al., 2023), adding or elevating other value commitments that managers are expected to pursue alongside financial performance. These commitments may be framed and communicated as mutually reinforcing in high-level broad statements, but in practice they often raise questions about prioritization, coordination across units, and accountability (Battilana et al., 2022; Jensen, 2000). These two aspects make purpose a potential driver of renewal, but also a potential source of organizational strain and inertia, depending on how purpose is translated into organizing arrangements and operational priorities.

To explore how organizations translate broad purpose commitments into operational priorities and organizing arrangements that support strategic renewal, I draw on two complementary lenses that sit at the heart of how purpose becomes enacted in organization. First, I draw on organizational design: the structures, processes, and governance arrangements through which organizations coordinate, prioritize, and handle operations (Galbraith, 2014). I use organizational design as a lens because multi-aim purpose becomes consequential in how coordination is designed through decision rights, roles, structures, processes, and accountability arrangements that shape how multiple goals are managed in practice.

Second, I use a business model lens because purpose ultimately becomes external facing through the activity system organizations use to decide and shape how value is created, delivered and captured, and how coordination and trade-offs are made across interdependent activities (Baden-Fuller & Morgan, 2010; Zott & Amit, 2010; Zott et al., 2011). Together, these lenses allow me to investigate a systems level account of how multiple aims of a purpose commitment shape or enable strategic renewal. Furthermore, the two lenses expands the understanding of previous research claiming that purpose needs to be embedded in organizational design and business models (George et al., 2023), by providing more granular insight into how such embedding can look in practice.

Empirically, I build the thesis on an abductive, case-based research design that have been iteratively refined by moving between empirical findings and theory. The thesis consists of two papers. *Paper 1* is a case study of the Swedish alcoholic retailer Systembolaget and examines the organizational design challenge that arise when corporate purpose introduces multiple aims, and how ambidexterity-like design solutions (O'Reilly & Tushman, 2013; Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996), including contextual approaches (Birkinshaw & Gibson, 2004), shape coordination demands and innovation potential through a performance–complexity trade-off.

*Paper 2* shifts the focus from the organizational design level to how purpose shape innovation at the activity-system level of the business model. Specifically, it identifies two

patterns of purpose-driven business model innovation: Modular patterns where purpose reinforces and strengthens an existing activity system, and architectural patterns where it renews or reconfigures the activity system for how value is created, delivered, and captured.

Together, the two papers outline an idea that when purpose introduces multiple aims, renewal outcomes depend on the mechanisms used to translate those aims into practice. More precisely, renewal outcomes are shaped by how organizational design enables (or constrains) coordination across the organization and on whether business model choices reinforce an existing activity system or stretch it toward renewal and reconfiguration. The complexity (e.g. coordination effort) and scope of renewal seem to, in part, relate to the centrality and compatibility (Besharov & Smith, 2014) of the multiple aims of the purpose. When the aims are compatible with the existing organizational design and business model, the goals may be implemented as incremental adjustments, such as improving material, production, or product tweaks, without rethinking the organizational systems. If goals are less compatible, the firm seem to face more trade-offs that requires rethinking and renewing how to organize to achieve the goals. In other words, low compatibility of the goals of the corporate purpose seem to push organizations towards renewing innovation, while high compatibility can more easily be supported through reinforcing innovation.

The remainder of the thesis is structured as follows. The next section develops the theoretical frame of reference. I then present the research design and a summary of the appended papers, followed by a discussion that integrates insights across the two studies and outlines directions for future research on purpose-driven strategic renewal.



## FRAME OF REFERENCE

### *Corporate Purpose and Strategic Renewal*

Corporate purpose as a concept can be traced back to roots in early strategy and management theory (Andrews, 1987; Barnard, 1938; Selznick, 1957). Although the concept has longstanding roots, it has remained relatively dormant until the recent surge of interest from both academics and practitioners in how to effectively integrate purpose into strategy and operations (George et al., 2023). As a result, purpose is increasingly discussed as a normative concept that shape strategy and guide how organizations pursue and justify value creation beyond financial performance alone (Battilana et al., 2022; Collins & Porras, 1991; George et al., 2023). In this view, purpose goes beyond being an aspirational statement by providing a strategic reference point that influence which opportunities are pursued, how trade-offs are evaluated, and what is considered legitimate organizational action (Brosch, 2023; George et al., 2023; Rindova & Martins, 2023).

Despite variation in definitions of corporate purpose, much of the recent discourse from investors (Fink, 2019), executives (Harrison et al., 2020), and academics (Besharov & Mitzinneck, 2023; Brosch, 2023; George et al., 2023) converges around the idea that the corporate purpose reflects an organizations core reason for being and the values it seeks to create for society beyond financial performance alone. While much of the current conversation on corporate purpose emphasizes pro-social contributions (George et al., 2023; Henderson, 2021a), it worthwhile to point out that corporate purpose does not necessarily have to aspire to pro-social contributions (Almandoz, 2023; Collins & Porras, 1991; Ocasio et al., 2023). For this licentiate thesis, corporate purpose is defined broadly as having a set of value commitments that extend beyond profit maximization as the sole criterion for decision-making. As such, the definition of corporate purpose go beyond being limited to pro-social commitments (alongside financial goals) to also include other aspirations in regard to for example innovation or customers (Collins & Porras, 1991). Conceptualizing corporate purpose as a set of value commitments beyond profit maximization preserves its normative character and align with the idea that purpose can function as a guiding “north star” (Besharov & Mitzinneck, 2023) with strategic consequences for prioritization, resources allocation, and accountability (Brosch, 2023), without necessarily imbuing it with strong pro-social or sustainability orientations.

Instead, a central implication becomes that corporate purpose introduces multiple goals or valued ends into the core of the firm. If corporate purpose articulates more than one goal or

valued outcome, purpose also entails the simultaneous pursuit of multiple goals, goals which are likely to correspond to different value orientations or logics and influence organizational priorities and decision-making (Battilana et al., 2022; Gulati, 2022). Recent conceptualizations of purpose emphasize that the multiple goals introduced are to be seen as mutually dependent (or at least equally central to the core business), arguing that in the purpose-driven firm the multiple goals of value creation are intertwined and equally relevant to strategic choices of the firm (George et al., 2023; Henderson, 2021a). At the same time, research on multiple aims cautions that such multiplicity can obscure priorities and complicate coordination, creating ambiguity about what should be optimized and how success should be evaluated (Jensen, 2000). Studies of organizations combining divergent objectives further highlight how multiple goals can intensify internal tensions and trigger challenges around integration, control, and identity (Battilana & Dorado, 2010; Battilana et al., 2022; Gulati, 2022). In short, the promise of purpose as something unifying that guides organizational direction, innovation, and renewal currently sits alongside a well-established concern that multiple strategic goals can also produce conflict, complexity, and contested interpretations.

While research on corporate purpose to some degree recognize the need for managing tensions and trade-offs in pursuit of multiple purpose goals (Battilana et al., 2022; Gulati, 2022) the current academic discourse on corporate purpose makes the tensions between stability and adaptability especially salient when it comes to renewal. On one hand, corporate purpose is treated as a strategic concept that is expected to generate dynamic outcomes such as innovation and adaptability (Henderson, 2021b) or the pursuit of new strategies for value creation (Rindova & Martins, 2023; Steller & Björck, 2024). Such dynamic outcomes imply a capacity for ongoing change and the ability to reconfigure activities, structures, and resources over time (Teece, 2007).

At the same time, purpose is also understood as a guiding north star (Besharov & Mitzinneck, 2023) grounded in organizational history and values (Almandoz, 2023), that provide guidance under uncertainty (Quinn & Thakor, 2019) and help unify stakeholders around a shared sense of meaning (Michael Beer et al., 2011; Bonchek, 2013; Pregmark et al., 2023). Furthermore, much of the purpose literature, especially in implementation-oriented accounts (see for example Ocasio et al., 2023 or George et al., 2023), argue that purpose becomes consequential only when it is articulated, formalized, and embedded at the core of the organization, which requires designing and shaping the organizational systems and arrangements that enable coordination and alignment (Carucci & Shappell, 2022; Galbraith,

2014). In other words, purpose is often theorized as both change-enabling (supporting innovation and renewal) and stabilizing (providing direction, coherence, and shared principles).

Taken together, previous research points to a conceptual ambiguity at the heart of corporate purpose as a strategic concept. Purpose is increasingly promoted as a device for direction and coherence, yet it is also invoked as a catalyst for innovation, adaptability, and strategic renewal. What remains less well understood is how organizations translate broad purpose commitments into actionable priorities and decision criteria, particularly when purpose implies multiple aims, and how such translations shape the organization's capacity to coordinate effectively while also enabling innovation and renewal in pursuit of purpose.

This ambiguity relates directly to strategic renewal. Prior research generally defines strategic renewal as changes that renew, reconfigure, or transform an organization's strategic direction, structures, and ways of creating value in order to remain viable over time (Agarwal & Helfat, 2009; Schmitt et al., 2018; Volberda et al., 2001). This is relevant for the present thesis because it distinguishes broader reorientation of the firm from more bounded forms of innovation that may improve or adapt the existing business without fundamentally renewing its strategy. For this thesis, strategic renewal is defined broadly and defined as changes that go beyond isolated improvements or innovations to include more significant changes that reorient more fundamental aspects of how the organization is directed, organized, and creates value. Innovation may be one important mechanism through which such change occurs, but not all innovation necessarily amounts to renewal.

In this thesis, I explore the ambiguity of purpose being theorized as both stabilizing and renewing by examining how corporate purpose is enacted through organizational mechanisms in practice and how they shape strategic renewal. I do so by mobilizing the two lenses of organizational design and business models innovation as key analytical lenses for examining purpose-driven renewal, and as a steppingstone toward laying the foundation for a broader dissertation agenda on how corporate purpose may underpin strategic renewal.

### *Purpose, value logics, and organizational design*

Organizations that articulate a corporate purpose beyond profit maximization face the implementation challenge of translating broad and often abstract aspiration about “why we exist” and “what we seek to contribute” into coordinated action across organizational levels (Battilana et al., 2022). While purpose may provide strategic direction on what is seen as valuable and legitimate, successful strategic implementation depended on, and is shaped by, how organizational activities are structured, how decisions are made, and how coordination is

achieved across the organization (George et al., 2023). Therefore, organizational design, defined as defined as the deliberate configurations of structures, processes, incentives and people practices (Galbraith, 2014) sits at the center of understanding how purpose becomes strategically consequential in practice.

A key premise in organizational design is that there is not a universally “best” structure. Instead, effective designs align internal arrangements with strategic goals and the demands created by those goals in an organizational system where the different components of the system are mutually dependent, and where different configurations can achieve “equifinality” and the same final state (Galbraith, 2014). When corporate purpose introduces multiple aims (e.g., commercial performance alongside societal or stakeholder-oriented aspirations), it can increase complexity of the organizational system (Battilana & Dorado, 2010) and ambiguity about priorities and complicate trade-offs, especially when the aims imply different time horizons, performance criteria, and stakeholder expectations (Jensen, 2002). In practice, this means that purpose implementation cannot be treated as a purely communicative exercise (e.g., articulating a statement), but must also be understood as a design challenge on the organizational level.

One way to theorize this challenge is through the lens of hybrid organizing. In hybrid organizing specifically, the multiple logics becomes central to organizational identity, practices, and governance, generating persistent tension around goal prioritization, internal coordination, and external accountability (Battilana & Dorado, 2010; Besharov & Smith, 2014). From a hybrid organizing perspective, corporate purpose can be interpreted as a strategic move that invites or amplifies multiple logics within the organization by explicitly framing multiple goals of value creation as mutually important. Each introduced logic carries distinct assumptions about what counts as success, which stakeholders matter, and how to justify decisions (Greenwood et al., 2011). Whether such multiplicity enable innovation and renewal or produce inertia and conflict would then be influenced by on how the logics of each goal relate to each other inside the organization, particularly their compatibility and centrality (Besharov & Smith, 2014).

Hybrid organizing also point to different patterns through which organizations can structurally and procedurally accommodate competing logics. Rather than fully “blending” logics into one integrated system, organization may engage in selective coupling, combining elements of different logics in some activities while keeping others more tightly aligned with one logic (Pache & Santos, 2013). Selective coupling might be especially relevant for understanding purpose-driven organizations, where purpose statements may intentionally remain broad (George et al., 2023), while the enactment of purpose requires embeddedness

across organizational domains (e.g., organizational structures and business models) that are also influenced by industry practice, regulatory context, or organizational resources and capabilities.

In summary, purpose may articulate broader forms of values, but design likely determines whether such values persist and becomes operationally relevant, for example through governance forums recognizing multiple stakeholders, performance management systems recognizing more than one dimension of success, or processes for navigating trade-offs between logics. However, while selective coupling may help explain how organizations coordinate multiple value logics across activities, it leaves open the question of how such arrangements support both coherence and renewal over time, two attributes often assigned to corporate purpose in current literature (Besharov & Mitzinneck, 2023).

Beyond introducing multiple value commitments, purpose scholarship commonly attributes dynamic outcomes to purpose (e.g. innovation, renewal, adaptability), which raises an additional design challenge: how to balance the stabilizing function of purpose (coherence, legitimacy, direction) with the flexibility required for innovation, renewal and change. This challenge maps onto classic ambidexterity research (Birkinshaw & Gibson, 2004; O'Reilly & Tushman, 2013; Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2008; Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996). Ambidexterity research offers design-relevant insights into how organizations can sustain contradictory demands for exploitation and exploration through different arrangements such as structural differentiation with separate units and architectures (Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996) or contextual structures (Birkinshaw & Gibson, 2004) and how to mitigate tensions through shared direction, trust and strategic conversations (Fredberg & Pregmark, 2018, 2022; Liedtka & Rosenblum, 1996; Pregmark et al., 2023). Applied to the context of purpose-driven organizations, ambidexterity research suggests that using purpose as a driver for renewal may require designing for ongoing tension between the goals or commitments in the purpose, rather than attempting to resolve it through stable, one-time arrangements, if purpose is to support both alignment and renewal.

#### *Purpose, business models, and value logics*

Business model (BM) research offers a complementary lens to organizational design for understanding how corporate purpose becomes consequential in practice by focusing on the activity system through which value is created, delivered, and captured (Richardson, 2008) (Zott & Amit, 2010). While corporate purpose articulates and organizations overarching value commitments and strategic direction, business models describe the configurations of activities, resources and relationships through which those commitments are enacted in markets and

stakeholder interfaces (Wirtz et al., 2016; Zott et al., 2011). In this sense, business models sit between strategy and execution, providing a template for how an organization operationalizes its strategic intent through a coherent system of interdependent choices (Wirtz et al., 2016).

A core insight in this literature is that business models are not simply descriptive templates. Business models embody assumptions about what “value” is, for whom it is created, and how the organization justifies capturing a share of that value (Baden-Fuller & Morgan, 2010). This is especially relevant when corporate purpose introduces or amplifies multiple value logics (e.g., commercial and social goals). In such contexts, the business model can be theorized as a mechanism through which logics are combined, prioritized, and stabilized in concrete choices, such as which stakeholders are treated as primary, what the value proposition emphasizes, what activities are performed in-house or through partners, and which performance criteria guide resource allocation (Casadesus-Masanell & Ricart, 2010). As such, studying business models can help understand how purpose-related goals and value commitments are enacted not only in internal organizational arrangements, but also in the organization’s external-facing value creation activity system.

At the same time, business model research underscores a stability-dynamism tensions similar to the research on corporate purpose. Research emphasizes that business models can be both templates for replication, efficiency, and scalability where firms benefit from stability and a consistent logic of how activities fit together and how value capture is sustained (Demil & Lecocq, 2010). As well as objects of innovation and strategic renewal, as firms respond to technological change, shifting stakeholder expectations, competitive pressures, and legitimacy demands (Foss & Saebi, 2017; Teece, 2010). Furthermore, Research on business model evolution emphasizes that change often occurs through iterative experimentation and recombination of components, rather than through discrete “redesign events,” suggesting that business models can be both stabilizing architectures and platforms for ongoing adaptation (Demil & Lecocq, 2010; Sosna et al., 2010).

Taken together, a business model lens contributes to the exploration of purpose as a driver of strategic renewal in two ways. First, it targets where and how purpose-related value commitments are enacted: in activity systems that structure stakeholder exchanges and concretize what value is created and captured (Zott & Amit, 2010). Second, it highlights business model innovation as a mechanism through which purpose can inform, and be tested against, changes in value creation, delivery, and capture, such as new partner configurations, revenue logics, or performance criteria (Demil & Lecocq, 2010; Foss & Saebi, 2017; Teece, 2010). In this thesis, business models therefore serve as a key lens for understanding how

corporate purpose is translated from abstract aspiration into a practical logic of value creation, and serves as an analytical lens for examining how purpose connects to strategic renewal at the level of the firm's activity system.



## METHODS

### *Methodological Approach*

This thesis uses a qualitative, case-based research approach to how organizational purpose becomes consequential for strategic renewal. The phenomenon under study is how corporate purpose is translated into ways of organizing in the course of strategic renewal. Questions of this kind require attention to context and to the practical conditions under which priorities are set and choices are made. A qualitative case-based design is therefore suitable for studying the “how” and “why” dynamics in real organizational settings (Bell et al., 2022). Case research also supports pattern recognition and comparison, both through in-depth work in one organization or by examining similarities and differences across several cases, which help strengthen the development of concepts and explanations (Eisenhardt, 1989; Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007).

Corporate purpose is not a new concept in strategy and management (Brosch, 2023), but it has gained renewed attention in both practice and scholarship in recent years. At the same time, purpose is used in different ways across research fields, and there is no single agreed understanding on what purpose is or what it does. Recent years have therefore seen several conceptual reviews and frameworks papers aimed at clarifying purpose as a construct and mapping key streams in the literature (e.g. Besharov & Mitzinneck, 2023; Brosch, 2023; Chua et al., 2024; George et al., 2023; Ocasio et al., 2023; Pantalena et al., 2026; Steller & Moellering, 2024) all with slightly different interpretations of what purpose is or should be. In this context, this licentiate thesis is deliberately phenomenon oriented. Rather than adhering to a predetermined definition of purpose in advance (e.g. by requiring a pro-social dimension), the study has aimed at staying open to how purpose is invoked, interpreted, and put to work in practice, and what follows from this in terms of decisions and organizing. As such, the aim is not necessarily to add “new theories of purpose,” but to remain open to furthering the understanding of how purpose actually operates in organizing and renewal by starting in the empirical findings and drawing in part on related, already established theoretical fields and concepts.

Consequently, the research process has been abductive and iterative. More specifically, the thesis draws on what Dubois and Gadde (2002) refer to as systematic combining: an ongoing back-and-forth movement between empirical material, the developing conceptual framing, and the evolving research focus. In practice, this means that early observations and

tentative interpretations informed subsequent data collection and analysis, while engagement with prior literature helped sharpen questions, refine concepts, and strengthen explanations. Rather than using theory as a fixed template applied to the data, theory has been treated as a working resource that is adjusted and sometimes reconsidered as new empirical insights emerge. This abductive stance is central to how the thesis develops its explanations of purpose-driven renewal: through iterative interaction between empirical engagement and conceptual development.

To explore how purpose becomes consequential for renewal in practice, the empirical study was designed to follow purpose into the arenas where it is translated into action. As such, a methodological design choice for the study has been to examine purpose-driven renewal across more than one aspect of organizing. For this licentiate thesis in particular, I attend to organizational design and business models, since these capture two closely related but distinct aspects of renewal: the structures for how organizations coordinate and prioritize internally, and how they configure their value creation, capture, and delivery externally.

At the same time, it is worth noting that the licentiate thesis is part of a broader doctoral project that also includes ongoing studies focusing on complementary aspects of purpose-driven renewal, including dynamics related to how purpose evolves over time and how organizational members interpret, mobilize, shape, and enact corporate purpose. These studies are not part of the empirical material analyzed in this licentiate, and the claims developed here rest on the studies presented in the appended papers. However, the parallel work has informed the abductive research process by indirectly influencing the overall framing of the thesis, as well as informing the directions of future research presented at the end of the thesis.

#### *Data sampling, collection, and analysis*

The empirical basis for this licentiate thesis consists of two qualitative studies. Both studies rely on a case-based logic suited towards explorative “how” questions where the phenomenon (purpose-driven renewal) is closely tied to its organizational context. While the two studies differ in design: one providing in-depth engagement in a single organizational setting, the other enabling comparison across multiple firms, they share a common methodological orientation. Both designs rely on purposive selection of information-rich cases (Robinson, 2014), qualitative data collection, and iterative analysis following an abductive research logic (Dubois & Gadde, 2002).

Across the two studies, the cases were selected purposively (Robinson, 2014), with the aim of studying settings where purpose was explicitly articulated and linked to renewal-related

choices, and where access enabled detailed inquiry. Paper 1 on organizational design is a single case study using action research methods (Coghlan & Shani, 2014) that provides depth into how purpose is translated into organizing choices related to prioritization, coordination, and design. Single cases can offer strong analytical value when they provide access to a rich empirical context that allow the development of plausible explanations grounded in detailed empirical material (Siggelkow, 2007; Tracy, 2010).

The business model study in paper 2 follows a multiple-case design, where several firms were selected to enable comparison of how purpose relates to different patterns of business model innovation. A multiple-case design supports the identification of recurring patterns as well as meaningful variation across settings (Eisenhardt, 1989; Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007).

Across both studies, semi-structured interviews constituted an important source of empirical data together with action research<sup>2</sup> organizational documents and other contextual material where available. Interviews are particularly useful for understanding interpretations, motivations, and accounts of decisions, while complementary sources help contextualize and cross-check data (Flick, 2022). The two studies, however, differ in how the empirical material was assembled. For paper 1, the organizational design study, the thesis draws on material generated within a longstanding research collaboration with Systembolaget, where data collection had been completed before the doctoral project behind this licentiate thesis began. Paper 1 has therefore primarily involved an abductive and iterative analysis of an already rich empirical base, including continued movement between emerging interpretations and relevant literature. For the business model study in paper 2, data collection was more explicitly iterative. The study initially built on interviews across eight firms and was subsequently extended with additional interview material from two firms (ELC-A, part of the original sample, and FWC-A new to the sample) to deepen and refine the analysis in relation to emerging patterns. This combination allowed the study to balance breadth across cases with added depth where needed to support the development of plausible explanations, rather than aiming for exhaustive coverage of all possible perspectives.

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<sup>2</sup> Action reserach conducted by Tobias Fredberg and Johanna Pregmark prior to the start of this doctoral project.

<b>Paper/Study</b>	<b>Research Design</b>	<b>Data collection</b>
Paper 1 – Organizational design	Case study	The data builds on two larger case: one retrospective study covering 2003-2016 and an ongoing collaborative research project started in 2015. The data collection was conducted by my co-authors before the start of the doctoral project.
Paper 2 – Business model innovation	Multi-case study	First round with 8 semi-structured interviews across eight organizations, conducted by co-author Albena Björck. A second round with 5 additional semi-structured interviews with a new cases conducted by myself and co-authors Johanna Pregmark and Tobias Fredberg. Secondary data from annual reports, press releases, and other documentation have been collected by me.
<i>Ongoing studies in the doctoral project that have informed the direction of the overarching doctoral project, but that are not part of the empirical material underpinning this licentiate thesis.</i>		
<i>Ongoing Study 3 – Agency in purpose-driven renewal</i>	<i>Interview study</i>	<i>So far, I have held 12 Interviews. I have also conducted 2 workshops with practitioners. Additional data collection is ongoing.</i>
<i>Ongoing Study 4 – Purpose evolution over time</i>	<i>Case study</i>	<i>5 semi-structured interviews conducted by me, Tobias Fredberg and Johanna Pregmark. Internal documents, press releases, and other secondary documents collected by me. Additional data collection ongoing</i>

*Table 1: Overview of research design and data collection for the licentiate thesis and doctoral research project*

For this thesis, the analysis was oriented toward developing empirically grounded explanations of how purpose becomes consequential for strategic renewal. This required an approach that could capture both how purpose is handled inside organizations (e.g., priorities, coordination, and organizing choices) and how it relates to renewal in what the organization does (i.e., changes connected to value creation, delivery, and capture in the business model). Methodologically, combining these two perspectives supports the exploratory aim of the licentiate thesis by providing a more comprehensive empirical account of how purpose becomes consequential for strategic renewal on the more structural levels made up by the organizational design and business model of an organization. A focus on internal organizing clarifies how purpose is operationalized through priorities, coordination, and decision-making, while a focus on business model implications complements this by clarifying how purpose-driven renewal is reflected in changes to the organization's value creation, delivery, and capture, and by helping characterize the scope of change. Considering both therefore reduces the risk that an exploratory analysis either remains confined to internal arrangements without characterizing changes to external facing activities, or remains at the level of business model change without examining the organizational work through which such change becomes feasible.

In practical terms, the analysis involved working with the cases from each study to build a coherent understanding of how purpose was interpreted and connected to renewal-related choices, and then using comparison to sharpen patterns and contrasts. Comparison is a well-established strategy in case-based research for developing explanations that can account for both similarity and difference across settings (Eisenhardt, 1989; Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). In the single-case study of paper 1, comparison supported a structured examination of organizing choices across different strategic responses to Systembolaget's purpose. In the multiple-case study of paper 2, comparison across cases supported the identification of recurring patterns and meaningful variation in how purpose related to business model innovation.

Consistent with the abductive stance (Dubois & Gadde, 2002) described above, the analysis proceeded iteratively, moving between emerging interpretations, the empirical material, and relevant literature. Concepts were treated as analytical resources rather than fixed templates, and were refined as the analysis developed. This approach fits the exploratory aim of the licentiate thesis: it combines in-depth analysis of organizing choices with comparison across cases to clarify how purpose is linked to different patterns of renewal outcomes, strengthening the empirical grounding of the thesis' overall explanation of purpose-driven renewal.

### *Research quality and validity*

The aim of this licentiate thesis is exploratory: to develop empirically grounded explanations of how corporate purpose becomes consequential for strategic renewal. In this context, the key question is not statistical generalization, but the trustworthiness and usefulness of the explanations developed from the empirical material (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Tracy, 2010). The thesis therefore emphasizes research quality through transparency in the research process, careful use of multiple sources, and systematic comparison across cases and interpretations. Accordingly, the quality criteria used here align with common notions of trustworthiness in qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Tracy, 2010) rather than measurement validity in a statistical sense.

A first quality principle concerns *credibility*: whether the interpretations are plausible given the empirical material. Across the studies, interviews were complemented with documents and other contextual sources when available, allowing key claims to be contextualized and cross-checked rather than relying on a single type of account (Flick, 2023). Credibility was also strengthened through iterative engagement with alternative interpretations during the analysis, including active attention to inconsistencies, potential counterexamples, and continuous discussion with my supervisors, co-authors, and colleagues. In addition, the analysis was conducted in an abductive manner where emerging interpretations were repeatedly confronted with both the empirical material and relevant literature and refined accordingly. Credibility was further supported through external scrutiny and feedback in academic forums. Earlier versions of the Systembolaget study in paper 1 were discussed in a research seminar setting, and the manuscript has subsequently gone through journal review and is conditionally accepted in *European Management Review*. The business model study has been presented at established international conferences, including the Strategic Management Society annual conference (San Francisco, 2025). Feedback from these settings was used to develop the framing, analysis, and presentation of the findings of the papers and support credibility.

A second principle concerns *transferability* and the extent to which insights can be informative beyond the specific cases. Rather than claiming broad generalization, the thesis supports transferability by providing detailed descriptions of the empirical settings and by articulating empirically grounded patterns and explanatory ideas in a way so that they can be assessed for relevance in related contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Also, by illuminating different aspects (organizational design and business models) of how purpose drives strategic

renewal, the thesis offers complementary empirical perspectives that together give a richer basis for readers to judge relevance and transferability (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007).

The final two principles concerns *dependability* and *confirmability*, which relate to the transparency and traceability of how conclusions were reached (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004). Throughout the research process, analytical decisions were documented and revisited as the conceptual framing evolved. The appended papers provide detailed accounts of data sources and analytical steps, supporting transparency and allowing the reader to assess how interpretations were developed. Finally, the licentiate thesis is written with explicit scope conditions: it aims to explore mechanisms and patterns relevant to purpose-driven renewal, while recognizing that other levels of analysis and alternative explanations may also be relevant, some of which are addressed in the wider doctoral project behind this thesis (see future research directions).

Taken together, these practices help ensure research quality for this exploratory licentiate thesis by making the reasoning process visible, grounding claims in the empirical material, and developing explanations that are credible in context and potentially informative beyond it (Tracy, 2010). The thesis does not claim completeness or universal applicability; instead, it offers empirically grounded explanations whose relevance can be judged in relation to similar contexts and renewal challenges.

To conclude the method section, I want to outline and clarify my contribution and work on the research design and methodology for my doctoral project this far. Within the overall research project, my contribution during the licentiate phase has primarily consisted of data analysis, interpretation, idea generation, writing, and revision. This includes contributions to the development of the appended papers as well as to the integrative framing, synthesis, and discussion presented in the thesis. At the same time, my data collection has mainly been directed toward building the empirical foundation for the forthcoming studies of the doctoral project. The “licentiate phase” of the project has thus involved both analytical and conceptual work on the present thesis and empirical preparation for the next phase of the research, including taking part in moving a paper through a full journal peer-review process as well as presenting my research at conferences to have it further developed through scholarly conversation and feedback.



## SUMMARY OF APPENDED PAPERS

### **Paper 1: *Dual-aim purpose strategies and organizational design solutions***

*Pregmark, J., Fredberg, T., Brandin, K.*

#### **Abstract**

This paper advances theory on the strategic dimensions of corporate purpose by exploring how organizations design for a *dual-aim purpose*: pursuing both financial and pro-social objectives that are inherently in tension. While earlier research highlights purpose as a unifying force that motivates action and guides strategic decision-making, we examine its more complex and sometimes constraining role in strategy execution. Based on a two-decade long study of Systembolaget, Sweden's state-owned alcohol retailer, we trace three organizational design strategies for enacting dual aims: accepting friction, avoiding friction, and removing friction. By introducing a framework that evaluates organizational designs through effectiveness, efficacy, efficiency, and effort, we highlight how organizational designs not only embody trade-offs but also require scaffolding mechanisms such as dialogic practices, capability-building, and governance models, that enable continuous recalibration. Our findings contribute to strategy and organization theory by showing that purpose-driven duality demands a more granular theorization of contextual ambidexterity: from "dynamic shifting" between aims to "transcending" solutions that embed both simultaneously. While Systembolaget represents a special case, the challenges it faces mirror those confronting a growing number of organizations navigating the shift toward multi-dimensional measures of success.

## **Paper 2: *Purpose-driven business model innovation***

*Brandin, K., Björck, A., Pregmark, J., Fredberg, T.*

### **Abstract**

This study examines how corporate purpose shapes business model innovation (BMI) in for-profit firms. Drawing on an abductive multi-case study of nine firms recognized as purpose-driven, we develop a framework suggesting that purpose shapes the scope of BMI through its influence on the firm's value logic. When purpose refines the existing value logic, firms are more likely to pursue reinforcing forms of BMI, making modular changes to selected business model elements while preserving the broader architecture of value creation, delivery, and capture. When purpose reframes the firm's value logic, firms seem more likely to engage in renewing forms of BMI, involving coordinated redesign across interdependent elements of the business model. We therefore show that differences in how purpose reshapes value logic help explain whether BMI remains reinforcing or becomes renewing.

## DISCUSSION

The promise of corporate purpose as a strategic driver of both direction and coherence and an enabler of adaptation and renewal underlines an important ambiguity in purpose research: if purpose introduces multiple goals with different value commitments, how do these commitments become strategically consequential in practice, and how do they support strategic renewal? This licentiate thesis explores this ambiguity by examining purpose-driven renewal through the two empirical lenses of organizational design and business model innovation. Together, these lenses suggests that purpose becomes consequential for renewal through (a) how it is translated into organizational design choices that shape how multiple commitments are coordinated and managed, and (b) by how it refines or renews the logic through which the business model creates, delivers, and captures value.

### *Purpose as a performance-complexity trade-off*

The findings from Paper 1 suggest that purpose-driven renewal is shaped by a tension between expanded performance ambitions across goals and the managerial effort required to handle organizational complexity between goals. As corporate purpose introduces multiple aims, organizations expand what they attempt to optimize and perform against (Battilana & Dorado, 2010), thereby increasing integrative demands and coordination costs (Besharov & Smith, 2014; Greenwood et al., 2011; Jensen, 2000). This tension can be understood as a performance-complexity trade-off. By this, I mean that broader and more ambitious purpose commitments can improve performance across multiple goals, while simultaneously increasing the organizational complexity and managerial effort required to sustain that performance. As such, the performance-complexity trade-off becomes a design choice where organizations may choose between different designs which carries different trade-offs between performance and organizational complexity.

In the Systembolaget case, solutions resembling structural and contextual forms of ambidexterity (Birkinshaw & Gibson, 2004; O'Reilly & Tushman, 2013; Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2008; Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996) helped the organization navigate multiple commitments embedded in its purpose while also expanding its ambitions in relation to the dual goals of generating profits from sales of alcoholic beverages while simultaneously reducing the societal harm from its consumption. The three organizational solutions adopted by the organization came with different performance implications and the managerial effort required to handle the

complexity of the chosen design. For example, when Systembolaget structurally separated the two goals of its purpose (retailing alcohol and public health) into separate units, complexity was reduced as each unit could focus fully on their respective goals. However, the increased focus (and effectiveness) came at the cost of a lower efficiency due to increased resource requirements to maintain independent structures for each goal. In contrast, the contextual solution where Systembolaget tried to integrate both goals in one organization through a higher order solution (Michael Beer et al., 2011; Poole & Van de Ven, 1989), performance across efficiency, effectiveness, and efficacy increased, but at the cost of increasing organizational complexity and managerial effort to sustain such performance (e.g. need for integration mechanism, employee education and involvement, forums for dialogue to resolve tensions between goals).

Read across these solutions, the Systembolaget case suggests that the challenge of purpose implementation lies not only in accommodating multiple commitments, but in choosing between trade-offs in how they are to be accommodated organizationally. The three design solutions Systembolaget employed came with different trade-offs in terms of efficiency, effectiveness, efficacy, and managerial effort, and no single solution appears inherently superior across all dimensions. Rather, the findings suggest that the choice among them depends on how the organization prioritizes between competing performance dimensions and its managerial capability to handle the complexity required to sustain them.

At the same time, the case seems to indicate that more integrative solutions, such as higher-order contextual solutions, may offer greater potential for simultaneously advancing multiple goals when the ambition is not only to accommodate competing commitments, but to renew how they are pursued in practice. In the Systembolaget case, more integrative solutions appear to expand what becomes achievable across multiple goals, including creating conditions for a shift from a control-oriented to a more service-oriented logic for pursuing both goals simultaneously with higher performance across all three performance dimensions of efficiency, efficacy, effectiveness. However, they do so at the cost of greater complexity in the form of coordination demands, managerial attention, and organizational effort.

The complexity dimension in the Systembolaget case seem to be influenced not only from the presence of multiple goals, but from the fact that the organization's two core purpose-commitments are partially contradictory: it strives to both generate revenue from alcohol sales and to reduce the consumption and societal harm associated with alcohol. Viewed in this way, the complexity dimension of the performance–complexity trade-off might depend on both the number of commitments involved, and on how compatible they are in practice. When multiple

goals are highly central yet only partly compatible, organizations are likely to face greater coordination demands and a stronger need for integrative arrangements that keep competing criteria simultaneously salient in decision-making (Besharov & Smith, 2014). In the Systembolaget case, this was visible in the organization's use of forums for dialogue and related integrative mechanisms to keep tensions between retail and public health considerations salient in ongoing decision-making when integrating the two goals in one structure using a contextual solution.

Taken together, the findings further suggest that the performance–complexity trade-off is not a static condition, but one that shifts as organizations expand the ambitions embedded in purpose and experiment with different ways of organizing around competing commitments (from control-oriented to service oriented in Systembolaget). What matters, then, is not only whether multiple commitments are present, but how organizations repeatedly configure and reconfigure the arrangements through which those commitments are made workable. Seen in this light, purpose implementation appears less as a one-time act of alignment and embedding, and more as an ongoing and adaptive design process in which organizations continually adjust coordination mechanisms as tensions, performance demands, and value commitments evolve over time.

The contribution of Paper 1 is to show how purpose becomes organizationally workable through different design solutions, each associated with distinct performance–complexity trade-offs, and how those design choices shape the scope and character of renewal by enabling some ways of pursuing multiple commitments while constraining others. Yet the Systembolaget case also suggests that how commitments are organized internally may shape broader shifts in strategic logic, such as the move from a control-oriented to a more service-oriented way of pursuing purpose. Paper 2 builds on this insight by examining how purpose is translated not only into organizational arrangements, but also into changes in the business model and the logic through which value is created, delivered, and captured.

#### *Reinforcing and renewing: two purpose-driven BMI patterns*

To explore how purpose translates into renewal beyond internal coordination, Paper 2 shifts attention from organizational design to the business model level. Building on the broader purpose literature's emphasis on purpose as a potential driver of change and renewal, the paper indicates that purpose can be mobilized through two distinct patterns of business model innovation: reinforcing and renewing. In reinforcing patterns, purpose remains closely aligned with existing assumptions about value creation, delivery, and capture, supporting more modular

changes (Foss & Saebi, 2017) within a largely stable activity system. This was visible, in firms such as MC-C, FSC-A, REC-A, and FWC-A, where purpose motivated substantial adjustments in specific elements of the business model, such as sourcing, sustainable production, digital channels, product development, and customer engagement, while the broader architecture of the business model, and its idea for value creation, capture and delivery remained intact. The reinforcing pattern resonates with business model scholarship emphasizing coherence, scalability, and the value of relatively stable activity-system architectures (Demil & Lecocq, 2010; Teece, 2010).

Renewing patterns, by contrast, were evident when organizations used purpose to question existing assumptions about what counts as value, for whom value should be created, and how trade-offs should be resolved. The renewing pattern was particularly visible in cases such as ELC-A, MC-A, and FSC-B, where purpose was linked to coordinated changes across offerings, delivery arrangements, partner relationships, metrics, and market segments caused by rethinking and renewing of the firms logic for value creation. In these cases, purpose became a basis for broader architectural reconfiguration (Foss & Saebi, 2017; Zott & Amit, 2010; Zott et al., 2011) across interdependent elements of the business model. The reinforcing–renewing distinction thus adds nuance to the purpose literature by showing that purpose may either reinforce an existing business model or support its renewal, depending on how far it reorients the organization’s logic for how value is created.

The performance–complexity trade-off identified in Paper 1 provides some insight into how reinforcing and renewing patterns of BMI differ in their feasibility and organizational demands. Reinforcing patterns likely require less extensive coordination if they fit more easily within the existing activity system. Renewing patterns, by contrast, likely require broader integrative efforts because architectural reconfiguration across interdependent elements in the business model places greater demands on coordination and governance. This suggests that the scope of purpose-driven BMI (e.g. the degree to which it becomes reinforcing or renewing) is not only a matter of strategic ambitions to reshape the logics of value creation, delivery, and capture, but also the ability of the organizational design to support more or less complex forms of coordination.

Read across the two papers, compatibility (Besharov & Smith, 2014) could offer a useful lens for understanding the complexity in supporting multiple goals. In Paper 1, the complexity dimension of the performance–complexity trade-off appeared to depend not only on the number of commitments involved, but also on how compatible they were in practice. A similar logic helps explain the patterns identified in Paper 2. When purpose-related commitments remain

relatively compatible with the firm's existing organizational arrangements and business model logic, purpose might be more easily translated into reinforcing patterns through modular changes. When those commitments are less compatible with existing assumptions about value creation, delivery, and capture, purpose likely creates stronger pressure for broader architectural reconfiguration, making strategic renewal more strongly implicated. At the same time, the findings from the two papers indicate that purpose implementation does not necessarily require that multiple commitments are fully blended into one unified organizational logic. Rather, organizations may accommodate them by embedding different commitments more strongly in different organizational domains, such as specific business model elements. In this sense, the findings also resonate with selective coupling (Pache & Santos, 2013), where organizations combine intact elements associated with different logics in order to organize for complexity more selectively, rather than trying to resolve all tensions through a fully integrated design.

This perspective would also suggest that compatibility may differ across levels: commitments that appear compatible in the formal purpose statement or at the level of broader strategic intent may prove less compatible when translated into concrete organizational arrangements or into the business model logic through which value is created, delivered, and captured. Seen in this way, the thesis suggests that corporate purpose becomes consequential for strategic renewal not simply by articulating ambition or providing direction, but by how it is translated into organizational structures and processes that expand what the firm is able to pursue. At the same time, those changes also increase the complexity of sustaining multiple commitments in practice. The contribution of the thesis is therefore not to show that purpose leads to one superior form of organizing or business model innovation, but to show how different translations of purpose are associated with different scopes of change and different integration and complexity demands. Purpose may reinforce an existing business model through substantial but modular innovation, or it may support broader strategic renewal when it reorients the firm's value logic and the architectural arrangements needed to sustain it.

In sum, Table 2 show how the thesis fulfills its aim of exploring how corporate purpose becomes consequential for strategic renewal through its translation into both organizational design and business model change, with different translations associated with different scopes of renewal and different complexity demands on the organization. While the thesis clarifies how purpose translation into organizational design and business model changes influence renewal, it says less about how purpose ambitions themselves evolve over time, how organizations move between reinforcing and renewing patterns, and how actors shape these shifts in practice. The findings in paper 1 and 2 do indicate that there is an evolutionary dynamic

at play: Systembolaget raised its ambitions over time, and transitioned between three different organizational solutions in pursuit of its purpose. Similarly, the FWC-A case from paper two indicate that reinforcing, modular innovation in sustainable supply chain management accumulated over time, leading to questions about if other business model logics for value creation, in this case data services on sustainable supply chain management, could achieve higher performance towards the purpose. These limitations will be explored in the next section of this licentiate thesis covering next steps and future research directions towards a more dynamic and systems-oriented understanding of purpose-driven strategic renewal

<b>Study</b>	<b>Analytical focus</b>	<b>Key finding</b>	<b>Implication for renewal</b>
Paper 1	Organizational design and purpose implementation	Purpose becomes workable through different design solutions for handling multiple commitments, each associated with distinct implications for performance across goals. No design solution is inherently superior; different solutions involve trade-offs between performance and complexity.	More integrative solutions may create greater capacity for renewal by enabling multiple commitments to be pursued simultaneously at higher performance, but they also demand greater managerial effort, coordination, and organizational capability for handling complexity.
Paper 2	Business model level and purpose-driven business model innovation	Purpose-driven business model innovation is mobilized through two distinct patters: reinforcing and renewing. Reinforcing patterns remain with the existing value logic and support more modular changes, while renewing patterns reorient value logic and drive more architectural changes.	Reinforcing patterns can involve substantial innovation and adaptation, but they tend to remain within the existing business model logic. Renewing patterns have stronger implications for strategic renewal, but also seem generally more demanding to sustain because they require coordination across interdependent elements of the business model.
Cross-paper synthesis	Translation of purpose across levels	Purpose becomes consequential through how it is translated both into organizational arrangements for sustaining multiple commitments and into business model changes that shape value logic.	Strategic renewal is more strongly implicated when purpose is translated in ways that not only accommodate multiple goals internally, but also allow the goals to reorient the business models value logics. At the same time, broader renewal potential tends to come with greater coordination demands and managerial effort.

*Table 2: Summary of paper contributions to understanding of purpose-driven strategic renewal (own creation)*

***Suggestions for next steps and future research: Towards a systems thinking of purpose-driven strategic renewal***

This licentiate thesis contributes to an emerging understanding of corporate purpose as a driver of strategic renewal by investigating how purpose-related commitments become consequential for renewal through organizational designs and business models. Paper 1 explores how multiple purpose-induced goals generates a performance–complexity trade-off and how different design solutions, including contextual approaches, shape the organization’s capacity to manage competing demands between purpose commitments and its influence on renewal outcomes. Paper 2 complements this by examining how purpose may be translated into business model innovation through different patterns of reinforcing and renewing the underlying value logics of the business model. Taken together, the two papers begin to outline how the scope and character of strategic renewal is shaped by the mechanisms through which multiple purpose-induced goals are translated in practice.

At the same time, the insights from the two papers in this licentiate thesis also shed light on other dimensions that seem important for understanding purpose-driven strategic renewal more fully. For example, the studies in the thesis examine how organizations translate purpose commitments once they have become decision-relevant, but it also points to the importance of understanding how the goals themselves evolve over time, and how such developments come to shape organizational renewal. In Paper 1, the ambitions behind the goals set by the purpose of Systembolaget evolve and increase, yet the evolutionary process through which the ambitions were renewed, articulated, legitimized, and reweighted remains only partially visible. Similarly, FWC-A, one of the case companies in paper 2 shows tendencies of reinforcing, modular innovation accumulating into a shift towards renewing the logics for value creation, delivery, and capture, suggesting that organizations may shift between these patterns over time. Consequently, understanding how reinforcing efforts can accumulate into renewal, or, conversely, how renewing efforts later turn into renewed coherence through reinforcing efforts, appears as an important aspect of understanding purpose-driven strategic renewal more fully. Taken together, the thesis points to a need for complementing the structural layers explored in this licentiate thesis with a more evolution-sensitive perspective on corporate purpose to understand how purpose may shape strategic renewal over time.

As a way forward, I suggest further exploration of purpose-driven renewal from a broader systems perspective. From a systems perspective, purpose-driven innovation and renewal would not be the results of purpose commitments or structural arrangements in isolation, but

by the interaction in which key elements of an organization co-evolve as an interdependent system rather than change in isolation (Galbraith, 2014). To elaborate, purpose may, through strategic intent, shape organizational design and business model choices, but those choices can also feed back into how strategic intent (and by extensions purpose) is interpreted, prioritized, and enacted over time (Pregmark, 2019). For example, previous research show that innovation and renewal in organizations can have multiple origins: change or innovation may be sparked by initiatives at multiple hierarchical levels (Bartunek et al., 2011) by peripheral experimentation that later scales (Regnér, 2003), or come from other distributed sources within organizational systems (Berggren et al., 2020), raising questions about how initiatives for renewal originating from different corners of the organization might influence, or be influenced by, corporate purpose, and how they co-evolve over time.

In summary, business models and organizational design constitutes one piece of the puzzle in understanding purpose-driven strategic renewal. It offers insights into how purpose-driven renewal can be organized for. At the same time, the findings in this thesis point to the importance of also attending to how purpose ambitions evolve and shift over time through ongoing action and learning. Drawing on the structural insights developed in this thesis, the next phase of this doctoral project moves toward a more systems-oriented perspective on purpose-driven strategic renewal. More specifically, it will focus on two research directions intended to build upon the insights developed in this thesis to help understand how purpose-driven renewal unfolds through the interplay between structures, actors, and the evolution of purpose ambitions. The next sections expand upon the two directions.

#### *Direction 1: How purpose evolves over time*

This thesis examines how the structural layers for enacting a purpose can generate a performance–complexity trade-off and how different organizational designs shape the efforts needed to reconcile competing commitments, yet it also indicates an important temporal perspective: purpose ambitions and goals does not necessarily seem to stay fixed over time. Therefore, one direction I am pursuing for furthering the understanding of purpose-driven strategic renewal is to explore how purpose evolves over time: how purpose ambitions and commitments change over time, and how those changes interact with organizational arrangements and business models.

In the Systembolaget case from paper 1, the renewal emerged not simply from a one-time implementation of a “strong purpose,” but during shift between structural and contextual design solution to raise the ambition for what could be achieve performance wise towards the purpose.

These changes in organizational designs, introduced new tensions which required rethinking governance and coordination to be resolved as strategies were renewed. More specifically, the core of Systembolaget's purpose to "profitably sell alcohol while simultaneously reducing the societal harm caused by consumption," remained largely the same as they moved through three different logics for how it could be achieved, first by focusing mainly on restricting access to alcohol, followed by structurally separating the two goals into separate organizations focusing on sales and public health respectively, and later contextually integrating the goals by shifting from an "limiting access" logic to a service-centered logic of helping customers buy "less but better" (e.g. fewer, but more expensive) products to drive revenue while simultaneously reducing consumption.

Another example hinting at the importance of an evolutionary view on purpose can be found in the FWC-A case from paper 2, where purpose initially created a substantive, but specific, focus on developing and manufacturing very sustainable outdoor footwear. However, over time those efforts seem to have aggregated and evolved into new capabilities (in this case data management and supply chain transparency in footwear manufacturing), raising questions for the company about if diversifying into completely new value offerings such as data services, or other activities, would align with and increase performance towards their purpose.

These observations suggest that treating purpose less as a static input and more as an evolving set of ambitions including goals, commitments, and interpretations that can be reinterpreted, reweighted, and re-operationalized over time (e.g. moving between contextual or structural solutions or shifting between reinforcing and renewing business model innovation), holds important insights for understanding purpose-driven renewal.

As already hinted at above, one way to explore an evolutionary perspective on purpose could be to explore the reinforcing and renewing BMI from paper 2 as dynamic trajectories rather than static categories. Paper 2 distinguisher two patterns by which purpose can be translated into business model innovation, but does not explain how organizations move between these patterns over time: how reinforcing initiatives accumulate into renewing reconfiguration, how renewing efforts may eventually transition into reinforcing activities; or how shifts in external expectations, internal learning, or performance pressures trigger changes in what purpose is taken to mean in practice.

To explore this evolutionary perspective more directly, I am already engaged in an ongoing case study of FWC-A, examining how the company's purpose has evolved over time from its founding to its current consideration of new value offerings. The study focuses on how purpose has been interpreted, enacted, and reformulated across different phases of the

company's development, and on how earlier purpose-driven efforts appear to have generated capabilities and strategic questions that were not present at the outset. Of particular interest is how commitments initially tied to the development and manufacturing of sustainable outdoor footwear may, over time, open up for broader reflections on what kinds of value offerings best advance the company's purpose. The study draws on interviews, internal documents, and reports, enabling an analysis of how purpose content, organizational arrangements, and strategic opportunities co-evolved over time. As such, this ongoing work already begins to extend the findings of this licentiate thesis toward a more explicitly temporal and processual understanding of purpose-driven strategic renewal.

In summary, an evolutionary perspective on purpose could further the understanding of purpose-driven strategic renewal by clarifying the feedback loops between purpose content (what the organization treats as non-negotiable goals, and how ambitions, goals and commitments are prioritized and changed over time) and the structural layers (organizational design arrangements and business model activity systems) explored in this thesis. An evolutionary perspective would help clarify how purpose content and structure feed back into each other. However, these feedback loops do not operate on their own. They are enacted, reinforced, and sometimes redirected through the day-to-day work of organizational actors who interpret what purpose requires, frame opportunities, and mobilize support for change. The next direction therefore turns to agency

*Direction 2: Agency in purpose-driven renewal.*

A more dynamic view of purpose also points to agency, the people who make purpose do something, as an important research direction for the next phase of this project. While purpose statements may articulate aspirations, the cases in this thesis provide several examples for how organization use different mechanisms for helping actors interpret and translate purpose aspirations into consequential choices, including prioritizing among potential opportunities, negotiating trade-offs, mobilizing resources, and redesigning interdependencies in ways that support new initiatives in becoming scalable.

Across the cases in the two papers of this thesis, purpose-driven renewal often involved dialogue with employees throughout the organization. FWC-A, ELC-A, and Systembolaget all used different forums, such as workshops, town halls, and other arenas, to discuss what purpose should mean in practice, surface tensions, and agree on priorities and trade-offs. These observations suggests that employee involvement may hold importance for translating broadly

articulated purpose ambitions into choices that people can act and coordinate around at the operational level.

The ELC-A and FWC-A cases from paper 2 further points to the importance of agency because actors appear to actively navigate the existing system and use purpose to frame and motivate new opportunities. Organizational actors drew on purpose to make certain ideas feel relevant and worth pursuing, even when they sat outside the firm's immediate core business. In ELC-A, the purpose of serving "all people" was mobilized to frame and justify initiatives such as collaborating with local low-income school districts as well as pursuing high-population, low-income cities in Asia. In FWC-A, purpose-driven work around transparency and data appears to have contributed to considering opportunities like expanding into data-related services, by framing such moves as a way to increase impact towards the purpose of "Catalyzing societal change/.../ for environmental sustainability". These examples highlight how purpose can travel through the organization as a practical resource for opportunity framing by helping actors connect local initiatives to broader renewal and, when needed, build support to coordinate across interdependencies.

Previous research on the roles of actors in organizations could provide a starting point for furthering the understanding for how agency shape purpose-driven strategic renewal. Here, some authors have explored the role of top management in driving successful strategic renewal (Barr et al., 1992; Burgelman & Grove, 2007; Buyl et al., 2011) emphasizing how their contextual insights influence and shape these renewal endeavors (Eggers & Kaplan, 2009; Hurst et al., 1989; Spender & Grinyer, 1995).

Some authors have focused on employees beyond the management teams, finding that frontline employees both actively participate in (Volberda et al., 2001) and advocate entrepreneurial initiatives within organizations (De Clercq et al., 2011) while other authors highlight how middle managers play a crucial role in bridging the gap between high-level strategic plans and operational realities by adapting, interpreting, and even reshaping strategies formulated by top management (Floyd & Lane, 2000; Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992, 1994; Wooldridge & Floyd, 1990; Wooldridge et al., 2008) and how insights originating from the organizational periphery can prompt management teams to reassess and adapt strategic decisions, enhancing their comprehensions of how change affect the organization Floyd and Lane (2000).

More recently, researchers have integrated the "top-down" and "bottom-up" perspectives (Fernández-Mesa et al., 2023; Heyden et al., 2017; Letierce et al., 2023; Volberda & Lewin, 2003), raising questions about how to coordinate or balance renewal initiatives originating from

different parts of the organization or who should be responsible for initiating, enabling, coordinating and managing the initiatives (Heyden et al., 2017; Tarakci et al., 2023).

Drawing on the previous research above, agency would complement the organizational design and business model perspective emphasized in this thesis by highlighting the people who make purpose do something in practice. Organizational designs and business models shape activities and what is possible, but innovation and renewal require organizational actors to interpret and translate purpose aspirations into consequential choices, including prioritizing among opportunities, negotiating trade-offs, mobilizing resources, while navigating or reshaping organizational structures in ways that make new initiatives scalable. Such translation work becomes particularly salient when purpose is broadly stated and introduces multiple goals or commitments, which on the one hand might increase the need to justify why a given opportunity is “purpose-consistent,” which trade-offs are acceptable, and what success should look like when performance is evaluated against more than one criterion.

Here, I have begun to examine these questions through interviews and theme-based workshops with practitioners focused on how purpose is mobilized, interpreted, and translated in practice. This ongoing study is helping me build on the structural insights uncovered in this thesis by examining more closely the people who make purpose do something in organizations, particularly leaders outside the top management team who drive innovation and renewal initiatives closer to where purpose is enacted in practice. As such, the aim of the study is a closer examination of how actors mobilize purpose to frame and legitimize actions, make initiatives and opportunities appear strategically relevant, broaden what counts as acceptable investment, and justify experimentation that might otherwise be difficult to defend. It also makes it possible to explore how purpose is mobilized differently across organizational levels and stakeholders, and how these different forms of agency become coordinated across interdependencies and organizational arrangements. In this sense, the study opens a way of examining more closely how actors shape, enable, and at times redirect renewal processes in practice, extending the findings of this thesis toward a more actor-centered and systems-oriented understanding of purpose-driven strategic renewal. Taken together, the structural, evolutionary, and agency perspectives suggest a systems view of purpose-driven strategic renewal.

Figure 2 provides a conceptual illustration of such a systems view where the structural layers examined in this thesis (organizational design arrangements and business model activity systems) shape what is feasible, where coordination burdens arise, and how trade-offs become amplified through interdependencies. The evolutionary perspective adds the time dimension by highlighting that purpose content (ambitions, goals, and commitments) can be reinterpreted and

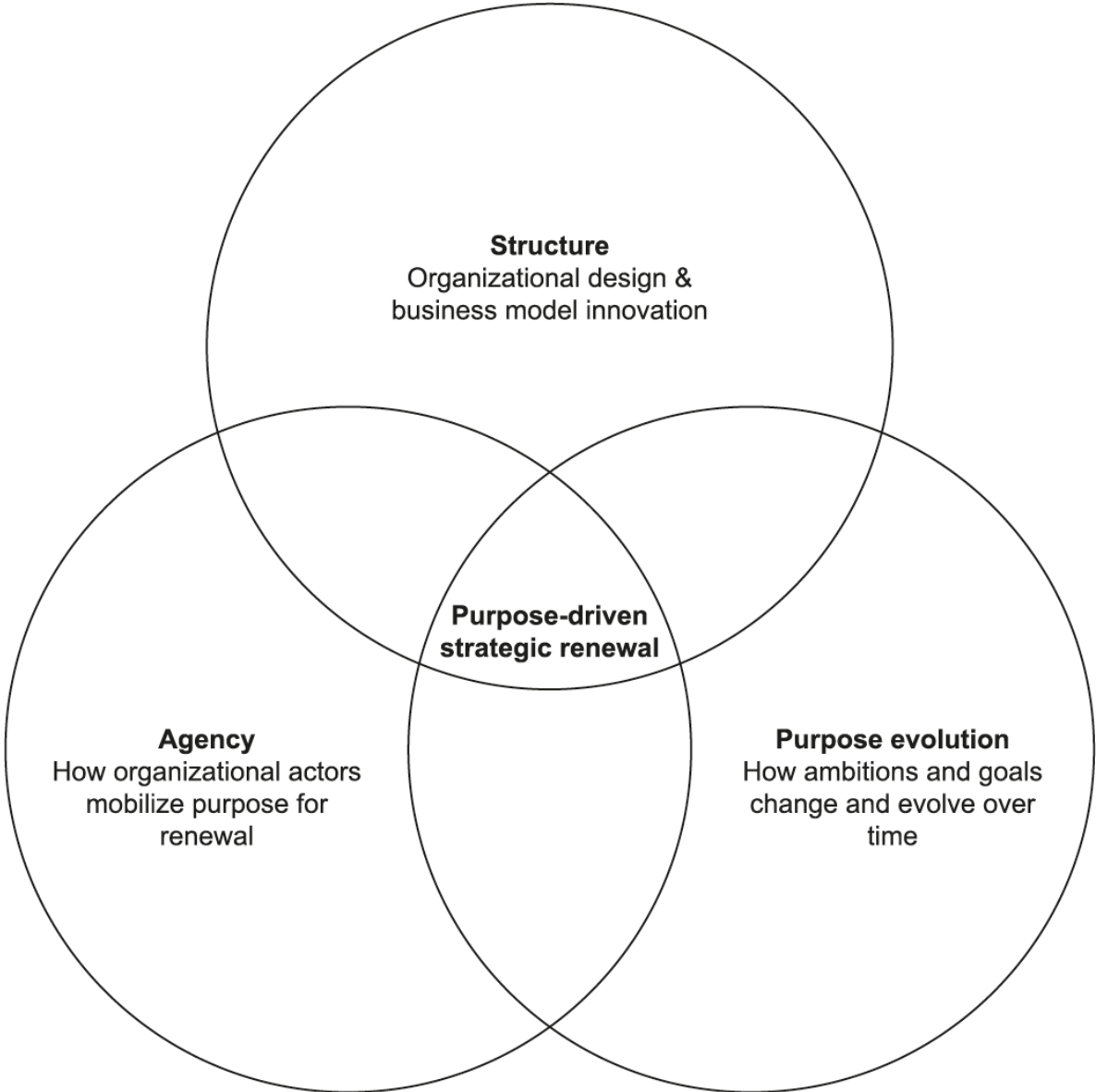


Figure 1: Conceptual overview of the reserach agenda going forward. (source: own creation)

reprioritized, and that shifts in purpose content and structure can feed back into each other over time. The agency perspective complements both by showing how these dynamics are enacted in practice through actors who mobilize purpose to frame and legitimize opportunities, negotiate what becomes acceptable, and translate purpose into priorities and coordinated renewal.

### *Other future research directions*

In addition to the two directions outlined above, the thesis reveals several other directions for future research. One direction concerns the centrality and compatibility of different purpose commitments and how variation in such compatibility may shape the complexity, feasibility, and scope of renewal processes. While this thesis draws on the notions of centrality and compatibility to interpret variation in purpose implementation, it does not fully apply Besharov and Smith's (2014) framework or examine their four ideal types of logic multiplicity. A fuller analysis of how purpose-related aims vary across levels and over time is therefore left for future research. For example, the thesis indicates that, in purpose-driven organizations and compatibility across goals may differ across strategic intent, organizational design, and business models and still lead to renewal. Furthermore, the thesis has mainly analyzed compatibility between goals, assuming that if a goal is a part of the purpose of an organization, it is also highly central to the core of the business (See, e.g., George et al., 2023). It is likely worthwhile to challenge and further investigate if this assumption holds true in practice, especially during renewal. Future research could therefore examine when and how differences in centrality and compatibility of purpose goals at different organizational levels influence and shape purpose-driven renewal.

A second direction is examining how the performance–complexity trade-off of purpose implementation varies across industries, organizational settings, and external environments, including the conditions under which more complex and integrative approaches are viable and beneficial.

A third avenue for future research concerns the organizational scaffolding of purpose-driven renewal. The findings suggest that demanding forms of purpose implementation do not rely on formal structures alone, but also on integrative mechanisms such as governance forums, dialogue practices, and other arrangements that enable continuous surfacing and recalibration as tensions and ambitions evolve. Future research could therefore examine what kinds of scaffolding mechanisms allow organizations to sustain complex purpose implementation over time, and how such mechanisms shape the feasibility and scope of strategic renewal.

## CONCLUSION

This licentiate thesis represents the first steppingstone in my research journey toward understanding purpose-driven strategic renewal. Through the two studies, I have begun to understand how corporate purpose shapes strategic renewal through its translation into organizational design and business model innovation, and how these processes involve tensions and trade-offs between performance, complexity, and renewal. The licentiate thesis should therefore be read not as a final account, but as an exploratory effort to understand some of the structural conditions through which purpose-driven strategic renewal unfolds, while also providing a basis for more informed inquiry going forward.

While the thesis has helped me crystallize some of the structural aspects of purpose-driven strategic renewal, strategic renewal cannot be understood through structural arrangements alone. The findings in this thesis point to the importance of dynamics, agency, and the practical work through which actors respond when organizational ambitions rise, and the complexity of the new aspirations exceed what the existing organizational structures can handle. In both the studies appended in this thesis, the translation of purpose into strategic renewal involved more than the introduction of new structural arrangements. In both studies, organizations relied on ongoing interpretive work (such as forums for dialogue, town-halls, individual development, and other activities to support sensemaking) to help actors negotiate competing demands, handle emerging tensions and complexity, and find ways of making purpose actionable in concrete situations. The use of such activities seem to be especially salient when renewing the logic for how value should be created. Consequently, I believe that the next step towards understanding purpose-driven strategic renewal is contingent on also understanding the actors inside the organization, and the agency through which the structures of the organization are interpreted, navigated, adapted, and at times compensated for in practice. My interest in complementing the findings in this thesis with the evolutionary and agency perspectives is further reinforced by my previous professional experience, where I frequently witnessed how highly motivated employees often went beyond their formal roles and responsibilities to compensate when the ambition and complexity of the task at hand outgrew what the organizational structures were capable of supporting. Through the lens developed in this thesis, it raises intriguing questions about what role organizational actors play in buffering or bridging misalignment between the ambitions of the purpose and the capabilities of the organizational structures to support the complexity needed to achieve strategic renewal when purpose (ambitions) evolves over time.

The next step towards my doctoral dissertation therefore continues to build on the structural insights developed here with one ongoing study diving into how corporate purpose evolves over time, and how the evolution shapes organizational renewal. A second ongoing study zeroes in on organizational actors and how they interpret, enact, compensate, and at times reshape purpose in practice as organizations navigate the tensions and demands of purpose-driven strategic renewal.

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