# Nordic Journal of Library and Information Studies

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# Editorial

To argue that we live in times of turmoil almost seems banal. The corona pandemic, which has not only caused severe illness and deaths but also pervasive changes in everyday practices (Eriksson-Backa & Tana, 2021), and the Russian invasion of Ukraine can be pinpointed as extreme nodal points in our time, at least in the part of the world that we in the guest editorial board inhibit. However, these events co-occur with a political and social situation in which populist and radical right-wing parties in several European countries have increased their influence. Simultaneously, research shows a decreasing trust in democracy, not least among young people (Mounk, 2018). Public libraries' role in promoting democracy is formulated in library acts and policy documents in Europe and North America and studies promote libraries as trust-building institutions (e.g. Johnston, 2019; Vårheim, 2014). However, libraries' democratic role and function in society is not pregiven. The political turmoil impacts the perception and management of libraries since they are publicly financed and governed. This situation calls for attention, at least in some countries. In Sweden for example, there is a heated debate on the role of the public library and the relationship between political governing and the professionalism of librarians. Recently, Anders Frenander, professor emeritus in Library and Information Science, in an essay requested research on the municipal political governing of libraries due to this discussion (Frenander, 2022, p. 45). This accentuate that the public library and library professionals constitute objects of study in themselves, but they also serve as empirical examples through which political tendencies in society can be explored and investigated. When a pandemic catches the world and a war is fought in Europe, the societal role of the public library thus comes forth as urgent, at the same time as it is put into spotlight and debate. The theme of this issue, *Public libraries in times of political turmoil*, focuses on these questions and explores them from different angles, making room for a multitude of perspectives to enable a deepened discussion and to further our knowledge.

The three scientific articles of this thematic issue contribute with both empirical and theoretical perspectives on public libraries in times of political turmoil. Two of the articles report studies conducted in Sweden, in both cases focusing on how the Swedish democratic model as expressed in national cultural and library politics increasingly is being challenged by radical right-wing politics, in particular on the local political level of the municipality – the political level responsible for providing public library services. In the paper *Plastic policies: contemporary opportunities and challenges in public libraries' enactment of cultural policy* by Johanna Rivano Eckerdal and Hanna Carlsson, public libraries are explored as situated at the junction of different levels of cultural policy. In several examples, policy documents and the democratic ideals they carry are found to be internalised by

library staff, and importantly, findings illustrate how democracy – understood as an ongoing process and a plurality – is enacted in local practices at public libraries in Sweden. The title of the paper alludes to how the policy documents, despite appearing to be fixed and solid, in practice are plastic and mouldable and consequently provide room for enacting the promotion of democracy.

The second article is by Hanna Carlsson, Fredrik Hanell and Joacim Hansson. It is written in Swedish and titled *"Det känns som att jag bara sitter och väntar på att det ska explodera" - politisk påverkan på de kommunala folkbibliotekens verksamhet i sex sydsvenska regioner* ['It feels like I'm just sitting and waiting for it to explode' – political pressure on municipal public library services in six South-Swedish regions]. The article emanates from an ongoing research project and reports on a timely study of public libraries' experiences of political pressure. Even though illegitimate pressure of this kind is uncommon, the study shows that it does occasionally occur, in particular in connection to issues related to cultural diversity. A prevalent strategy for dealing with political pressure among the libraries participating in the study is to develop and employ policy documents, but there are also disquieting examples of libraries sometimes avoiding certain activities.

In the third scientific article, written in Danish, *Bibliotekarer som aktivister i Danmark og Sverige: Kompromis og konflikt* [Librarians as activists in Denmark and Sweden: Compromise and conflict], Anne-Sofie Elbrønd Nissen and Nanna Kann-Rasmussen explore differences between Denmark and Sweden when it comes to conflicts related to how librarians at public libraries may act as, or be perceived as acting as, activists. Against the background of the different cultural political climates of the two countries, where cultural policy generally attracts low interest in Denmark while the area in Sweden is the scene of ideological conflict between left-wing and right-wing political actors and between national and local political levels, the paper shows how activism is considered a suitable description for certain library work in Denmark while the notion of activism is considered more problematic in the Swedish library sector.

In addition to the three scientific articles this issue presents three book reviews of recently defended doctoral theses, all of which connect to the broad theme of reading, literacies, and search skills. The review section begins by Olof Sundin's review of Anna-Maija Multas *New health information literacies. A nexus analytical study*, followed by Gunilla Widén's review of *Development of online research skills among lower secondary school students: The roles of formal instruction and personal factors* by Tuulikki Alamettälä. Lastly, Terje Colbjørnsen reviews Elisa Tattersall Wallin's dissertation *Sound reading. Exploring and conceptualising audiobook practices among young adults*.

As guest editors of this thematic issue, we are grateful to all authors who submitted manuscripts, to the reviewers who contributed with detailed reviews and constructive comments, and to Dr. Lisa Börjesson, editor-in-chief of *Nordic Journal of Library and Information Studies*, for vital assistance during the process of developing this issue.

**Lisa Engström, Fredrik Hanell & Ola Pilerot**
Guest editors

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# Plastic policies:

## Contemporary opportunities and challenges in public libraries' enactment of cultural policy

**Abstract**

*This study explores how democracy—often understood as an abstract concept or a location-transcending, intangible phenomenon—is produced, shaped and continuously reshaped through local library practices in certain places and under local conditions at a specific point in time. To better understand potential conflicts and/or tensions that might arise between the three levels of Swedish library policy at a time when values enshrined in the Swedish democratic model are being challenged by radical right-wing parties, we explored the potential influence on and enactment of policy documents in public libraries day-to-day practice. We did so by conducting an ethnographic study of five municipalities in Sweden's Skåne County. Our study was theoretically informed by practice theory and the view of democracy as an ongoing process and a plurality. Our findings showed that policy documents are often internalized by library staff. The influence of the democratic mission established in the* Swedish Library Act*, in particular, was evident in the way library staff carried out their work. One tension created by the "democratic paradox" (i.e., the requirement that a democracy allow opponents of the democratic form of rule a voice) was evident in library policy enactments, inasmuch as librarians adopted different stances towards the neutrality norm. Thus, in practice, what appear to be rigid, inflexible policy documents are in fact plastic and mouldable. This plasticity allows room for librarians to legitimately promote democracy. Although public librarians spend much time engaging with various policy documents, they consider it time well spent and value the result. Public libraries appear as locations where different levels of cultural policy interconnect. In their role as public institutions, they also have a mission to fulfil in honoring the democratic paradox via a praxis that includes support for democracy as one of their goals.*

**Keywords**: Public library; Cultural policy document; Migration; Ethnographic study; Democracy

## Introduction

This article discusses a study concerning how three levels of policy documents (the *national Library Act*, the regional cultural policy, and the local library plan) translate from theory to practice in the context of Swedish public libraries. The rationale behind the study is that more knowledge is needed about the role of policy documents in day-to-day library practice. In acknowledgement of the public library's position as an important institution in the democratic form of rule, we first investigated if, and then how, policy statements (here viewed as an expression and enactment of this form of rule) are present in library performance. We argue that this knowledge is important in the present age of political turbulence, when liberal democracy and its institutions, including libraries, are being called into question.

The *Swedish Library Act* embraces a representative, liberal understanding of democracy, in keeping with the way democracy is commonly construed in the Western world today. However, support for the liberal democratic form of rule is currently declining, especially among younger generations in the Western world (Foa & Mounk, 2017). Instead, democracy is gradually eroding in a third wave of authocratization (Lührmann & Lindberg, 2019), and illiberal and radical right-wing movements are now gaining ground (Lindberg & Steenekamp, 2017; Elgenius & Rydgren, 2019). The narrow definition of "the people" that such movements tend to adopt, which often has nationalistic and ethnic overtones (Lindsköld, 2015; Elgenius & Rydgren, 2019), and their critique of multiculture and globalization are in stark conflict with the Swedish library system's mission to reach everyone (SFS 2013:801, §2).

Another pillar of radical right-wing rhetoric is critique of the establishment, targeting institutions that together constitute the representative form of rule: government, political elections, the judicial system, and the free press (Elgenius & Rydgren, 2019). Cultural institutions, including libraries, are not spared from criticism. The understanding of democracy as open to manifold voices is contrary to this ethno-nationalist critical view of plurality. Indeed, ethno-nationalism's narrow definition of the populace and its critique of plurality have thrust public libraries into the centre of present ideological conflicts concerning culture institutions and cultural policy.

*A note on the Swedish public library system*

Sweden has three levels of government: a national level and a two-tier local government system consisting of 21 counties (*regioner*) and 290 municipalities (*kommuner*). The first *Swedish Library Act* (1996) mandated that all municipalities should have a public library. Consequently, public libraries now exist all over Sweden. However, just how public libraries are organized and operate is open to interpretation at the municipal level. The new *Swedish Library Act* (SFS 2013:801) that came into force in 2014 includes the following preamble:

> Aims, §2
> The libraries in the public library system shall promote the development of a democratic society by contributing to the transfer of knowledge and the free formation of opinions. The libraries in the public library system shall promote the status of literature and an interest in learning, information, education, and research as well as other cultural activities. Library activities shall be available to everyone.[1]

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1 Translation by the Swedish Library Association. *Promoting the development of a democratic society The Swedish Library Act according to the legislator*. https://www.culturaydeporte.gob.es/dam/jcr:4f1456a3-b670-4b32-bcda-bd50247a9086/swedish%20library%20act.pdf

The *Library Act* 's focus on collaboration prompted the Swedish government in 2015 to instruct the National Library of Sweden to draft a strategy for promoting the development of, and cooperation within, the Swedish public library system (Government Offices of Sweden, 2016). This strategy was intended to provide solutions to current problems, one of which was a lack of clear roles and responsibilities among the system's national, regional and municipal stakeholders. Ultimately, a proposed national library strategy was presented to the government in 2019 (Fichtelius, Persson & Enarsson, 2019). It should be noted that our empirical material was produced before the proposed library strategy was presented.

Concerning public libraries, the lack of clarity regarding roles and responsibilities within the system is perhaps most obvious in connection with the various policy documents issued by different levels of government that govern their operations. Apart from establishing an overarching operational framework, the *Swedish Library Act* requires that plans be drafted at the regional level that suggest public libraries' priorities and direction. It is also mandatory for each municipality to have its own library plan. The local-level policy documents required by the new *Library Act* should not be viewed as simply a result of the increased focus on bureaucracy caused by New Public Management trends in the public sector. In fact, they represent a change welcomed by the library sector (Hedemark & Börjesson, 2014, p. 103). Nevertheless, the change requires public library staff to orient themselves in relation to policy documents issued on three different levels, in both strategic and everyday public library practices. The study presented here investigates how libraries manage the interrelationships between these levels of governance, giving special consideration to how tensions and conflicts might arise between them.

We are especially interested in determining the effect that the ascendancy of radical right-wing parties in Swedish politics might have on coordinating the three levels of policy in public library practice and on potential conflicts and tensions arising among these levels. According to Gabriella Elgenius and Jens Rydgren (2019, p. 584) radical right-wing parties are united by putting "emphasis on ethno-nationalism rooted in myths about a shared history and cultural homogeneity. Their programs are directed towards strengthening the nation by making it more ethnically homogeneous and – for most radical right-wing parties and movements – by returning to traditional values. The radical right also tends to accuse elites of putting internationalism and their own self-interests ahead of the nation and the people". In Sweden's 2014 general election, the radical right-wing party *Sverigedemokraterna* (SD) (cf. Elgenius & Rydgren, 2018; LIndsköld 2015), acquired the balance of power in both the Swedish Parliament and several local government councils. The party then further strengthened its position in the 2018 general election. SD's ideology calls into question values found in the Swedish democratic model that were previously taken for granted, such as free and equal access to information, literature and culture for all. SD's increased political influence has thus sparked ideological conflicts concerning cultural institutions and cultural policy; an area of Swedish politics that was formerly characterized by broad consensus. Libraries are not excluded from this ideological debate. One manifestation of these shifting political winds is seen in a bill submitted to the Swedish Parliament in which four SD parliamentarians suggested changes to the Library Act that would mean it only applied to Swedish citizens and would no longer prioritize languages other than Swedish and national minority languages (Emilsson et al., 2019).

At the local level, the outcome of the two recent general elections and SD's increased influence continue to cause political turbulence in many municipalities. SD's questioning of free and equal access to information, literature and culture, as has also been expressed in local government councils, directly contradicts the *Library Act's* preamble, which establishes a democratic mission for all libraries

**Rivano Eckerdal and Carlsson:** *Plastic policies*

within the Swedish library system. Conflicts and tensions may thus potentially arise for public library staff who strive to realize this mission, but who are also closely linked, formally and informally, to local government and administration. One example of just such a development was seen in Sölvesborg Municipality, which is governed by a political coalition with SD in power. In 2019, the municipal library manager was forced to resign her position due to her refusal to adapt the public library's activities to match the local political agenda. She argued that her foremost obligation was to follow the national *Library Act* (Clemens, 2019). In light of this example, SD's political agenda arguably presents new challenges in harmonizing the three levels of policy regulating Sweden's public library system as well as for staff in attempting to navigate among the directives. It is therefore of interest to examine how public library staff experience these challenges and the role cultural policy documents play in public library practice at this time.

**Purpose, aim, and objective**

The purpose of this study is to explore how democracy—often understood as an abstract concept or a location-transcending, intangible phenomenon—is produced, shaped, and continuously reshaped through local library practices in certain places and under local conditions at a specific point in time. Our aim is to gain research-based insight into potential conflicts and/or tensions between the three levels of Swedish public library policy at a time when values enshrined in the Swedish democratic model are being challenged by radical right-wing movements and parties. To achieve this aim, our objective is to explore if, and then how, policy documents influence day-to-day public library practice, including how instantiations of democracy within them are interpreted and enacted. In pursuing our objective, we conducted an ethnographic study in five municipalities in Sweden's Skåne County. This study was undertaken during 2016 and 2017, and a report on its findings has been published in Swedish. Preliminary findings from the study were also presented at the Nordic Conference on Cultural Policy Research conference, this paper being a further development of that presentation and the aforementioned Swedish report.

**Previous Research**

Our study is primarily based on research from two fields within library and information studies (LIS): 1) *public libraries, cultural policy, and policy documents* and 2) *public libraries and democracy*. By studying cultural policy in public library contexts, this study helps tie these fields more closely together. In the sections to follow, we present both important findings and arguments in support of how this study relates and contributes to these research fields.

*Public libraries, cultural policy, and policy documents*

How policy documents are understood and enacted at Swedish public libraries is a relatively unexplored topic within LIS. One important exception is Åse Hedemark's and Lisa Börjesson's (2014) study of the design, use, and evaluation of municipal library plans. Their study shows that the requirement to implement a library plan can be interpreted differently, leading to varied practical consequences in different parts of a library's administration (Hedemark & Börjesson, 2014, p. 110). They emphasize the importance of further investigating interrelationships and possible tensions between library plans and other documents governing public libraries.

The influence of local conditions on strategy formulation for public library activities and the performance of these strategies has been studied by Hanna Carlsson (2013). In her study of Malmö City Library's development from 2009 to 2011, she shows how the public library's strategies and visions are incorporated into Malmö City's transformation efforts and place marketing strategies. She focuses on the activities of one public library, in this case a large city library in an expansive region.

Like the aforementioned study by Hedemark and Börjesson, Carlsson combines document studies with a case study of a single public library. Our study further builds on their results. By conducting our study in five municipalities within one region, we explore how local circumstances influence the interpretation and application of policy documents in not one but five public libraries.

Jenny Johannisson (2012) highlighted the division of responsibility and tensions between different cultural policy levels in relation to public libraries in her analysis and discussion of the Cultural Collaboration Model's implementation and its implications for public library management and operations in Sweden. Johannisson views the Cultural Collaboration Model's introduction as a "structural change that could potentially have major consequences for the division of responsibility between different political levels as well as public libraries' practical activities" (Johannisson, 2012: 293. *Translation ours*.). Our study was conducted while this model was being implemented, and therefore provides knowledge about the impact this structural change on the activities and practices of five public libraries in one geographic region.

Regional administrative body Region Skåne applied the Cultural Collaboration Model early on. In 2012, its cultural affairs administration, Kultur Skåne, initiated a project financed by the Swedish Arts Council supporting public libraries' development into culture centres (Kulturnämnden, 2012). A study analyzing this initiative found that the goals set for three local projects were consistent with the desired direction indicated in the regional project, which was also supported nationally (Rivano Eckerdal, 2013). Furthermore, the importance of the project form in realizing development was also revealed, since it enables staff to translate policy document formulations into concrete, joint measures applied in day-to-day library practices.

A second study investigated how experiences from the projects had a lasting impact on public libraries' activities (Rivano Eckerdal, 2016). Its analysis revealed that library employees viewed change differently depending on their position in the organization. It became clear that libraries are influenced by current political agendas, with librarians implementing policy on behalf of municipal politicians. For a library's staff to perform their work in the best possible way, they need both support and an explicit mission from politicians.

In light of this fact, one aspect considered in our study is the relationship between public libraries, public library managers, and local politicians. These relationships have been explored from varying perspectives and with different emphases in previous studies. (See, for example, Pors, 2005; Gazo, 2011; Sveum & Tveter, 2012; Evjen, 2015; Michnik, 2014, 2015.) Topics discussed in these studies include local politicians' lack of knowledge about public libraries (Gazo, 2011; Sveum & Tveter, 2012) and public library managers' and local politicians' attitudes towards and understanding of the public library (Pors, 2005; Michnik, 2014, 2015). Among other findings, Katarina Michnik (2015) points out that library plans can increase the attention that politicians pay to public libraries; a relationship we investigate further in this study.

*Public libraries and democracy*
Previous research points to cultural policy as being connected with the welfare model, which emphasizes such values as *bildung*, equality, and democracy (Blomgren & Johannisson, 2016; Johannisson, 2006). Research also shows that both the welfare model itself and its values are being increasingly challenged (Svensson & Tomson, 2016), particularly by radical right-wing parties (Lindsköld, 2015). LIS research has shed light on the democratic role of public libraries (Buschman, 2018), which includes ongoing support for popular education and equal access to information and

culture. The latter aspect is often conceptualized in terms of the public library's role in supporting (media and) information literacy (Sundin & Rivano Eckerdal, 2014) and in bridging the digital divide by providing opportunities for digital participation (Thompson, 2014; Carlsson, 2012, 2013; Olsson Dahlqvist, 2019).

Another line of research focuses on the democratic potential of the public library as a meeting place in the local community (e.g. Fisher et al., 2007; Hvenegaard Rasmussen, Jochumsen & Skot-Hansen, 2011; Rivano Eckerdal, 2013), particularly during periods of migration (Audunsson, Essmat & Aabø, 2011; Johnston, 2019) and digitizing (Audunson, 2005; Olsson Dahlquist, 2019). The arguments presented in many meeting-place studies are based on views of democracy that emphasize the accessibility of shared public spaces in fostering a thriving civil society and, thereby, also a vital democracy. Notable, here, is the deliberative norm, (applied in LIS by Buschman, 2003, and others), and varying opinions on the importance of social capital for sustaining a strong democracy (applied in LIS by Vårheim, 2007, 2009, 2011; Gong, Japzon & Chen, 2008; Vårheim, Steinmo & Ide, 2008; Fergusson, 2012; Johnson, 2010, 2012; Johnston & Audunson, 2019, and others). These theoretical conceptions of democracy share a common notion of conversation, debate, and meetings between people of diverse backgrounds as prerequisites for civic participation and a functioning democracy (Johnston & Audunson, 2019; Johnston 2016, 2019). They also criticize the lack of venues and opportunities for such public conversation in contemporary society. Research focusing on the public library as a meeting place takes into consideration the low barriers to access and openness of public library space, proposing the institution as a stakeholder that can actively contribute to the revitalization of democratic society (Stigendal, 2008; Audunson, 2005; Audunson, Essmat & Aabø, 2011; Engström, 2019).

Despite continuous emphasis on the democratic role of libraries, as is also expressed in international policies such as the Public Library Maniphesto (IFLA/UNESCO, 1994), and the Alexandria Proclamation (IFLA/UNESCO, 2006), these studies remain rare examples of attempts to theorize and define democracy within LIS. Most build on theories that follow the liberal consensus model and on the associated neutrality norm that characterizes libraries and librarianship (c.f. Lewis, 2008; Hansson, 2010, 2019); a model challenged by this study. The lack of empirical research exploring how democracy is actually realized in public libraries has also been highlighted (Audunson et al., 2019). Our study seeks to expand the theoretical landscape and fill empirical gaps. It thereby contributes to this evolving research field, focusing on how the interplay between policies and practices in public libraries relates to democracy as an ongoing process, and considering theories of democracy as a plurality (Olsson Dahlquist, 2019; Rivano Eckerdal, 2017, 2018). Public libraries are here understood to be among those social institutions critical to upholding democracy (Hansson, 2010; cf. Mouffe, 2013). Our study contributes research-based knowledge regarding if and how public libraries might offer spaces that help foster resistance to threats to liberal representative rule such as those we observe today.

Whereas the research mentioned thus far focuses on the democratic potential of public libraries in contemporary society, several other studies investigate how this potential might be challenged by New Public Management's implementation (Buschman, 2003, 2007; Kann-Christensen & Andersen, 2009) or downplayed when cultural policy (Johannisson, 2006, 2012) and public library strategies are conflated with economic growth objectives in urban development plans and place marketing schemes (Carlsson, 2013; cf. Hvenegaard Rasmussen, Jochumsen & Skot-Hansen, 2011). These changes challenge both traditional conceptions of public libraries and the professional role of librarians requiring them to develop new skills, approaches, and expertise in performing today's public library

**Rivano Eckerdal and Carlsson:** *Plastic policies*

(Carlsson, 2013; Rivano Eckerdal, 2013, 2016; Schwarz, 2016). Past studies have scrutinized these changes and suggested ways to resist neoliberal tendencies in library development (*The Progressive Librarian*; Gregory & Higgins, 2013; Hansson, 2019; Whitworth, 2014; Quinn & Bates, 2017; Rivano Eckerdal, 2017, 2018).

**Methodology**
Central to this study's design is our elucidation of how the intangible and the tangible and the location-transcending and the situated are simultaneously present when democracy is enacted. We argue that to achieve a more coherent, and yet still multifaceted understanding, of how democracy is done at public libraries, equal priority must be given to these different dimensions, which should also be considered as a whole rather than as separate entities (Mol, 2002, p. 55).

We view democracy as an ongoing process and a plurality (Mouffe, 2013) that can be done in multiple ways—that is to say, as *democracies* (Mol, 2002). This conception requires a theoretical approach that captures democracy as being part of, and as being continuously done in, practice. Practice theory is therefore particularly useful in this investigation. We have chosen practice as our unit of analysis, and practice theory as the study's theoretical lens. We will focus on public library practice, here conceptualized as a complex of elements including activities, routines, artefacts, and knowledge (cf. Reckwitz, 2002; Cox, 2012) that can be assembled and enacted (Mol, 2002) in different ways according to local conditions. Annemarie Mol develops praxiography in order to understand how knowledge—in her case, knowledge of a disease—is produced:

> This, then, may be a way out of the dichotomy between the knowing subject and the objects-that-are-known: to spread the activity of knowing widely. To spread it out over tables, knives, records, microscopes, buildings, and other things or habits in which it is embedded. Instead of talking about subjects knowing objects we may then, as a next step, come to talk about enacting reality in practice. (Mol 2002, p. 50)

Cultural policy documents lie at the heart of this study: we explore the different meanings stakeholders ascribe to them, their textual content, how this content is translated into activities and material arrangements in public library practice (Rivano Eckerdal, 2012, 2018), and how something is always either added or lost in this process (cf. Callon, 1986; Carlsson, 2013). With regard to analysis, we will approach these policy documents as texts, as material elements that form part of library practice, and as actors in their own right that shape, and are themselves reshaped, in this same practice (cf. Barad, 2003; Latour, 2005). This sociomaterial approach, which recognizes the performativity of texts and further emphasizes the attention paid to materiality in practice theory, ensures an analytical focus on policy documents that enables us to fulfil the study's purpose.

Our practice theoretical approach leads us to focus on how policies are enacted in practices, and assumes a view of policies as both produced and reproduced. We thereby gain an understanding of how cultural policy travels between—and also translates between—documents and practices. In other words, how policy statements are as much produced in everyday and local practices as they are enacted.

As a means of typifying the three policy levels relevant to Swedish public libraries, we included the most important regulatory document produced by each level at the given time. At the national level, this was the *Library Act* (SFS 2013:801). At the regional level, it was the Regional Culture Plan for

Region Skåne, 2016- 2019 (Region Skåne), and at the local level, the library plan for each municipality included in the study (i.e., Lund, Osby, Skurup, Tomelilla, and Örkelljunga).

Methodologically, we have adopted an ethnographic approach, which is particularly suitable for a study that focuses on capturing location-transcending phenomena through mundane activities. This approach also makes a methodological contribution to policy research. In order to pinpoint how varying local conditions might influence public library practices, we conducted fieldwork in five municipalities in Sweden's Skåne County. These were chosen based on demographic and geographic differences as well as differing political representations so as to produce empirical material that recognizes possible variations in each public library's circumstances. Region Skåne consists of 33 municipalities organized into clusters of adjacent municipalities that cooperate regarding public libraries and other matters. The following criteria guided our selection: 1) The municipality should not be a major regional municipality, 2) it should not recently have attracted much media attention, 3) its cultural budget should be about average for Region Skåne, and 4) several of the clusters should be included in the final selection. Furthermore, based on the assumption that such a situation would necessitate frequent communication between the stakeholders, the municipality should be governed by a minority following the outcome of the 2014 public election. The selected municipalities are therefore Lund, Osby, Skurup, Tomelilla and Örkelljunga.

The included municipalities are presented along with some basic statistical data regarding their public libraries. Table 1 summarizes the situation when the study commenced in 2016. The statistics available at the time portrayed the situation as it was in 2014. Later statistics from 2017 are also included, depicting the situation during the second year of the study. We wish to emphasize that we are interested in how the policy documents are understood and enacted, which makes the situation at the time of the interview or observation that which is most relevant for our purposes. The fact that some information is now out of date is therefore unproblematic, since it still contributes to the overall picture.

Table 1
The Included Municipalities

| Basic descriptors | Year | Lund | Osby | Skurup | Tomelilla | Örkelljunga |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Population | 2014 | 115,968 | 12,828 | 15,167 | 12,914 | 9,733 |
| | 2017 | 121,274 | 13,182 | 15,642 | 13,416 | 10,047 |
| Tax index | 2014 | 102 | 85 | 89 | 83 | 83 |
| Staffed library service-points | 2014 | 11 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 3 |
| | 2017 | 10 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 3 |
| Annual work units | 2014 | 67.5 | 5.8 | 7.4 | 6.4 | 5.2 |
| | 2017 | 83 | 6.8 | 7.8 | 7.2 | 5.1 |
| Media expenses per inhabitant (SEK) | 2014 | 53.4 | 46 | 55 | 54.6 | 56 |
| | 2017 | 53.4 | 40.4 | 52.2 | 50.1 | 55.2* |
| Operational expenses per inhabitant (SEK) | 2014 | 578 | 468.3 | 422.1 | 415.3 | 650.5 |
| | 2017 | 570.6 | 414.3 | 481.5 | 507.3 | 471.8 |

* Figure for 2016.

*Note.*
The population data were taken from Statistics Sweden's statistical database and reflect the situation as at December 31 2014 and December 31, 2017, respectively. By way of comparison Sweden had 9,747,000 residents on December 31 2014, and 1,288,908 of these resided in Skåne County. As of December 31, 2017, Sweden had 10,120,242 inhabitants, and 1,344, 689 of these resided in Skåne County (http://www.statistikdatabasen.scb.se).

Information about tax indices was collected from each municipality's website.  This figure refers to the tax base in each municipality in 2014, and is relative to the situation for Sweden as a whole, as assigned an index score of 100.

Information concerning libraries was collected from the National Library of Sweden's statistical reports available online (http://bibstat.kb.se/reports).

"Staffed library service points" refers to physical places with an address that offers library services ("Bemannade serviceställen" in Swedish).
"Annual work units" refers to the equivalent of one person working full time during one year. For example, two people working half time during one year equals 1 annual work unit ("Årsarbetskraft" in Swedish).

Ethnography allows for the combining of multiple methods. Hence, this study was conducted in two stages during 2016 and 2017. In 2016, we interviewed the library manager, the local politician, and the local official responsible for library-related matters in each municipality. They were identified as important stakeholders in public library issues at the municipal level. We first e-mailed the library manager. If they agreed to participate, we then contacted the local politician and the local official. They were informed both about the study and that their interview would be recorded. Each interviewee signed a consent form prior to their interview.

The interviews were semi-structured, with a question scheme developed separately for each category. We posed a battery of questions about three specific policy documents: the *Library Act*, the regional culture plan (specifically the section concerning regional libraries) and the municipal library plan. All were published and accessible online. The interviews were recorded and transcribed, with some editing to make them more intelligible. Each interviewee was given the opportunity to read their interview transcript.

In 2017, we performed observations that focused on the library and its staff to learn about their everyday work and their experiences working with the policy documents. We wanted to know if, and also how, directives in these documents became part of the library's day-to-day practices. Before beginning these observations, we attempted to inform the staff about the study in person at a staff meeting, for example. Where this proved impractical, however, we e-mailed the staff beforehand to ensure that they were informed of our presence. We also announced our presence during the observations using a sign, and invited visitors to come and talk with us.

Over the course of 4–5 days, we visited the main library in all five municipalities and one branch library each in two municipalities (Tomelilla and Skurup). We used shadowing, an observation method developed by Barbara Czarniawska in which the researcher follows people at work, including engaging in conversations with them (Czarniawska, 2007). While library staff are also important stakeholders in our context, we chose not to conduct regular interviews with them. This is because the topic was deemed potentially sensitive in their case, since, to some extent, the policy documents and their implementation have a bearing on library staff's relationship with management. Instead, we chose to pursue informal conversations with staff that were not recorded. Fieldnotes were taken during our observations. These focused on what did (or did not) happen in the library as well as on what came up in conversations with staff concerning policy documents' role in their work.

We also used "seating sweeps"; a kind of structured observation method previously used in studying public libraries (Given & Leckie, 2003; Ögland, 2014). This method involves developing a protocol to determine how a specific place is used by noting activities occurring there and who and what are involved. The method is useful, since it identifies variations in use. In our case, it proved useful as a means of coordinating our observations, since we were two researchers conducting the study but only one was present at each library. We used these sweeps as a means to create on-the-spot accounts that were more structured than our fieldnotes. As such, the sweep protocols complement our fieldnotes and we have analyzed the two together.

Our empirical material includes transcriptions of 15 interviews, policy documents (three per municipality), and field notes and seating sweep protocols from our ethnographic study of libraries in the five municipalities. We primarily used the policy documents to provide background and context for our interviews and observations. The policy documents were not analyzed separately.

Due to research ethical considerations, we have chosen to refer to the municipalities by name only rarely. We have sought to create opportunities for candid conversations, and cannot risk our report disadvantaging the study's participants in any way. Similarly, no personal names are used in the report. The interviewees were informed that it might be possible to identify them, since their professional roles are specified. We consider this justifiable since they hold leadership positions. We refer to ourselves as "we" in our paper, except when using extracts from a fieldnote concerning an observation that only one of us conducted. In such cases, we use the pronoun "I", whereas we use "we" in analyzing that observation.

One noteworthy feature of the interviews conducted during 2016 was the importance the majority of interviewees ascribed to the *Library Act's* preamble and to its democratic mission, in particular. This finding made our understanding of democracy as a potentially conflictual process (Mouffe 2013) an important starting point for our analysis. In her theory of agonistic pluralism, Chantal Mouffe considers the social as being invariably shaped by conflicts without rational solution, that is, by antagonism. Democracy is therefore understood as a process that requires solving conflicts by nonviolent means. Democratic institutions play an important role as places where antagonism is transformed into agonism; a struggle between adversaries (Mouffe, 2005, p. 20). Accordingly, we understand democracy as doings and practices that are shaped by the local to varying degrees. Consequently, during 2017 we paid close attention to if and how the democratic mission was enacted in the libraries' daily operations. Given our sociomaterial perspective on practices, we included activities, routines, artifacts, and knowledge expressed in doings or sayings. The material we collected includes stakeholders' experiences and views as expressed during interviews and conversations, and our descriptions of activities in the libraries and the libraries' designs.

Our analysis of the material was continuous, with the findings from 2016 shaping our focus during 2017. We performed a content analysis of our interview transcripts and fieldnotes, first identifying and then thematizing the answers to the research questions. The central theoretical tools used in analyzing our empirical material are *enactments* (Mol, 2002): how the policy becomes part of library practice; *intra-actions* (Barad, 2003): how the strategic document becomes materialized in specific material practices at certain points; and *translations* (Callon, 1986): how something is always either added or lost in this process. In the second stage of our analysis, we used these analytical tools as sensitizing concepts (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2014, p. 14).

**Results**

We will now move on to present the results of our analysis. First, we describe how the policy documents became part of the library practice in a way that often was not apparent to the library staff themselves, what we call internalized enactments of the policy documents. Second, we depict ways in which the democratic mission of the *Library Act* was translated in the library practice. Our results show that these translations varied in relation to the notion of neutrality. Third, we zoom in on instances when the strategic documents became materialized in specific socio-material practices, intra-actions, that called for the library staff to balance and prioritize between different target groups.

*Internalized enactments of policy documents*

During our fieldwork we held conversations with library staff and observed different activities and the library space. When asked about the policy documents, staff often replied that these played no role in their everyday work. One example of this occurred in a conversation during a staff lunch break. Six people were present, including me, the observer:

*One of the librarians note that many of the* Library Act*'s requirements are obvious, including that libraries must be open to everyone and free of charge. We begin discussing differences between the former and current acts, and after a while I mention that the current preamble states that the library system must promote democracy by allowing people to form free opinions. Many present react to this statement, claiming that this idea is a given. One person reflects that the idea has become more or less ingrained since their childhood years, while another person remarks that perhaps the idea isn't quite as incontrovertible anymore as it used to be. (fieldnote)*

This fieldnote exemplifies how goals and priorities included in policy documents may shape librarians' actions even when their influence is not consciously understood by those involved, they have become internalized. One librarian at another library commented that they did not take the policy documents into consideration at all. Later in the conversation, however, this same librarian stressed the importance of access—a key concept found in policy documents at all tree levels (fieldnote). Many library staff explained that they keep the policy documents in the back of their minds, considering them when deciding the number and content of library activities, for example, and in their efforts to reach minority groups. One librarian explained that they do not consider the policy documents in their everyday work practice, but that these anyway inform how they understand their task.

*They become an important consideration in certain situations when library staff carry out planning and suchlike, but s/he doesn't think about the policy documents during their everyday work. It's more a question of how to understand their professional role. I comment that sometimes it's difficult to know which comes first—the chicken or the egg. I ask if s/he feels that the policy documents are useful and s/he answers that they are, but says that what they propose is obvious in many ways; it's nothing remarkable, nothing in them make her/him do anything differently. Nevertheless, they are helpful to refer to when engaging with politicians and others who don't know much about libraries. In that instance, they are useful. (fieldnote)*

The above fieldnote exemplifies how staff bear the policy documents' principles in mind when performing their work. The principles in the policies are experienced as part of how the library practice is enacted (Mol, 2002). This is particularly true of the requirements concerning prioritized target groups, free access for all, and that libraries must be a meeting place free of charge.

This internalization of policy document principles was observed at all the libraries. Still, it should be noted that interpretations of and attitudes towards the policy documents vary, as is often acknowledged by library staff. One librarian commented that while they personally consider the policy documents to be crucial, this view is not shared by everyone. One library manager noted that librarians view goals, visions, change, and professionalism differently depending on whether they are veterans of the profession or have only recently finished their training (fieldnote). Nonetheless, while some librarians included in the study began their careers before the first *Swedish Library Act* was even in place, they still agree with its spirit. In their case, policy document wording and the understanding of the professional role have been shaped reciprocally.

We observed different activities that reinforced librarians' involvement with the policy documents. One example being staff participating in preparing and writing their library plan, drafting action plans based on this library plan, and providing input and feedback concerning the regional culture plan. We interpret this active, collaborative participation in producing policy documents as promoting library staff's familiarity with the material. The discussions that arose in the group were supportive in nature and provided a guide for the librarians in performing their work. They also created opportunities to

connect statements in the policy documents with the library's activities and everyday operations. Although time-consuming, such discussions are a worthwhile investment in the long run, since they bolster confidence in how to enact the library. Engaging in conversations about different ways to apply policy documents in everyday library practice is thus an important facet of the profession. Such conversations are a means of becoming aware of, and being reminded of, what librarianship is about. In keeping with our view of democracy as an unending process (Mouffe, 2013:132), we view such conversations as enactments of democracy. Together, library staff figure out how to connect their daily practices to policy document stipulations, and how these can be framed as fulfilling policy objectives or not.

*The importance of the* Library Act*, and its translations into practice*
One of our study's primary results concerns the importance assigned to the *Library* Act and to its explicit focus on democracy. Its importance is chiefly stressed by librarians and library managers, who also believe that the *Act*'s preamble can be used to legitimize public library activities and priorities. These findings are unsurprising, since previous research has concluded that a democratic pathos is a driving force and motivator for many librarians (Ohlsson Dahlquist, 2019). The library room is also one of the few open social spaces where people are not required to consume (Given & Leckie, 2002) and where they can remain without needing to identify themselves or state their business. Such ideals likely contributed to the decision made by public library staff in many Swedish municipalities to assume key roles in receiving the unusually large number of refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants who entered Sweden in the fall of 2015. In a situation where other municipal institutions were unable to fully meet the needs of this human influx, the public library assumed a leading position in welcoming these people to Swedish society. The events of 2015 and those that followed revealed the unique role that public libraries and their staff plays in times of dismounted welfare. In fact, the special position adopted by public libraries and librarians' actions in connection with this situation have been framed as sanctuary practices (Lundberg & Ohlsson Dahlquist, 2018).

Their responses can also be viewed as translations into practice of the democratic mission established in the *Library Act*. The *Library* Act stipulates in the Preamble that libraries within the public library system shall promote the development of a democratic society. However, how that is enacted in practice is not clarified. Therefore, the responses are examples of such realisations—translations (Callon, 1986)—of the strategic formulations into library practice. Our findings also make it clear that the events of 2015 reveal how this democratic mission can be translated into practice in different ways according to local circumstances. For example, one library chose to actively position itself as a welcomer for the newly arrived by emphasizing the public library's role as an inclusive institution. Its staff mounted stickers reading "Refugees Welcome" by its entrance. The library also made a language café part of its regular program. This event was held weekly in the main library room, amongst the bookshelves, and was also included in the local library plan.

Another library provided a very successful service called "information cafés", to help new arrivals navigate different aspects of Swedish society. These weekly meetings attracted so many attendees that they eventually disrupted other library activities. Following negotiations with local politicians, services for the newly arrived were relocated outside the library. The library manager argued that these meetings were a joint undertaking with the municipality—one supported by the library but for which it did not bear sole responsibility. Ultimately, the library created a new position with a focus on the information café meetings and linguistic diversity in general.

A service similar to the information café was provided at the largest public library included in our study. However, in this case it was offered via a project in which professionals worked as volunteers providing guidance about different aspects of Swedish society (for example) to people newly arrived in Sweden. This was a weekly service supported by one librarian who ensured that volunteers had access to a private space suitable for any sensitive discussions that might unfold, such as those regarding legal or financial difficulties, and to secure computers, connected to printers.

Another finding concerning how the *Library Act*'s democratic mission can be translated in different ways pertains to how librarians we met relate differently to the neutrality norm, which inevitably impacts how they perform their work. One example is how librarians react to racist or discriminatory opinions expressed inside the library. We met librarians who argued that they could not remain silent in such situations and still uphold the library's democratic mission. They viewed discussion or dialog with persons expressing antidemocratic opinions as falling within the scope of their professional role. We also met librarians who believe that fulfilling their professional role in keeping libraries open to all requires them to remain neutral, and often silent, in such instances. These divergent views cannot be attributed to circumstances in their respective communities. Rather, applying the typology of library neutrality developed by Nora Schmidt (2020, p. 274-284), the outcome of these translations is instead influenced by whether neutrality is conceptualized as an active, passive, or "culturally humble" concept. The latter implies a role for the library to, as a response to a recognized imbalance of power relations, work "towards balancing the observed bias, hence furthering social justice" (Schmidt, 2020, p. 282).

In agreement with Mouffe's theory on democracy, we recognize the plurality that characterizes contemporary society. There are many groups with diverse interests that clash from time to time, leading to potential conflicts. According to Mouffe, democratic institutions are crucial in offering spaces where such conflicts can be handled (Mouffe, 2013, p. xii). Conflict management is a process wherein people change their view about one another from "enemies" to "adversaries" (Mouffe, 2005, p. 20). From their founding, public libraries have been governed politically and held up as key institutions in supporting and promoting democracy and the welfare society (Buschman, 2003; Hansson, 2010). How democracy is enacted in public library practice is therefore highly relevant. We are unable to gauge whether the emphasis placed on the public library's democratic mission has increased in the five municipalities included in our study. What we do know is that the democratic mission took on a key role from the fall of 2015.

*Balancing and prioritizing*
One recurring observation concerned the lack of space in the libraries under study regardless of their size. It is clear that libraries were originally designed with a greater focus on their collections than is necessary today. Overall, neither is the *Library Act*'s prioritization of children and youths mirrored in libraries' design, which focuses largely on accommodating adults. These imbalances between libraries' physical space and the activities taking place within bring the needs of target user groups into conflict. Consequently, in planning daily activities, librarians are forced to decide who will have access to the different rooms. For example, they must decide whether to prioritize activities for children or the newly arrived, or for people in need of IT support or children. Librarians also need to make ad hoc judgements concerning people's needs and access to the physical space. They make such decisions in their everyday practice, with policy documents serving as important guides in such matters. While library staff do apply policy document guidelines in these instances, when they are required to strike a balance between different missions and prioritized groups, decisions about access become difficult to make. We view these decisions as intra-actions between prioritized groups. Intra-

action – not interaction – is a neo-logism coined by Karen Barad to point out how the world is in a constant becoming, and how various material phenomena meet in the process of constant becoming. In each meeting – or intra-action – a specific relation is enacted, a relation that creates or stabilizes a border that potentially can be changed in another intra-action (Barad, 2003, p. 815-817). Viewing the decisions made by library staff as enactments in relation to intra-actions in the library practice then is helpful as it demonstrates that they are temporary decisions that may be contested in future intra-actions, and also how fundamentally important they are by being part of the constant becoming or the library.

During one of our visits, a librarian was threatened by a non-student user who was denied access to a computer reserved for students. Another kind of collision is enacted in incidents such as this, where users threaten library staff, demanding access to specific library resources. We view such incidents as an intra-action related to the principle that library activities must be available to all. That is to say, the fact that library activities must be open to all does not mean that libraries must accommodate each individual user's wishes. Users may use library resources as long as they do not do so at another user's expense. Since library resources are limited, decisions about access are under constant review. Still, in balancing different users' needs, one comes to realize that the concept of a "library for all" does not require libraries to meet all the needs of any one user.

The above example also relates to access to digital resources and tools. Several libraries offer specific activities to support learning about digital tools and resources. This is one means to satisfy Paragraph 7 of the *Library Act*, which requires public libraries to work to increase knowledge about information technology. Formal measures aside, users' need for support in connection with digital resources comes to the fore in many other situations where they interact with library staff:

*I ask how they handle users' requests for help—do they impose a time limit? The answer is no, as long as there is no line. They can, however, ask to get back to the user if they have a colleague with some specific expertise that is needed, for example. I clarify by saying that I was referring to cases where the user need help with their internet bank account or mobile ID app or suchlike. One of the librarians says that they simply use common sense. Another librarian explains that they have decided not to provide help. While this is not official policy, an internal decision has been made. They do not help users to buy tickets or any such thing, since such activities involve assuming a certain responsibility, which they are not authorized to do. I ask if it ever happens that they stand behind a user [and provide guidance], for example, if the user doesn't understand some instructions, and they reply that they do so. They can explain instructions in simpler language. The first librarian mentions that the Swedish Migration Agency has a digital service where you can respond to decisions. The librarian can then explain what it says, for example that the Agency requires a photocopy of the person's passport, but they will not do it themselves only tell what is needed. I remark that boundaries that were once easy to draw are blurred nowadays due to the many different digital services available. For example, librarians must not give users advice concerning medical, legal, or financial matters. These days, however, such matters are intertwined with questions about how to use specific digital tools. The other librarian comments that they feel sorry for those that don't have anyone else to ask; it's a question of accessibility. (fieldnote)*

Digitalizing only increases the need for physical libraries and their in-person services. Libraries are crucial means of allowing everyone access to vital digital resources, without which civic participation becomes impossible. A number of important institutions' physical customer service offices, including those of the Swedish postal service, Sweden's Social Insurance Agency, and the Swedish Migration

Agency, as well as central societal functions such as banks, have been dismantled. These public service institutions are no longer physically present in every municipality, offering digital access to their services instead. Consequently, public libraries have become venues from which to access these institutions for those without digital tools and an internet connection. The *Library Act* stipulates that public libraries shall increase knowledge about information technology "for the attainment of knowledge, learning, and participation in cultural life" (SFS 2013:801, §7). To support and develop users' skills related to information technology is therefore part of public libraries mission. However, the recent shift has precipitated new questions among library users concerning the need to learn to use digital services and tools and the content of these services: How do I start my smartphone? How do I pay my bills using my online banking services? How do I reply to messages from the Swedish Migration Agency? The increased demand for support in using these technological tools forces library staff to balance and prioritize in their library practice.

**Discussion**
We will now return to the objective and aim of our study and discuss them in relation to our results, followed by a discussion of the challenges to democracy, understood as a process fraught with conflicts, that radical right-wing movements and parties are posing.

*Policy documents' influence on public libraries' day-to-day practice*
When Swedish library managers were asked about their views on library plans in a previous study, they answered that these are of only limited importance (Hansson & Aldstedt, 2017, p. 46). Our assumptions about policy documents being a burden to library staff were unfounded, as was confirmed by our observations. The people we met with were primarily positive towards the policy documents. Though it might be that staff with negative views chose not to engage with us during our observations, we did speak with many library staff members, and most of them consider both the documents and their involvement with them as being positive overall. In our interviews, in which we explicitly asked about both advantages and disadvantages, policy documents were usually considered beneficial. While much time is spent engaging with them, the effort is considered worthwhile and the result is valued. The work of drafting, evaluating, and updating library plans also plays a role in internal communication processes. Since staff are obliged to follow the plan, effort is required on their part to implement policy document directives in library practice. At some libraries we studied, all library staff are involved in drafting action plans that reflect the library plan. This work and the discussions it involves are an effective means of realizing the library plan's visions in library activities.

Our practice theoretical perspective entails a focus on the enactment of the policy documents in library practice; a practice that these documents both contribute to moulding and are themselves moulded by. This perspective provides a means of acquiring knowledge about how cultural policy travels and is translated (Calloun, 1986) from document to practice. Or in other words, how policy documents are both shaped and enacted in local library practice (Mol, 2002). For example, we have observed that library plans can be used to clearly define the limits of a library's duties. In two of the municipalities included in our study such demarcations were made in relation to local schools, since municipal libraries are not responsible for supplementing inadequate school library service unless special arrangements including financing, are in place. This is yet another example of policy documents being used in different ways according to the situation, indicating that their application is adapted and reshaped when enacted in library practice.

As shown in the results section, such adaptation was also evident with regard to the *Library Act*. It became clear from the onset that those we interviewed ascribed great importance to this document

and to its explicit focus on democracy, in particular. Notwithstanding, the library staff we spoke with during our observations often said that they did not apply policy documents in their everyday practice. Despite this, we observed that the democratic mission was manifest in the ways that staff enacted their work, especially in their efforts to provide good resources for children and youths and opportunities for people who have recently arrived in Sweden to engage with information, culture, and literature in Swedish and other languages.

We conducted our study at a time when the current *Library Act* had recently entered into force. Despite its newness, library staff considered the *Act*'s directives to be self-evident. In our analysis, we describe policy documents as having been internalized by many of the librarians we met during our observations. The fact that several of them described policy document guidelines—including those in quite recent documents—as being obvious or like "second nature" reveals how these documents are continuously reshaped – intra-acted (Barad, 2003) – when enacted in library practice.

*Potential conflicts and/or tensions among the three levels of Swedish library policy*
We now wish to address the aim of this paper by discussing any tensions and/or conflicts that may arise at the strategic or everyday levels of library management in the five municipalities due to incongruence among the three policy levels. We began by assuming that following several levels of policy documents must be wearisome for library staff. However, our results show that this situation yields a largely positive income instead.

Although the library managers, in particular, spend much time and effort considering policy documents, they do not view this task as problematic, but rather as an opportunity for progress and development. While their work with policy documents mainly concerns the municipal library plan, they do not describe their obligation to consider and refer to regional and national policy documents as burdensome. Rather, they see it as an advantage in their dealings with politicians and library users, since they can justify library activities by referring to the requirements in these policy documents. In doing so, they show municipal policy's alignment with regional and national directives. Our results show examples of some of the major consequences for library activities that Johannisson (2012) foresaw as a consequence of the implementation of the Cultural Collaboration Model, somewhat surprisingly they turned out to be to a large extent welcomed by library staff.

Our findings also show that public librarians navigate between the national and the local in their work for democracy often with the support of politicians and officials. While library-related issues have been uncontroversial in the five municipalities during the time of our study, in some of these municipalities, general political tensions have been observed at the municipal level. Although these tensions have arisen between individual politicians, they are also manifestations of general political divisions within the municipality. For example, measures supporting new arrivals in Sweden have been challenged, and anything with an international connection is immediately considered controversial. Such problematizing and critique is evident among both politicians and library users. In such situations, library staff have referred to the policy documents arguing that they support such activities. Michnik previously has pointed out that library plans may be a way to increase the attention politicians pay to public libraries (2015). What we found is that the documents that library staff and library managers refer to when they are criticized varies but it is the *Library Act* that is most commonly referred to in defending a library's position. This finding harmonizes with the results of a study conducted in another Swedish region (Pilerot & Hultgren, 2017, p. 33).

**Rivano Eckerdal and Carlsson:** *Plastic policies*

Hence, our analysis shows that being subject to policy documents issued by three different levels of government is not a major problem for the Swedish public libraries included in our study. The tension between different strategic documents governing public libraries that Hedemark and Börjesson have pointed out (2014) did turn up in our study. The tensions we identified arose among library management, politicians, and users—that is to say, horizontally—and not vertically, as we had assumed. And, in fact, having three levels of policy documents has proven advantageous when such tensions arise, since the different levels and various documents involved provide a solid basis for negotiations. But, this solid basis is enacted in different ways depending on the circumstances. Our results thus confirm the importance the local context has for how strategic library documents are performed (Carlsson, 2013) and it does so in as much as five municipalities.

As a consequence, these seemingly rigid, inflexible policy documents appear to be both plastic and mouldable when they are enacted in the day-to-day public library practice. We therefore consider public libraries to be locations where different levels of cultural policy are interconnected. Accordingly, we argue that a contemporary Swedish librarian's skill set includes acting as a translator between different political levels. The principles from policy documents from different levels of government are enacted in the library practice. This can be a more or less strenuous task depending on the circumstances surrounding the library's day-to-day practice. This circumstance elicits questions about how changes influence the expectations placed on professional librarians and the content and organization of their work.

*Challenges to democracy by radical right-wing movements and parties*
The work undertaken by the librarians we encountered is subject to the tension created by a paradox in the democratic form of rule; the principle that a democracy must allow opponents of the democratic form of rule a voice. Through the examples referred to, we have shown that librarians are forced to set limits and priorities in their everyday practice. To satisfy *Library Act* stipulations, they must provide resources and opportunities for library users to form free opinions, which necessitates both impartiality and rejecting censorship. On the other hand, honoring their mission to provide services to all and to promote democracy requires librarians to work to preserve the democratic form of rule (Hirschfeldt, 2017). The very nature of libraries is that they are political (Jaeger & Sarin, 2016), and not neutral (Jaeger et al, 2013). Consequently, the library has a mission to fulfil in its role as an institution where the mentioned democratic paradox is upheld via enactments that have support for democracy as one of their goals. As we have shown, librarians' interpretations of policy documents vary. Thus a running conversation that includes scrutinizing how neutrality is understood is important in realizing libraries' democratic mission in the best possible way. Given our view of democracy as a conflict-prone process these enactments form part of the "doing" of democracy. We wish to stress that we consider this to be a valuable and important role for libraries to fulfil, and that librarians are needed to mediate balance. It is part and parcel of their professional role.

Our results show how public libraries' democratic role is enacted in an era when liberal democracy is under fire (Foa & Mounk 2017) and when radical right-wing movements and parties are causing political turbulence in Sweden and many other Western countries. We have shown how this role is performed on the local, everyday level by focusing on how the democratic mission, as established in the Sweden's *Library Act*, is either supported or impeded by locally situated library plans and everyday practices at Sweden's public libraries.

**Conclusion**

This study contributes knowledge about how the public library—an important social institution cherished by the public and politicians alike (Evjen, 2015)—has a role to play in preparing its users to be citizens (Budd, 2015; Hansson, 2010). Moreover, library staff are in a position to act during times when liberal democratic values are challenged by radical right-wing movements and parties, and when socioeconomic differences between social groups are on the increase. Sweden currently faces a number of challenges related to growing social divides, such as those between urban and rural areas and between long-time and newly arrived residents. Swedish society urgently requires greater knowledge about how to handle these challenges, not only in a formal political sense, but also concerning how various social institutions and their staff should interact with users in their daily operations. By exploring if—and how—public librarians enact the library's democratic mission, we have learned how social institutions can strengthen trust in liberal democracy in a local setting and what obstacles they may encounter.

Our analysis of how democracy, viewed as a process, is enacted in library practice comprises a rare empirical contribution to understanding democratic rule and the role libraries have in it (Audunson et al., 2019). Via our theoretical starting points, we have addressed the two aspects of democracy relevant to this study: how democracy is abstract and location-transcending, yet also concrete and contingent on local conditions. We have gained insight into how the location-transcending democratic mission of public libraries established in different policy documents is translated and enacted in everyday activities at a specific point in time in five Swedish municipalities.

This study contributes research-based knowledge on how staff at Swedish public libraries act to address social challenges in their daily practice. Furthermore, the ethnographic approach adopted provides a rare methodological contribution to policy research. Viewed collectively, we consider our results as revealing different ways that democracy is done in local practices at Swedish public libraries today. The plasticity that occurs when the seemingly fixed and solid policy documents are enacted allows room for librarians' democracy-promoting efforts. Furthermore, as cultural institutions, libraries provide opportunities for negotiations between different levels of cultural policy—an important contribution to society during challenging times. In adopting an agonistic view of democracy (Mouffe, 2013), we question whether it is possible for public libraries to be both neutral and democratic (Jaeger et al., 2013). In our view, favoring democracy can never be construed as a neutral stance. On the contrary, we consider democracy to be highly normative, and the idea that it is possible to support democracy in a neutral manner is therefore untenable.

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# "Det känns som att jag bara sitter och väntar på att det ska explodera"- politisk påverkan på de kommunala folkbibliotekens verksamhet i sex sydsvenska regioner

**Abstract**

*Public libraries are one of several institutions that uphold Swedish democracy. The representative liberal democratic model, expressed in the Library Act, is increasingly being questioned and challenged. Political actors, mainly from the radical right, advocate a democracy focused on the will of the people at the expense of the rights of individuals. With the notion of plural agonistics, public libraries can be seen as important arenas for debates and meetings between people, offering ways to handle conflicts within democratic institutions. Methodologically, this study employs the perspective of institutional ethnography, and the aim of this paper is to develop knowledge about public libraries' experiences of political pressure and how this is enacted in a time of political turbulence. This paper reports findings from the first stage of a survey study directed at public library managers in 77 municipalities from the six southernmost regions of Sweden. Based on replies in these surveys, interviews were conducted with seven of the participating library managers. Findings show that the interplay between libraries and the local political level, and between national and local political levels, generally functions without notable opposition. Illegitimate political pressure is uncommon, but when it occurs, it is primarily triggered by issues connected to cultural diversity. Results further indicate that local public libraries tend to respond to illegitimate political pressure by development and use of professional policy documents, but also, in some cases, by avoiding certain activities.*

**Keywords:** Public Libraries, Democracy, Institutional Ethnography, Plural Agonistics, Library Policy, Political Pressure, Sweden

**Inledning och syfte**

På många platser i västvärlden växer folkbiblioteken fram, utvecklas och institutionaliseras vid tiden då demokrati som styrelseskick vinner mark och formaliseras (Hansson, 2010a; Torstensson, 2012). Idag är folkbiblioteken en av flera institutioner som bidrar till att upprätthålla det svenska demokratiska styrelseskicket. I Sverige anges de övergripande målen för de allmänna biblioteken, inklusive folkbiblioteken, av bibliotekslagen (SFS 2013:801) som är en nationell ramlag. Lagen anger övergripande målsättningar, prioriterade målgrupper och att folkbibliotek ska finnas i samtliga svenska kommuner. Det är emellertid kommunen som är ansvarig för folkbibliotekets verksamhet, dess ekonomiska ramar och antagandet av en kommunal biblioteksplan. Ett starkt kommunalt självstyre, fastställt i grundlagen, samexisterar alltså med den nationella styrning som ges av bibliotekslagen.

I den svenska bibliotekslagen (SFS 2013:801) slås fast att biblioteken "ska verka för det demokratiska samhällets utveckling genom att bidra till kunskapsförmedling och fri åsiktsbildning", och att biblioteksverksamheten ska vara tillgänglig för alla. Den form av demokrati som den svenska bibliotekslagen ger uttryck för är den representativa liberala demokratin vars bärande tanke är att förena individuella rättigheter och majoritetens vilja (Rivano Eckerdal, 2017). Under senare år har dock tendenser i västvärlden kunnat skönjas där den liberala demokratin förlorar folkligt stöd (Mounk, 2018). Istället förespråkar politiska aktörer, främst från den radikala högern, en demokrati inriktad mot nationalism och folkvilja på bekostnad av individuella rättigheter. Vi ansluter oss i denna artikel till Rydgren och Van der Meiden (2019) definition av högerradikala partier som en grupp partier vars huvudbudskap är "a mixture of ethnic nationalism—or nativism—and antiestablishment populism" och vars "main rallying issue, at least in Western Europe, has been opposition to immigration" (Rydgren & Van der Meiden, 2019, s. 440). Det illiberala politiska projekt som dessa aktörer driver rymmer alltså en kritisk syn på migration och kulturell mångfald, vilket kontrasterar starkt mot folkbibliotekens uppdrag att nå ut till alla (Carlsson & Rivano Eckerdal, 2018). Samtidigt pekar Mounk (2018) på en parallell rörelse där en icke-demokratisk liberalism med teknokratiska förtecken växer fram, vilken medför att väljarnas inflytande över den förda politiken minskar. Sammantaget leder dessa ifrågasättanden av den representativa liberala demokratin till att folkbiblioteket, som demokratibärande institution, ställs inför en rad utmaningar. Det är av vikt att beforska vilka konsekvenser detta får för dem som verkar och arbetar i de kommunala folkbiblioteken på lokal nivå.

I denna artikel presenterar vi de första resultaten från ett större forskningsprojekt vars övergripande syfte är att nå kunskap om *hur svenska folkbibliotekariers arbetsvillkor och upplevelser av uppdraget att verka för ett demokratiskt samhälles utveckling förändras när en etablerad demokratisyn utmanas*. Studien anknyter till Chantal Mouffes teori om agonistisk pluralism (1999, 2008, 2016). Genom denna teoretiska ingång kan bibliotek förstås som viktiga arenor för debatt och möten mellan människor, vilket möjliggör en hantering av konflikter och spänningar inom det demokratiska systemet (jmf Rivano Eckerdal, 2017).

Att högerradikala strömningar och partier vunnit mark i ett flertal västländer har bidragit till att det politiska samtalet förändrats. Också i Sverige kan skönjas en förskjutning i vad som utgör de centrala ideologiska konfliktlinjerna i svensk politik. Dessa har traditionellt legat vid hanteringen av socioekonomiska klyftor, men på senare år har politiska konflikter mer kommit att handla om migration och lag och ordning, vilket ligger i linje med högerradikala partiers etniska nationalism och anti-etablissemangsretorik (Rydgren & Van der Meiden, 2019). För det kulturpolitiska sakområdet har svängningen inneburit ett skifte från blocköverskridande samsyn till ideologiskt driven debatt (Lindsköld, 2015). Detta kan även skönjas på kommunal nivå i flera sydsvenska regioner, vilket har givit den politiska diskussionen om kultur- och bildningsinstitutioner såsom folkbiblioteken en ny

ideologisk skärpa. Att folkbibliotek på ett nytt vis hamnat i det politiska blickfånget väcker frågan om hur folkbibliotekens företrädare upplever relationen till det politiska i utförandet av sitt lagstadgade demokratifrämjande uppdrag. I denna studie söker vi svar på denna övergripande frågeställning.

Syftet med denna artikel är att med agonistisk pluralism som analytisk tolkningsram nå kunskap om folkbibliotekens upplevelser av 1) relationen mellan nationell bibliotekspolitik såsom den kommer till uttryck i den svenska bibliotekslagen och dess lokala, kommunala tillämpningar samt 2) förekomsten och upplevelsen av politisk påverkan samt hur denna tar sig uttryck inom och utanför de kommunala beslutsvägarna. Specifikt inriktar vi oss på följande forskningsfrågor:

- *Hur upplevs relationen mellan bibliotekspolitiken på nationell nivå och lokala politiska krav på bibliotekets verksamhet?*
- *Vilka upplevelser av politisk påverkan beskrivs? Förekommer upplevelser av politisk påverkan och hur tar den i så fall sig uttryck?*
- *Anpassar sig verksamheten till det förändrade politiska landskapet? Hur tar det i så fall sig uttryck?*

## Folkbibliotek och demokrati

Med den här studien vill vi bidra med kunskap som kan öka förståelsen för folkbiblioteket som en central demokratibärande samhällsinstitution. Därmed sällar vi oss till en rik forskningstradition inom biblioteks- och informationsvetenskap som utforskar folkbibliotekens demokratiska roll. Tidigare forskning har bland annat tagit avstamp i demokratiteoretiska resonemang som understryker betydelsen av tillgängliga offentliga rum för en fungerande demokrati. Exempelvis har folkbibliotekets potential som en mötesplats som kan understödja demokrati och medborgerligt deltagande belysts, (Audunsson 2005; Buschman & Leckie, 2007; Aabø et al, 2010), liksom folkbiblioteket som befrämjande av socialt kapital (Vårheim, 2011; 2014a) och som utgörande ett exempel på den deliberativa demokratins offentliga sfär (Buschman 2003: Widdersheim & Koizumi, 2016; Vårheim et al. 2019; Audunson et al. 2019; Widdersheim, Koizumi & Larsen, 2021). Det finns också exempel på forskning som problematiserar folkbibliotekens stöd till medborgerlig delaktighet (Olsson Dahlquist, 2019; Engström & Olsson Dahlquist 2020; Engström, 2021), liksom studier som undersöker hur folkbiblioteken möjliggör delaktighet och integration (Audunsson, Essmat & Aabø 2011; Vårheim 2014b; Pilerot & Lindberg, 2018).

Den forskningsinriktning som vi ansluter oss till i denna artikel utgår från Chantal Mouffes teori om agonistisk pluralism. Med detta perspektiv undersöks bibliotekens betydelse för demokratin som möjliga arenor för agonistisk kamp mellan olika politiska ståndpunkter. Genom en agonistisk läsning, har Rivano Eckerdal (2017) visat hur den svenska bibliotekslagen tillskriver biblioteken en tydlig politisk roll. Med utgångspunkt i Mouffes teori har också idén om biblioteket som en neutral aktör ifrågasatts; att arbeta för en fortsatt livskraftig demokrati genom att erbjuda ett institutionellt utrymme för agonistisk kamp är i grunden något politiskt (Hansson, 2010b, 2011; Rivano Eckerdal, 2018). Också de svenska folkbibliotekens mer omedelbara relation till politiken har varit föremål för studier. Rivano Eckerdal och Carlsson (2018) har belyst relationen mellan nationella mål och kommunalt självstyre i förhållande till folkbibliotekens verksamhetsinriktning. Michnik (2018) har undersökt kommunpolitikers syn på folkbibliotekets roll i det digitala samhället.

Sammantaget utgör den forskning om relationen mellan folkbiblioteken och det politiska som under det senaste decenniet publicerats, inte minst gällande svenska och nordiska förhållanden, en rik fond att ställa den här föreliggande studiens resultat emot. Samtidigt tillförs den tidigare forskningen ny kunskap genom studiens fokus på folkbiblioteksanställdas upplevelser av hur nationell bibliotekspolitik samspelar med lokala politiska diskussioner samt upplevelser av politisk påverkan sedan valet 2018, vilket inte tidigare studerats i Sverige.

**Carlsson, Hanell och Hansson:** *"Det känns som att jag bara sitter och väntar på att det ska explodera"*

**Att läsa politisk förändring – folkbibliotek som arenor för agonistisk kamp**

Den dubbla hotbild som Mounk (2018) menar att den liberala demokratin nu står inför, det vill säga en demokrati där individuella rättigheter inte respekteras fullt ut alternativt en slags teknokrati med individuella rättigheter men med bristande demokratisk förankring, är inte något nytt problem. Ambitionen att förena liberalismens tankar om individens fri- och rättigheter (frihet) med demokratins idéer om folkstyre och majoritetsbeslut (jämlikhet) och ett försvar av en kulturell mångfald har möjligen funnit sin mest kända form inom den politiska filosofin i tanken på en deliberativ demokrati, där just det politiska samtalet står i centrum för samhällsutvecklingen. Premisserna för den deliberativa demokratin har dock kritiserats av statsvetaren Chantal Mouffe (1999, 2008). Där tänkare som John Rawls och Jürgen Habermas betonar rationell dialog och samtal i sökandet efter konsensus framhäver Mouffe (1999) istället, utifrån en postmarxistisk och poststrukturalistisk position, hur alla anspråk på objektivitet i grunden är politiska och att konsensus (tillfälligt) skapas genom hegemonisk maktanvändning och uteslutning av alternativa förklaringsmodeller.

Enligt Mouffe är den deliberativa demokratin inte kapabel att möta de utmaningar som den liberala demokratin står inför eftersom demokratins essens inte kan reduceras till rationell konsensus. Istället förordar Mouffe en teoretisk förståelse för demokrati som hon benämner "agonistisk pluralism". Utifrån detta synsätt förstås demokratin som en process präglad av legitima konflikter mellan kollektiva identiteter och de kraftfulla känslor som de skapas av, och frammanar (Mouffe, 2008). En livaktig demokrati behöver ge utrymme för dessa passioner i politiska diskussioner likaväl som radikalt olika politiska ståndpunkter. Demokratins centrala uppgift är att omvandla antagonism (en kamp mellan fiender) till agonism (en kamp mellan legitima meningsmotståndare) genom skapandet av kollektiva identiteter vävda kring demokratiska mål (Mouffe, 2016). De ständigt nya motsättningar som framträder i ett samhälle ("det politiska") behöver kunna hanteras med hjälp av det demokratiska systemets praktiker och institutioner ("politik") annars ökar risken för våldsamma konflikter i samhället (Mouffe, 1999).

Med utgångspunkt i Mouffes perspektiv på demokrati förstår vi institutionen folkbibliotek som en arena för debatt och möten mellan människor. Genom att erbjuda denna typ av mötesplatser kan folkbiblioteken möjliggöra en hantering av konflikter och spänningar inom det demokratiska systemet, en roll som blir än mer viktig i det senaste decenniets politiska förskjutningar. Mouffe (2008) menar att dessa förskjutningar i det politiska landskapet har underlättats av att etablerade partier närmat sig mitten och tonat ner konflikter mellan höger och vänster samtidigt som inflytandet från marknaden vuxit. Ett sådant postpolitiskt tillstånd, där politiskt beslutsfattande alltmer blir en fråga om avpolitiserad administration utan utrymme för ideologi eller passion, är djupt skadligt för demokratin, menar Mouffe (2016). Hon varnar vidare för att en sådan utveckling kan leda till en rörelse från agonistisk kamp (mellan höger och vänster) mot mer hotfulla antagonismer (mellan "vi" och "de") exempelvis i form av alltmer aggressiv nationalism. Då vi här ser folkbiblioteken som möjliga arenor för agonistisk kamp är det av intresse att undersöka om och i så fall på vilka sätt folkbiblioteket ikläder sig denna roll i hanteringen av sin politiska omgivning. Givet att den politiska utvecklingen skapar alltmer utrymme för antagonistisk konflikt är det av stor vikt att söka förstå om och i så fall hur detta påverkar folkbibliotekens verksamhet.

**Metod och genomförande**

Metodologiskt inspireras den här studien av institutionell etnografi, ett vetenskapligt förhållningssätt som formulerats av den normkritiska kanadensiska sociologen Dorothy Smith (t.ex. Smith, 2005; 2006a). Institutionell etnografi används ofta för att identifiera och formulera maktförhållanden i till exempel arbetslivet, där den vardagliga erfarenheten då tilldelas en stor roll för att skapa förståelse

för hur olika maktstrukturer reproduceras och utmanas på arbetsplatser och andra institutionella sammanhang (Campbell & Gregor, 2002; Smith, 2005). Erfarenheten betraktas som individuell, men inte bara. För att bli meningsfull i ett större sammanhang skrivs den om till att läsas som institutionell, det vill säga som translokala koordinerade processer och sätt att agera (DeVault & McCoy, 2006). I det här sammanhanget innebär det att de erfarenheter som en individuell bibliotekschef, bibliotekarie eller biblioteksassistent ger uttryck för inte bara är deras egen, utan också bibliotekets. När exempelvis intervjuer används inom institutionell etnografi fokuseras således inte individens subjektiva erfarenheter. Istället är det beröringspunkter och kopplingar mellan utsagor från individer som alla arbetar i olika delar av ett institutionellt komplex som spåras och vävs samman för att belysa de translokala sociala relationer som formar det lokala (DeVault & McCoy, 2006). Translokala sociala relationer, eller styrande relationer (eng. ruling relations), tar sig ofta uttryck genom olika former av administrativa och styrande dokument men kan också utgöras av sammansättningar av diskurser i till exempel media. Genom detta synsätt kommer den metonymiska utsagan att "bibliotekets förhållande till politiken är konfliktfyllt" att fyllas med ett innehåll som direkt korresponderar mot en levd vardagserfarenhet hos de som verkar i biblioteken och på olika politiska nivåer. Ansatsens kritiska potential blir tydlig då institutionell etnografi kan bidra till att folkbiblioteksanställda bättre kan förstå, och påverka, de translokala sociala relationer som omger folkbiblioteksinstitutionen. I svensk biblioteksvetenskaplig forskning har institutionell etnografi använts av bland andra Pilerot (2016) och Hansson (2019).

Datainsamlingen genomfördes i två steg, genom en enkätstudie och en uppföljande intervjustudie. Enkätstudien genomfördes i maj och juni 2021 och omfattade 77 kommuner i Sveriges sex sydligaste regioner: Blekinge, Halland, Jönköping, Kalmar, Kronoberg och Skåne (se även Hanell, Hansson & Carlsson (2022) som erbjuder en mer detaljerad avrapportering av enkätstudien). I varje kommun identifierades den som var ansvarig för de kommunala bibliotekens verksamhet och till dessa skickades enkäten ut elektroniskt via epost. Detta första utskick kompletterades sedan med två påminnelsemejl till de som inte svarat och det slutliga antalet respondenter kom slutligen att uppgå till 57, vilket ger en svarsfrekvens på 74%. Av de som svarade uppgav 77% titeln Bibliotekschef, medan övriga angav likvärdiga titlar, ofta omfattande ansvar inom till exempel kultur och fritid som komplement till biblioteksverksamheten. 78,9% av respondenterna angav minst tre års erfarenhet av nuvarande uppdrag.

Innehållsligt fokuserade enkäten på tre huvudområden som tillsammans belyser de translokala processer som bidrar till att forma de lokala upplevelserna: 1) samspelet mellan biblioteksverksamheten och den politiska nivån, 2) relationen mellan den lokala politiska diskussionen och skrivningarna i bibliotekslagen samt 3) erfarenheter av direkt eller indirekt politisk påverkan vid sidan av formella beslutsgångar.

Efter insamling analyserades enkäterna med blicken på eventuella konflikter inom de tre huvudområdena som kan tydliggöra samspelet mellan translokala sociala relationer i de institutionella praktiker och diskurser som präglar folkbiblioteksanställdas vardag. Baserat på denna analys markerades 23 svar som särskilt intressanta genom att de indikerade någon form av konflikt. Av dessa 23 valdes slutligen sju kommuner ut för fördjupat studium i form av individuella intervjuer med de personer som besvarat enkäterna. Den intervjuguide som konstruerades formulerades som en direkt fördjupning av enkätens tre huvudområden och fokus lades på de konfliktytor informanten angivit i relationen mellan bibliotekets lokala verksamhet och dess politiska omgivning. I analysen av dessa konfliktytor har Mouffes perspektiv på demokrati använts som en tolkningsram. Samtliga intervjuer genomfördes med det webbaserade mötesverktyget Zoom under november och december 2021. Intervjuerna spelades in som ljud- och bildfiler och transkriberades därefter ordagrant.

Intervjuinspelningarna är mellan 30 och 59 minuter långa. I den anonymiserade resultatredovisningen anges vid intervjucitat ett intervjunummer från 1-7.
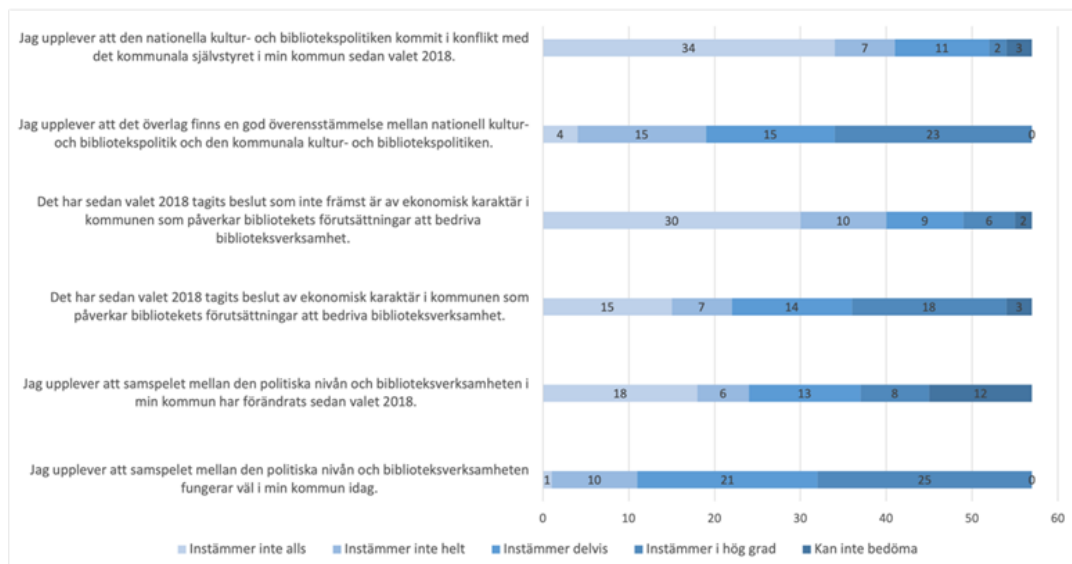
**Resultat och analys**
Resultaten från föreliggande studie redovisas i enlighet med den ordning huvudområdena ses i enkäten. De fördjupande resonemang som framkommer i intervjuerna redovisas löpande i anslutning till resultatredovisningen av enkätens olika delar.

*Samspelet mellan biblioteksverksamheten och den politiska nivån*
Enkätens inledande avsnitt berör samspelet mellan biblioteken och den politiska nivån samt på ett övergripande plan relationen mellan nationell och kommunal kultur- och bibliotekspolitik. Det kan vara på sin plats att åter påminna om de förutsättningar som ges i lagstiftningen vilken tillsammans med andra politiska beslut ingår bland de translokala sociala relationer som både styr och möjliggör folkbibliotekens verksamhet. I Sverige regleras de allmänna biblioteken, däribland folkbiblioteken, av en nationell ramlag (SFS 2013:801) som bland annat stipulerar dessa verksamheters övergripande mål och prioriterade målgrupper. Lagen säger att folkbibliotek ska finnas i alla svenska kommuner. Kommunen är alltså huvudman för folkbiblioteket och folkvalda kommunpolitiker beslutar om folkbibliotekets budget, samt antar en kommunal biblioteksplan som anger det lokala folkbibliotekets verksamhetsinriktning. Det kommunala självstyret i Sverige som fastslås i regeringsformen är starkt. Dock måste kommunerna hålla sig inom Bibliotekslagens ramar.

I sammanställningen som gestaltas i Fig 1. framgår att samspelet mellan den kommunala politiska nivån och biblioteksverksamheten överlag bedöms fungera väl. Likaså upplevs överensstämmelsen vara huvudsakligen god mellan nationell kultur- och bibliotekspolitik och dess kommunala kultur- och bibliotekspolitiska tillämpning.



Figur 1. Samspelet mellan biblioteken och den politiska nivån. Fördelning av antal svar per fråga (n=57).

Utifrån påståendet "Jag upplever att den nationella kultur- och bibliotekspolitiken kommit i konflikt med det kommunala självstyret i min kommun sedan valet 2018" svarar en betydande andel (59,6%) "instämmer inte alls". 19,3% instämmer emellertid delvis, och två av respondenterna anger svaret

**Carlsson, Hanell och Hansson:** *"Det känns som att jag bara sitter och väntar på att det ska explodera"*

"instämmer i hög grad" – av övriga enkätsvar att döma verkar dessa två svar främst bottna i ekonomiska beslut.

Utifrån påståendet "Jag upplever att det överlag finns en god överensstämmelse mellan nationell kultur- och bibliotekspolitik och den kommunala kultur- och bibliotekspolitiken." svarar 40,4% att de instämmer i hög grad, och 26,3% instämmer delvis. En betydande andel (26,3%) svarar dock att de inte instämmer helt, och 7% att de inte instämmer alls. En väsentlig andel svarande menar att det sedan valet 2018 har fattats beslut av ekonomisk karaktär som påverkar förutsättningar för bibliotekens verksamhet: 31,6% instämmer i hög grad, och 24,6% instämmer delvis. Väsentligt färre menar att det fattats beslut sedan valet 2018, av icke-ekonomisk karaktär, som påverkar bibliotekens verksamhet: 10,5% instämmer i hög grad, och 15,8% instämmer delvis.

Utifrån påståendet "Jag upplever att samspelet mellan den politiska nivån och biblioteksverksamheten i min kommun har förändrats sedan valet 2018." svarar en femtedel att de inte kan bedöma detta. Av de som graderat svaret har flest svarat "instämmer inte alls". Summan svar från de som tycker sig märka en förändring ("instämmer helt" samt "instämmer delvis", totalt 36,8%) ligger nära summan av svar från de som inte tycker sig märka en förändring ("instämmer inte alls" samt "instämmer inte helt", totalt 42,1%). Utifrån påståendet "Jag upplever att samspelet mellan den politiska nivån och biblioteksverksamheten fungerar väl i min kommun idag." svarar 43,9% att de instämmer i hög grad. 36,8% instämmer delvis.

En specifik skillnad som berörs i intervjumaterialet när det gäller nationell och kommunal kultur- och bibliotekspolitik märks till exempel i den nationella satsningen *Stärkta bibliotek* som explicit fokuserar på de prioriterade grupper som omnämns i bibliotekslagen. En av de intervjuade bibliotekscheferna menar att inriktningen hade varit annorlunda om styret i den egna kommunen fått bestämma: "jag tror att man kanske hade velat ha en annan satsning på det lokala, och på majoritetskultur" (1). Här framträder alltså en motsättning mellan vad som görs gällande i nationella och dominerande styrande relationer, iscensatta genom lagstiftning och kulturbyråkrati, och motstridiga lokala perspektiv som hämtar näring från en rivaliserande kulturpolitisk diskurs (jmf Lindsköld, 2015).

Arbete riktat mot bibliotekslagens prioriterade grupper såsom att köpa in litteratur på andra språk än svenska är något som flera bibliotekschefer har upplevt motsättningar kring. Under arbetet med en ny biblioteksplan mötte en bibliotekschef motstånd mot det förslag som tagits fram på tjänstemannanivå: "[…] där hade man ju en del synpunkter på formuleringar, till exempel gällande prioriterade grupper och mångspråk." (1). Bibliotekschefen valde då att omformulera berörda avsnitt så att lydelsen kom att ligga mycket nära bibliotekslagens skrivningar, vilket kan ses som en strategi för att motivera bibliotekets verksamhet med hjälp av nationell lagstiftning. Strategin synliggör hur textbaserad diskurs i vår tid spelar en central roll för styrande institutionella praktiker (DeVault & McCoy, 2006; Smith, 2006b). En annan bibliotekschef beskriver ett motstånd mot litteratur på andra språk än svenska, samtidigt som språkcaféer på svenska betraktas som mer positivt:

> "[Sverigedemokraterna] är ju inte förtjusta i det här att vi köper in böcker på andra språk än svenska, till exempel. Det är de inte. Inte så att det står i något protokoll, eller något sånt. Däremot har vi haft språkcaféer med – speciellt när flyktingvågen kom hade vi oerhört många, vi hade upp till 70-80 personer. Det – för det handlar mycket om SD känner jag – det har de ju uppskattat oerhört mycket, våra språkcaféer då, så att vi hjälper – att de ska lära sig svenska, det tycker de är bra, om jag nu ska vara lite ironisk så, va" (2).

Det politiska motståndet kopplat till andra språk än svenska, både när det gäller litteraturinköp och programverksamhet, förefaller vara ett återkommande inslag i flera kommuner:

"[Sverigedemokraterna] har ju ifrågasatt en del verksamhet politiskt så att säga och det är ju samma sak som på andra ställen, att man ifrågasätter ju då att ha verksamhet på andra språk än svenska, att man har litteratur på andra språk än de europeiska och så där" (3).

Dessa exempel på förtroendevaldas utspel och kommentarer kan kopplas samman med en diskurs som högerradikala politiska aktörer försöker etablera som en legitim ståndpunkt i en agonistisk kamp (Mouffe, 2016) där folkbiblioteken är en viktig arena.

*Samspelet mellan lokala politiska diskussioner och bibliotekslagens skrivningar*
Även för det tema i enkäten som rör frågor om vad informanterna bedömer vara beslut eller diskussioner som står i motsättning till de prioriterade skrivningarna i Bibliotekslagen visar resultaten på en relativt liten förekomst av motsättningar, vilket framgår av Fig. 2. Dock förekommer en synlig skillnad mellan olika prioriteringsområden.



Figur 2. Motsättningar mellan skrivningar i bibliotekslagen och lokala politiska diskussioner. Fördelning av antal svar per fråga (n=57).

På frågan som rör upplevelsen av motsättningar mellan politiska diskussioner i kommunen och skrivningen i bibliotekslagen som säger att "[b]iblioteken i det allmänna biblioteksväsendet ska verka för det demokratiska samhällets utveckling genom att bidra till kunskapsförmedling och fri åsiktsbildning.", svarar 70,2% "instämmer inte alls". Ingen respondent angav svaret "instämmer i hög grad".

På frågan som rör upplevelsen av motsättningar mellan politiska diskussioner i kommunen och skrivningen i bibliotekslagen som säger att "[b]iblioteksverksamhet ska finnas tillgänglig för alla.", svarar nästan lika många, 68,4%, "instämmer inte alls". Två respondenter anger dock svaret "instämmer i hög grad". Ett av svaren syftar på ekonomiska beslut i den aktuella kommunen.

På frågan som rör upplevelsen av motsättningar mellan politiska diskussioner i kommunen och skrivningen i bibliotekslagen som säger att "[b]iblioteken i det allmänna biblioteksväsendet ska ägna

**Carlsson, Hanell och Hansson:** *"Det känns som att jag bara sitter och väntar på att det ska explodera"*

särskild uppmärksamhet åt personer med funktionsnedsättning, bland annat genom att utifrån deras olika behov och förutsättningar erbjuda litteratur och tekniska hjälpmedel för att kunna ta del av information.", svarar 86% "instämmer inte alls". Ingen respondent angav svaret "instämmer i hög grad".

För frågan som rör upplevelsen av motsättningar mellan politiska diskussioner i kommunen och skrivningen i bibliotekslagen som gäller nationella minoriteter och personer med annat modersmål än svenska framträder en delvis annorlunda bild jämfört med frågorna som rör andra skrivningar i bibliotekslagen. På denna fråga anger 59,6% svaret "instämmer inte alls". Fyra respondenter anger svaret "instämmer i hög grad". Samtliga dessa fyra kommuner är representerade i intervjustudien. Det är alltså fler av de svarande som upplevt någon typ av motsättning i detta sammanhang sedan valet 2018 jämfört med de andra skrivningarna i bibliotekslagen. Här finns således den tydligaste konfliktytan i den dokumentbaserade verklighet som folkbiblioteken verkar inom (jmf DeVault & McCoy, 2006; Smith, 2006b). I nästa avsnitt erbjuds exempel på folkbiblioteksanställdas upplevelser av hur denna konflikt gestaltas i både agonistiska och antagonistiska motsättningar.

*Politisk påverkan*
När det gäller enkätfrågorna om erfarenheter av politisk påverkan vid sidan av gängse kommunala beslutsvägar visar svaren att detta är förhållandevis ovanligt i de sex undersökta regionerna. På frågan "[h]ar du eller någon av dina medarbetare upplevt sig utsatta för vad som kan betecknas som 'politisk påverkan' av en typ som ligger utanför de formella kommunala beslutsgångarna?" svarade 86% av respondenterna nej. Av de åtta bibliotekschefer som svarade ja på frågan angav fem att försöken till påverkan gällde programverksamhet. Därutöver fördelade sig svaren relativt jämnt mellan medieinköp, utställningar och annat, som organisatoriska förändringar.

Liksom i föregående avsnitt, som visar på vissa motsättningar mellan lokal och nationell kultur- och bibliotekspolitik, framstår enkätens samlade bild av bibliotekens arbete när det gäller mångspråk i flera fall som ideologiskt laddat och med en starkt polariserande potential. Flera exempel i intervjumaterialet som visar på upplevelser av en politiskt motiverad antagonism riktad mot biblioteken kan hänföras till detta arbete, och nästan samtliga kan kopplas till området kulturell mångfald.

I en kommun erbjöd biblioteket en arabisk sagostund, vilket orsakade diskussioner i sociala medier då flera ifrågasatte om detta var en lämplig verksamhet för biblioteket att erbjuda. Flera framförde åsikten att svenska bör användas vid liknande sagostunder för att bidra till bättre kunskaper i svenska. Diskussionerna fördes både på bibliotekets Facebook-sida, där bibliotekschefen såg sig tvungen att moderera samtalet, samt på de lokala Sverigedemokraternas Facebook-sida:

> [De lokala Sverigedemokraterna] har en egen Facebook där den här diskussionen då fördes. Men som sagt, där tystnade det ganska snabbt. Sen fick jag även som bibliotekschef, eller ansvarig då, eftersom det var jag som- jag valde att gå in och moderera ett inlägg om den här arabiska sagostunden, jag tog bort kommentarer som kunde tolkas som fientliga mot en viss grupp människor. Jag tycker inte vi kan ha den typen av diskussion så jag bad att få ha den diskussionen då med den som gjorde inläggen, alltså oss emellan då. [...] Men där fick jag ju ta en del tillmälen. Jag blev kallad för, vad var det... Ja, någonting fult, väldigt fult. [skratt] (4)

I citatet syns hur politiska passioner kopplade till kollektiva identiteter tar sig uttryck i en antagonism där tydlig skillnad görs mellan ett "vi" (svensktalande) och ett "de" (arabisktalande) – i linje med den typ av aggressiv nationalism som Mouffe (2016) tydligt varnar för. Samtidigt försöker bibliotekschefen skapa förutsättningar för en agonistisk kamp genom att hålla möjligheten till diskussion levande trots

**Carlsson, Hanell och Hansson:** *"Det känns som att jag bara sitter och väntar på att det ska explodera"*

den höga konfliktnivån. I en annan av de undersökta kommunerna gavs än mer direkta exempel på politisk påverkan från politiker riktat mot enskilda programpunkter vid biblioteket, i det här fallet när en arabisk teater skulle uppföra en föreställning:

> […] när vi haft en arabisk teater, då gick man in och sade att det här ska inte vi i vårt bibliotek och…lite andra saker också, som då kanske då som man ska säga det ska inte politikerna göra. (5)

En annan bibliotekschef berättar om hur en enskild politiker framförde tydliga synpunkter på ett av bibliotekets arrangemang, där en internationellt erkänd akademiker bjudits in, på ett sätt som chefen uppfattade som otillbörlig politisk påverkan:

> [D]et var ju då en politiker från Moderaterna då, som hörde av sig och sade att ni kan väl inte ha ett arrangemang med den här personen, han är ju stalinist. Men, eh, vi pratade om det och jag pratade med min chef med och han [politikern] kom sen tillbaka och sade att det var absolut inte meningen att försöka påverka oss, han liksom bara hade en fråga, tyckte det var konstigt så där, va. Tja, så var det kanske, jag vet inte. (3)

I dessa två exempel framträder bibliotekschefernas direkta erfarenheter av hur styrande relationer, gestaltade i form av direktiv från den kommunpolitiska ledningen, styr och begränsar folkbibliotekens institutionella praktiker kopplade till programverksamhet. Dessa två exempel som visar på hur politiska företrädare upplevs gå över en gräns och försöka utöva inflytande över inslag i biblioteksverksamheten som av bibliotekscheferna anses vara frågor på tjänstemannanivå tillhör dock undantagen. I intervjumaterialet är det oftare aktörer utanför den parlamentariska politiska verksamheten som står för den politiska påverkan som bibliotekscheferna upplever riktas mot biblioteken.

De delar av bibliotekens arbete som kan relateras till kulturell mångfald eller sexuella minoriteter verkar i flera fall framkalla starka reaktioner från enskilda personer:

> [K]ring insatser som ogillas så att säga, hbtq-certifiering eller vad det nu är, sagostunder på arabiska eller vad det än är, så får vi ju, hm, ibland får man ett brev eller bara enstaka som hör av sig och sätter ju press då på ju framförallt kanske våra kommunikatörer som jobbar direkt i kontakt med omvärlden. […] Ja, de är koordinerade. Ibland är det som kurerade brev, att man märker det liksom. Och, det är alltid från höger, från högersidan, SD-relaterade eller ännu längre till höger, eh, nazister eller vad de nu kallar sig på nåt sätt. (3)

I vissa fall verkar det alltså finnas en samordning bakom de påverkansförsök som riktas mot biblioteket. Det är samtidigt tydligt att påverkansförsöken kommer från den politiska högerkanten. Ett exempel på hur politisk påverkan från den yttersta högerkanten kan te sig beskrivs av en annan bibliotekschef. I denna kommun är den högerextrema organisationen Nordiska motståndsrörelsen aktiv, vilket har påverkat biblioteksverksamheten även om biblioteken hittills inte varit föremål för någon direkt aktivitet från organisationen. Den närvaro som organisationen på olika vis markerar i kommunen har fått bibliotekschefen att vidta särskilda säkerhetsåtgärder vid programverksamhet som bedömdes kunna vara hotad:

> Vi hade ju en av de här judiska överlevarna då, men då hade jag faktiskt Securitas där för jag tänkte att man vet liksom inte nu för tiden. Och även med den här mannen då så bestämde vi liksom en flyktväg då om det skulle hända någonting, så vi skulle då i stort sett bära ut honom och få undan honom om det skulle hända något. (2)

I intervjumaterialet är det endast en bibliotekschef som på detta vis direkt upplevt hotbilden från högerextremister, och behövt hantera det upplevda hotet – dock utan att ställa in den planerade programverksamheten. I flertalet intervjuer ges dock åtskilliga exempel på hur högerradikala idéer förs fram av enskilda individer som är kritiska mot bibliotekens verksamhet kopplad till kulturell mångfald. Det framstår därmed som tydligt att den högerradikala diskurs som folkbibliotekscheferna talar om formas translokalt och gestaltas genom koordinerade processer vilket får konsekvenser för folkbiblioteket lokalt. I ett vidare perspektiv utmanas därigenom också folkbiblioteket som institution, underbyggt av ett system av koordinerade processer och sätt att agera (DeVault & McCoy, 2006) sammanvävt med den svenska demokratin, och som en arena för agonistisk kamp. På frågan om det verkar finnas kopplingar mellan retorik från högerradikala opinionsbildare och enskilda användare som påstridigt framför synpunkter på programverksamhet eller kommer med inköpsförslag som rör kontroversiell litteratur uttrycker en bibliotekschef oro:

> Ja, jag sitter bara, det känns som att jag bara sitter och väntar på att det ska explodera någon gång här nu. Men vi får väl se vad som händer, det kanske är lugnt. (6)

I vissa fall tar sig denna form av politisk påverkan direkt hotfulla uttryck. En bibliotekschef berättar om hur en bibliotekarie i grannkommunen blev utsatt för personliga påhopp och hotelser efter att biblioteket ordnat sagostunder för barn på andra språk än svenska:

> […] vi har ju sagostunder på andra språk än svenska och så där. Jag vet en grannkommun där, till [kommunens namn], hade ju den personen som höll i det här blev ju rätt ansatt med "vi vet var du bor" och hela den biten, men jag har inte hört att det skulle varit någonting runt just den här delen med våra sagostunder. (7)

Denna typ av antagonism, som tydligt passerar gränsen för vad som kan betraktas som legitim politisk påverkan eller agonistisk kamp (Mouffe, 2016), riktas mot bibliotekarien som företrädare för biblioteket som institution, som bärare av vissa idéer (såsom att arbeta för kulturell mångfald och minoritetsgruppers mänskliga rättigheter) som högerradikala politiska aktörer vill påverka både genom agonistisk kamp och genom antagonistiskt, hotfullt agerande. Upplevelsen av hur en translokalt formad högerradikal diskurs omsätts i fysiska hot blir här både bibliotekets och den enskilde bibliotekariens (jmf Smith, 2006c).

I en kommun framträder media som en viktig aktör i de diskursiva styrande relationer som omger folkbiblioteket. Här uppmärksammades biblioteket av nationell högerradikal media i samband med en programaktivitet med en författare som skrivit en bok om ensamkommande flyktingbarn. Reportern intervjuade bibliotekschefen, som sedan figurerade med citat och namn i den publicerade artikeln. Handlingar från kommunen kopplade till arrangemanget begärdes också ut för att visa på kostnaderna för arrangemanget då väktare hyrts in utifrån en upplevd hotbild mot författaren. Den här typen av uppmärksamhet från en nationell högerradikal medieaktör kom som en överraskning för bibliotekschefen:

> [D]e var ju upprörda över att vi hade bjudit in den här författaren och undrade hur vi hade tänkt och jag kände mig så naiv, så jag bara "vi tänkte att hon hade en ny bok och att det var spännande att få höra den berättelsen", du vet, ja, så enkelt tänkte vi. Vi är ett bibliotek och vi bjuder ibland in författare, liksom, det var min bild av det. Så förstod jag, oj, att så här naiv får man inte vara när man sätter programverksamhet, det är ungefär som ett uppvaknande för mig mycket i alla fall, man behöver vara laddad till tänderna kring vem man bjuder in, liksom, för vem – vilken grupp kan det trigga, liksom, det man har tänkt? Men då var de så här, liksom, att fattar du inte att ni skulle bjudit in någon motpol då liksom, då skulle det vara någon annan som hade en annan syn som

skulle varit med och debatterat här nu då. För mig var det, jag var helt oförberedd på de här frågorna [...] (6)

Med dessa röster som representerar sju olika folkbiblioteksverksamheter i södra Sverige framträder ett narrativ som visar på förekomsten av motsättningar mellan nationell och lokal bibliotekspolitik när det gäller de styrande relationer som omger biblioteksverksamhet som kan relateras till kulturell mångfald. Narrativet ger också en komplex bild av hur dessa motsättningar i samhället, i "det politiska" (Mouffe, 1999), kommer till konkreta uttryck i form av agonistisk kamp och antagonism riktad mot biblioteken. I nästa avsnitt beskrivs hur biblioteken på olika vis förhåller och anpassar sig till det politiska landskapet.

### Hur biblioteken anpassar sig till ett förändrat politiskt landskap

Medieplanering och urvalsprinciper vid medieförvärv är centrala kunskapsområden för bibliotekarieprofessionen. Kritik som riktas mot biblioteksverksamheten som rör inköp av litteratur medför att biblioteksanställda upplever att deras professionella kompetens och förhållningssätt ifrågasätts vilket föranleder insatser för att tydligare definiera bland annat urvalsprinciper:

> Så att det är sådana där diskussioner där man ifrågasätts lite grann i sin profession på något sätt, alltså i sin förmåga att göra urval, medieurval – det är ju också en fråga som alltid kommer upp, det här med inköp av en viss typ av litteratur och varför vi väljer bort viss, och hur vi gör. Därför har vi nu börjat fila på en ordentlig mediepolicy som vi då hoppas kunna luta oss mot i professionen. Det är ingenting vi tänker ska bli en politisk fråga, utan det är ett professionsdokument, ett arbetsdokument för oss som jobbar helt enkelt. Som vi kan luta oss emot. (4)

Strategin att tydligt motivera och förankra bibliotekets verksamhet i olika typer av policydokument märks också när programverksamhet diskuteras av en bibliotekschef apropå upplevelser av ilska från enskilda användare och uppmärksamhet från nationell radikal högermedia. På så vis omsätts levda erfarenheter i dokument, där anspråk på fakta och objektivitet kan skrivas fram som ett led i en agonistisk kamp. En dokumentbaserad verklighet kan därmed sägas både styra, och medskapas av, folkbibliotekens institutionella praktiker (jmf DeVault & McCoy, 2006; Smith, 2006b). Betydelsen av att vara förberedd på olika typer av reaktioner och att ha tänkt igenom motiven för programverksamheten lyfts fram:

> [...] i alla fall mig har det påverkat lite i just förberedelser inför saker man vill göra, att man mer går på djupet i varför gör vi detta, vad når vi med detta i förhållande till insatser på något sätt – att man gör en liten beräkning innan och inte försöker vara så naiv i att bara "åh, så härligt och mysigt det kan bli" utan "ah, nej, det kan finnas folk som blir upprörda eller arga kopplat till detta". Och det tror jag också vi försökt landa ner i mycket, att vi vill koppla det mesta vi gör till biblioteksplanen också att vi vill vara tydligare i det för då är det också lättare att – ja, men att man är beredd när något händer, att man vet, liksom, ja, men det var därför vi tog in, och det var därför – att man liksom har hela det här bakom sig så att man inte står helt oförberedd vilket jag upplevde att vi gjorde nog. (6)

I flera av intervjuerna återkommer bibliotekscheferna till hur bibliotekslagen och den kommunala biblioteksplanen är viktiga redskap för att värna bibliotekets verksamhet riktad mot personer med annat modersmål än svenska. En bibliotekschef beskriver dock hur biblioteksverksamheten medvetet undviker vissa typer av programverksamhet för att undvika konflikter med den lokala politiska nivån, där Sverigedemokraterna har ett starkt inflytande:

> Ja, det är ju den där arabiska barnteatern som man inte vill ha då. Och sen är det ju då mångspråk som man ju inte ville ha, hemspråksgaranti för alla i kommunen och så. Så, det finns ju där och det

> fanns ju en hbtq-trans-sagoberättare som kom hit och man heller inte ville ha och det är ju inget kvalitetskrav, utan det är bara för att de är som de är, så att säga.
> Intervjuare: Hur upplever din personal detta?
> Jaa…vi plockar ju bort de här grejerna, vi känner ju att, nej vi kan inte göra de här grejerna om inte politikerna vill det så att det går ju inte, va. (5)

I detta exempel har kommunpolitiska företrädare tydligt markerat vilken typ av verksamhet som de tycker att biblioteket inte ska ägna sig åt. Även om bibliotekschefen är kritisk till att kommunpolitikerna i flera fall varit alltför involverade i specifika verksamhetsinslag har den politiska påverkan fått till följd att biblioteksorganisationen känner sig tvungen att anpassa sig efter den politiska viljan, även när den står i motsättning till bibliotekslagens intentioner och skrivningar. Här ges alltså ett konkret exempel på när den kommunpolitiska ledningens styrning övertrumfar den nationella och dominerande dokumentbaserade verkligheten (till skillnad från ovan då en bibliotekschef tvärtom använder bibliotekslagen för att begränsa de lokala politikernas inflytande).

I en annan kommun ger bibliotekschefen uttryck för hur biblioteksverksamheten och vilken programverksamhet som erbjuds anpassas utifrån vad som anses "gångbart" i kommunen. Här gäller det alltså inte politisk påverkan från politiska företrädare utan upplevelsen av det politiska landskapet i en bredare bemärkelse, det vill säga uttryck för "det politiska" (Mouffe, 1999):

> Och jag vet inte, det är klart att man någonstans utifrån den kommun man verkar i kanske tänker sig för vad det är för programpunkter som kan vara gångbara. […] det är klart att vi försöker att anpassa oss till vad vi, vad vi liksom känner att det här skulle kunna locka [kommunens invånare] och då kanske det inte är, ja vad ska jag ta för exempel, utan någon värdering i det, så, att vi tar hit en som har kommit som flykting och berättar om sin resa från var det nu är, över hav och land och flyktingsmugglare. Jag tror, nej, jag tror inte det skulle…jag tror inte det skulle vara gångbart, om jag säger så i den här kommunen, så. (7)

## Diskussion och slutsatser

Svensk nationell bibliotekspolitik, manifesterad genom svenska bibliotekslagen (SFS 2013:801), är tydlig i sin reglering av ansvarsfördelningen i det allmänna biblioteksväsendet, där kommunerna anges som folkbibliotekets huvudman. Tidigare studier (Rivano Eckerdal & Carlsson, 2018) visar dock att många folkbiblioteksföreträdare ser ett behov av en övergripande nationell lag som kan balansera det kommunala självstyret. I synnerhet märks detta i tider med stramare ekonomiska ramar där det lagstadgade kravet på att folkbibliotek ska finnas i varje kommun, samt erbjuda en avgiftsfri verksamhet, framstår som mer angeläget. Bibliotekschefer och personal använder sig av lagen för att försvara och legitimera sin verksamhet, samt synliggöra den för kommunala fritidspolitiker som anses ha begränsad kunskap om folkbibliotekens samtida roll (Rivano Eckerdal & Carlsson 2018; Michnik 2018). Även om vi i den här studien kan konstatera en relativt positiv bild ser vi också spår av friktion i det kraftfält av styrande relationer som omger den nationella bibliotekspolitiken och politiken förd på kommunal nivå som bottnar i beslut av ekonomisk karaktär. Vi ser också att bibliotekslagen, som ett centralt inslag i folkbibliotekens dokumentbaserade verklighet, används för att legitimera olika former av verksamhet. Merparten av enkätsvaren visar dock att samspelet mellan nationell och lokal bibliotekspolitik, liksom mellan den kommunala politiska nivån och biblioteksverksamheten överlag fungerar väl, eller delvis väl.

Om blicken istället riktas mot de situationer och tillfällen som förmedlas av respondenterna, där friktion och motsättningar mellan nationell och lokal bibliotekspolitik uppstår, berör dessa i hög grad kulturpolitiska frågor som kommit att bli ideologiskt laddade i samtidens politiska förskjutning mot en mer antagonistisk konflikttyp. Den nationella bibliotekslagens femte paragraf anger att biblioteken i det allmänna biblioteksväsendet ska ägna särskild uppmärksamhet åt de nationella minoriteterna och personer som har annat modersmål än svenska, bland annat genom att erbjuda litteratur på de

nationella minoritetsspråken och andra språk än svenska. Resultaten från studien visar relativt entydigt att det främst är vid realiseringen av dessa nationella mål som konflikter, som inte bottnar i beslut av ekonomisk karaktär, uppstår med den politik som förs lokalt. Det är också i dessa formuleringar som den nationella bibliotekspolitiken tydligast knyter an till konfliktpunkter mellan den traditionellt förda kulturpolitiken i Sverige, med fokus på socioekonomisk utjämning, och den förskjutning av det kulturpolitiska samtalet som åstadkommits av radikalhögerns framgångar i såväl Sverige som stora delar av Europa (Lindsköld 2015; jmfr Rydgren & Van der Meiden, 2019; Elgenius & Rydgren, 2019). Den etno-nationalism som högerradikala partier förespråkar grundar sig på nostalgiska myter om en gemensam historia och en homogen kultur. Deras partiprogram inriktar sig generellt på att stärka nationen genom att göra den mer etniskt homogen och genom att återgå till så kallade traditionella värden, vilket främst uppnås genom att motverka invandring och internationalisering (Elgenius & Rydgren, 2019). Språk kan i denna kontext förstås som en etnisk och kulturell symbol och bibliotekslagens prioriteringar av andra språk än svenska utgör därmed ett hot. Mot denna bakgrund är det inte förvånande att studiens resultat visar att upplevda ifrågasättanden av programverksamhet eller litteraturinköp på lokal nivå, kopplade till den femte paragrafen i bibliotekslagen, oftast kan härledas till en högerradikal diskurs som gestaltas av aktörer såväl inom som utanför det parlamentariska systemet.

Studiens resultat visar generellt att förekomsten av politisk grundande ifrågasättanden av biblioteksverksamheten eller politisk påverkan utanför formella kanaler inte är vanligt förekommande. Påverkansförsök eller ifrågasättanden kan komma från såväl folkvalda politiker som allmänhet och riktar sig framförallt mot programverksamhet som, från ett högerradikalt perspektiv, upplevs hota etnisk homogenitet och så kallade traditionella värden. Vi ser också exempel på så kallad välfärdschauvinism, det vill säga ifrågasättanden av användningen av skattemedel för ändamål som anses främja immigration och mångkultur på bekostnad av den inhemska befolkningen (Elgenius & Rydgren, 2019). Ibland förekommer till och med antagonism i form av direkta hot mot den personal som ansvarar för programverksamheten.

Flera av deltagarna i studien upplever situationen som ny och ovan. Biblioteksverksamhet har tidigare inte väckt reaktioner av detta slag, vilket leder till att nya strategier och nya former av konfliktberedskap behöver utvecklas. Sådana strategier rör sig från moderering av nätdiskussioner och tydligare mediepolicys, till väktarstöd och flyktberedskap vid författarbesök. Syftet tycks vara att bibehålla verksamheten men välkomna debatt om och när sådan uppstår. Att på detta sätt bjuda in till diskussion om programverksamhet och litteraturinköp kan från Mouffes (1999) perspektiv förstås som strategier för att omvända antagonistiska fiender till motståndare som istället kan föra en agonistisk kamp inom den demokratiska institutionens legitima ramar. Biblioteket framstår på så vis som en arena för debatt och möten som kan ge rum åt de ständigt nya motsättningar som framträder i samhället, i "det politiska" (Mouffe, 1999). Bilden som här framträder av hur samtidens politiska rörelsemönster manifesterar sig och hanteras i folkbibliotekens vardag ligger således i linje med tidigare studier som diskuterar bibliotekets demokratiska roll med grund i Mouffes utgångspunkter (Hansson 2011; Rivano Eckerdal, 2018). Det finns också samstämmighet med studier som belyser hur bibliotekarier hanterar den professionella roll som innebär att, med bibliotekslagens formulering, verka för det demokratiska samhällets utveckling genom att bidra till kunskapsförmedling och fri åsiktsbildning (Carlsson & Rivano Eckerdal, 2018; Rivano Eckerdal, 2017; 2018).

Samtidigt kan vi i studien visa på flera exempel där arenan för debatt och möten inskränks, med minskat utrymme för agonistisk kamp som följd, och där diskussionen villkoras och bibliotekarier hindras i utförandet av sin professionella roll. Detta tar sig uttryck genom att verksamheten på olika sätt anpassas för att undvika potentiella konflikter med lokala politiska aktörer. Programverksamhet som kan väcka anstöt hos högerradikala grupperingar eller folkvalda politiker upphör eller plockas

**Carlsson, Hanell och Hansson:** *"Det känns som att jag bara sitter och väntar på att det ska explodera"*

bort, antingen som svar på uttalade politiska krav eller till följd av mer subtila upplevelser av vad som upplevs som "gångbart" i kommunen. Dessa exempel visar på de svårigheter som bibliotekarier idag kan ställas inför när motsättningen mellan å ena sidan professionell identitet och nationella uppdrag och å andra sidan lokalt sammanhang och vardag blir för stor. Det vill säga, när lokala politiska krav formulerade i samspel med en translokal högerradikal diskurs framträder som styrande relationer, vilka överskuggar den nationella och dominerande dokumentbaserade verkligheten som gestaltas framför allt i bibliotekslagen. Som tidigare påpekats av bland andra Rivano Eckerdal (2018) är den professionella identiteten en av bibliotekariers många kollektiva identiteter. Med en agonistisk blick är detta en styrka som kan vitalisera den pågående diskussionen om bibliotekens demokratiska uppdrag och hur det ska utföras. Samtidigt ser vi i våra resultat, tecken på att politiska påtryckningar kan bidra till att den professionella identiteten underordnas andra identiteter och att diskussionen tystnar. Bibliotekarien som både lever och arbetar i den lilla kommunen är ofta synlig och igenkänd i lokalsamhället. Kanske som förälder, fotbollstränare, eller sambo med den lokala butiksinnehavaren. Vilken identitet får då ta störst plats i ett sammanhang där den arabiska sagostunden inte upplevs som "gångbar"?

Resultaten av den här studien visar, att det lokala folkbiblioteket kan utgöra en arena som bidrar till en agonistisk demokratisk utveckling som främjar legitim ideologisk debatt, men att denna roll inte kan tas för given. Den måste fortsätta att försvaras och aktivt upprätthållas, men också omskapas. Mouffe (2016) pekar på att demokratin inte har något slut utan ska förstås som en ständigt pågående process. Med hjälp av en institutionell etnografisk ansats (Smith, 2005; 2006a) synliggörs i analysen maktförhållanden vilket kan bidra till en bättre förståelse för de translokala sociala relationer som omger folkbiblioteket och som påverkar dess roll som demokratibärande institution. Vår studie visar att flera bibliotek idag befinner sig i en ny situation där ett tidigare samskapande av den demokratiska biblioteksinstitutionen med lokalsamhället delvis förbytts till antagonism, något som kräver ett annat förhållningssätt. Detta nya framhäver också behovet av reflektion över arbetsmetoder och bibliotekslagens tyngd. Det väcker även nya och viktiga frågor, både för den biblioteks- och informationsvetenskapliga forskningen och för samhället i stort. Om bibliotek ska ha förutsättningar att vara viktiga demokratibärande institutioner som kan möjliggöra fritt åsiktsutbyte och samtal mellan meningsmotståndare, hur ska vi då undvika att politiska påtryckningar minskar bibliotekens vilja och förmåga att erbjuda detta? Hur kan vi undvika en negativ spiral där minskad öppenhet på viktiga demokratiska arenor förstärker tendenser till antagonism som hotar det demokratiska styrelseskicket?

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# Bibliotekarer som aktivister i Danmark og Sverige: Kompromis og konflikt

**Abstract**

*This article concerns differences in the types of conflicts related to librarians acting as activists in Denmark and Sweden. The conflicts in Denmark are limited and mainly of internal character while the conflicts in Sweden are debated in more broadly in the field.*

*Through the Orders of Worth framework by Boltanski & Thévenot the article analyses interviews with both Danish and Swedish librarians. The analysis shows that activism in Denmark is considered an appropriate description for library work that involves doing* more *than making materials available in working towards social justice. In Sweden, the understanding of activism is more problematic and the Swedish informants in the article do not see themselves as activists, nor the library's work for social justice as activism. The article shows that Danish librarians work strategically with activism through partnerships. In contrast, the Swedish librarians justify their work by focusing on work done for the good of society or certain groups, since this is considered the best possible position in order to avoid conflict, as the library institution itself also is justified from this perspective. Finally, the article discusses the cultural policy-climate in both countries and shows, that libraries and the cultural field in general have been low on society's agenda in Denmark, while there is an ongoing ideological conflict in Sweden between left- and rightwing political actors and between national and local levels of government. Overall, the article shows that the difference in the conflicts related to activism in libraries in Denmark and Sweden must take the cultural policy climate in each country in to account, but that it is important for the understanding of the conflict to discuss how actors justify their work for social change.*

Keywords: Folkebiblioteker, Bibliotekarer, Aktivisme, Kulturpolitik, Orders of Worth, Retfærdiggørelser

## Indledning

Folkebiblioteket har traditionelt været forbundet med objektivitet- og neutralitetsidealer, såsom autoritativ fagkyndighed og politisk upartiskhed (Jochumsen & Hvenegaard Rasmussen, 2006; Skouvig, 2004). Men i dag hævder visse forskere og praktikere, at bibliotekerne tillige bør positionere sig som aktører i bestræbelserne på at fremme forandring og retfærdighed (Beutelspacher & Meschede, 2020; Lankes, 2016). På denne måde udfordres ideen om neutralitet i disse år, og særligt i en svensk sammenhæng er sådanne bestræbelser blevet betegnet aktivisme (Sundeen & Blomgren, 2020). Aktivisme er typisk forbundet med et ønske om at forandre eller gå imod eksisterende strukturer, for at skabe et bedre samfund (Della Porta & Diani, 2020; Lindekilde & Olesen, 2015).

Meget af forskningslitteraturen om bibliotekaraktivisme tager udgangspunkt i en amerikansk kontekst, hvor det kan findes under betegnelsen 'progressive' eller 'critical' librarianship. Den amerikanske bibliotekar og skribent Alfred Kagan (2015) har beskrevet syv progressive biblioteksorganisationers historie og betydning (herunder den svenske organisation Bibliotek i Samhälle, som vi vender tilbage til). Mange af disse organisationer blev grundlagt i 60erne og 70erne, men eksisterer fortsat. Flertallet af disse organisationer har kæmpet for tre forskellige men indbyrdes forbundne sager. For det første har organisationerne været optagede af udjævningen af sociale skel i biblioteksbetjeningen, for det andet af informationsfrihed og anti-censur og for det tredje har organisationerne været præget af en skepsis mod New Public Management. I dag præsenterer det amerikanske Progressive Librarians Guild (PLG) sig således:

> […] libraries are sites where structures of injustice, exploitation, control, and oppression are nourished, normalized and perpetuated. The Progressive Librarians Guild exists to expose and call out librarianship's active and passive complicity and acceptance of those systems, to offer and practice alternatives to those systems, to empower the voices of those excluded from positions of power and/or the historical record and to develop a praxis that contributes to on-going pursuits of human rights and dignity. (Progressive Librarians Guild, 2017)

PLG kæmper stadig mod censur, men den aktuelle formålsparagraf peger på et skift i den forstand, at det ikke længere blot er betjeningen af de underrepræsenterede, der er i fokus, men også synliggørelsen af og kampen mod, at biblioteker er en del af samfundets overordnede undertrykkende strukturer. I dag er der desuden i stigende grad også en holdning til, at bibliotekarer skal være proaktive 'change agents', særligt anført af den amerikanske LIS-forsker, David Lankes (Lankes, 2016). Ifølge Lankes er bibliotekarer potentielle agenter for radikal og positiv forandring, og bør derfor tage del i at arbejde for denne forandring. Denne opfattelse ses også hos IFLA, der i deres 'Global Vision' strategi opfordrer bibliotekarer og biblioteker til at handle (IFLA, 2018). I en nordisk kontekst er litteraturen om bibliotekaraktivisme mere sparsom, men både i Danmark og Sverige har der været en stigende interesse for bæredygtighed og klimaspørgsmål, som også er blevet betegnet som aktivisme (Beutelspacher & Meschede, 2020; Mathiasson & Jochumsen, 2021). Som antydet er det ikke helt ligetil at definere hvordan eller hvornår, der er tale om aktivisme. I en kommende skandinavisk antologi defineres ABM-aktivisme gennem et eller flere af følgende fire kendetegn (Kann-Rasmussen et al., forthcoming):

1) Politisk stillingtagen. Det vil sige en tydelig tilslutning til eller afstandstagen fra et politisk standpunkt. Eksempel når visse museer under den store flygtningestrøm i 2015/2016 hængte "Refugees Welcome"- bannere over indgangen.
2) Åben kobling til aktivistiske dagsordener. Eksempelvis ved at anvende sprog, symboler og slogans fra sociale bevægelser. Således kan man forestille sig, at bibliotekarer, der arbejder for at formidle litteratur om racisme ikke ville blive betegnet som aktivister, men hvis formidlingen inkluderede Black Lives Matter-bannere i biblioteket, ville man kunne betegne det som aktivisme.

3) Bestræbelser på at synliggøre strukturelle uligheder (i modsætning til "blot" at arbejde for inklusion), som også kendetegner mange sociale bevægelsers arbejde. Dette gælder også PLG som beskriver deres formål som at "expose and call out" de undertrykkende strukturer. Også klimabevægelsen arbejder målrettet på at synliggøre problemerne.

4) Aktivt arbejde med personalets egen privilegerede status. Det betegnes som aktivisme når arbejdet for eksempelvis inklusion ikke blot indebærer, at biblioteket formidler eller målretter bestemte services mod underprivilegerede grupper, men også arbejder for at bevidstgøre sig selv eller andre om deres privilegerede status. Eksempler er muligheden for at biblioteker kan blive LGBT-certificeret, fordi en del af certificeringen består af undervisning i en øget bevidsthed omkring normer for minoritetsgjorte og ikke minoritetsgjorte.

Denne artikel er skrevet med udgangspunkt i en undren over den forskel vi mødte, når vi talte om aktivisme med svenske og danske bibliotekarer, udviklere og biblioteksledere i forbindelse med tidligere undersøgelser (Kann-Rasmussen, 2022; Bollerup, 2021). Blandt de danske informanter anses aktivisme som en passende betegnelse for ønsker om positiv forandring og bestræbelser på, at det ikke er tilstrækkeligt blot at stille materiale til rådighed, men at biblioteket også skal gøre noget *mere*. Denne opfattelse er også gældende i Sverige, men begrebet aktivisme er ikke en problemfri betegnelse. De svenske informanter betegner ikke sig selv som værende aktivister, og anser ej heller deres individuelle arbejde eller bibliotekets ansvar for at arbejde med antidiskrimination eller mangfoldighed som aktivisme. Fokus for denne artikel er at forstå, hvorfor de konflikter, der kom til syne i det danske biblioteksfelt var små og afgrænsede, mens det svenske biblioteksfelt tilsyneladende havde modstridende forestillinger, dels om hvad begrebet *bibliotekaraktivisme* betyder og dels om hvorvidt det hører hjemme i bibliotekernes demokratiske samfundsopdrag.

I både Danmark og Sverige diskuteres bibliotekaraktivisme, men på to meget forskellige måder. I Danmark er særligt verdensmål og klima i fokus i de aktivistiske bibliotekarers arbejde. Det kommer både til udtryk i den daglige drift, eksempelvis gennem bæredygtige 'låne-poser' på Brøndby Bibliotek, men også på et strategisk niveau, gennem et biblioteksnetværk for verdensmål, DB2030, der blandt andet arbejder på en verdensmål-certificering for biblioteker (Lerche, 2021; Mønsted, 2019). Der er ligeledes oprettet et regnbue-netværk for biblioteksansatte på tværs af bibliotekerne i Danmark. Dette netværk beskæftiger sig ikke udelukkende med initiativer henvendt specifikt til LGBT+-personer, men arbejder også for at sikre viden og kendskab til LGBT+-problematikker, for at sikre mere synlighed omkring LGBT+ i biblioteksrummet (Centralbibliotekerne, u.å.). På trods af dette netværk, er debatter om bibliotekets rolle i forhold til køn, racisme og etnicitet næsten udeblevne. Engagerede aktører i biblioteketsfeltet opfordrer gennem fagmagasiner deres kolleger og biblioteket som institution til at 'gå forrest' og ikke være 'berøringsangste over for politik' eller at biblioteket trænger til et 'norm-kritisk blik' (Joumaa, 2019; Mønsted, 2020). Der er altså en klar opfordring bibliotekarer imellem til i højere grad at tage stilling til aktuelle emner i den offentlige debat. At give adgang og stille materiale er ikke længere tilstrækkeligt, biblioteker og bibliotekarer må også aktivere og facilitere handling.

I Sverige er billedet af bibliotekaraktivisme anderledes end i Danmark. Hvor klima og bæredygtighed er centrale dagsordener på danske biblioteker, er der i højere grad fokus på nationale, etniske og seksuelle minoriteter i Sverige, bl.a. gennem Biblioteksföreningens såkaldte expertnätvärk som er en " resurs och kunskapsbank men också en möjlighet för dig som arbetar på bibliotek att utvecklas och utbyta kunskaper med andra" (Svensk Biblioteksförening, 2022) og muligheden for at blive LGBT-certificeret (RFSL, 2021). I Sverige har særligt to kritiske positioner deltaget aktivt i debatten om aktivisme, der har kredset om begreber som neutralitet, censur og bibliotekernes rolle som demokratiske institutioner. Med andre ord, hvordan skal man fortolke det svenske biblioteksvæsens rolle som at være en institution for alle?

Flere biblioteker i Skåne, hvor Sverigedemokraterna har politisk flertal, har oplevet, at politikerne har grebet ind i arbejdet med såkaldte biblioteksplaner, som alle svenske kommuner skal udarbejde. Et eksempel på en konflikt er fra Sölvesborg, hvor Sverigedemokraterna er det næststørste parti. Den daværende biblioteksleder i Sölvesborg fortæller, at hun i forbindelse med vedtagelsen af kommunens biblioteksplan fik "tydliga direktiv att stryka skrivningar som handlade om litteratur på minoritetsspråk och om bibliotekens kontakter med invandrarföreningar" (Clemens, 2019). Et andet eksempel er fra Svalöv, hvor kommunens politikere beordrede et facebookindlæg som fejrede bibliotekets LGBT-certificering fjernet (Eriksson, 2021). Disse, og mange andre sager har udløst en debat om Sverigedemokraternas indstilling til begrebet armslængde, idet disse politikere har detaljestyret kulturinstitutionerne på en hidtil uset måde.

En anden debat, der har været diskuteret i det svenske biblioteksfelt, er en debat vedrørende aktivisme og biblioteksorganisationen Biblioteket i Samhälle (BiS). Omdrejningspunktet har været en artikel ved navn *Offentliga bibliotek som arena för aktivism* som har undersøgt "formeringen, och gestaltningen, av aktivistiska ideer inom bibliotekssektorn på 1970- och 2010-talen" (Sundeen & Blomgren, 2020, s. 159). Artiklens fokus er "socialistiska och identitetspolitiskt laddade övertygelsers betydelse för uppfattningen av professionsidentitet och professionspraktiker" (ibid.). Gennem analyser af udvalgte artikler og blogindlæg fra organisationens fagbladet *bis*, identificerer Sundeen og Blomgren et aktivistisk narrativ inden for organisationen. Sundeen og Blomgren undersøger både 1970erne og 2010erne og viser, hvordan de socialistiske begreber som dominerede i 1970erne i dag er afløst af et fokus på antiracisme og ikke-diskriminering. De to forskere konkluderer, at der inden for BiS kan identificeres et narrativ om bibliotekaren som gatekeeper (grindvagt), som kritiseres af de to forskere. Kritikken fokuserer på, at bibliotekarerne anvender deres egne politiske holdninger som grundlag for at udvælge og formidle litteratur i modsætning til en professionsetisk praksis styret af "principper om oberoende og saklikhet" (ibid s. 175). Efterfølgende har der i *bis* været en hård kritik af de to forskere. Forskningsartiklen blev kritiseret for citatpraksis og videnskabelighed (Persson et al., 2021) men også de to forskere er personligt blevet beskyldt for at gå Sverigedemokraternas ærinde (Aghed, 2021; Atlestam, 2020).

Der er altså store forskelle i diskussioner og konflikter, relateret til biblioteksaktivisme i Danmark og Sverige. I Danmark opfordrer engagerede stemmer i biblioteksfeltet aktivt deres kolleger på tværs af biblioteksinstitutionerne til at tage aktivt stilling til andre emner en blot verdensmål og klima og gøre mere for blandt andet kulturel inklusion og minoriteter, mens debatten om aktivisme i en svensk kontekst er optaget af en kritik af Sverigedemokraternas kulturpolitik og om begrebet aktivisme i sig selv, eksempelvis om rimeligheden af resultaterne af Sundeen og Blomgrens analyser af den aktivistiske tjenestemand. I denne artikel vil vi derfor undersøge hvordan aktørerne retfærdiggør deres aktivistiske arbejde, og hvilke kompromisser de indgår for at forstå forskellene i konfliktniveauet. I den forbindelse vil det være frugtbart at fokusere på aktørernes argumenter og retfærdiggørelser i konflikten. Artiklen vil derfor tage udgangspunkt i teorien om retfærdighedsregimer, Orders of Worth (OoW), som er formuleret af Boltanski & Thévenot (2006 første gang udgivet i 1991) og videreudviklet af Boltanski & Chiapello (2005 første gang udgivet i 1999) og Thévenot & Lafaye (Lafaye & Thévenot, 2017 første gang udgivet i 1993). Teorien om retfærdighedsregimer er en sociologisk teori om kritik. Vi finder denne teoretiske ramme særlig anvendelig i undersøgelsen af konflikterne om bibliotekaraktivisme i Sverige og Danmark, idet teorien kan anvendes til at analysere både den kritik og de retfærdiggørelser som aktører fremsætter, når de er uenige eller befinder sig i en konflikt (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006, s. 25). Ligeledes er OoW-frameworket velegnet som ramme til at forstå bibliotekaraktivisme, fordi aktivisme i sig selv er en bestemt form for kritik af tingenes tilstand og status quo. I artiklen vil vi desuden diskutere det kulturpolitiske klima i Danmark og Sverige for en større forståelse af forskellene i konflikterne i de to

lande.

Først vil vi præsentere og beskrive OoW-frameworket som teoretisk ramme og beskrive artiklens empiriske materiale, som består af syv interviews med danske og svenske biblioteksmedarbejdere. Dernæst følger en analyse af interviewmaterialet med udgangspunkt i OoW-frameworket og slutteligt en diskussion af det kulturpolitiske landskab i de to lande, for en dybere forståelse for de forskelle typer af konflikt og kritik som optræder i interviewmaterialet.

**Orders of Worth som teoretisk ramme**
I bogen *On Justification* (2006) beskriver Boltanski & Thévenot et teoretisk framework, Orders of Worth (OoW), som består af en række retfærdighedskompetencer mennesker trækker på, når de befinder sig i konflikt. Det værende både for at kritisere tingenes tilstand og at søge efter enighed. Spørgsmålet om retfærdighed handler om fordelingen af *grandeur* eller *storhed* mellem de aktører, der befinder sig i den enkelte situation. Boltanski & Thévenot konstruerer i bogen en model af i alt seks retfærdighedsregimer: *markedsregime, opinionsregime, det industrielle regime, inspirationsregimet, det domestiske regime, borgerregimet*. Siden er OoW-frameworket blevet videreudviklet med nye regimer: *projektregimet* (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005) og *det grønne regime* (Lafaye & Thévenot, 2017). Boltanski & Thévenot kobler ligeledes en række objekter til de enkelte regimer, som subjekterne gør brug af i en konfliktsituation.

| Regime | Retfærdighedsprincip | Tilstand af storhed | Subjekter | Objekter |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Marked** | Konkurrence | Eftertragtet | Købere, sælgere, konkurrenter | Rigdom, penge |
| **Opinion** | Andres mening, omdømme | Berømt | Berømtheder, fans, journalister | Medier, omtaler |
| **Industriel** | Effektivitet | Professionel, effektiv | Professionelle | Midler til at opnå et mål |
| **Inspiration** | Inspiration | Spontan, uafhængig | Kunstnere, visionære | Drømme, kroppe, sind |
| **Domestisk** | Tradition, det familiære | Hierarki, ærlighed | Familiens overhoved | (Uskrevne) regler og etikette |
| **Borger** | Fællesskabet, for alle | Regelbundet, repræsentativ | Fællesskaber, repræsentanter | Love, rettigheder |
| **Projekt** | Partnerskaber, netværk, samarbejde | Fleksibel, involveret | Partnere | Projekter |
| **Grøn** | Bæredygtighed | Bæredygtig | Beboere | Natur |

Figur 1. Orders of worth (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006; Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005; Lafaye & Thévenot, 2017)

**Elbrønd Nissen and Kann-Rasmussen:** *Bibliotekarer som aktivister i Danmark og Sverige*

Hvert regime anser storhed som noget forskelligt. Eksempelvis anses principper om solidaritet og lighed som storhed i borgerregimet, mens markedsregimet vil anse det som en underminering af menneskets frie valg og konkurrence. To eller flere regimer kan dog også indgå i et simpelt kompromis, der forener modstridende regimer og forhindrer et sammenstød. I et simpelt kompromis, udebliver den konflikt, der ellers ville finde sted, når modstridende regimer mødes, og to retfærdighedsregimer sameksisterer, gennem midlertidig stabilitet. Begrebet aktivisme i sin rene form kan betegnes som et kompromis mellem borgerregimet og inspirationsregimet. Aktivister og protestbevægelser er på den ene side optaget af grupper og deres rettigheder (borgerregimet), men den måde aktivister protesterer på, er ofte retfærdiggjort gennem argumenter fra inspirationsregimet (spontan, kreativ, overraskende og uafhængig af andres anerkendelse). Boltanski & Thévenot anvender en sultestrejke som eksempel på aktivisme som kompromis, idet en individuel person føler så stærkt for en fælles sag, at vedkommende ofrer sig selv (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006, s. 300). I de simple kompromiser sameksisterer modstridende regimer, men der opnås enighed uden at afklare den egentlig konflikt, idet den udskydes. Simple kompromiser er derfor lette ofre for kritik, idet uforløste konflikter altid kan genaktiveres (Reinecke et al., 2017). I sultestrejkeeksemplet kan man for eksempel forestille sig kritik af den sultestrejkende for at tage opmærksomhed fra sagen, når rampelyset rammer individet.

Projektregimet og det grønne regime er nye retfærdighedsregimer, som har lettere ved at indgå kompromisser end de originale seks regimer (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005; Lafaye & Thévenot, 2017; Reinecke et al., 2017). Projektregimet har eksempelvis infiltreret markedsregimet uden at destabilisere den, men har derimod forsynet kapitalismen med nye legitimeringsformer (såsom selvrealisering og netværk) som er bedre egnet til en moderne verden. Ligeledes har det grønne regime haft stor indflydelse på mange virksomheders legitimeringsarbejde, ikke som en erstatning for den finansielle bundlinje (storhed i markedsregimet) eller professionalisme (industriel storhed), men som et supplement, der kan legitimere virksomheden (Reinecke et al., 2017). Disse kompromiser kan siges at være transcenderende kompromiser. Et transcenderende kompromis skaber højere legitimitet end simple kompromiser, og er ikke på samme måde lette at kritisere. De involverede parter i konflikten sigter mod et fælles bedste, og retfærdiggørelser fra flere regimer inkluderes og ligestilles i et overordnet fælles moralsk referencepunkt.

Det empiriske materiale består af syv semistrukturerede interviews med danske og svenske biblioteksmedarbejdere (fire danske, tre svenske), som alle er engagerede i projekter omkring LGBT+, bæredygtighed, minoriteter, inklusion, m.m. Interviewene er foretaget i foråret 2021 og informanterne har svaret på spørgsmål omkring deres arbejde og engagement i de forskellige projekter. Informanterne er danske (DK) eller svenske (SE) bibliotekarer (BI), ledere (LE) og projektudviklere (PU) og er ansat på lokale biblioteker (LO) og regionale (central)biblioteker (RE). Alle informanter er anonymiseret gennem disse koder og en informant med koden (DK-BI-LO) er dermed en Dansk BIbliotekar på et LOkalt bibliotek, mens koden (SE-PU-RE) beskriver en svensk ProjektUdvikler på et REgionalt bibliotek. Da det empiriske materiale består af et begrænset antal interviews, har artiklens analyse naturligvis sine begrænsninger og skal ikke forstås som et forsøg på at beskrive det samlede billede af forskellene i konfliktnivauet i Danmark og Sverige. Artiklen skal i stedet læses som et forsøg på få indblik i individuelle bibliotekarers retfærdiggørelser, og de kulturpoltiske forskelle, der spiller en rolle for informanternes aktivistiske arbejde/agenda. Vi har anvendt de i alt otte retfærdighedsrimer som beskrevet ovenfor i vores læsning af interviewene og har haft fokus på hvilke ord, subjekter og objekter informanterne gør brug af i retfærdiggørelserne af deres aktivistiske arbejde. Når informanterne eksempelvis  retfærdiggør deres arbejde ud fra en henvisning til landets bibliotekslov eller grundlov, anvender de objekter fra borgerregimet. På samme måde kan en henvisning til FN's Verdensmål ses som et objekt fra det grønne regime og OoW-frameworket er dermed særligt relevant som analytisk værktøj frem for en social teori (Larsen, 2016).

Analysens resultater diskuteres i forhold til det kulturpolitiske landskab i de to lande, for at relatere analysens resultater i en større kontekst. De svenske interviewsvar er efterfølgende oversat til dansk i artiklen.

I det følgende afsnit vil vi diskutere hvordan informanterne retfærdiggør deres engagement og aktivistiske arbejde med udgangspunkt i OoW-frameworket, når de befinder sig i en konfliktfyldt situation.

**Retfærdiggørelser og kritik af aktivisme**
På tværs af Danmark og Sverige retfærdiggør informanterne deres aktivistiske engagement ud fra borgerregimet, og dette regime kan derfor siges at være det overordnede regime. Analysen vil derfor tage udgangspunkt i borgerregimet og efterfølgende beskrive to former for kompromiser med borgerregimet: ét problemfrit kompromis og et problematisk kompromis.

*Borgerregimet*
Borgerregimet er kendetegnet ved et fokus på solidaritet, fællesskab og kollektivets interesser. Subjekter med storhed er repræsentanter for den fælles sag (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006). Man kan sige at store dele af den offentlige sektor, og dermed også biblioteksvæsenet, retfærdiggøres gennem borgerregimet, idet bibliotekets opgave er at give fri og lige adgang til *alle* borgere i samfundet og repræsentere et fællesskab (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006, s. 187; Larsen, 2016). Retfærdiggørelser fra borgerregimet kommer til udtryk gennem informanternes udsagn om, at folkebiblioteket skal være for alle og at deres rolle er, at sikre lige adgang til viden og information, at stille materialer til fri rådighed og at varetage borgerne interesser, men også gennem forsikringer om, at selvom en bestemt dagsorden kan virke aktivistisk, er det med fællesskabet og *for alle* for øje. Selvom informanterne på tværs af landene retfærdiggør deres arbejde ud fra borgerregimet, er der stor forskel i den måde informanterne taler om aktivisme på og om hvorvidt informanterne anser sig selv som værende aktivister. Informanterne i Danmark betegner sig selv som aktivister, fordi aktivisme er forbundet med at gøre noget "mere" end blot at stille til rådighed. En informant udtrykker det således:

> "De [kolleger] kan godt se, at vi skal arbejde med verdensmål, men det er lidt ovre i den her kasse med, at hvis vi formidler noget, så kan vi sætte kryds ved det, klappe os selv på ryggen, og så kan vi koncentrere os om noget andet. Men jeg mener, at vi skal være en del af løsningen på verdensmålene. Det er ikke noget, hvor vi laver én udstilling eller ét foredrag, og så er det slut. Det her er noget, vi bliver ved med at gøre, kontinuerligt" (DK-PU-LO).

I modsætning til de danske informanter, anser de svenske informanter ikke sig selv eller deres arbejde som værende aktivistisk, men i stedet som en almen, menneskelig selvfølgelighed. Informanterne beskriver deres arbejde med aktivistiske dagsordener således:

> "Alt er ikke relativt i bibliotekerne. Visse ting sorterer vi bort. Det vi ved, er dårligt. Til andre ting siger vi 'ja!' Det her skal vi stræbe mod. Og der findes meget tydelige incitamenter til, at vi skal skabe et bedre klima. Der er et stærkt mandat. Så findes der forskellige grader af engagement, men der er ikke noget subversivt i at arbejde med klimaet på nogen måde. (…) At sige at man vil arbejde for et bedre klima, det er en almen overenskomst" (SE-PU-RE1).

> "Jeg synes ikke klima er et kontroversielt spørgsmål, selvom det måske er det nogen steder" (SE-PU-RE2).

> "I mange kommuner har man gjort et meget aktivt LGBT-arbejde, for eksempel er der medarbejdere, der vil have knapper med regnbue-symboler. Men i stedet kunne man gå tilbage til

grundloven, som handler om alle menneskers ligeværd og stræben efter ligestilling og anti-diskrimination, og se LGBT-arbejde som en del af det" (SE-LE-LO).

De svenske informanter anser arbejdet med eksempelvis klima eller LGBT+ som en 'del af jobbet', idet biblioteket skal varetage *almene* interesser og være for *alle*. Retfærdiggørelserne fra borgerregimet er tydelige hos de svenske informanter, og idet biblioteket også kan retfærdiggøres ud fra borgerregimet, opstår der derfor ingen konflikt. Dette underbygges ligeledes af Larsen (2016), der viser, at kulturinstitutioner møder kritik fra offentligheden når institutionerne *ikke* retfærdiggør deres arbejde ud fra borgerregimet, men andre regimer, idet offentligheden anser kulturinstitutionerne som civile institutioner og dermed også kræver, at institutionerne varetager det fælles bedste.

*Det problemfrie kompromis: borgerregimet, projektregimet og det grønne regime*
De danske informanter beskriver, hvordan de lykkes med aktivistiske projekter og initiativer ved at indgå partnerskaber med relevante partnere uden for biblioteket, idet partnerskaber kan legitimere den aktivistiske dagsorden. Informanterne beskriver således, hvordan den succesfulde aktivistiske dagsorden beror på et kompromis mellem borgerregimet og projektregimet. Projektregimet er kendetegnet ved aktivitet – at indgå i projekter og partnerskaber, at skabe netværk og altid at have noget i *pipelinen* (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005, s. 110). Om nødvendigheden og mulighederne gennem partnerskaber siger informanterne:

> "… dem der kan møde litteraturen og fællesskabet – socialklasse fem, folk med indvandrerbaggrund, der ikke er vokset op med et bibliotek, for hvem et bibliotek er en autoritet måske, eller en fremmed institution. Det kræver, at vi forlader vores bygninger og kommer ud i samfundet og går i partnerskaber med andre. (…) Jeg tror ikke nødvendigvis på, at vi hopper på en ladcykel fyldt med bøger og cykler ud i en ghetto. Det er fint nok, der er ikke noget galt med det. Men hvis vi for alvor skal have bundtræk, skal vi gå i samarbejde med relevante partnere" (DK-LE-RE).

> "Hvordan får vi samarbejder på tværs - det har stået i samtlige strategier, jeg har arbejdet under i alle de år. Hvordan går vi ud og laver nogle relationer med andre end dem, vi plejer at lege med? Vi har haft en forståelse af, at hvis vi vil løse tingene, så skal det ske i fællesskab, den har vi haft langt før, det blev skrevet ind i et verdensmål" (DK-PU-LO).

Gennem et transcenderende kompromis, kan biblioteket dermed både være relevant for lokalsamfundet og varetage borgernes interesser (borgerregimet), og indgå relevante partnerskaber med organisationer og aktører uden for biblioteket, i tråd med projektregimet (Boltanski og Chiapello, 2005). I interviewene kan også koblingen til det grønne regime identificeres. Det grønne regime trækker på retfærdiggørelser om bæredygtighed, og storhed opnås ved at gøre noget godt for klimaet (Lafaye & Thévenot, 2017). I interviewene kommer retfærdiggørelser fra det grønne regime særligt til udtryk gennem arbejdet med klima i relation til FNs verdensmål. I både Danmark og Sverige beskrives verdensmålene som en måde at øge bibliotekets legitimering i kommunen:

> "Agenda 2030 forstærker bibliotekets legitimitet. I mange kommuner har man en 2030-koordinator. Man skriver det ind i generelle policydokumenter i kommunen. Og så kan biblioteket sige at "ja!" Her har I et fantastisk eksempel på deleøkonomi som vi har været i gang med vældig længe. Social bæredygtighed, check, check, check" (SE-PU-RE1)

> "Ud fra et biblioteksperspektiv er det verdensmålene, der er interessante (…) og der ligger noget i verdensmålene, hvor vi allerede kan sætte hak ved en masse ting" (DK-PU-LO)

Når den aktivistiske dagsorden i biblioteket retfærdiggøres ud fra borgerregimet (værdi for alle) og kobles til projektregimet (gennem partnerskaber) og det grønne regime (verdensmål og klima) og

dermed indgår et transcenderende kompromis mellem de tre regimer og en fælles sag, styrkes legitimiteten af den aktivistiske ageren udadtil (Reinecke et al., 2017). Konflikter mellem de tre regimer fremstår små og irrelevante i det transcenderende kompromis og der er i stedet tale om en bred og inklusiv legitimitet, fordi der skabes ækvivalens mellem de forskellige retfærdighedsregimer. Det reducerer kravene om retfærdiggørelse hos aktørerne, fordi der opnås en lige fordeling af storhed i alle involverede regimer og kritikken udebliver (Reinecke et al., 2017).

Gennem interviewene bliver det således tydeligt, at de danske informanter arbejder mere strategisk med aktivisme gennem ovenstående kompromiser, end de svenske informanter. I de svenske udsagn står retfærdiggørelserne fra borgerregimet meget tydeligt frem. Det ses blandt andet når de svenske informanter anvender objekter fra borgerregimet til at underbygge deres retfærdiggørelser, eksempelvis ved at henvise til den svenske bibliotekslov, grundloven og FN:

> "… [i den svenske grundlov beskrives] alle menneskers ligeværd, alles ret til uddannelse, arbejde, sundhed; der er spørgsmål om ligestilling, antidiskriminering (…) Så når vi arbejder med ligestilling og antidiskrimination er vi ikke aktivister, men vi følger vores opdrag, som offentlig sektor" (SE-LE-LO).

> "… [verdensmålene] kommer fra FN. Det er jo en almen deklaration ligesom menneskerettighederne. Det er et fælles udgangspunkt, som alle har tilsluttet sig og det er i vores dokumenter, når det gælder vores regionale udviklingsstrategi" (SE-PU-RE1).

> "[LGBT+] er en af mine opgaver, eftersom jeg arbejder med fokus på tilgængelighed og når vi taler om tilgængelighed, udgår vi fra de syv diskrimineringsgrunde [henvisning til svensk diskrimineringslovgivning]" (SE-PU-RE2).

Som det ses forbliver det overordnede regime hvorfra arbejdet med klima, LGBT+ eller antidiskrimination retfærdiggøres, borgerregimet. Der opstår derfor ikke noget nyt og overordnet fælles moralsk referencepunkt, der forener storhed mellem modstridende regimer, som kendetegner det transcenderende kompromis. Når de danske informanter arbejder strategisk med aktivisme gennem transcenderende kompromiser, fastholder de svenske informanter retfærdiggørelserne fra borgerregimet, som det overordnede regime.

*Det problematiske kompromis: borgerregimet og inspirationsregimet*
Når aktivisme retfærdiggøres inden for borgerregimet eller som et kompromis med det grønne regime eller projektregimet, er det for det meste uproblematisk. Som vist ovenfor, kan arbejdet med en aktivistisk dagsorden ligefrem styrkes gennem transcenderende kompromiser, og det aktivistiske arbejde kan legitimeres, ved at få endnu et argument koblet til sig. Sådan forholder det sig ikke, når det gælder andre kompromiser. Flere informanter beskriver en konflikt mellem borgerregimet og inspirationsregimet (det følelsesmæssige), der udspiller sig, når informanternes personlige relation til den aktivistiske dagsorden bliver fremhævet:

> "Man har noget indeni, hvor man henter drivkraften. Jeg kan da huske, da jeg var teenager i den søgende tid og man ikke fandt noget som helst man kunne spejle sig i. […] Og det er jo en drivkraft, at jeg vil, at unge nu skal kunne finde sig selv og blive afspejlet, når de kommer ind på et bibliotek" (SE-PU-RE2).

> "Jeg er en queer-person, og italesætter mig også som sådan. Og det betyder, at jeg har et fokus på køns- og seksualitetsproblematikker. Altså hvordan køn er repræsenteret i biblioteksrummet, det kan jeg slet ikke slippe, fordi jeg selv har den" (DK-LE-RE).

Fordi informanterne selv er LGBT+-personer, oplever de kritik fra kollegerne som begrundes i borgerregimet, fordi det kan virke som om informanterne arbejder for deres personlige sag og ikke kan gemme egne følelser væk. Kritikken fra kollegerne går derfor på, at der er tale om at skyde gråspurve med kanoner, når informanterne arbejder med øget fokus på LGBT+-personer (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006, s. 252) og at informanterne er for følelsesladede. Denne konflikt beskrives både af svenske og danske informanter:

> "Ved du hvad det sværeste er, hvad den største modstand er, i hverdagen. Det er dem, der siger: Jamen det der, det kan vi da allerede. Vi behandler da alle mennesker lige. Den der selvgodhed – når vi kommer og siger, 'nej det kan I faktisk ikke. Vi er nødt til at gøre noget aktivt for, at der sker en forandring' " (SE-PU-RE2).

> "Kollegerne bliver lidt trætte, møre i hovederne og synes de har nok problemer med vagtplanerne op til påsken og... Det [at påpege uretfærdighed] kan nogle gange synes som et add-on, som der ikke nødvendigvis er tid til" (DK-LE-RE).

Der er forskel på, hvilke retfærdiggørelser danske og svenske informanter trækker på, når de bliver mødt med denne form for kritik. I Danmark kobler informanterne sig i højere grad deres aktivistiske dagsorden til projektregimet og ofte også det grønne regime og indgår et transcenderende kompromis, mens det dominerende regime blandt de svenske informanter er borgerregimet. Når de danske informanter kritiseres for, at deres aktivistiske dagsorden blot er et udtryk for personlig interesse, går informanterne strategisk til værks og anvender partnerskaber uden for biblioteket til at legitimere den givne aktivistiske dagsorden. Denne praksis kan beskrives som *inside activism* (Olsson & Hysing, 2012), hvor en *inside activist* er en person, som er engageret i netværk og organisationer i civilsamfundet, har en formel position i offentlig administration og som agerer strategisk indefra og bruger sin position på lige fod med personlige værdier, i arbejdet mod positiv forandring. Omvendt er retfærdiggørelserne fra borgerregimet så stærke hos de svenske informanter, at det bliver svært at indgå kompromis med andre regimer. Konflikterne omkring aktivisme og bibliotekets rolle er derfor stærkere i Sverige, fordi de modstridende retfærdiggørelser i kompromiset mellem borgerregimet og inspirationsregimet genaktiveres igen og igen. Fordi det ikke er muligt at indgå et transcenderende kompromis og dermed opnå stærk legitimitet, forbliver kompromiset og legitimiteten skrøbelig, fordi informanterne aldrig udløser spændingen mellem konkurrerende former for storhed, men forbliver i hvert sit modstridende regime og i stedet foregiver, at de er enige om et overordnet fælles moralsk referencepunkt (Reinecke et al., 2017). Dermed svækkes legitimiteten, hvis det er inspirationsregimet, der kobles på borgerregimet.

**Kompromis eller konflikt**
Der er ingen store forskelle mellem Danmark og Sverige i den måde vores informanter har engageret sig i LGBT+ rettigheder eller i klimasagen. Internt i bibliotekerne er der heller ingen store forskelle i den måde informanterne beskriver deres oplevelse af konflikter med kolleger, der synes at deres engagement bliver for meget eller for personligt. Til gengæld viser analysen af retfærdiggørelserne, at der er forskelle i den måde de svenske og danske bibliotekarer forsøger at retfærdiggøre deres engagement, ved at indgå kompromiser mellem borgerregimet og andre regimer. Vores analyse viser, at de aktivistiske bibliotekarer i Danmark lykkes med at legitimere deres engagement i LGBT+ rettigheder, klima og verdensmål gennem transcenderende kompromiser. Men hvorfor sker dette ikke i lige så høj grad i Sverige? Måske er det danske biblioteksvæsen i højere grad optaget af at koble sig til dagsordener uden for biblioteket som følge af en svækket legitimitet generelt i samfundet? (for en diskussion af de danske bibliotekers legitimitet se fx Jochumsen og Hvenegaard Rasmussen 2006; eller Kann-Rasmussen 2019). Men en anden forklaring kan også være at det stærke svenske fokus på

borgerregimet og de svenske informanters afvisning af at være aktivister, går hånd i hånd med den kulturpolitiske situation i de to lande.

Både i Sverige og Danmark er bibliotekerne reguleret af en nationalt forankret bibliotekslov, men har deres forvaltningsmæssige ophæng i kommunerne. Den danske bibliotekslov er fra 2000. Ifølge loven skal folkebibliotekerne *"fremme oplysning, uddannelse og kulturel aktivitet ved at stille bøger, tidsskrifter, lydbøger og andet egnet materiale til rådighed"* (Lov Om Biblioteksvirksomhed, 2000). Den danske bibliotekslov betoner således i sin formålsparagraf, at bibliotekernes opgave er at stille til rådighed. Dog har loven ikke forhindret de danske biblioteker i at være opsøgende, brugerinddragende og, som det ses ovenfor, at være proaktive i forhold til at bidrage til løsningen af samfundets problemer. Den svenske lov om biblioteker trådte i kraft i 1996. Formålsparagraffen angiver, at folkebiblioteket skal virke for det demokratiske samfunds udvikling ved at bidrage til formidling af viden og fri meningsdannelse. Herudover er det en opgave at fremme litteraturens stilling og interessen for dannelse, oplysning og forskning samt for kulturel virksomhed. En interessant ændring fra den oprindelige lov til den gældende lov fra 2014 er, at ordet "medborgere" erstattes af "alle" for at understrege, at man ikke behøver svensk statsborgerskab for at kunne bruge biblioteket (Riksdagsförvaltningen, 2013; Rivano Eckerdal, 2017). Den svenske lov angiver, at alle kommuner skal udarbejde en biblioteksplan. Ifølge Engström (2021) er disse planer sammen med loven bibliotekernes vigtigste styringsdokumenter, idet bibliotekarerne internaliserer indholdet i disse planer. I Danmark er det ikke et krav at kommunerne udarbejder planer for bibliotekerne, men mange kommuner udarbejder lokale bibliotekspolitikker. På denne måde ligner bibliotekernes vilkår i de to lande hinanden.

Forskellene kan ses i landenes nationale kulturpolitik. I Sverige blev en national kulturpolitik vedtaget i 2009. Af denne fremgår nogle overgribende nationale mål:
"*Kulturen ska vara en dynamisk, utmanande och obunden kraft med yttrandefriheten som grund. Alla ska ha möjlighet att delta i kulturlivet. Kreativitet, mångfald och konstnärlig kvalitet ska prägla samhällets utveckling*" (Regeringskansliet, 2009).

I Danmark findes ikke en national overordnet kulturpolitik (Sokka et al., 2022), og forfatterne af denne artikel er ikke stødt på aktører i biblioteksfeltet, som henviser til andre nationale politiske mål eller politikker end biblioteksloven. Derudover peger den danske kulturpolitiske forsker Casper Hvenegaard Rasmussen (2018) på, at det kulturpolitiske område i Danmark i høj grad har mistet status de seneste år. Dette dokumenteres ved at både midler og debat om kulturpolitiske emner er faldet støt i mange år. Hvenegaard Rasmussen forklarer dette fald med blandt andet en "usikkerhed om, hvad der er målet med kulturpolitikken" (s. 242). Dette forklarer også hvorfor konfliktniveauet i Danmark er lavt.

Som nævnt, har netop biblioteksplanerne i kommuner med stærk Sverigedemokratisk repræsentation været genstand for en del af debatterne om aktivisme, og bibliotekernes engagement i arbejdet med især etniske minoriteter og LGBT+ rettigheder. Dette mener vi, kan have rod i den store forskel, der er mellem de nationale overgribende mål, der som man kan se ovenfor lægger vægt på mangfoldighed og udfordrende kunst og Sverigedemokraternas kulturpolitik. Sverigedemokraternas syn på kultur og kulturpolitik er meget langt fra de nationale mål (Lindsköld, 2015). I partiets valgmanifest fra 2018 kan man læse: *"Vår vision är att den svenska kulturen ska erkännas och blomstra istället för att kvävas av vänsterliberala våta filtar eller bildningsförakt"* (Sverigedemokraterna, 2018). I Sverigedemokraternas kommunalpolitik står: *"Ett av kulturpolitikens främsta syften är att stärka intresset för och kunskapen om svensk och lokal kultur, liksom att slå vakt om de djupa värden som det kulturella arvet innehåller. Detta bidrar till att återskapa en gemensam identitet i vårt samhälle och underlättar dessutom assimilering av nytillkomna"*

(Sverigedemokraterna, 2016). Det nationale fokus på mangfoldighed og det Sverigedemokratiske fokus på svensk kultur som et middel til at assimilere indvandrere, er tæt på uforeneligt. Dette sætter bibliotekerne i en vanskelig situation, hvor politiske modsætninger mellem nationale og lokale kulturpolitiske aktører umuliggør en neutral position, fordi formidling til minoriteter bliver et politisk konfliktområde. Dette diskuteres ligeledes af den svenske kulturpolitiske forsker Tobias Harding (2021), som viser, at der pågår en kulturkrig mellem højre- og venstrefløjen i dagens Sverige. I artiklen beskrives det, at den konsensus, der har præget kulturpolitikken tidligere er under pres, og både højre- og venstrefløjen kritiserer hinanden for at politisere kulturen. Harding beskriver, at særligt forestillingen om et multikulturelt samfund, kontroversiel moderne kunst og armslængdeprincippet står i centrum af kampen. Sverigedemokraterna har, ifølge Harding, mindre respekt for armslængdeprincippet, og netop hændelserne i Sölvesborg, hvor Sverigedemokraterna har forlangt at biblioteket skulle ændre passager om minoritetssprogede materialer, fik den daværende kulturminister (fra Miljöpartiet) til at gå i rette med partiets syn på armslængdeprincippet. Dette illustrerer også konflikten mellem kulturpolitikken på det nationale niveau (kulturministeren) og politisk styring i de kommuner, hvor Sverigedemokraterna har en fremtrædende rolle. Når forskellen mellem national og lokal kulturpolitik bliver for store, er bibliotekets rolle og bibliotekarernes position meget vanskelig. På den måde kan man forstå de svenske bibliotekars retfærdiggørelser fra borgerregimet som den bedste position, de kan vælge i den politiserede og i forvejen konfliktfyldte situation. Folkebiblioteket er grundet i værdier fra borgerregimet, og derfor er argumenter fra borgerregimet med til at mindske risikoen for kritik.

**Konklusion**
Fokus for denne artikel er at forstå, hvorfor de konflikter, der kom til syne i det danske biblioteksfelt var små og afgrænsede, mens det svenske biblioteksfelt tilsyneladende havde modstridende forestillinger, dels om hvad begrebet *bibliotekaraktivisme* betyder og dels om hvorvidt det hører hjemme i bibliotekernes demokratiske samfundsopdrag. Artiklen undersøger derfor, hvordan aktørerne retfærdiggør deres aktivistiske arbejde, for at forstå forskellene i konfliktniveauet.

I artiklen udfolder vi Boltanski og Thévenots (2006) teori om retfærdiggørelser og kritik i en analyse, der fokuserer på de involverede aktører og deres retfærdiggørelser af deres arbejde. I Danmark anses aktivisme som en passende betegnelse for at arbejde for positiv forandring og bestræbelser på, at det ikke er tilstrækkeligt blot at stille materiale til rådighed, men at biblioteket også skal gøre noget mere, især i forhold til klimaforandringer og verdensmål, men også i forhold til strukturelle uligheder i samfundet. Denne opfattelse er også gældende i Sverige, men begrebet aktivisme er ikke problemfrit og begrebet opfattes meget anderledes end i Danmark. De danske informanter betegner aktivt sig selv som aktivister i mod sætning til de svenske informanter, der ikke anser deres individuelle arbejde eller bibliotekets overordnede ansvar for antidiskrimination eller lighed som aktivisme.

Analysen har vist, at hvor de danske informanter i høj grad arbejder strategisk ved at koble sig til andre regimer og på den måde indgår stærke kompromiser med høj legitimitet, fastholder de svenske informanter retfærdiggørelserne fra borgerregimet, bl.a. gennem at koble arbejdet til svensk lovgivning. Denne position anses for at være den bedste position at indtage for at undgå kritik og konflikt, da folkebiblioteket som institution også har hjemme i dette regime. Artiklen diskuterer ligeledes forskellene i det kulturpolitiske klima i de to lande og viser, at bibliotekerne og kulturområdet i det hele taget har ligget lavt på samfundets dagsorden i Danmark (Hvenegaard Rasmussen (2018), hvorimod der i Sverige pågår en kulturkrig både mellem venstre- og højrefløjen og mellem det nationale og visse dele af det lokale niveau (Harding, 2021). Bibliotekernes aktiviteter er dermed blevet politiserede, samtidig med at visse bibliotekar selv er blevet udsat for kritik for at agere politisk.

Samlet set har denne artikel vist, at forskellen i konflikterne om aktivisme og biblioteker i Danmark og Sverige både må tage højde for det kulturpolitiske klima i det enkelte land, men også i den måde aktørerne retfærdiggør deres daglige arbejde for social forandring, over for både borgere, kolleger og samfund.

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*Book review:*

# New health information literacies

*Anna-Maija Multas (2022). New health information literacies. A nexus analytical study. Acta universitatis Ouluensis B Humaniora 192, University of Oulu, Oulu*

The thesis consists of a long introductory chapter and four co-written individual articles, with Master of Arts Anna-Maija Multas as the first author of all four. The thesis has the title *New health information literacies. A nexus analytical study* and it addresses a topic of great importance – health information literacy in an increasingly digital society. The work aims to improve our understanding of new health information literacy as a sociocultural phenomenon. Anna-Maija Multas does this by examining health information literacy, both as a theoretical construct and as everyday online information practices. The thesis, like all theses, has strengths and weaknesses, but the strengths unquestionably outweigh the weaknesses.

The work has a qualitative character and aims to gain new insights rather than measuring them quantitatively. The thesis draws primarily on previous research from new literacy, practice theory, sociocultural theory, and health literacy. In her account of earlier research, Anna-Maija Multas combines a large number of earlier studies. This earlier work is combined with and placed within the analytical framework of nexus analysis, a form of mediated discourse analysis.

The nexus analysis consists of three stages: engaging, navigating and changing. During the engaging phase, the social action to be studied is identified, as well as the relevant parts and actors within this social action. The navigating phase is the main part of the nexus analysis and consists of data collection and analysis. Key elements in the analysis are historical bodies of the investigated people, the interaction order of the people in, and the discourses at play. The final phase is changing and the name indicates the underlying idea of nexus analysis to bring change in the practice of nexus.

The empirical work has been divided into two phases: Phase I is a systematic review of current research on health literacy in an online context. Through the systematic review, published in two separate articles, Anna-Maija Multas guides us through a huge amount of earlier literature. Phase 2, on the other hand, empirically explores young people's everyday discourses and health information literacy practices through interviews, video diaries, and YouTube videos of three video bloggers. The results from phase 2 are also published in two articles.

The thesis is a contribution to the growing body of information literacy research from a sociocultural and practice-oriented perspective. The most important contribution of this work to information studies is that it extends the scope of information literacy studies to various aspects of information creation, especially in relation to health information video blogging by young people. Another contribution is the analysis of the mechanism of authority construction.

The thesis provides many insights and makes without doubt an important contribution to information studies. Anna-Maija Multas has taken on a great task to include not only information studies research in the discussion, but also research from related fields interested in information health literacies. The topic of the thesis is of high relevance for today's society, and I am very pleased that a doctoral student in information studies is taking on a research problem that is important not only to her own research discipline, but to the academy as a whole. However, the research problem could have been described even more clearly at the beginning of the thesis.

In a subject like information studies, which depends so much on the publication of articles, it is sometimes difficult to make a whole out of the individual articles. This problem is solved very well in this thesis. Chapter Two presents a large number of studies in a coherent manner. When I first started reading the thesis, I sometimes thought that the chapter on previous research focused too much on descriptions, but by the end of the chapter it is clear how Multas also relates to the earlier research. Chapter Two forms the theoretical framing of the thesis and it is at the forefront of information studies.

The method chapter (Chapter Three) is very clear and nexus analysis is introduced as the framework. For me, nexus analysis has been a new acquaintance and the way it is presented in the thesis is an important contribution to information studies. The systematic review is described well, and the data collection on the everyday discourse and practice of information literacy among young video bloggers is carefully described with enough details and reflections. My objection to chapter three is that I am not convinced that phase one fits into the nexus analysis (as a phase of engagement).

The findings are presented in a transparent and convincing manner. A novel finding is the notion of information creation as a part of health literacy. I would also like to mention how Anna-Maija Multas highlights the different types of information - first-hand, second-hand, or a mix of both - and how these relate to the mechanism of authority construction. The ways in which reference to information can be seen as recourse to discourses that sometimes conflict with each other, as well as the different positioning of participants in relation to their expected audience, are central insights. Also of particular note are the reflections on the relationship between information literacy practices learned in school and the ways in which these are embodied and manifested in video blogs. These are all very interesting and important findings for information studies.

The conclusion is the last chapter. I have been a PhD student myself and I know how tired one can be at the stage of writing the conclusion. Therefore, I understand that the conclusion is only a page and a half long. However, that is a pity, because ideally the conclusion should be the grand finale of the

thesis. Instead, the conclusion is primarily a short summary. This is definitively not unique for this thesis, but is a quite common problem of theses.

My main objection to the thesis is what I consider to be an imbalance in the empirical focus of the thesis. I argue that the so-called first phase of the thesis – the systematic literature review - takes up too much space in the study (two articles) at the expense of what I consider to be the main contribution of the thesis – the second phase. This is also something that Anna-Maija Multas actually write herself. This does not mean that I think the systematic literature reviews are weak or that they do not contribute, but rather it means that not enough attention has been paid to the second phase of the thesis. The main findings of the thesis are based on three participants' sayings and doings. Although this is a qualitative work, the results could have been even more convincing if the empirical base had been stronger.

A note on structure: The summary of findings (Chapter Four) and the discussion (Chapter Five) is separated from each other. That is the traditional way to structure a thesis – to separate the result from the discussion. However, in a qualitative study such as this, I would say that such a separation is difficult to maintain. But the respondent argued very good case for this structure.

According to the guidelines, "University of Oulu Graduate School has defined that the doctoral thesis should show evidence that the doctoral student can independently and critically apply scientific research methods and generate new scientific knowledge." Anna-Maija Multas' *New health information literacies. A nexus* study undoubtedly meets all the requirements for a dissertation as formulated by University of Oulu Graduate School. At the public defence, we went over the various parts of the thesis. I also find the respondents' ability to publicly defend her thesis without any doubt satisfactory.

*Declaration of interest*
Olof Sundin served as external examiner at Anna-Maija Multas' thesis defence. The review does in large correspond to the opponent's formal statement as required by the Doctoral Education Committee at the University of Oulu.

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*Book review:*

# Development of online research skills among lower secondary school students

*Tuulikki Alamettälä (2022) Development of online research skills among lower secondary school students: The roles of formal instruction and personal factors. Tampere University Dissertations; No. 537, Tampere University, Tampere*

**Overview of the dissertation**

Tuulikki Alamettälä's doctoral dissertation takes on a current, important and interesting research task: understanding and developing students' online research skills through Guided Inquiry Design (GID), carrying out teaching interventions. The study adopts the case study design with multiple data collection and analysis methods, addressing the research problems from several aspects. The study was conducted as a longitudinal two-year case study, in one Finnish lower secondary school, and quasi-experimental design was used to investigate the effects of the interventions over a period of time. The GID-model was experienced as promising among the participating teachers and the pre- and post-interventions showed a positive effect on students' online research skills, especially on a short term basis. The effects were most evident among students who were less active online searchers and social media users, and among students with a positive attitude to more traditional teacher-centred learning. There is a great variation is the students' online research skills and self-efficacy was clearly a key factor associated with these skills.

The results contribute to further development of pedagogical practices in relation to supporting students online research skills. The dissertation consists of a thesis summary, and four papers, two conference papers and two journal articles, all referee-based, international publications, and Tuulikki Alamettälä is first author, all co-authored with Eero Sormunen, and one also together with Md Arman Hossain.

In this review I will first present and discuss the contents from a more overall perspective, the research topic and motivation, the pedagogical framework Guided Inquiry Design, the research context and methodological choices, and then present the included papers more in detail. Finally I will summarise my impressions of the dissertation work.

**A challenging and important topic**
The research topic is well motivated and its importance clearly outlined. The literature review showed that young people have shortcomings in their online research skills although they have used the Internet for all their lives and the online environment is a natural part of everything they do. The main challenges are related to locating information, evaluating the quality and reliability of the information, and in connecting information from several information sources. Previous research covers to some extent what are the factors affecting the online research skills, such as personal factors, especially self-efficacy, as well as attitudes and gender. Still, there is limited research on how young people develop their online research skills and why there are individual differences. It is also shown that it is difficult to develop suitable pedagogical models to support teaching and learning of online research skills, and fairly little is known about the development work of new pedagogical models that can be used for these purposes.

The knowledge gaps mentioned above, underlines that the topic of the dissertation is current and important, but it is also challenging. Online research skills are multi-dimensional and therefore also difficult to study. It is hard to measure all that influences these skills and in what ways. In this study, online research skills are defined with help from frameworks from two different disciplines. Online research became a key concept in educational sciences when reading and comprehension of online material became more common (Leu et al. 2011; 2015), and focus shifted from managing traditional reading, towards the importance of effective information search, selection of relevant sources, and synthesizing information from multiple sources. The other framework used in this study is the information literacy framework, a key concept within library and information science, and it has been studied for decades. Still, the information literacy concept is known to have many different definitions depending on context, and there are various information literacy scales. Organisations developing library and information services (e.g. ACRL, CILIP), as well as international organisations, such as UNESCO, have emphasized the importance of information literacy for lifelong learning and informed citizenship, applying the more generic understanding of information literacy as a set of information skills (ACRL 2015, CILIP 2018, Grizzle et al. 2014). The criticism towards capturing information literacy in a simple list of skills is acknowledged in the theoretical background of this work, referring to e.g. Limberg et al. 2012 and Tuominen et al. 2005, who emphasise the need to understand information literacy in context, and as sociotechnical practice. However, the skill-based conception of information literacy was chosen for this work as it is in line with the context studied, the Finnish school curriculum identifies information literacy as information competencies.

Connecting online research from educational science, and the generic information literacy concept from library and information science, gives this study a good ground for managing the multi-dimensional study object. The dissertation doesn't discuss how the research traditions possibly overlap, but it could be interesting to elaborate how interdisciplinary research between these areas could advance the support of young people's information literacy, an increasingly important topic for society at large, not only in educational context. An additional challenge to this topic is that while dealing with a multi-dimensional concept, online research skills, it is difficult to measure, and the choice of suitable research methods is difficult. For example, Alamettälä brings forward that the relationship of students' computer use with computer and information literacy has been widely

studied, but with mixed results. This is an important note, and it would be interesting to elaborate further on the topic, what are the reasons for this?

**The Guided Inquiry Design**

The pedagogical framework of this study is the Guided Inquiry Design, introduced by Kuhlthau, Maniotes and Caspari (2012; 2015), applying constructivist pedagogy theories and the information seeking process (ISP) model. The GID model has been developed especially for information literacy instruction with the aim to engage students in the information inquiry process through instructive interventions, offering targeted support for the different phases of the process. The model involves eight different key phases with focus on the phases before the information search, making students better prepared for information-gathering activities. Also other pedagogical models are presented, but the GID model was chosen because it is anchored in extensive empirical research and there are detailed guides for its implementation. However, the model is developed in the context of the North-American school traditions and is less known and studied outside the USA. In this respect this dissertation study contributes with testing the model in other school traditions, bringing it into the Finnish school context, giving a good opportunity to discuss how generic or universal the model is.

**Research context, design, and methodological choices**

The research context is the Finnish school system, and more specifically, the lower secondary school. In 2014, the national core curriculum introduced seven cross-cutting competencies extending across all school subjects, and one of them was multiliteracy. Multiliteracy is defined as a set of competencies needed for accessing, interpreting, producing, and evaluating information in various forms and formats. In this respect, the Finnish school system was a very good ground for testing how the teachers work with literacy instruction in general, and pedagogical designs for online research instruction in particular. The overarching goal for this dissertation work was therefore to develop a better understanding of the roles of formal learning and personal factors in learning online research skills. The research questions focused on finding out how teachers develop their practices of instruction in online research, after having been introduced to the GID framework, and examine the effects of the intervention on the students. The study also focused on students' skill profiles and personal factors that are associated with how students' online research skills are developed.

The research strategy is based on a case-study approach, which is well motivated in the dissertation. Also, the research design, how the different parts of the case-study are performed are clearly presented and described, and the strength of the study is definitely in its longitudinal approach, and the naturalistic setting, although only one school and teacher (and teacher team) was studied. In the centre of the study was the mother tongue teacher and two history teachers who co-operated in the second intervention course, and they were interviewed several times during the study. In addition, 94 lower secondary school students participated in the study, divided into one intervention group and one control group. The interventions were integrated into three different courses during two following school years (2015-17). Pre-, post-, and follow-up-tests were conducted and data were collected through questionnaires, self-efficacy and performance tests. The collected data were analysed using both quantitative and qualitative methods, the interview data through content analysis, and the questionnaire and test results through e.g. mixed between- and within-subjects analysis of variance, t-tests, and cluster analysis. Overall, the research design and methodological choices are clearly motivated and the research process transparent and systematically presented.

**Publications**

*Publication 1: Alamettälä, T. & Sormunen, E. (2018). Lower secondary school teachers' experiences of developing inquiry-based approaches in information literacy instruction. In: Kurbanoglu, S. et al. (Eds.),* Information literacy in the workplace. *Springer. (ECIL conference proceedings).*

The paper reports on the part of the longitudinal case study where the Guided Inquiry Design (Kuhlthau et al. 2012) was introduced in a Finnish lower secondary school, addressing what kind of pedagogical designs do teachers develop for inquiry-based information literacy instruction, to what extent were the designs similar to the designs of GID, and how do teachers experience their possibilities and success in developing inquiry based IL instruction in their everyday school context. Data was collected during 2015-16 and 2016-17 through thematic interviews. The teacher(s) were relatively positive about GID, and experienced that their investment in the first phases of the inquiry paid off. Some challenges were detected especially with students who are not used to or like a learner-centred approach. This paper is an important part of the dissertation, mapping the teacher perspective of GID and their experiences on a longitudinal level. The paper reports only on experiences from one school, and mainly one teacher, but nevertheless the longitudinal approach brings valuable knowledge on a complex process.

*Publication 2: Alamettälä, T., Sormunen, E. & Hossain, M.A. (2019). How does information literacy instruction in secondary education affect students' self-efficacy beliefs and attitudes? In: Kurbanoglu, S. et al.,* Information literacy in everyday life. *Springer. (ECIL conference proceedings).*

This paper reports on the students' self-efficacy in and attitudes to online research that were developed in the interventions during the longitudinal case study reported in paper 1. The research data was collected through questionnaires to the participating students before, during and after the intervention. The analysis shows that the teaching intervention changed the students' intentions in relation to evaluation of search results and in source-based writing, but no effects were seen in attitudes or self-efficacy. The quantitative data is relatively small and a larger sample might have given more nuances. A methodological discussion could have been added here, the challenges in measuring information literacy instruction are numerous, including both conceptual and methodological concerns.

*Publication 3: Alamettälä, T. & Sormunen, E. (2020). The effect of a teaching intervention on students' online research skills in lower secondary education.* Information Research*, 23(2), paper 861.*

This paper reports further on the quasi-experimental study, testing the effects of the intervention among students in the lower secondary school. The focus here is on the students' learning outcomes from the online research skills interventions, investigating if the teaching intervention improved their online research skills, and whether individual factors such as IT activity, self-efficacy and attitudes affect these learning outcomes. Pre- and post-tests of the online research skills were conducted with 87 students divided into one intervention group (n=55) and one control group (n=32). The results show that the interventions had effects on some of the students online research skills and the intervention group scored better after the interventions compared to the control group which scores remained the same. The effects were most efficient in search planning and query formulation. Some skills were not affected by the interventions, such as critical evaluation of sources. Also individual factors were analysed to see if there is a relation between IT activity, social media activity, self-efficacy, attitudes to online learning and traditional learning, and behavioural intentions. The analysis shows that IT and social media activity play a role in the learning outcome in the way that less active students get a boost of the intervention and have a greater learning outcome. Also the (positive)

**Widén:** *Development of online research skills among lower secondary school students (book review)*

attitude toward traditional learning was showed to influence the learning outcome positively, generating some challenges to the interpretation of the results.

*Publication 4: Alamettälä, T. & Sormunen, E. (2021). Learning online research skills in lower secondary school: Long-term intervention effects, skills profiles and background factors.* Information and Learning Sciences*, 122(1/2), 68-81.*

The fourth paper focuses on the long-term effects of the teaching interventions and the skills profiles of the students involved in the longitudinal case study reported in papers 1-3. The research data was collected through (a follow-up) test in the simulated online environment NEURONE and the task was to compose an article for the school magazine on the advantages and disadvantages of computer-gaming. The system guides the students' search process, step by step through subtasks of information searching, evaluation and use. In addition the students' self-efficacy in online research, their attitudes to learning and behavioural intentions were collected through the questionnaire developed and reported in paper 2. The analysis of the test scores between the intervention and control group show no difference, and the teaching intervention did not seem to have a long-term effect on the students' skills. A cluster analysis was performed to reveal online research skills profiles of the students, showing three clusters, namely high, medium, and low performers. A comparison of high and low performers and their individual factors (self-efficacy, attitudes, ICT activity) showed that high performers have higher self-efficacy, but other relations were more difficult to find. Although it is difficult to find clear connections between individual factors and online research skills, this kind of analysis helps in mapping how well a group of students perform in relation to different online research skills and helps in planning teaching interventions.

**Summarising impressions**
As concluded already in the beginning of this review, this doctoral dissertation takes on an important task in investigating students online research skills, competencies that have been showed to be surprisingly difficult to teach and learn. The study develops a better understanding of how teaching these skills can be supported through a specific pedagogical approach developed for information literacy instruction (GID). The strength of the study is its longitudinal case-study approach, conducted in one lower secondary school in Finland. The carefully designed case-study, including very many different sets of data (interviews, observations, surveys and tests), were collected and performed over a two-year period, so that the students' progress and learning could be followed. The GID model was experienced as helpful among the teachers, and the results of the interventions pointed at some effects, improving students' online research skills in some skill areas, and that self-efficacy, ICT activity and attitude to learning affect learning outcomes. The four papers that constitute the main part of the dissertation, report on different aspects and the different sub-studies within the longitudinal case study, and they clearly show the progress of the research.

The thesis summary is relatively short, binding together what is reported in the four papers. The conceptual and theoretical discussion could have delivered some more in-depth analysis as the study investigates complex competencies. The GID model could have been discussed in more detail, and in that way, given room for developing the model further, as the research design is really robust and gives an excellent opportunity to evaluate the model itself. However, the study contributes with important knowledge and advances concretely the pedagogical approach to online research interventions. It also shows that a pedagogical model like GID has a lot of potential as it is based on the broadly studied and used model of the information seeking process (Kuhlthau 2004). To conclude, Alamettälä's work brings together research on information literacy represented in LIS and in education research which is very welcome in order to build a more coherent picture of the complex

**Widén:** *Development of online research skills among lower secondary school students (book review)*

online research skills and how to support young people in navigating today's challenging information landscape.

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*Book review:*

# Sound reading. Exploring and conceptualising audiobook practices among young adults

*Elisa Tattersall Wallin (2022). Sound reading. Exploring and conceptualising audiobook practices among young adults. Doctoral thesis. University of Borås, Faculty of Librarianship, Information, Education and IT.*

Do you listen to audiobooks? Surely you have noticed the people on trains and buses with headphones or earplugs. You may have speculated about what category of audio was currently streaming from the smartphone in hand to the phones in ear. Chances are, they were listening to an audiobook. Perhaps you considered for a moment if this practice can actually be termed *reading*?

Elisa Tattersall Wallin's thesis *Sound reading* takes the emergence and popularity of audiobooks in streaming services as a starting point to examine how young people today read -- by listening, by seeing and by touching -- and how audiobook listening practices fit, *or are made to fit*, with everyday life. It is a well-crafted and original contribution to the emergent field of audiobook research, packed with concepts and findings. The thesis is positioned within the field of library and information science (LIS), but crosses paths with a host of other research traditions: book history, media studies, publishing studies, comparative literature, sociology, reading research, sound studies and more. While the relevance of all these disciplinary neighbours is not thoroughly discussed in the thesis, there is little doubt that Tattersall Wallin's empirical and conceptual contributions should be a reference point across disciplines for future work on audiobook listening.

The title of the thesis is "Sound reading. Exploring and conceptualising audiobook practices among young adults". That is a good title, especially because it highlights key issues and concepts in the thesis. It is about reading and sound, and about practices that are examined both empirically and conceptually. The title is also a play on words, signalling that what is regarded as "sound reading" is a subject of debate, historically and in the current moment.

The author takes a stand on the side of the readers/listeners: Let us just see (and hear) how they read! The stated aim of the thesis is to "develop knowledge and conceptualisations of audiobook reading practices in the context of subscription services and apps" (p. 4), particularly exploring the temporal and spatial aspects of young people's usage and practices.

Tattersall Wallin's work builds on different types of data and materials, from transaction logs provided by the streaming service BookBeat to semi-structured interviews and software analysis. In terms of theory, she positions her work within LIS, but most explicitly employs three imported theories or broad concepts as the analytical foundation: Practice (theory), remediation and affordances. Both methods and theories come across as relevant for the topic and the questions asked.

The thesis comprises four articles and a summary essay. On the whole, I find that the different parts combine very well. The overall research design and coherence of the project is very convincing and one of its clear strengths, as I see it. The four articles emerge from a clearly outlined motivation to understand audiobook practices, both through empirical investigation and via a discussion of new and old concepts. While each study contributes something of its own, the articles also build upon the same overall idea for the project and relate to one of the main research questions.

Article 1 is called "Time to read: exploring the timespaces of subscription-based audiobooks" and was co-authored with Jan Nolin and published in *New media and society* in 2020. The aim of this study was to explore patterns of audiobook use on a large scale, to understand the temporal listening patterns of users of an audiobook service. Building on a transaction log from the BookBeat service, the authors find patterns of everyday usage, suggesting that audiobook listening is tied up with other everyday practices across what the authors call *daytime*, *weektime* and *yeartime*. Perhaps the most intriguing finding from this paper is the sheer amount of time spent listening to audiobooks for users of the BookBeat platform: 94 minutes per day for women and 98 minutes for men (mean values). While the differences between user groups are quite small, it seems worth noting that young men (18-20) listen most of all (100 min.)

The second article is the main theoretical contribution from the thesis. Entitled "Reading by listening: conceptualising audiobook practices in the age of streaming subscription services", it was published in *Journal of Documentation* in 2021. Further developing the concepts and ideas introduced in the first article, the ambition for this article was to identify, clarify and conceptualise crucial issues for contemporary audiobook researchers. It is a rich and solid contribution, introducing a number of useful concepts, including the central notion of "reading by listening".

My favourite of the bunch is article three, where Tattersall Wallin digs deeper into some of the issues raised in the previous articles and incorporates interviews with young people (aged 18-20). The article is called "Audiobook routines: identifying everyday reading by listening practices amongst young adults" and was published in *Journal of Documentation* in 2022. By asking the informants about everyday listening routines, the author identifies a wide range of audiobook practices, some *mobile* ("commute listening", "exercise listening", "chore listening") and some *stationary* ("homework listening, "schoolwork listening", "leisure listening"). Perhaps the most intriguing findings are related

**Colbjørnsen:** *Sound reading. Exploring and conceptualising audiobook practices among young adults (book review)*

*71*

to how young people routinely use audiobooks for *wellbeing* purposes, like destressing, to keep company or to help with falling asleep. In this article, the informants come to life, and I get to *see* how audiobooks form part of everyday life for young people. Take, for instance, this quote:

> "Usually, on a school day, I start it [the audiobook] in the morning. When I go to make breakfast, I put my headphones on, it's almost the first thing I do in the morning. And later I will sit down and do my makeup and get ready, and then I usually have the book on, but not with the headphones. Then I have it playing out loud [from the smartphone]" (Tattersall Wallin, 2022, p. 272).

The interplay between the individual, the technology and the situations is really complex and fascinating! I will happily recommend "Audiobook routines" to scholars even outside of LIS, as it brings insights into media usage in the digital age more broadly.

Finally, the fourth article (unpublished at the time of writing) looks at the concrete features of audiobook apps and how they afford different types of reading practices among a group of young audiobook listeners. While still a bit unpolished, the paper supplements the other articles nicely, especially as it brings technology into the mix.

First and foremost, the strength of the work lies in the empirical contributions. These will help push audiobook research forward, specifically as they deal with the actual usage of audiobooks (i.e., practice), rather than their place in the literary landscape or book industry distribution channels.

The notion of practice is derived from Ted Schatzki's theory (e.g., Schatzki, 2009). Tattersall Wallin cites Schatzki's definition of practice as "an organized, open-ended spatial-temporal manifold of actions" (p. 25). Practices, as she (and co-author Jan Nolin) sees it, are organized around clock time, localized routines and everyday actions, folding into "timespaces", to quote Schatzki (2009) once more. The choice of this theory is apt, and the basic definitions are well covered. The application of practice theory in articles 1 and 3 is fruitful. Not least, practice theory provides Tattersall Wallin with a smart entry point to discussions around the status of the audiobook and whether listening to an audiobook constitutes reading at all:

> "This thesis explores the use of audiobooks as a form of reading practice. A practice approach involves studying reading as it is carried out, without preconceived notions about how reading should be done. The interest lies in the settings of reading and activities that people are doing when they read" (p. 4).

However, the full "backstory" of Schatzki's practice theory (with Heideggerian and Wittgensteinian influences) is left rather unexplained in the summary essay. Other practice theories in the social sciences and humanities are only mentioned in passing, if at all. Brief conceptual discussions are also characteristic of the summary essay's handling of the remediation and affordances concepts. A thesis cannot cover everything and anything that a reader might think of, but I still think this lack of theoretical background is a pity, not least because these concepts are particularly rich and evocative. Something to elaborate on in future publications, perhaps?

All in all, Elisa Tattersall Wallin's thesis is a solid and thought-provoking examination of media and information practices, and one that researchers of audiobooks will need to be familiar with.

*Declaration of interest*
Terje Colbjørnsen served as external examiner at Tattersall Wallin's thesis defence.

**Colbjørnsen:** *Sound reading. Exploring and conceptualising audiobook practices among young adults (book review)*

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**Colbjørnsen:** *Sound reading. Exploring and conceptualising audiobook practices among young adults (book review)*

*73*