



# STRÖMSTAD AKADEMI

*Nordiskt institut för avancerade studier*

## NEWSLETTER MAY 2021, international edition

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### Editor's corner

#### R\_e\_d\_a\_k\_t\_ö\_r\_e\_n\_s\_r\_u\_t\_a Anders Gustavsson: Editor's Corner

**Surgeon and Chairman of the Board Peter Fritzell** reports on important events in Strömstad Academy.

**Vice-Chancellor and Information System Scientist Per Flensburg** informs about current events within Strömstad Academy, for example a marketing team report. He argues that members of Strömstad Academy should register on the discussion forum. <http://stromstada-kademi.se/wp2/2021/02/15/diskussionsforum-videor/>

May's cronicle in Strömstads Tidning on 22 May was written by **tourism researcher Anders Steene**.

Redaktör: Anders Gustavsson  
Layout: Per Flensburg

He discusses how tourism may be able to recover after the covid19 pandemic.

Proposals for new chronicles in Strömstads Tidning should be sent to **Mariana Back** [mariana.back@tekniskamuseet.se](mailto:mariana.back@tekniskamuseet.se)

**Economist John Fletcher** continues his article series with the theme "What Happens to Our Welfare?" This time the theme is Democratic 'rebellion'.

In a polemic against economist John Fletcher, **educator Carl Olivestam** discusses the concept of democracy with regard to the relationship between state and religion.

**Solar energy researcher Johan Vestlund** discusses, in connection with John Fletcher's latest post, weak points in democracy but also opportunities for improvement.

**Business Economist Rune Wigblad** has published the article "Hur kommer det sig att prestationerna ökar vid nedläggningar?" in *Organisation & Samhälle - Svensk företagsekonomisk tidskrift* 2021. <https://org-sam.se/hur-kommer-det-sig-att-prestationerna-okar-vid-nedlaggningar/>

**Business Economist Sarah Philipsson** has published AAS 57 with the title "Konsumenter och företag som aktörer på marknaden". <http://stromstadakademi.se/AAS/AAS-57.pdf>

**Educator Åsa Morberg** critically discusses the government's new assignment to the Swedish Media Council to identify and develop methods against racism in the school world. She is also hesitant about a ten-year primary/elementary school that was recently proposed in a government investigation. Furthermore Morberg expresses critical views on the international PISA surveys in their entirety. She is critical of the fact that the government is increasingly stepping in to control the schools' activities in detail. She argues for a strengthening of good association practice and good association customs within Strömstad Academy.

**Physicist Ari Lampinen** informs about the international climate conference in Glasgow in November 2021, where members of Strömstad Academy can register to participate.

**Psychiatry researcher Lennart Wetterberg** discusses the value of preprint opportunities for researchers at Strömstad Academy in corona times.

**Ethnologist Anders Gustavsson** has published the book "Improper Use, Moderation or Total Abstinence of Alcohol Use of and opinion on alcohol especially in the western Swedish countryside and coastal regions during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries". Online version is AAS 56. <http://stromstadakademi.se/AAS/AAS-56.pdf>. The book can be ordered through Strömstads Bokhandel, [std.bok@telia.com](mailto:std.bok@telia.com) or [Bokus.com](http://Bokus.com)

**Linguistics Jens Allwood** has in the Video Series SAV 29 published *Integration – we-*

*binarium* i samarbete med immigrantinstitutet. <http://stromstadakademi.se/SAV/SAV-29.pdf>. He also informs about the ongoing work with the debate book on scientific methods that he edits.

The anthology "Pandemics - past and present for the future" has been published and presented through a press release. <http://stromstadakademi.se/Pandemierforhand.pdf>. The book can be ordered at Strömstads Bokhandel: [std.bok@telia.com](mailto:std.bok@telia.com) or on [Bokus.com](http://Bokus.com). The price is SEK 249. <https://www.bokus.com/bok/9789189331006/pandemier/>

**Psychiatrist Kristina Lindwall Sundel** has written a book review on the anthology *Pandemier*.

On 17 May **pharmacologist Marylou Wadenberg** gave a webinar with the title 'Alcohol/drug addiction /emergence and treatment options. About the Whys 'n Hows'.

I want to urge a previous call for all members to verify and complete their personal information on the Academy website. Also try to recruit new members to the Academy, not least young scholars. Please, send suggestions to Vice-Chancellor Per Flensburg [per.flensburg@stromstadakademi.se](mailto:per.flensburg@stromstadakademi.se)

I wish new contributions to the June issue 2021 of the Newsletter sent to my e-mail address with deadline on 26 June 2021: [anders.gustavsson@ikos.uio.no](mailto:anders.gustavsson@ikos.uio.no). Send short articles, opinion articles and/or reviews of new scientific literature. Swedish contributions should have an English translation.

Please, also send contributions to the Academy's publication series *Acta Academiae Stromstadiensis*, AAS, and the video series to the e-mail address: [gudmundbergqvist@hotmail.com](mailto:gudmundbergqvist@hotmail.com)

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## Chairman's report

### Colleagues in Strömstad Academy,

I would like to start by referring to other board members' letters in the Newsletter. The pandemic seems to be slowly receding, but a new wave cannot be ruled out.

The board meeting and the Annual meeting in Strömstad, both on 21/6, will be held. Some members will participate physically, but the majority will probably be participating virtually. The agenda has been sent out already 25/5, and all other relevant documents will be emailed no later than 210614.

The Science Festival, open to the public in Strömstad's high school facilities, is planned for the end of August/beginning of September, and our expertise in the Academy (virology, Tomas Bergström) has tentatively flagged that it may be relevant to go ahead and implement this. However, it can be difficult to know if travelling between different countries will be allowed. We will circle back on this.

Regardless of whether it will be a physical meeting in Strömstad or not, I would like all

members to consider possible collaborations with other organizations, and from which we will continue to make our lectures public via our Website.

The local Chapter in Gothenburg, for example, has been/is very active with regard to various Webinars.

Folkuniversitetet in Falun/Dalarna has described themselves as very interested in collaborating with the Academy regarding lectures/courses etc. This is exactly in line with what the Academy wants! All local chapters wanting to be part of this initiative, please contact the local chapter in Falun for discussions!

**IMPORTANT!**

On the same note, members of the Academy have submitted reflections on the government's report; <https://seniorarbetskraft.se/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Sammanfatt.pdf>

All the best, Peter

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## Vice-Chancellor's report

Another month has passed, and from now on we are already in the month of June and the summer is conspicuous by its absence. However, Strömstad Academy is not, the activity there is in full swing. Every week there is at least one webinar, if not arranged by us, then at least by our partners, most notably Rotary and the Immigrant Institute, which is very active. Jens Allwood, Åsa Morberg and John Fletcher are running projects together with them. To keep track of all webinars, meetings and more is a real hassle, and so I thought I would use the calendar that I was thoughtful enough to install on our website. In the bottom row, next to the far right of the website, you will find a picture of a hand making a reservation in a calendar. Click on that image and

you can see what is in the calendar. I will ask Carina, our online assistant, to help me set up various meetings. You should send her the information and then she puts it into the calendar. Instructions will be available on the website under "Current News", which in practice is a small blog.

A lot of things are happening around us in the world. The pandemic still occupies a significant part of the news flow, but I have a feeling that people are losing interest more and more. Unfortunate timing for our book on pandemics. But it has attracted attention in some places and we continue to spread our accumulated knowledge. If you know a journalist, feel free to tip the person in question, send the person in question to one of the editors.

I heard on the radio that the BBC had a really bad time when a speaker began with: "Ladies and gentlemen!" There could have been some trans person in the audience who was offended by this and felt excluded, so that introductory phrase was not allowed to be used! Now, admittedly, there was no such person in the current audience, but there could have been! One wonders: Where is common sense? Where is the tolerance? Mats Alvesson, one of my favorite researchers, writes about this in a debate article in DN, from Aug 2020, which I came across. He believes that today there is too much focus on doing things right, than doing the right things. Society is heading into a functional stupidity due to a lot of rules that do not fulfill any function. How many of us have not been quality audited by the National Agency for Higher Education and similar authorities? What was examined? Yes, the processes! The result of the processes was completely uninteresting. Major Björklund was the first to introduce it when reviewing C- and D-theses. In my opinion, one of the few wise decisions he made. But he had to give it up, and now I suppose you are back in the old trot.

At Strömstad Academy, we have long pushed the issue that we should have order and control in our routines so we can be allowed to manage research funds and in the long run become a real university. Not least, the undersigned has pushed that issue. But some members have questioned this and see it as increased bureaucratization and control. After Framtidsgruppen's final report, the Academy's management realized that the goal of a university and getting fixed resources was unrealistic, but instead each project had to apply for research grants on its own. We are so lucky that our staff costs are quite small and our costs for conducting our investigations are usually not that big either. Except for some natural sciences that need laboratories and other expensive equipment. So why should we draw on a complex and time-

consuming administrative framework just to make sure we do things right? Wouldn't it be better to do the right things instead?

One such thing is about the climate. It is, in my opinion, the greatest threat to humanity that currently exists. The pandemic is a nuisance, people are dying, and we have to change some of our social habits. But this is nothing compared to the climate threat. According to the forecasts of the researchers, an increase in the average temperature of the earth above 2° will lead to large parts becoming uninhabitable, e.g. Southern Europe will become a desert and all the world's population, which is estimated to be about 9 billion, will gather around our latitudes. Talk about migration! During the last great migration around the 400s, the Roman Empire fell, so what will not fall now?

I'm not a climate expert, I only read what some researchers write and what I read scares me. Strömstad Academy has, or perhaps rather, has had extensive research on solar energy. Not much seems to be happening in this area nowadays. We have a project that is about solar energy, but there is no project manager. Maybe it's so much that requires lab resources that we simply cannot conduct such research? But we could do something, right? Respond to all strange claims from climate skeptics, respond to all other false claims such as that wood is a climate-neutral fuel! This is true in the long term, but not in the horizon we are moving within, ie approximately until 2050. If I cut down a tree and set it on fire, a lot of CO<sub>2</sub> is released. Even if I plant a new tree directly, it will take about 20 years before it becomes a carbon sink. Wood emits 1.2 times more CO<sub>2</sub> than coal and natural gas emits only half as much CO<sub>2</sub> as wood when it burns. From a climate point of view, wood is a very bad fuel. It is best if it is left unburned in the woodshed.

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## Vice-Chancellor's IT tips

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Strömstad Academy is a virtual academy, and it has become even more virtual during the pandemic. In practice, this has resulted in the fact that the number of communication channels has doubled: from one (e-mail) to two (e-mail and e-meetings). E-meetings usually take place via GoToMeeting (GTM), which our Chairman has at his disposal or via Zoom, which is probably the most common meeting program outside the corporate world. The enterprises use Microsoft's Teams. Some exotic people, like me, use other programs such as Google Meet. The last two are free while both Zoom and GTM cost money. Connecting to these programs is extremely easy. You get a link, click on it and are basically up and running. Google Meet works that way, but otherwise does not have many extra features. The other platforms require you to download an app and you do it once. You read the instructions on the screen and should not be afraid to click "yes". I think many people seem to be terrified of allowing something in the belief that they open up to viruses and other devilry. If "yes" or "OK" or something similar is pre-selected ("default" is called in computer language), there is usually no danger clicking on it. What you should not click on are links in e-mails that come from unknown users. Especially if it is associated with some fantastic offer! Throw away such emails right away!

What I was going to talk about here are the emailing routines. Peter always complains that he is overwhelmed by emails and must spend a lot of time reading and answering. The same applies to the undersigned. Right now, however, only 7 of the 59 unread letters I have are from Strömstad Academy, but that is because I have been sitting and reading and answering these letters all day. One sometimes feels like Sisyphus. At the same time, I am the Vice-Chancellor and would like to know what's going on, so reading the emails is usually not so time consuming, but if you expect an answer or action from me, you must let me know very clearly!

What is a special nuisance is that long discussions are started. For example, someone sends a text and wants comments on it. Of

course, the person in question wants as many comments as possible and sends them to as many people as possible. Someone has opinions and responds to everyone. Another has comments and sends to everyone. Someone has views on what the first one said and sends to everyone. A fourth person comes up with something, which is actually completely irrelevant, but which the person in question still thinks that he/she has a certain point saying and sends to everyone. The first person now has comments to the third person and sends to everyone. Yes, did you get it? Thought so. Discussions should be conducted in discussion forums where answers and comments are clearly structured and easy to follow. Being familiar with discussion forums belongs to elementa, knowing that a blue text that is underlined means a link to something and that you can then click on, also belongs to elementa. Being able to read a text on the screen, being able to follow the instructions in that text should not be insurmountable for a professor! Yes, now I am a mean, patronizing, incomprehending besserwisser and a lot of other nasty things, but, dear friends, a smart management of our electronic resources saves a lot of time! It requires a little running in, this requires time to learn, but taking that time pays off many times over.

So, dear members and members of Strömstad Academy: Register on our discussion forum, there are descriptions of how to do it: <http://stromstadakademi.se/wp2/2021/02/15/diskussionsforum-videor/> There is also a quick reference guide: <http://stromstadakademi.se/Lathund.pptx>. This can be found on the website if you type 'discussion forum' in the search box on the right-hand side column and then click on the magnifying glass.

*Per Flensburg*

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## Marketing team report

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We have some minor projects underway:

- Include descriptive texts for our anthologies in Bokus
- Spread knowledge about the pandemic anthology to journalists we know
- Trying to get a debate article published in Curie, the Swedish Research Council's journal
- Write debate articles and other material to be posted on Tvärtänkt, so there is some

content before we go out with any marketing. If you have any thoughts about something, do not hesitate to send them to someone in the Marketing Group!

- Formulate a marketing strategy that must be ready for the annual meeting and included in the operational plan

In addition, we have been busy with webinars and project work. It's great to be active!

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## John Fletcher: Democratic rebellion

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**Democracy is not a 'condition'. Democracy is gained and regained through the individual choices each of us makes – or chooses not to make – in our daily lives. The role of the 'from above' approach is, at best, to remove obstacles, open doors.**

**Well-being is not a 'condition'. Democracy is built and developed by individuals who work to improve their own lives.**

**Trust, respect for others, cooperation do not exist. They are created and grow thanks to the way we treat people around us in our day-to-day lives.**

I want to initiate a democratic rebellion against politicians and special interests who want us 'to be taken care of' – rather than to be citizens. None of the immense opportunities that are within our reach will be gained unless a sufficient number of individuals decide what kind of country they, themselves, want to live in – and settle for nothing less. It takes only a couple of percent of us Swedes to initiate a process of change.

Our democracy will not survive and develop unless that minimum share of our population consider our democracy 'worth the effort'.

"The minimum share" means "you and me and a few others". This might be a good plan of operation for those who care:

### **1. Find your own answer to the question: "What matters to me?"**

My answer (and that is exactly what it is: **my** answer. I'm sure your answer will be different!)

I want to:

- remain in charge of my own life, have the freedom to choose;
- be needed by others, thus finding a meaning in my life;
- develop myself in order to achieve ends which I find meaningful;
- see opportunities to improve the life of myself and my family;
- feel comfortable with my society's rules and the stability of those rules.

### **2. Ask myself: Is that how my life works?**

My answer will depend upon:

- **the general, external conditions:** How do our social systems work. (the legal and welfare systems, taxes, the programs offered by our political parties . . .) the list is limitless and unique for each individual;
- **my personal 'equipment'** (my inherited talents, my environment as a child, my choices in life, education, profession, hobbies, political activities, non-profit activities . . .) This list is just as limitless and unique.

### 3. And finally: “What am I able to do when there is a collision between what I see and my values?”

I might:

- **specify the deviations** – and consider what changes I find desirable;
- **investigate my opportunities** to affect developments; (politics, media debates, my own networks, . . .)
- or I might say: “**after me, the deluge**”.

A person who takes this kind of stance will gain influence – and that is how developments start. It is a matter of informing and convincing, and, just as important, of questioning the limitations we have allowed our politicians to build around us. We need to point to the conflict between the (relatively speaking) free market system which has helped build our prosperity and all the attempts ‘from above’ to micromanage our lives. We have allowed ourselves to be led into one-way streets which are very difficult and expensive to reverse. Take, for example, the problems associated with our housing, which has been tied up by decades of rules, subsidies, housing hoarding, black markets, you name it. This has created immense trans-

fers of fortunes – and is likely to cause equally immense transfers when we try to get out of that specific one-way street which emerged from our faith that decision makers at the center would be able to replace the preferences held by millions of individuals. I address all our politicians regardless of party. They all have a share in building our top-down society.

We need to show how the ambitions held by individuals to build better lives for themselves and their families are hampered by the attempts to organize their lives ‘top-down’. We need to show how these individual ambitions can initiate renewals. That presupposes that we help each other to pull down the obstacles – mental as well as legal – that our “We’ll-take-care-of-you”-politicians have constructed – and are still constructing. Please note: I’m addressing all political parties. They all have helped build the obstacles.

You will have noticed that my focus is on the choices made by individuals, rather than the choices made by our government. Our future is shaped by our personal drives (including some that we might want to discuss) and by our ‘run-of-the-mill’ decisions.

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## Carl Olivestam: What makes a democracy democratic?

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### What makes a democracy democratic?

#### Carl Olivestam

Our energetic Academy member John Fletcher continues his public discussion in the Academy's newsletter, which really raises its reading value. This time, Fletcher takes a Swedish perspective on democracy and Swedish social construction as the norm for an analysis of the democratic status of different states. Moreover, the concept of democracy does not need to be defined either. Just think Swedish, he seems to reason.

The County Administrative Boards in Sweden, on the other hand, consider it necessary to specify this. They describe democracy as follows:

The word democracy comes from the Greek and roughly means "democracy". Issues of democracy have been debated for thousands of years, but there is no definition of the term that everyone in the world would agree on. Among other things, this is because democracy is something that is constantly evolving and changing.

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The question of whether democracy is good or bad has been discussed ever since the idea arose. There are those who believe that a democratic system is not always as fast and efficient as a dictatorship where the one who deci-

des can quickly enforce various decisions. In a democracy, everyone should have their voice heard, you have to compromise and vote to reach a decision. Therefore, in certain extreme situations, it is decided, even in democratic states, that democracy may be left behind for efficiency and speed. In crisis situations, it may simply be necessary for those in control to make a quick decision so that the situation does not be aggravated.

(The County Administrative Boards' website: Informationsverige.se, retrieved 290421. Translated from Swedish by Olivestam).

It is an ongoing problem for any democratic society, Sweden not excluded, how a state should handle and distribute the responsibility in combating the ongoing pandemic (Stromstad Academy has recently published an anthology on the subject). The state of Singapore is currently considered a world leader in the fight with this pandemic. The slightest tendency triggers a radical action. This state is considered a democracy, though it is a one-party state and though there have been only three prime ministers so far, the son to the first hold that position now, since 2004. This democratic country is characterized by business philosophy more than ideo-

logy though the development of this society has resulted in a welfare state surpassing even the Swedish concept.

A nuance of the concept of democracy would undoubtedly complicate Fletcher's analysis in which he divides the non-democratic states into ideological, religious, power- and wealth-focused states. Furthermore, we can state that it is not only states that act in the global arena. And Fletcher himself has a background in a corporate culture that works independently of national borders and his professional background should probably be included in the category of power and wealth? The major players who threaten democracy today are global companies as Google, among others. In comparison, the ideologically and religiously anchored states seem rather powerless. But in Fletcher's threat picture, the market economy seems to appear as a guarantee to eliminate ideologically based states. A slightly unfortunate term realizing that democracy itself is ideological. And are not the states Fletcher mentions - Soviet, China, Nazi Germany – also founded by a religion: Soviet with its atheistic religion, China with its Maoist-Confutze-mix and Nazi Germany with a mix of Reichkirche, Christliche Nationalsozialisten and Die germanisiertes Christentum?

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## **Johan Vestlund: Comments on John Fletcher's text "And if we don't care to do all this work?"**

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Do you wish to live in a country where citizens get full value for their tax payments? Where the central government, local communities and other authorities act in the best interest of these citizens? Are you free to express your opinions? Does media care to present facts? To sum it up, do you wish to live in a country where things work? What does it take to make democracy work like that? John Fletcher wrote that democracy is built on a day-to-day basis because you and I care, show respect for its values and rules. But John didn't develop his comments upon

democracy's weak points or upon what we might be able to do to make it work better. I have seen democracy in action in my work with ministries, authorities, and the European Union during my close to ten years working with a regulatory authority. There are great variations in the cultures ruling in different departments/authorities. Let me add that I have delved into the literature regarding how mass media operates, more about that later.

Democracy works best when people have a reason to take notice, to gather facts concer-



ning issues of interest to them. One such issue is distribution policy. In that area, people are reasonably rational, voting for the party which offer the largest contributions to their own wallets. You end up with a distribution policy based on high income earners pay into the system and others get welfare payments. Over time, a balance is established between those who want to distribute more and those who want to distribute less.

Democracy might work less well with issues which are more complex. Is it a good or a bad idea to protect the population of wolves, to privatize state and local government infrastructure, to be a member of the EU, to build wind turbines, to permit independent schools, to deregulate farming or to introduce vaccination 'passports'? How would the average citizen be able to form an adequate opinion? The answer is: most don't. It is easy to form an opinion, but if you don't check your facts, instead trusting 'what everybody else seems to think', simple 'rules of thumb', and just plain public opinion, then your views are inadequately substantiated. Checking facts carefully takes time and effort, something which most people lack, so people often form their opinions without having the relevant facts. The sources often are news reports and what they heard relatives and friends talk about – which is based on the same sources. This might actually work, if the media supplied neutral news, but do they? Or are neutral news as common as icebergs in Sahara? You will find an answer in research on how to influence people. It shows that that there are rich opportunities for those who wish to exercise influence on their compatriots. Things that offer value to special interests rarely offer value to all. The end result is that opinions rather than facts give advantages to special interests, rather than solutions that work for everybody. You might be asking yourself whether this is actually happening, and if so, whether it is a big problem. The answer is: it goes on all the time. Let me give you a few cases.

Research has developed the 'agenda theory', which shows a connection between what is said in the media and what the news recipient considers important. The reaction might be delayed, you might react weeks/months/years later. The agenda theory was first deve-

loped in the 1920's by Walter Lippmann and then developed further in the 60's by Maxwell McCombs, who carried out extensive field trials in connection with American elections. And furthermore, you can influence not only the perceived importance of an issue, but also the opinions regarding the issue as such. Edward Bernays wrote his groundbreaking book "Propaganda" in the 20's, describing the methods which can be used, and how to apply them. Based on his extensive experience, Bernays claimed that roughly 50 percent of all articles published by New York Times on that time were based on propaganda. Later research indicates that it has increased since then.

The combination of propaganda with the agenda theory is effective for a number of reasons. One such reason is that propaganda easily becomes news simply because the propaganda is news in its own right. The effect is, that even if you have the ambition to be a neutral news channel, you might find it difficult to disregard certain news just because they are initiated by a special interest. It can also be difficult for a news producer to see that special interests stand behind certain news – the special interest news would not be as transparent as in common advertising. And even if the news producer is aware that special interests stand behind a piece of news, it still is news. A demonstration with 100 000 participants is news regardless of whether you agree with what is said or not. The conclusion is that special interests affect neutral news reporting, raising people's awareness of the issue at hand, in line with the agenda theory.

A news channel can decide to present news in different ways, or not at all. It is important to select a news-editor-in-chief who shares your opinion about what is important. The news editor is able to select what will be included – or not – in the general news flow. The editor can also decide how to present a special piece of news. This is called 'gate-keeping'. This is done quite openly in certain newspapers. When the largest morning newspaper in Sweden put a new editor in place in 2013, he stated that as from that moment the newspaper would follow an agenda setting journalism. Earlier, the newspaper had reported on many issues with the

ambition to present all different points of view, to present the facts. This was changed to a policy of arguing for the points of view of the gate-keeper. Basing your reports on facts became less important.

Neutral news media will, over time, follow the declared 'agenda setters'. The reason is that editors in chief have to select from a very broad flow of news so as to carry the news the readers/viewers want to get. Since they want to know more about the news they have already noticed, they will, as per the agenda theory, be influenced by what they receive through other media channels. This means that the neutral channel will over time be pulled into the agenda defining media mainstream.

And furthermore, it is not very difficult to pretend to be neutral. The gate-keeping can be discrete, invisible. The editors are, after all, human, and their private, but still political opinions may become apparent through what they choose to reject and what to bring forth. This becomes particularly obvious with regard to news that collide with the gate-keeper's views. In that situation, it is easy to blame the owner's instructions, ethics or anything else in order to low-key the issues he/she doesn't agree with. If, for example, an editor is to report on an opinion poll, it is easy to stress either the upturn for one party or the downturn for another. You can choose to talk about, or not to talk about a party without breaking any rules, but through the agenda effect you can influence what is seen as important. You can also let your opinions show implicitly in what you write, all the while appearing to be evenhanded in words, voice, and face.

We talked about propaganda, and there are many tools when you want to shape opinions. What do you think the think tanks produce? They produce ideas for changes in line with their mission which is based on the ideology they are expected to support. When the plans are to be carried through there is a broad palette of methods, such as engaging gate keepers, infiltrate organizations – preferably authorities, taking varying noticeable actions such as demonstrating, carrying out school strikes in front of the Parliament every Friday, writing debate articles, trolling in comment spaces, nudging etc.

A further threat to democracy lies in the combination of political appointments of civil servants in government authorities, lack of civil servant liability, and badly written laws. As for an example, up until the mid-70's all Swedish civil servants had a personal responsibility for acting according to current laws and regulations. The jobs within these authorities were also reasonably well defined. Decisions were to be based on actual facts. But then the liability was removed, opening for the possibility of appointing staff based on political merits, rather than the relevant expertise. This new approach was applied primarily to senior positions, where the opportunity to carry through changes were strongest. It is difficult to know whether the liability was abolished on the basis of naivety, lack of evaluation of the consequences, or more aggressive considerations. The decision's effects are obvious, with catastrophic appointments of Director Generals and strange appointments in local governments.

There are government investigations that are worth noting as well. Claims without a reference to science would never be accepted in academic circles, they would be trashed by opponents, but such claims seem to be acceptable in politics. Ideological opinions are submitted as facts. The fact that proposals would affect an entire business area negatively is neglected. Not because the investigator doesn't know – there are plenty of people in the Government Offices who carry academic titles – so we can disregard lack of knowledge. The only viable conclusion is that the investigation was carried out in order to reach an agreed conclusion, not to find a working solution based on facts.

The membership in the European Union has acted as a catalyst for threats against democracy in the European countries. Looking merely at the practical consequences; we have submitted to rules and laws which are difficult to interpret, at the same time as special interests have found a wider arena for influencing decisions. The difficulty regarding interpretation is caused by a higher rate of change in our legal systems. Normally, we are able to allow new laws to be tested by practice and adjusted when needed. Now, new changes are introduced before the old

have found a practical shape. And to make matters even worse, texts are often written to gain everybody's acceptance – and to allow everybody to make an interpretation which suits themselves. Thus, rules are applied very differently by different members of the EU. The envisioned harmonization of all these rules is a vision, rather than a fact. Many EU rules and directives lack any analysis of what the consequences might turn out to be. That makes it easy for bad decisions to slip through, particularly when decisions are pushed by individual nations and/or special interests. The situation is not made easier by the often very tight time schedules. It makes you wonder whether that time pressure is created just to force decisions through the system. Nations often push for a greater harmonization in order to make rules more beneficial for themselves, and, here, the larger and richer nations have an advantage. The decision structure also opens wider doors for special interests to carry influence, particularly when comparing to the 'old order' with civil servants making decisions within the framework of a personal liability. In fact, many decisions are made before the negotiations and decision meetings, making them mere formalities. The desire to make decisions based on facts is not always obvious.

So, what might we do to vitalize our democracy, giving us a country that works?

- The citizens: It is difficult to change people to any greater extent. Democracy needs people who care to look for the facts concerning different issues and make their minds up based on these facts. Yet, we know that most people don't have the energy or the time to find those facts regarding each issue at hand. It is also uncertain whether democracy would work better if our schools were to start teaching the students more facts. Not even the highly trained members of the Strömstad Academy have an answer to everything.
- Special interests: They will continue working for their own points of view, using all available means. This will go on as long as there are individuals/organizations able and willing to finance think tanks and influencers.
- News channels with an open agenda setting focus: The customers always have the freedom not to use channels they disagree with. At least, the operators are honest about their intentions. You can disagree when a formerly neutral channel starts distributing propaganda, but that is the owner's decision and it will work as long as there are buyers.
- Neutral news channels: "Neutral" news can be distributed if the will to do so is there. If you agree that "Those who have a problem can always turn to alternative media!" you have just proven to yourself that the description "neutral news channels" doesn't always describe reality. The agenda theory and gate-keepers make it a very difficult task to be "neutral", that is, if you interpret "neutral" as meaning that every citizen would agree that the channel really is "neutral". If your ambition is to achieve a more multi-sided news coverage you would have to establish a tougher review process to ensure that politically colored views don't appear in what is said – or not said. We would probably need a change in current ethical guidelines and/or the use of editors of different political 'colors' in news channels that wish to be accepted as neutral in order to avoid being 'neutered' in a narrow midstream of news.
- Re-establishing civil servant liability would be a reasonable step to rebuilding a proper use of government authority. Those who stand to gain from the current situation will, of course, resist such changes.
- Government investigations will look for real facts and what is best for the nation and its citizens rather than find arguments for what is considered politically expedient. This ought to be so obvious that it shouldn't really need to be stated. Two shortcomings need to be rectified. The first is that investigators deliver quality. The second is that the opposition rarely checks the conclusions/proposals. The first point requires a change of thinking in the Government Offices and Authorities with less political bias and stronger requirements regarding the impartiality and expertise on the investigators.

The second point requires referral bodies who react to shortcomings on the basis of facts and argumentation. This is partly a matter of knowhow. Many civil servants are not used to disagreeing openly. Add to that the problem with the lack of civil servant liability. Even if you are responsible for a specific review of a proposal it is your boss who makes the decision. You may see shortcomings in the investigation being reviewed which your boss wants to neglect in order to deliver a politically suitable reply. That boss will not want you to state your objections. The first thing, though, is to recognize that there is a problem. Nothing will change by itself as long as the person who created the problem is allowed to continue to do so. "What? What are you talking about? It works, doesn't it?"

- There are several changes which would improve the quality of cooperation in the EU. The work is done primarily in the EU Commission, and the member state should be able to work on the ways new rules are developed as well as on the organization. The rules development work needs a more active participation in working groups to ensure that the rules become suitable also for small member states as, for example, Sweden. That would require greater efforts by competent Swedish representatives. We also need greater efforts to establish reasonable organizational and development processes within the EU. Many changes are made simply because they serve the interests of individual parties, not because they improve the overall quality. There is a plethora of different groups, constella-

tions, support systems and hierarchies who keep changing. Swedish representatives, who see that proposed changes are detrimental to our interests, need a stronger support from the Government. There is another job that we need to do at home. We have already seen that rules are written in a very imprecise fashion in order to allow different interpretations. A requirement is not always a requirement, but quite often a "it-would-be-nice-if-you-follow-this-directive-where-it-meets-you-needs" - wish. Every seminar on EU knowhow and EU-legal rules will tell you this within the first 15 minutes of the seminar, but that idea has never penetrated into the minds of those who apply these rules. We stick to the 'old square Swedish way of doing things', which means that we apply new rules by the letter compared with other member nations. You only need to cross the Öresund to see that civil servants can think independently, making the exercise of authority cheaper and at least as effective.

Democracy can be influenced, for the better as well as for the worse. What is good for a special interest is rarely good for the majority and may at times cause serious restrictions for some groups. It doesn't really matter whether the influence comes through suggestion or based on facts. What matters is that people are convinced. You may think that you base your opinions on rational facts when most of these opinions have been planted in your head by somebody. You would be better off taking a walk in the forest to clear your mind.

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## Åsa Morberg: Counteracting racism

**The Government gives the Swedish Media Council a mandate to identify and develop methods for counteracting racism, ie. hostility and hate crimes online**

*By Åsa Morberg, Associate Professor of Didactics, Strömstad Academy.*

This decision appears to be a rejection of the school system and its representatives, who do not seem to master this area of combating racism. It is not reported how the state produced the information about the school system's opportunities to fulfill this task.

When studying the new teacher education inquiry, this area should in that case have been highlighted clearly and also addressed

it in the forthcoming new teacher education program. Instead, the government is now going out and raising another so-called expertise to inform the professionals on methods. Who then has the expertise when it comes to teaching about racism? Not the school system and its representatives?

The Swedish Media Council will now study research and other studies and also consider the existing legislation and identify methods that can counteract racism. The school's professional teachers' other task is to be responsible for methods for teaching and learning. The authority shall compile and nationally disseminate methods that combat racism. The Swedish Media Council must also pay special attention to the usefulness of the methods in the identified target groups' own activities. The gender perspective must be taken into account in the implementation. How should the professionals' knowledge and skills be used?

A number of collaboration partners are listed for the State Media Council, and they will collaborate with the Children's Ombudsman, the Forum for Living History and the Agency for Youth and Civil Society Issues, the National Agency for Education, civil society organizations and other relevant actors. Universities and colleges must also be a conversation partner, not a participant in the work.

The Government writes about the reasons for this in a memorandum (2021-04-22 A2021 / 00972) which is extremely worth reading and worth thinking about. The reason is that the proportion of registrations in 2016 and 2018 has almost doubled. The Swedish Media Council has discovered that the majority of those who are exposed to cyberbullying are also exposed to bullying at school.

There is also a tendency for some groups to be more vulnerable than others, for example young people with a different ethnicity than where you live. The Swedish Media

Council must study, those who are exposed, those who strengthen and those who defend. It is a broader approach than what has been studied previously.

Knowledge of what actions reinforce or weaken racism and various forms of hatred is insufficient. Various forms of intervention can counteract cyberbullying. At the same time, there is a lack of knowledge and analysis about which methods give the best positive effect to counteract and reduce the incidence of cyberbullying. There is a lack of knowledge and analysis of what methods can counteract and reduce the prevalence of racism and similar forms of online hostility towards and between children and young people.

This way of acting from the state is symptomatic. A problem that has been discovered in the school and that is actually to be addressed in the school by the principals and the professionals, according to our current control system, is addressed by the state over the heads of the school system's principals and professionals. This can be seen as a sign that the state is taking command of the school's governance. The signs indicate that we are on the way to state leadership.

This assignment should have started in the school system. The fact that the state removes the assignment from the school system is a rejection of the school system's principals and the school's professional teachers. It is obvious that the school system must work closely with authorities and other knowledge producers.

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## Åsa Morberg: 10-year elementary school - against better knowledge

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### Now a 10-year elementary school is being created - against better knowledge?

By Åsa Morberg, Associate Professor of Didactics at Strömstad Academy

This is not the first time that there has been a proposal for a ten-year elementary school. Once again, a proposal came to Anna Ekström from the investigator Eva Durhan, head of department at the National Agency for Education. The proposal is about how a ten-year school should be prepared and how it should actually work. The proposal derives from the January agreement and then it will be a 10-year primary school.

The motive for this proposal for a 10-year compulsory school is said to be that the pre-school class is its own form of school and not part of the compulsory school. Minister Anna Ekström thinks that there are shortcomings with this. However, six-year-olds are already covered by compulsory schooling today, as the preschool class is compulsory. The preschool class would be a bridge between preschool and elementary school. However, the Swedish Schools Inspectorate considers that there is instead a risk of the opposite, ie. it gets chopped up.

Then there is also the risk of staff changes, first from preschool to preschool class and then from preschool class and year one in elementary school. There are also no explicit knowledge requirements for children in preschool class and they have fewer hours than where elementary school students have.

There is a new teacher education on the way in. When you study the content and structure, do you see any of the preparations for a 10-year elementary school? Clear goals and guidelines on children's development and the importance of play for children for elementary school teachers should have been set. The teacher education for compulsory school today does not offer teacher students

a sufficiently good play-adapted teaching. Here, changes are needed immediately in the new teacher education.

According to the proposal for a 10-year compulsory school, the pre-school class will then be year 1 in compulsory school. The elementary school will thus be a full 4 school years. This way, the six-year-olds will have the same right to structured teaching, mother tongue teaching, development talks and also special support as the elementary school students.

Unfortunately, this is about the six-year-olds having more school, and less play. Research shows that early formalized teaching can even disadvantage students in their further education and that is what the reform is actually about. Going to preschool with good didactic quality, on the other hand, has positive results on children's development and the ability to learn. This applies especially to children from socio-economically weak environments.

Switching to a 10-year elementary school needs a lot of preparation, the investigation says. The timetable must be extended. The teaching must be adapted to the six-year-olds' need for play. The proposal entails a teaching time of three hours per school day. It is emphasized by the investigator that the play should remain and that the teaching should be varied and take into account the six-year-olds' movement needs. The reforms for early learning have so far been about "schooling the preschool" even though the ambitions have been completely different.

Who should then be authorized to teach the six-year-olds. The investigator proposes that teachers who are eligible for elementary school should be eligible for the new first grades. About half of those who today work in preschool class are preschool teachers and they are then not qualified to teach in the new elementary school. This requires competence development in early reading

and writing and mathematics learning. I believe that in order for elementary school teachers to become competent for six-year-olds, they need competence development in play.

Why then a 10-year elementary school?

Now it is expected that more people will leave elementary school with approved grades and be eligible to start high school. The investigator advocates careful follow-up so that it works according to the decision. The reform will enter into force in 2026.

The reform is based on the government's so-called January agreement. There is a decision that a ten-year elementary school

should be introduced. The purpose, say the politicians, is to improve the knowledge results by giving the students more teaching based on the compulsory school curricula and in the rule and competence structure that the compulsory school has.

That means more school and less play. The best interests of the children still appear, in my opinion, to be preschool class and nine-year elementary school. Despite this, the government is now moving forward with a 10-year elementary school. Now researchers, preschool teacher educators, and parents need to make their voices heard.

## Åsa Morberg: PISA - the leaning tower that falls to the ground

### **PISA - the leaning tower that falls to the ground**

*By Åsa Morberg, Associate Professor of Didactics and member of Strömstad Academy*

The article is about the PISA survey and the audit report from the Swedish National Audit Office and the aftermath. First a few words about PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) is a kind of knowledge evaluation of how 15-year-old students in different countries are "equipped for the future" when they leave school. The project is run by the OECD and there are four areas being studied: mathematics, science, reading comprehension and problem solving. PISA can, in my opinion, not say how our Swedish 15-year-olds are equipped for the future.

PISA is conducted every three years. The goal of the PISA project is to test and evaluate school students' performance around the world. An underlying purpose is to be able to achieve better teaching methods and better results. What method development has PISA achieved? How can better methods be developed after a two-hour survey? What have become better methods through PISA?

The test is arranged so that 5,000 students from each country can take the test, which takes 2 hours. What conclusions can actually be drawn from a study based on students answering questions for two hours? The attention that PISA receives indicates an overconfidence in the study.

Since the start of PISA in the late 1990s, the results of the PISA surveys have received more and more media attention. Every time the results of the latest PISA survey are published, countless articles are written with dramatic headlines, such as "Sweden worst in class" and "PISA shock".

What the articles have in common is that they use the results of the PISA surveys without critically examining them and questioning them. It is rare to see an article that scientifically critically reviews the PISA surveys. It is important to highlight criticisms of the PISA surveys and its OECD principal, specifically criticisms of the content and quality of the PISA surveys and their interpretation and use of the results. There are good reasons to question the PISA surveys and I believe that Sweden should leave the PISA surveys immediately.

Sweden has now participated in violation of the official regulations. The National Audit Office therefore directs harsh criticism to both the National Agency for Education

and the government. For the first time, the National Agency for Education was in charge of PISA and it went completely wrong, according to Sofia Sandgren Massih, the National Audit Office's Audit Director. Minister of Education Anna Ekström is now called to the Constitution Committee.

So what exactly is the problem? Sweden removed a large proportion of students from PISA 2018, in clear violation of the regulations. All countries remove students from PISA. Officials at the Ministry of Education said they had alerted inaccuracies internally on at least two occasions. The Minister of Education has not noticed this and yet officially defended the results. The National Audit Office's audit report states that:

- • Sweden incorrectly exempted a large proportion of students from writing the test, in violation of the OECD's official regulations.
- • Both foreign-born students and students born in Sweden were incorrectly exempted from writing the test.
- • Both the National Agency for Education and the government have violated their obligations to follow up on the suspected errors.
- • The Government has not "fulfilled its responsibility to ensure that subordinate authorities conduct their activities in accordance with the requirements set by the Constitution".
- • The OECD has at crucial points misunderstood how the Swedish school system works, which led to incorrect conclusions in their review report which was released last fall.
- • The OECD has not delivered the review of the PISA study promised by the Director General of the National Agency for Education (From the Ministry's press release).

Andreas Schleicher, head of the PISA organization, believes that student selection is not a problem. The OECD is currently investigating the criticism from the Swedish National Audit Office, but the head believes that Sweden's PISA results 2018 are credible. The

National Audit Office's review of the Government's and the National Agency for Education's handling of the PISA study in 2018 reawakens the previous criticism that too many students are excluded in order for the result to be in accordance with the actual level of knowledge in the country. Students are excluded in all countries participating in PISA. How many are excluded can of course vary and be obscured.

The manager Andreas Schleicher, believes that the selection of students in 2018 is within the framework. He rejects the criticism directly and believes that the selection of students has not been able to significantly affect the result. A group within the OECD is studying the criticism from the Swedish National Audit Office in more detail. Andreas Schleicher believes that their review will not affect the result in general and it is interesting to consider. The OECD is criticized when they first approved the Swedish student selection and then subsequently claimed that not everything went right. They do not seem to understand the Swedish educational system. If you criticize me, I criticize you! Now the Swedish honor is on uncertain ground and PISA is leaning more and more.

Chief Andreas Schleicher also believes that the OECD can use other analysts who can study the sample. I am sure they would come to the same conclusion, he says. He believes that there are basically two problems: Is a lower response rate a problem? Does the loss affect the result? As a researcher, it is of course said that both non-response and response frequency affect the end result. It is basic knowledge. The PISA survey is losing relevance, according to a Norwegian professor Svein Sjöberg at the University of Oslo. He thinks that Sweden should leave the survey. Using the survey as a measure of quality in Swedish schools becomes absurd because that is not what you measure. Let PISA fall flat to the ground. Exit the PISA project immediately.



## Åsa Morberg: Detailed control in school

**The government's plan for security and peace of mind in schools - the government takes a tougher grip and detailed control and bans mobile phones in the classroom.**

*By Åsa Morberg, Ass Professor, Docent, Strömstad Academy*

In the January Agreement, a document has been produced that deals with the national plan for security and study peace. It is a referral of Ds 2021: 13 "National plan for security and study peace". It is an extremely important document to read for everyone who works in the schools, but other stakeholders outside the school should also study the document.

This is another expression of the government stepping in and in detail controlling the school activities for school staff. The control system has previously worked so that politicians provide overall goals, set frameworks and guidelines and the professionals implement these in school. There has been a very clear division of tasks, but now a big and important change is taking place! The government intervenes and controls in detail and takes over the role of the professionals.

Mobile phones are an example of detailed control. I compare with the development of the television medium in society and in school. In the 70's when TV came, the TV medium was intensely discussed among teachers. Some teachers put the school's TVs far away in the equipment rooms and covered them and did not want to use TV in their teaching. We can laugh a lot at this today. The TV medium is excellent to use in school. So many good and informative TV shows available to use. Now we compare with mobile phones.

Mobile phones are not just a mobile phone, but the mobile phone is a good and efficient work tool. It is of course important to learn to use them as work tools in school. The mobile phones should of course not be used in a disturbing and uncontrolled manner.

The professionals specify if and when they are to be used and also in what way. The investigators as well as the Minister of Education and the members of the Swedish Parliament use mobile phones as work tools. How can it then be that politicians are going in controlling details at this level in the schools?

The school is well on its way to becoming government-controlled on a detailed level again. Politicians believe that there will be better order this way and want to find out if they can control the details. This is seen in all measures that come from the government. The government is gradually taking a tougher grip on the school's governance. One report after another are clear examples of a changed control system.

"Now there will be greater order and an order regarding what teachers, principals and resource staff can and should do in different situations," says Minister of Education Anna Ekström (S). What teachers "may and must do" must therefore be decided by the government. One must even regulate "teachers' right to intervene physically".

What confidence do teachers and school staff then have in politicians? Many believe that politicians at both national and local level have poor insight into school activities and thus a lack of knowledge and understanding. Politicians do not understand what they are deciding on and many teachers believe that the decisions made affect their professional role and professionalism negatively! The government is now taking step by step towards a government-run and centralized school. The problem is that the teaching staff loses its autonomy. A government-run school is by many seen as the solution to the school's problems. Professions where unpredictable events easily occur are difficult to actually control in detail.

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## Åsa Morberg: Bureaucratization versus good association practice

### Choice of path: Bureaucracy, bureaucratization versus good association practice

by Åsa Morberg, Associate Professor of Didactics, Strömstad Academy

This article is about bureaucracy and bureaucratization versus the development of good association practice or good association practice. The article is based on the discussions at the last board meeting 2021-05-06 where good association practice was set against bureaucracy and bureaucratization. This is a matter of fact and nothing else.

Strömstad Academy's organization has i.a. been mostly about proposing qualitative measures so that Strömstad Academy can be said to have a good administration and apply good association practice. This is important for any future accreditation and funding applications. The Vice-Chancellor's proposal for organization is also, in my interpretation, about creating a transparent and clear framework and guidelines for the activities of Strömstad Academy. That's commendable.

In Strömstad Academy, it seems to be in order to use some home-made decision models and it does not seem to matter so much how the actual internal work in the Academy is conducted. At Strömstad Academy, we are just a collection of senior researchers who should have a good time together and we do not care about how the association's organization and administration look and work? Good association practice seems to be of secondary importance? Can we do at least a little anyway in Strömstad Academy? The main thing is that we have fun together and that we are engaged in the core business, ie. research and education! Research and education are linked to organization and administration.

The main thing is that we have fun together and that we are engaged in the core business, ie. research and education! Research

and education are linked to organization and administration.

Creating order does not have to mean that we cannot have fun together. Creating a good and efficient organization is not about either bureaucracy or bureaucratization. It is about highlighting important areas for development when it comes to good association practice. If Strömstad Academy is to be developed into an organization in order to eventually become an established research organization and be able to apply for funding and manage funding, routines need to be clarified. We should also do what we can to develop the Academy's working methods qualitatively. Good association practice therefore needs to be constantly on the agenda.

When associations apply for funding at the relatively few financiers who receive applications from associations, you often need to send in documents from the association (eg financial statements from the last three years, budget, annual report, activity plan, statutes, minutes, etc.).

Good association practice is regarded as a kind of norm library that is based on an accumulated knowledge of what works and what does not work in association contexts. Good association practice can also be seen as a kind of cultural heritage from those who have been active in associations during past generations. Good association practice is in many ways a silent and unarticulated knowledge.

"The non-profit association fulfills the conditions for being a legal person if it has been formed by at least three people, adopted statutes/by-laws that regulate name, purpose and decision-making process, and appointed a board." All according to the Swedish Tax Agency's website. , but you can also see good association practice in a more developed way. Then good association practice refers to what is accepted and good in the ge-

neral association community, ie norms for how an association should be organized and administered for the result of the association's work to be optimal.

Good association practice is about meeting certain quality requirements. The great advantage of following good association practice could be summed up something like this with a quote: "If it is good association practice, it is democratic, well thought out, proven and thus efficient and resource-saving. Good association practice is the association's equivalent to business knowledge on how to best organize and run a company. It also corresponds to such concepts as "Best Practice" and "Excellence". But unique for associations of course. " (Christer Leopold) Source: Internet.

Is it important for Strömstad Academy to, for example, be able to differentiate between sending to the Board and re-referral? Is it worth doing the work in the right order? Is it important that the Board does not make decisions, which the Annual Meeting should be making, or vice versa? Is it important to really make decisions and to follow voting rules? Is it important to have detailed decision minutes and an agenda for each meeting at least one week in advance? Is it important to follow conflict of interest rules? Is it important that the Board takes full responsibility for the day-to-day work and ensures that the decisions are implemented within a reasonable time? (Examples of cases in the long bench are Åsa Morberg's proposals for a blog, proposals for ethical guidelines, pro-

posals for memorial certificates and fundraising for the deceased, etc.) Is it important that Strömstad Academy takes far-reaching financial responsibility? Etc.

For me, it is important to have good association practice. These are no strange things at all. Academics generally do not want to devote themselves to organization and administration at all, and academics do not have to do that either. Few academics are interested in good association practice, but when it comes to research, interest in order arises. Academic freedom is talked about by many, but academic freedom is about freedom in research, not in organization or administration. Frameworks and guidelines are needed.

To sum up: Good association practice is desirable. If Strömstad Academy is to do something with better quality, we must dare to pay attention and, above all, try to understand what can be considered improper in organizational and administrative contexts. The basic thing is to try to be unpretentious and at least think about whether there is a point in any critical views, when you turn the stones to see how the business works today?

It is very good that our Vice-Chancellor reviews the organization and administration when he takes office. It contributes to transparency and clear frameworks and guidelines. If we at Strömstad Academy are to make each other better, we need to dare to see if something is possibly a little improper and needs to change.

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## **Ari Lampinen: Preventing dangerous anthropogenic climate change in Glasgow**

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Due to COVID-19 pandemic the main United Nations (UN) climate conference scheduled to be held last year in Glasgow, Scotland was postponed by a year to November 2021. This update has been published, because Strömstad Academy (SA) as an admitted observer organization to the UN cli-

mate convention process may send delegates to Glasgow and other conferences.

The main task in the Glasgow conference is to initiate a new global commitment cycle for getting on track to reach the objective of the United Nations Framework Convention

on Climate Change (UNFCCC). UNFCCC is the most significant of the global treaties signed at the 2nd UN environmental summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Objective of this treaty is *"stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system"* (Article 2). Word "**dangerous**" is crucially important, because it reveals that this anthropogenic problem cannot be prevented. Opportunity to prevent it was lost at the 1st UN environmental summit in Stockholm in 1972. Common international framework could not be established for dealing with this global environmental problem. For the next two decades solving it was left entirely to national policies and voluntary actions of individuals.

What is "dangerous" was left vague in the climate convention text on purpose. Sharp definition is scientifically impossible. Definition was not politically necessary until insufficient implementation progress required new tools, where it is needed. The resulting definition is a political decision based on science. "Dangerous" can not refer to the worst case scenario, which means transforming Earth inhabitable. Basing it on some levels of selected incremental effects would be scientifically inappropriate and politically inconvenient. Observed and modeled incremental effects (extreme weather events, biodiversity impacts, pathogen distribution expansion etc.) were used, but abrupt effects are in the core.

Abrupt effects form a separate dimension of danger, because they are large and fast, but unpredictable. Unlike incremental effects, they can not be included in models and global community can not get advance warnings of them. Effects like 10 degree temperature change within a decade and 10 meter sea level rise within a week are politically concerning. Mechanics of anthropogenic ignition of such effects can be verified only after they have happened. But using Earth consciously as a laboratory for

experimenting these would constitute outstandingly disturbing human behavior. However, for science Earth is a laboratory that already has proven the danger. Research of past Earth climates has shown that very large abrupt effects have occurred many times before, and they will also occur in the future. Knowledge of natural mechanisms igniting abrupt changes indicate plausibility of anthropogenic ignition.

Definition of "dangerous" became defined as crossing 1.5-2 degree limit on average Earth surface temperature change compared to pre-industrial situation. For scientific experts giving exact number would be unprofessional. For the political UNFCCC process 2 degrees is the scientifically most appropriate round number. Risk level increases progressively when temperature increases and the next round number 3 degrees would represent intolerably high risk. The 1.5 degree limit has precautionary nature. Scientific evidence suggest possibility of ignition at this level, but risk level and especially dynamics of the change in motion would not enable setting this number on purely scientific grounds. It is mostly based on political considerations. If obligations for countries were set on the 2 degree basis, reaching this target would be impossible as many countries do not fulfill their obligations under legally binding international treaties. Using 1.5 degrees as basis for setting obligations makes reaching the objective of the UN climate treaty possible.

Despite addressing this problem not only nationally and individually but also internationally since 1992, its severity keeps growing. COVID-19 pandemic induced in 2020 a global economic recession that resulted in a drop of global emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> from fossil fuel burning compared to previous year. Global recessions have produced such drops a few times before, but always only temporarily. Like before, emission growth will resume its normal course in 2021. The mechanism behind the pro-

blem, anthropogenic greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, continued to strengthen in 2020, like before.

In Glasgow new strong global effort will be attempted to get on track for meeting the objective of UNFCCC. Official information of the process is maintained by UNFCCC secretariat in their web site ([www.unfccc-](http://www.unfccc.int)

[c.int](http://www.unfccc.int)). SA fellows interested in attending the Glasgow conference will receive practical information by contacting me via SA email.

*Ari Lampinen*

## Wetterberg: New preprint publication series

### New preprint publication series at Strömstad Academy after COVID-19

*Lennart Wetterberg, Professor of psychiatry, Strömstad Academy and Karolinska Institutet*

The old Swedish proverb that says "What looks like a time-saving shortcut may ultimately take more time to follow than the standard route" must be revised. After the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus was first confirmed on January 7, 2020, the gene sequence was published within a week, on January 12, 2020, on a shortcut. Since then, more than 134,000 articles on COVID-19 have appeared at *PubMed.gov* until May 2021. These scientific articles were published by so-called prepublications or preprints about COVID-19 and have been widely disseminated and gained many new readers.

For example, a preprint in medRxiv (pronounced "medarchive") about the stability of the virus on different surfaces has been downloaded over 660,000 times, tweeted about by more than 13,000 people, and picked up by over 320 news sources. Traditionally, a peer review is reviewed through a process that takes time. It can be months, sometimes years, from submitting a manuscript to a traditional journal before publication, as exemplified by a recent article on respiratory infection under lithium and valproate medicine in 50,000 patients with bipolar disorder prepublished in 2020 by Mikael Landén and colleagues (1, 2).

The global spread of the corona pandemic required faster scientific communication for prophylaxis, diagnostics, treatment, and vaccine protection against the many virus variants. For example, it would have been unethical not to publish the basic sequence of the new virus immediately, without embargo, as the result was a must as a basis for the development of SARS-CoV-2 vaccines. The speed of publications, rather than as before only the reference "in progress", was one of the purposes of preprints.

New scientific presentations could be spread and reviewed immediately before they had passed traditional peer review. Preprints provide the opportunity for global contact with other researchers, many times with information of immediate value for future reviews in a traditional journal. Results highlight the unparalleled role of preprint servers in the spread as the increased number of COVID-19 articles has greatly affected the scientific communication landscape (3).

Final guidelines for preprint publishing have not yet been drawn up. It is important to be prepared for unforeseen sudden global and local events, such as serious disease outbreaks (4). Strömstad Academy now offers researchers, especially from the Nordic region, additional opportunities for prepublishing new research results, which can be outsourced quickly for open access online. An evaluation of the Academy's role in preprint publishing will be carried out on an ongoing basis to harmonize the procedures with international preprint platforms under development.

Of course, Strömstad Academy agrees with the academia on the following warning text:

**Caution: Preprints are preliminary reports of work that have not been certified by peer review. They should not be relied on to guide clinical practice or health-related behavior and should not be reported in news media as established information.**

**Instructions to prepublish in Strömstad Academy Pre-Publication Series (PPS)**

On 17 October 2020, to give Nordic researchers a new opportunity for preprinting multidisciplinary scientific studies, the Board of Strömstad Academy decided to establish Strömstad Academy's Pre-Publication Series (PPS) with the following guidelines:

- Members can publish in Strömstad Academy's pre publishing series.

- All co-authors agree to prepublication.
- The author is responsible for ensuring that ethical rules and permits are followed.
- The author is also responsible for the content and for not violating Swedish law or using copyrighted material.
- Information on the preprints policy of different journals can be found on the web link <https://v2.sherpa.ac.uk/romeo/>

Anyone who is not yet a member may contact Gudmund Bergqvist by phone +46 (0)70-5378171 at the editorial office of PPS Strömstad Academy: [gudmundbergqvist@hotmail.com](mailto:gudmundbergqvist@hotmail.com)

**Publications in Strömstad Academy's new preprint series, PPS, see table below.**

Date	Document	Number
201205	<a href="#">GRIN3B and PCSK4 gene variants on chromosome 19p13.3 in therapy-resistant schizophrenia that exhibits clozapine-responsiveness.</a> Eva Lindholm Carlström, Jonatan Halvardson, Sven Ove Ögren, Lars Feuk, Lennart Wetterberg. 19 pages	PPS-3
201113	<a href="#">Isolation of ribonucleic acids from cells stored at ambient conditions following critical-point drying and inspection under scanning electron microscope.</a> Rojin Bozkurt, Rolf Nybom, Lennart Wetterberg, and Håkan Karlsson. 9 pages	PPS-2
200917	<a href="#">Increased concentration of extracellular vesicles exposing aquaporin 4 in cerebrospinal fluid in patients with bipolar disorder.</a> Lennart Wetterberg, Fariborz Mobarrez, Rolf Nybom, Håkan Wallén, Aurimantas Pelanis, Dietrich von Rosen, Mikael Landén. 20 pages	PPS-1

**References**

1) Landén M, et al. (2020). Respiratory infection during lithium and valproate medication: a within-individual prospective study of 50,000 patients with bipolar disorder. medRxiv2020.05.04.20090084; doi: <https://doi.org/10.1101/2020.05.04.2009008>

**Prepublished 2020, May 08**

2) Landén M, et al. (2021). Respiratory infection during lithium and valproate medication: a within-individual prospective study of 50,000 patients with bipolar disorder.

**Published 2021 February 1** in International Journal of Bipolar Disorders. 2021;9(1):4. doi: 10.1186/s40345-020-00208-y.PMID: 33521836

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## Jens Allwood: What is the best scientific method?

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### Collection of papers on scientific methods with critical questions and answers

#### What is the best scientific method?

Our work on a book discussing and debating scientific methods is slowly moving forward. The ambition of the book is to mirror scientific reality, where not everyone always agrees. All contributing authors contribute by describing their own methods, read each other's descriptions and pose critical questions about the other's descriptions, which are then answered by the authors of the description.

The contributions of the original authors will be published with all questions and answers.

The planned contributions are:

- Elisabeth Ahlsén, Neurolinguistics
- Jens Allwood, Linguistics, Communication & Cognitive Science
- Leif Bloch Rasmussen, Informatics
- Per Flensburg, Informatics
- Anders Gustavsson, Ethnology
- KG Hammarlund, History
- Ulf Persson, Mathematics
- Peter Währborg, Behavioral medicine, Cardiology
- Björn Zethraeus, Bioenergy technology

Judging by the papers and critical reflections, I have received so far, it will be an interesting book, especially if you are interested in the reality of interdisciplinary work.

Jens Allwood (editor)

