



# STRÖMSTAD ACADEMY

*Nordic institute for advanced studies*

## News Forum

### Strömstad Interdisciplinary Academy

#### Content

Editor's corner Anders Gustavsson.....	1
Åsa Morberg: Chairman's report.....	2
Per Flensburg: Vice-Chancellor's report.....	3
Åsa Morberg: Teacher education.....	5
Åsa Morberg: The school debate seen through Åsa Morberg's eyes.....	6
KG Hammarlund: Answer to Åsa Morberg.....	7
Jens Allwood: Which method is best?.....	8
Stig Ottosson: The Ukraine project.....	10
Per Flensburg: The Home page.....	11
Åsa Morberg: Project planning.....	12
Per Flensburg: Good science.....	12

#### Editor's corner Anders Gustavsson

##### Editor's corner

##### Anders Gustavsson

**Educator and Chairman of the Board Åsa Morberg** informs about news within Strömstad Academy. She is a keen actor in the current school debate and opposes the Swedish government's pursuit of detailed control of teacher education in Sweden. More practical training is needed and less research preparation elements.

**Vice-Chancellor and Information System Scientist Per Flensburg** informs about news within Strömstad Academy. He also writes about the home page and good science.

**Historian KG Hammarlund** has submitted a response to **didactics Åsa Morberg's** article in Nyhetsforum June about students' reading comprehension and suggestions for more practically oriented teacher training.

**Ethnologist and pro-rector Anders Gustavsson** has published In the Free Serie FSS no 37 Abstracts Vetenskapsfestivalen. Many abstracts are in English. <http://stromstadakademi.se/FSS/FS-37.pdf>

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)

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I wish new contributions to the August issue of the Newsletter sent to my e-mail address with deadline on 27 August 2023: [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. Texts should be in Word- or Open Office format!

Please, also send contributions to the Academy's publication series Acta Academia Strömstadensis, AAS, to [peter@wahrborg.se](mailto:peter@wahrborg.se), the video series SAV to: [gudmundbergqvist@hotmail.com](mailto:gudmundbergqvist@hotmail.com) and the Free Series to: [per.flensburg@stromstadakademi.se](mailto:per.flensburg@stromstadakademi.se)

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## Åsa Morberg: Chairman's report

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The summer break actually started very dramatically, with Per Flensburg's illness. It was with great concern that we received the news that both Per and his wife Helen were affected by the Corona virus with various complications. In some way, we probably thought that the angry Covid 19 virus no longer caused severe disease situations.

Now we know that if you are affected by Corona, it is still a big, difficult and upheaval event. You can still get really sick from the Corona virus, despite many vaccine shots and other measures. How one chooses to react to one's diagnosis and how our colleagues choose to handle notification of illness look different. For my own part, it felt very anxious and very sad. My thoughts have often gone to Per and his wife Helen.

Our principal is a key person in our academy and he acts as an important hub around which most things revolve. I got in early contact with Per's wife Helen, who informed me about how Per was doing. We sent flowers to the residence from Strömstad Academy, and wished for a speedy recovery. Helen was kind enough to also inform us about how the disease progressed and how Per actually felt.

We received emails from Per's sick bed and even pictures where we could see that Per received oxygen. Per is at Borås Hospital until he can go home. Illness is naturally stressful, both for those affected but also for those of us who are around. Worry and anxiety and uncertainty.

Per's illness means that we in Strömstad Academy's management have come to a temporary halt, but we cannot stand completely still waiting for Per to get healthy. We have a lot of things ahead of us to tackle, follow up on and fix. Thank God we have Anders Gustavsson as Pro-Vice-Chancellor and as Pro-Vice-Chancellor Anders can step in and for Per. That is the intention of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor. At the same time, we can state that things are somewhat more quiet during the summer break.

We have decided to post the matters that we need to have a discussion about. These matters will be presented in the News Forum. The time that you have to submit comments will be stated there. This means that everyone can comment on all important matters before they are prepared in the Working/Executive Committee (AU) and decisions must be made in board meetings and at extraordinary annual meetings. We will need one like that.

First, we have two items that we unfortunately did not make a decision on. One is the association's by-laws and the other is the ethics policy with the ethics council. There were discussions, but no decisions, on these two items. Therefore they will come up as items on the agenda at our next working committee meeting and at our next board meeting.

We also need to discuss the timing of the Science Festival and the content of the festival. This is actually the responsibility of the Vice-Chancellor and Pro-Vice-Chancellor, but getting an insight in how members view the matter allows you to make more well anchored decisions.

We went out and invited members to write down their views on the proposals I outlined as a first attempt. We received many good views in constructive friendly letters, the Science Festival is everyone's commitment.

I also need to listen to the consequences of the motion that dealt with the role of the Working Committee (AU). We have a by-law description of the mandate of AU, but upon closer inspection, as Chairman, I need a new interpretation of the description decided on so that I really understand the decision in the way that the motioner intended.

We also have important work to implement and it concerns the financial/fiscal year and the operating year. We can't have it the way it is now. John Fletcher has made some suggestions for us to study and decide on, so that we get a different order. We have an overly complicated system, in my opinion. I was wrong in the preparations for the Annual Meeting, and that must not happen. We, the Treasurer and I as Chairman received the bank's views and they advised to change the structure of financial/fiscal year and operating year

We also have a complex program for our webinars. The good thing about Jitsi.meet is that it is free. I don't see any other benefits and I'm also one of those who had a hard time getting the system to work. We have spent so much time and effort to bring about a change. John Fletcher has done a comparative study coming up with a new proposal. It is a comparative study that can provide some guidance for decisions about a new system.

We will also court the Minister of Education. Mats Persson. We will publish an outline of the thoughts and musings that exist right now. We don't know if we can get an audience with the Minister of Education. We hope and believe that if we can write a letter in which there is a win-win situation, then it should work. If the Minister of Education does not find any benefits for his agenda in the courtship, we will not get an audience. That's how it is. What do we now have to offer the Minister of Education? We will write about that briefly and clearly, and here we need the members' creative input.

In summary, I personally wish our Vice-Chancellor and his spouse a very good recovery. We send them our warmest thoughts and good energies. I also wish everyone a continued pleasant summer.

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## Per Flensburg: Vice-Chancellor's report

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Between June 1st and 7th, Helen (my wife) and I went on a combined wine and asparagus tour in Germany. There was not much of the asparagus, because the season was already over, but there were some vineyards. Not particularly prominent though. When we got home I was very tired, and so was Helen, so the time between Wednesday and Saturday we spent pretty much in bed. But on Saturday I got really sick, had a fever, had trouble breathing and couldn't cope very much. It got worse and worse and on Tuesday Helen made sure that I was admitted to the emergency clinic in Borås. There I was taken care of, given oxygen and probably a lot of other things and it was found that I had covid 19. I was admitted to the infection clinic where I stayed until July 14th! I am now home with oxygen. Chained with a nasal cannula and 25-metre long tube to a device that extracts oxygen from the air. See picture.

Physically, I can't stand anything. Maybe I can walk 10 meters, but that's about it. My lungs took a big hit and it's taking a long time to recover. In addition, it has contributed to diabetes, as a side effect of all the medication I have been on. However, I hope to avoid measuring blood sugar and taking insulin.



Intellectually, however, I am fully functioning. So now there are some thoughts about Strömstad Academy. The first is a proposal from our new member, Stig Ottosson, who previously worked part-time in Ukraine. The Swedish Institute announces funding to apply for

1. Supervision of doctoral students whose supervisors have died or become unable to supervise. It can also be support for doctoral students who have been wounded in the war and need extra help.
2. Supervision of master's students in their degree project. Many supervisors are called in and it is important that they complete their training
3. Support for the development of business life in Ukraine.

Stig and I have brainstormed some ideas and we think that SA can apply for supervision of both doctoral students and master's students.

The maximum amount is 1 million and we will of course seek that. What is needed is a match between supervisors from SA and students from Ukraine. I would therefore like to ask everyone to read Stig's article in this news forum and think about what you can and want to do. There will be a fee for the tutorial, also for possible trips to Ukraine. The amount depends on how many there will be and how much money we get. The idea is that for the doctoral students, we will offer tutoring that is partly domain-specific to the extent possible, and partly method tutoring, preferably in the form of a course in scientific methodology. For the master's students, we have the same set-up, but simpler. In addition, we have thought that we can provide domain-specific courses if there is interest. Also for this, we want to have information if you want to participate. Email Stig in the first instance at the following address: [stig.ottosson@tervix.se](mailto:stig.ottosson@tervix.se)

Another thing I thought about a lot during my hospital stay is quality. I believe that in order to receive funding and attention, it is very important that we have a high quality in basically everything we do. But mainly I have been thinking about quality in our writings and then mainly AAS. I have long called for explicit review criteria for the reviewers, but the interest has not been particularly great. A big problem is that different subjects have very different criteria and to put together something that makes sense that is universally valid is almost impossible - Nevertheless, we have to do it if we are to have any credibility in our interdisciplinarity. How do we formulate quality criteria that apply to:

1. Natural science
2. Social science
3. Humanities
4. Nursing science
5. Medicine
6. Behavioral science
7. Artistic sciences

During the lonely hours in the hospital, I thought a lot about this and came up with some thoughts, which I present in another article in this news forum. Looking forward to getting comments on it.

The future? Yes, I'll probably be tied to my oxygen machine for several weeks. I don't think I'll get rid of it until 5-6 weeks from now. And recovery takes a long time; think e.g. that it is doubtful whether I can attend the "nobel prize award" in Strömstad gymnasium in December. But one who lives will see and I hope you all have a lovely August!

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## Åsa Morberg: Teacher education

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### Teacher education is now to be reformed once again

*By Åsa Morberg, fil. dr. in pedagogy and docent in didactics and teacher trainer*

Well-trained teachers with the conditions to do a good job are crucial to solving the problems in schools, the government and SD claim. It is quite obvious! Consequently, they go to teacher training and set up an investigation, as all squeamish politicians do. Sweden's politicians are world champions at reforming teacher education.

The reform falls back on the Tidö Agreement. In the Tidö agreement, it was stated that the government and the Sweden Democrats wanted to see stricter admission requirements, in order to raise the status of teachers. At the same time, they wanted to reform the educational content with an increased focus on subject knowledge, cognitive science and practical methodology. What you don't write about is that you want to reduce something? An already material-heavy teacher education will become even more material-heavy. They also want to reduce the proportion of higher education institutions that provide subject teacher training, where where will then be the highest ranked, i.e. the universities. The government and SD are recommended to study the evaluations of the subject teacher training.

Raising the admission requirement absolutely does not automatically lead to higher status. Increasing the material in an already material-heavy education is a real misconception. Furthermore, subject knowledge has expanded continuously since the reforms of the 1960s. Don't the government and SD know about it? The subject knowledge has been the winner at the expense of the professional aspects. Now there will be more subject knowledge.

Then it is claimed that cognitive science should be included. So more science. Cognitive science is described as an interdisciplinary field where researchers from various fields such as philosophy, psychology, neuroscience, computer science, linguistics and social anthropology study the nature of human thinking. Is it a subject that the government thinks student teachers need? Today, there are roughly 1,000 PhD holders in the school system, and yet more science must be invested in. Tone down the research preparation elements and increase the professional elements.

As for the practical methodology, I am very curious how the government thinks. Namely, I wrote my doctoral dissertation on the subject of methodology and it is a historical overview of the development of the subject of methodology from 1842 onwards. The methodology as a subject has been abolished a long time ago. The subject was not university related. It was an experiential subject. The representatives of the methodology did not find a place in the university because they were only good non-researcher trained teachers.

The methodology was replaced by didactics, one might say. The didactics were research-based. The problem became who would actually teach didactics? Teacher educators who hold a doctorate, have their own teacher education, are familiar with teacher education and can be called teacher educators are rare in the university. The methodology can be said to be a practical subject, but now the government and SD add the term practical? What in heaven's



name does that mean? Does this mean that the methodology is pushed to supervisors within practice VFU? Or how have you actually thought?

I wholeheartedly support the universities' criticism of the government and SD. The plans for a new teacher training are met with criticism from the universities. Representatives of teacher training programs around the country suggested in a reply "that instead of detailed control, teacher training should be given sufficient resources and academic freedom".

The teacher education is not a university education as it is treated by the government and SD. If it is to be controlled in detail, it should be taken out of the university and put into special teacher training colleges.

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## Åsa Morberg: The school debate seen through Åsa Morberg's eyes

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### The school debate seen through Åsa Morberg's eyes

*By Åsa Morberg, docent in didactics and chairman of Strömstad Academy*

School debates and teacher training debates have interested me a lot ever since I was trained as a primary school teacher in the 60s. I have now been given a fantastic opportunity to collect my debate articles into a book, thanks to our colleague Gudmund Bergqvist, chairman of the Editorial Committee, and his tireless and kind support. Gudmund's support has been and is invaluable.

The latest article in the members' letter, which was basically about professionalisation, resulted in several interesting letters from colleagues. It pleased me very much. Our colleague Rune Wigblad even wrote a PM and a kind of appeal that here we can do something through Strömstad Academy. It is certainly not always that members have written to me, but it has happened now and then and I am so grateful for that. Wise colleagues in other disciplines have really contributed to my thinking and, last but not least, to my actions.

I have debated continuously in the newsletter, basically since I became a member of Strömstad Academi. I have a script with many pages that I am working on cleaning up and trying to get a uniform lay out on. I have debated in many other fora as well of course. I have blogged for Skolvärlden and continue doing so for Lärarna. I have written in the local press in Sandviken and Gävle, yes, actually in the whole of Gävleborg Region. I have also debated nationally and participated in both television and radio. I have actually also managed to get articles into both DN and SVD.

An example of a debate article clearly shows why I debate. Together with my supervisor Stefan Selander and my doctoral student Göran Fransson, I wrote an article on the culture page of DN with the headline "Sweden is the worst in teacher support". That article resulted in the university in Gävle receiving several million for research into the first years for new teachers. There was a good result of that debate article. The article initiated a new area of research, the so-called the induction research. I was able to apply for a position as docent after some time with reference to my writings about the first time of new teachers. The payoff was good from that article. Something happened. I debate because I want something to happen.

I have been involved in school and teacher training and am subscribing to News from the Department of Education. There are messages almost every day. I am very critical of politicians' tireless squeamishness. If the teacher training is to be within the College/University, then you should not control the details. With such a strong detailed management as we have today, there will be no higher education in the same way as other higher educations. If detailed mana-

gement is to continue, we need to move teacher education to teacher training colleges again. The reforms in teacher education are scandalously numerous. One reform does not have time to be fully implemented before the next one is on its way. It is devastating. The reforms also go in different directions. Here and there and back and forth. The absence of professional tools in teacher training creates problems, but all reforms that are carried out give teachers more science and more theory! How is that possible you may as

The school is also the subject of my debate articles. I am pursuing a thesis that the school should become more professionally supported. Teachers are deprived of their professionalism through the painstaking detail management that takes place. One fabrication is worse than the other. How do you come up with the idea of debating the do or don't do of mobile phones from the Department of Education? Or the discussion about how teachers should create peace of mind in their activities? Or other crazy things! The Ministry of Education deprives teachers of their professionalism and turns them into "puppets".

I continue to debate. I never give up. It would be great if we could do something together about professionalization. On Tuesday evening, I will speak at a cultural evening in a nearby municipality about "The school debate seen through Åsa Morberg's eyes". Fun for me.

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## KG Hammarlund: Answer to Åsa Morberg

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### **On students' reading comprehension and "practitioners" in teacher education - reply to Åsa Morberg**

*KG Hammarlund*

There is no doubt that experienced and skilled teachers in primary and secondary schools are a poorly utilized resource in Swedish teacher education, and I completely agree with Åsa Morberg on that. The question is, however, whether one can conclude from this that profession of "metodiklektor" should be reintroduced, or that the lack of "practitioners" in teacher training may play a role explaining the declining reading comprehension among Swedish students according to the 2021 PIRLS survey.<sup>1</sup>

If one looks at PIRLS, it can first be stated that the Swedish results have indeed fallen, but also that they follow the same downward curve as the OECD countries on average. Swedish students thus retain their relative position among the top 10, slightly behind Finland but slightly ahead of Norway and Denmark. A question which arises is whether there is any common factor that can explain that not only Sweden, but the OECD average has fallen significantly since 2016?

One factor mentioned in the report is that the study was conducted during the Covid19 pandemic. Another factor is that the reading comprehension test was carried out using digital on-screen texts. Exactly what these changed conditions have meant is, of course, difficult to determine, but it does not seem unlikely that they played a role.

If we look specifically at the Swedish results, it is clear that they have deteriorated especially for students with a low degree of home resources and/or with a migration background. It is not surprising that students with Swedish as a second language and parents with perhaps even less knowledge of Swedish may have difficulty understanding a Swedish text.

It is a sad and well-known fact that Swedish schools fail when it comes to compensating for students' home resources (or lack thereof). Well-educated and competent teachers has a key role fulfilling that task, but they must also be given the conditions/resources to make use of

their skills. They may also need the support of special educators, teachers' assistants, multilingual staff and, as Åsa Morberg points out, well-functioning school libraries. Today, when more and more municipalities are cutting the budget in terms of education, this is not possible.

That "practitioners" can no longer be employed in higher education – and thereby constitute an important resource in teacher training – is hardly correct. It is true that a permanent position as a senior lecturer (universitetslektor) normally requires a doctorate (the Higher Education Ordinance allows for exceptions, but those are rarely granted). However, there is no obstacle to employment as a lecturer (universitetsadjunkt). It is also possible, when it comes to serving both as a teacher in primary or secondary school and in teacher training, to offer fixed-term employment as an adjunct lecturer. In addition, our universities have great freedom to set up other types of positions.

Several institutions of higher learning also make use of these opportunities (an example is the project Framtidens lärarutbildning at Örebro University<sup>2</sup>). In cases where this does not happen, several explanations are conceivable: a lack of interest at the faculty or vice-chancellor level, a lack of resources as a result of a long-term erosion of faculty grants, difficulties in finding forms of cooperation with municipal administrations. After all, it is the municipalities that must allow for part-time teaching so that teachers can participate in teacher training alongside their teaching duties or have the time needed for collaboration, for example around planning and implementation of the in-school training (verksamhetsförlagd utbildning).

Developing and improving teacher education in such a direction does not conflict with a strong research connection. It is true that only a small percentage of teachers go on to postgraduate studies, but it would be strange if (as in some cases) a five-year education did not qualify for postgraduate studies. Even more important, however, is that teacher students during their training acquire the ability to read, assess, and make use of both educational and subject-related research in order to further develop their skills during a long working life.

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### Footnotes:

1 Skolverket (Swedish National Agency for Education) 2023: PIRLS 2021. The reading ability of Swedish students in grade 4 in an international perspective.  
Internet: <https://www.skolverket.se/getFile?file=11490>

2 Om Framtidens lärarutbildning

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## Jens Allwood: Which method is best?

**Which method is best?**–Interdisciplinary dialogues on method  
*Jens Allwood (ed)*

There are many terms today for research collaboration across disciplinary boundaries. Perhaps it is a sign that a dear child has many names. Two of these are in Swedish "multi-disciplinary" and "cross-disciplinary". In Swedish, we can also say "multidisciplinary" in addition to "multi-disciplinary" and in addition to "interdisciplinary" we can say "interdisciplinary" and possibly "transdisciplinary". The basic form can be said to be "multidisciplinary", where several sciences are coordinated, in the sense that they strive towards a common goal, but can actually do their work in separate tracks and the coordination of results is left to a project manage-



ment. You get several different perspectives, theories and methods. It is sufficient that the coordinators are competent in their own disciplines.

If we increase the intensity and move from coordination to collaboration and cooperation, from multi-discipline to the various variants of interdisciplinary, it is increasingly required that one understands each other's perspectives, theories and methods. Sometimes it is also required to be competent in several disciplines, both regarding understanding of theories and use of methods. Although such interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary competence sometimes occurs, it turns out in reality that it is not that common.

The present volume is an attempt to empirically illustrate the degree of understanding across disciplinary boundaries for different methods. Representatives of different scientific orientations have been invited to describe their favorite method or their view of scientific method based on their own preferences, possibly shaped by their disciplinary affiliation(s). Each author's contribution has then been read by the others, who have been asked to comment and write critical questions about what they read. These questions were then sent to the authors of each contribution who were asked to answer the questions.

The following 9 researchers representing 7-8 disciplines participate in the book:

1. Elisabeth Ahlsén - Neurolinguistics - Activity-based analysis of communication disorders
2. Jens Allwood - Linguistics, communication and cognitive science - Why concept definition and concept analysis?
3. Leif Bloch-Rasmussen - Informatics - Informatics and Pragmatism
4. Per Flensburg - Informatics - About describing reality
5. Anders Gustavsson - Ethnology - Fieldwork on sensitive (emotional) themes – Subjective experiences and reflections
6. KG Hammarlund - History - What does (good) historical method look like?
7. Ulf Persson - Mathematics - What is a mathematical method?
8. Claes Ugglå - Theoretical physics - Methods in natural sciences
9. Peter Währborg – Medicine - Methods in the medical sciences

Although many of the contributors weave much of their understanding of philosophy of science into their discussion of method, one gets a fairly good idea of the differences between the different disciplines' ways of approaching method. However, it is important to remember that the 9 authors primarily represent themselves. Differences in perception of method can sometimes be as great or even greater within a discipline than between disciplines. Intradisciplinary variation can be greater than interdisciplinary variation.

The differences between the authors can be seen, among other things, in their attitude to certain overarching methodological issues, which are often of a scientific-philosophical nature. Some of the questions or themes that the authors have or imply different views on are: Generic methods, Truth and knowledge, Explanations and understanding and the relationship between natural sciences and humanities-social sciences, Subjective versus objective, Methodological reductionism or holistic systems theory? What kind of information can be obtained from concept analysis?, The role of ethics in research, Misunderstandings and lack of understanding across disciplinary boundaries.

As a whole, the contributions, the questions and the authors' answers show many of the differences that exist between scientific disciplines and many of the challenges that exist in scientific collaboration. Hopefully, reading the book can be a contribution to finding solutions when interdisciplinary problems arise

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Pre-order with conference discount Science Festival Strömstad Akademi:

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Discount for members 50% reduced price (approx. SEK 300) + postage

The book is sent when it is printed against an invoice from Strömstad akademi The order is sent to Jens Allwood: jens@allwood.se

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## Stig Ottosson: The Ukraine project

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Stig and I wrote the following text as an introduction to the people of Ukraine. Stig is processing them. I signed as principal.

Strömstad Academy works to ensure that Swedish society can continue to benefit from the knowledge and experience of senior researchers by offering them opportunities for continued research and educational activities. Our environment is characterized by independent interdisciplinary thinking. Today, 67 professors, 33 associate professors and 39 PhD:s representing 88 subject areas and 14 countries participate in our work. Among the members are three Nobel Laurates and our Swedish astronaut.

Some of our members continue their research and publish in international scientific journals, others are more interested in sharing their knowledge with a wider public and society. That's why we have several writing series, online and in print, as well as our own publishing house where members can publish their papers and lectures.

Strömstad Academy is a virtual academy based in Strömstad, a coastal town in western Sweden close to the Norwegian border. We organize an annual science festival in Strömstad, where members present their research. There are local chapters in Stockholm/Uppsala, Falun, Gothenburg, Strömstad and Malmö/Lund. These have regular meetings (digital and physical) and provide webinars in collaboration with e.g. Rotary, the Technical Museum and the Immigrant Institute.

Strömstad Academy is a meeting place and a residence for researchers and teachers/lecturers who want to work and think freely and independently. Most members are seniors, but we also have younger members. The Academy has a free exchange of ideas both within and between different sciences. We try to create a genuine scientific and critical discussion where ideas are bumped and wetted.

Many junior professors in the Ukrainian university system are conscripted and participating in the war, which means reduced resources for qualified supervision of master's and PhD students at the various universities. We also think there are many Ukrainian soldiers, with high academic degrees, who are so injured, maimed, etc that they cannot fight. Here we at Strömstad Academy can assist. For this purpose, the Swedish Institute (SI)<sup>[1]</sup> has set up a support package from which we could apply for funding so that our members could contribute with our knowledge, contacts and experience. We will apply for such a package.

Professor Stig Ottosson have knowledge and experience of the Ukrainian university system - as well as cultural differences - and has already a certain established network of contacts. Therefore, we would like to create a university network in Ukraine. We can then make an application to SI in a program with projects aimed at supporting doctoral students and younger researchers (postdocs) in Ukraine. We can supervise PhD-students, give courses in scientific methods and in certain cases also domain specific education.

If we get our application granted, we must then, in parallel with the creation of a financial project and the building of a university network, also create a matching system between institutions/students and us, including a short searchable presentation of what everyone in our network can and wants to contribute to this qualified supervision. Applicant students must also provide the corresponding information so that a qualified match can be achieved.

Per Flensburg  
Professor of Systems Analysis  
Vice-Chancellor of Strömstad Academy

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[1]SI shares information about Sweden abroad and analyses how other countries view Sweden. They also facilitate international exchanges and partnerships. The goal is to increase awareness of Sweden and build good relationships with individuals, organizations and other countries.

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## Per Flensburg: The Home page

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### The home Page

*Per Flensburg*

I have discovered that the knowledge of what is on our website leaves something to be desired. I've often received slightly sour comments that "it should be on the website!" and when I usually answered, even a little more sourly: "It already is there!" and so I have given the address. I therefore ask **all members** for the following:

**Please take an hour and go through the website and click on all links except articles and newsletters,**

Yes, feel free to click on all the links, but I'm afraid it will take more than an hour. After doing this, you know what's on the website, you've figured out how I was thinking when I designed it. Start with the Swedish version, the English version needs a thorough revision, which Marylou has already started.

I would also like to have other views on the website because we are going to change web hosting and then there is the possibility of slightly more radical changes. I am in the process of changing hotels to my own websites, but it is taking some time and right now I can't change my own website.

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## Åsa Morberg: Project planning

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### **Project planning that contains requests to the Board**

*by Åsa Morberg, Chairman*

Projects of various kinds can be started by members without going through the Board and board decisions.

It is only when the project costs money and the project manager expects financial support from the Board that the project manager needs to submit a project plan to the Board. It should be a project proposal that covers the entire project and the Board is interested in receiving a budget for the implementation of the project and a summary of the requests that the project manager makes to the Board. The Board must be able to make well-founded decisions.

There is also a lot of good and less good advice online if you don't remember how a project budget can be drawn up.

In order to make good decisions in the board about project support, an overview of what the project is about and how the project is to be financed is therefore needed. A holistic perspective on financial support is desirable and then justifications are needed for the requests made. It is important to inform the Board on how alternatives to internal financing have been sought.

We always need to see what opportunities are available to get external funding. If it is an anthology, you can study what possibilities are available to cover printing expenses. Now we publish pretty much everything in-house and it costs a lot. For my part, with experience of publisher-produced anthologies, it is good to try publishing. It creates money in the form of royalties to the Academy and the publisher takes care of the marketing. It is a good alternative. Publishers absolutely do not publish books other than those that can be sold! When we publish books, we don't know what will sell, as evidenced by our stocks.

Project budget is needed and we need to try other possibilities for financing!

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## Per Flensburg: Good science

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### **Good science, a set of ideas.**

*Per Flensburg, Professor*

This paper is a rather loosely thought one that was developed in the infection clinic at Södra Älvsborg Hospital (SÄS) during the month I was there. It started with a call before I got sick, where I wanted to convene an editorial committee for a magazine in the field of digitization, technology and entrepreneurship. But I got sick before it was arranged.

It was Rune who, during the science festival, inspired me to propose this journal. He also inspired a new anthology about power structures in academia. Naturally, I realized that they should perhaps also make a magazine on this topic. There are apparently many in the Acade-

my who have experience of these persecutions, abuse of power, bullying slander and abuse in the work environment. I can immediately think of a fairly large number of people in my circle of acquaintances who have experienced these phenomena. Surely there are many who have similar contributions. If you add to that our international experiences and call the journal something like: "International Journal on Abuse of Power in the Academy" then we really should have a winning horse!

But of course, it's not that simple. Publishing a journal about slanders in academia and exposes malpractice can never be popular. A book could possibly become popular, but I'm not sure. To quote Peter Fritzell: We need to do a proper impact analysis before we get started!

But then another idea was born in the oxygen-poor darkness of the night: Why not a magazine about good science? It is this idea that I continue to develop. I describe it in the form of requirements for a conceivable scientific journal in the field: Good Science.

### **Examination**

The quality of a journal is determined by its procedures for reviewing submissions. The traditional review method is double blind review, i.e. the reviewer does not know who is reviewing and the person being reviewed does not know who did it. This process is considered to allow the reviewers to express themselves freely and, because they are unknown, they are also fairly insensitive to possible reprisals from those being reviewed.

In practice, however, most people in a field are familiar with each other and I suspect that in many cases the reviewer and the reviewed are known to each other. Most write in groups of about 30 pieces and then this is still familiar even if you maintain some kind of apparent double blind review.

Instead, I would like to advocate the exact opposite procedure: Open review! Both the person reviewing and the person being reviewed must be known to each other.

The advantage of having an open review is that the reviewers must stand for their opinions and justify them properly. I believe that the cornerstone of all science is precisely: Motivation!

### **Motivation**

Each article should have a message. The most important part of the article is justification for the scientific value of the message. More on this later. This is where conditions such as reliability, correctness, completeness, etc. come in. Justifying that a certain condition is correct presupposes a certain context, which is why the apparent objectivity of research cannot always be maintained. One may state that under such and such conditions the statement appears to be correct, but should the conditions not be as general as possible? On the other hand, we have the relationship relevance versus rigor, where the relevance of the message becomes lower the more universal it is.

In addition to everything else, I am writing a master's thesis in the history of ideas at Umeå University. The methods course there was interesting because the usual method in the history of ideas was narrative. It was about creating a credible, preferably interesting and exciting story that described the conditions at the time in question and interpreted them. It is important not to involve the values of our time, but to stick to the past. This requires a completely different approach than if, for example, I want to investigate different possibilities with virtual reality to convey Swedish values.

But we must realize that it is as stupid to prescribe one as the other. Each scientific investigation has its own characteristics and must be assessed and justified on its own merits. This demands a lot from the reviewers.



## Message

Each article should have a message. This must first and foremost be understandable. The journal is aimed at everyone who deals with good science, and the message must therefore be comprehensible to them. Furthermore, the message must be important, preferably previously unknown, contribute to improving society, etc. One can imagine a long list of requirements for the message and it is up to the author to show that the list is fulfilled. One can also imagine that the author attaches a review of his own text according to established guidelines.

The requirement for a message and related requirements are more reminiscent of research applications than of research results. When a research application is announced, that rule is linked to a notion of some form of improvement in society and the applicant is expected to show in his application how this is to be done.

An exception is the Swedish Research Council, where the focus is on research results instead of societal improvement. It is the largest government funder of research at Swedish universities, colleges and institutes. They finance research in all scientific fields by announcing grants in open competition. Every year, VR handles around 900 researchers who sit in various review groups and process around 6,000 research applications.

However, I emphasize that good science must be relevant to society and must be assessed in this perspective.

## True, correct and right

Already when I was in secondary school, I was interested in philosophy and lectured on Bertrand Russell's book "The ABC of Relativity". It actually came up in English in the oral matriculation exam and got myself a Ba in English.

There was one thing I got hung up on in that book and that was Russell mixing up "true", "correct" and "right" without a clear definition. Several years later, I myself came to the following conclusion:

- True = logical truth, opposite false. Occurs only within logic
- Correct = consistent with reality. Opposite: Incorrect. This only occurs in empirical observations.
- Right = morally right, opposite wrong. Has to do with ethics and morals.

When, at a more mature age, I began to read Plato, Aristotle and other ancient Greeks, I was very amazed that they did not distinguish between "right" and "true". In the Nichomenean ethics of Aristotle, chapter VI, there is the best description of knowledge I have seen so far. Aristotle associates "knowledge" with "virtue" and believes that knowledge is inherently virtuous. That virtue can then be seen from different perspectives does not make it less interesting.

## The beautiful

In connection with "the virtuous", the ancient Greeks speak of "the beautiful". The bigoted attitude of the Victorian era focused on "boy love" and caused a lot of trouble with its narrow views. But "the beautiful" is presented both in sculpture, painting, performing arts and poetry. We've all been fascinated at some point by the introduction to the Illiad:

"Sing, O goddess, of the wrath that burned with the Pelidan Akhilleus  
wretched, to a thousand agonies of the sons of the Achaeans,  
and as to Hades a host of brave warrior souls  
plunged down and left the corpses of the heroes to dogs and birds  
Staying on the ground for prey - it happened, as Zeus wanted it -,

all from the moment when they first began to quarrelsome part,  
The son of Atreus, the sport of hosts and the noble Achilles" (translation: Erland Lagerlöf, 1908 and Google translate)

The big question is: How do you make science out of this? In the introduction to the Illiad, Jesper Svenbro has written a long letter to Birgitta Trotzig, who has apparently just passed away, and in which he goes through some of the interpretations he has encountered. But then he discovers one by Simone Veil, which many years ago was loaned to Birgitta Trotzig and not returned. This turns all Jesper's interpretations upside down. Is this science?



Many years ago I read a book by Ulf Lindhe, in which he interpreted Marchel Duchamp's artwork: "The bride undressed by her bachelors, even". See picture besides. It was a very strange book and the interpretation was completely incomprehensible to me. I couldn't understand how Lindhe got it all together. But his interpretation is famous and wellknown, so in some context unknown to me this is great art and great beauty. But is it possible for me to understand it? Is it possible for me to appreciate this beauty?

Again, it's all about context. I once attended a method course where Lars Vilks was one of the participants. He claimed to be an artist because he was exhibited in a number of galleries. Consequently, everything he did was artistic activity. I had no fun with his operation with the Swedish authorities in connection with Arx and Nimis. To hold on like that is as artful as a painting

by Archimboldo. See picture below.

Whose all shenanigans with the Swedish authorities in connection with Arx and Nimis turn out in his masterful hands to be mere vegetables, which fall outside all rules. The most fun was the free state of Ladonia, where I quickly became a citizen.

But I mean the whole thing got out of hand with the model dogs. According to Vilks, by virtue of the Swedish freedom of expression, he has every right to draw and build roundabout dogs.



But the fatwa from al-Qaeda directed against Lars Vilks and the editor-in-chief of Nerikes Allehanda Ulf Johansson created many problems and threats for Vilks. The concept of respect plays a big role in this context. We now have the same thing with Koran burnings.

### Respect

You rarely associate respect with research. As a rule, it is about the researcher demanding society's respect for his work and the related discoveries made. In this context, I mean respect for the work of other researchers, regardless of the method or theory they are based on. A story of the history of ideas must be received with the same respect as a properly conducted quantitative survey. Both highlight different phenomena and are thus complementary to each other. Things like relevance, comprehensibility, social benefit are

important and must always be weighed. In my opinion, research and science are at the service of society: You must constantly demonstrate social benefit or, in any case, the possibility of social benefit. After all, it is society that pays me.

There are researchers who do not share this view but instead refer to academic freedom. Shirin Ahlbäck Öberg<sup>[1]</sup> writes, for example: At our universities and colleges, we should, without concern for possible consequences, be able to freely research and teach about things that outsiders may perceive as unimportant or downright controversial.

I do not agree with this. There must be some kind of sense and reason in what you are researching. An example is ignoble price. In 2021, one of them in ecology went to a Spanish/Iranian research group that analyzed bacteria from used chewing gum stuck to the pavements in 5 different countries. The team analyzed how the bacteria change over three months. It turns out that chewing gum initially contains bacteria known to be present in human mouths. Then these bacteria gradually disappear and environmental bacteria take their place. Interestingly, the bacteria on older chewing gum are similar to the bacteria on plant surfaces, Antarctic rocks, deserts and solar panels. On reflection, however, this is quite natural.

Another example is an article I read a long time ago where they discussed how the color "Blue" should be designated in program code. Should you write "b", "bl", "blu" or possibly "blue"? I don't remember what conclusion was reached.

### What is scientific knowledge?

This is the most difficult question to give a general answer to. A simple answer is: "It depends". We talk about characteristics of scientific knowledge, we talk about methods for producing scientific knowledge, we talk about the reliability of scientific knowledge and we talk about its general validity. You can certainly enumerate more aspects, but the interesting thing is that for all of them you can easily refute its claim to be scientific (See e.g. Alan Chalmers' book: "What is this thing called science?").



A characteristic of scientific knowledge is that it is considered correct under a large number of different cases. The phenomenon is usually called induction and means that the researcher makes a large number of observations of a phenomenon under different conditions and draws general conclusions from these. The classic example is "All crows are black". The scientist only needs to examine all the crows in the entire world and see if they are black or not. But there is an interesting question of interpretation here: Crows are actually both black and gray. See picture beside. The statement can be interpreted to mean that all crows are only black, but this only shows the

researcher's lack of ornithological knowledge.

An even more interesting example is the statement "All swans are white". That is not true because in Australia there is a viable population of blacks like that. They were discovered in the 16th - 18th century when Australia was discovered and are a classic example of the inadequacy of induction.

A famous ballet is Tchaikovsky's "Swan Lake". It premiered at the Bolshoi Theater on March 4, 1877, and the main roles are the white swan Odette and the black swan Odile. Tchaikovsky probably knew there were black swans, but let's assume for a moment that this is not the case. Can one then consider the existence of black swans predicated based on Odile's existence in the ballet "Swan Lake"? From an artistic point of view, it is absolutely unequivocal: Odile exists! From a scientific point of view, it is more doubtful. She exists as a fantasy, but not as a reality.

When I previously talked about induction and that it meant that the researcher makes a large number of observations of a phenomenon under different conditions and from these draws general conclusions. However, this is not correct. How many times do I have to stick my hand into an open fire to realize that my hand will get burned? How many times do I have to stick it in cold water to realize it's getting wet?

There are many experiments one can do with induction. I usually ask the class to think of a number between one and zero. Next, I will prove to them that no one thought of the number 0.5. The proof is simple: There are infinitely many numbers between one and zero. 0.5 is one of them. The probability that someone will have thought of 0.5 is then  $1/\infty$ , i.e. zero! But there is always someone who thought of 0.5.

Despite all the criticism, induction still has its justification, and this applies mainly to the discovery of regularities in society. I observe certain regularities in existence and these regularities can possibly be understood on a more general level.

So far I have talked about science as a general phenomenon without making any specification. But there are many kinds of science, each with its own characteristics, and it is valuable to bring these up for closer examination. We need to see how to define good science in each field. Take e.g. the following list:

1. Natural science
2. Social science
3. Humanities
4. Nursing science
5. Medicine
6. Behavioral science
7. Artistic sciences

Don't we have to have guidelines for each area or is there some general "good science"?

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[1]Om akademisk frihet, SULF:s skriftserie XLIII

Published by Sweden's university teachers and researchers in 2023

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