



STRÖMSTAD ACADEMY

Nordic institute for advanced studies

News Forum Strömstad Interdisciplinary Academy

Content

Editor's corner Anders Gustavsson	1
Chairman's and Vice-Chancellor's report.....	2
Per Flensburg: A Christmas treat	4
Åsa Morberg: Sweden should leave the PISA survey	6
Jena Allwood: Book reviews	7

Editor's corner Anders Gustavsson

Editor's corner

Anders Gustavsson

Vice-Chancellor and Information System Scientist Per Flensburg and Educator and Chairman of the Board Åsa Morberg informs about news in Strömstad Academy. Flensburg has written a Christmas treat. Morberg argues that Sweden should leave the international PISA survey.

Linguist Jens Allwood invites members of the Strömstad Academy to write reviews of the Academy's books.

Author Staffan Hübinette presents the digital newsforum Drugnews <https://drugnews.se/>

In SCIREA Journal of Sociology volume 7, issue 6 2023 **ethnologist Anders Gustavsson** published More than a decade as a senior cultural scientist. <https://article.scirea.org/pdf/841240.pdf>

In the new Reprint Series no 1 **Ethnologist Åsa Ljungström** has published Local Heroes: A Case Studies of 19th Century Trading Farmers in Sweden <http://stromstadakademi.se/SAR/SAR-1.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

I wish new contributions to the January issue of the Newsletter sent to my e-mail address with deadline on 27 January 2024: 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 Strömstadiensis, AAS, to peter@wahrborg.se, the video series SAV to: gudmundbergqvist@hotmail.com and the Free Series to: per.flensburg@stromstadakademi.se

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Chairman's and Vice-Chancellor's report

December's monthly report

Here comes our last report for 2023. This is the last report of the year and we also present a small annual review of 2023 in the report. We thought the attempt to write a joint report was so successful that we are continuing doing so.

New year with new challenges in 2024

Now we are in December, the last month of the year. We thought that our joint monthly column would partly be about the past year, and partly of course about December's work at Strömstad Academy. We thank everyone for good cooperation for the good of the Academy. We feel that everyone wants the best for Strömstad Academy, but we have slightly different mindsets and different paths. It has worked well with productions and publications and it is really fun.

CV online - post CV or link to CV

We are still missing CVs from many members. Surely all members of Strömstad Academy have a CV that can be posted on the website? Now we all take the plunge and post our resumes or simply post a link. Our website is our face to the outside world. Now, if we visit the Minister of Education and he goes online and learns that we can't even post CVs, that's not good. Send your CV (or a link to it) to either per@flensburgs.se or mlwadenberg@telia.com.

We are all looking forward to the Science Festival 2024 -06-10 -13

The Vice-Chancellor and Pro-Vice-Chancellor have decided that the Science Festival will take place on June 10-13, as we previously announced. We have booked Skagerack for the whole festival, but we have also booked Fars sal on Monday and cafe Guldtuppen in the afternoon/evening. There is a planning group consisting of four members: Lasse Broman, Peter Fritzell, Rosa Jörgensson and Sveza Filipova Daceva. It is a very good group with a strong local connection to Strömstad. Views on the program's content and layout are channeled to Per and Anders, who are responsible for the program itself. Views on everything else about the Science Festival must go to the planning group. The local group ensures that we get food and opportunities to socialize in a pleasant way during the Science Festival. The Science Festival is very important both for Strömstad Academy's individual members and the social interaction between the members. It is also important to make Strömstad Academy better known. It is now a matter of balancing these two purposes! The Chairman has contacted Strömstads Tidning to get more information out about the Science Festival. Åsa has contacted the Editor-in-Chief. Mariana Back can supplement with guest columns in Strömstads Tidning. At the last board meeting, it was decided to cooperate with Rotary during the Science Festival.

The local chapters in Strömstad Academy are important

We need reports from the local chapters. We have received a very gratifying report from Marylou Wadenberg and the restarted local chapter in Stockholm/Uppsala. We have the following convenors for the local chapters: Bodil Frisdal in Lund, Jens Allwood in Gothenburg, Sveza Filipova in Strömstad, John Fletcher leaves and Peter Fritzell takes over in Falun and Marylou Wadenberg for Stockholm/Uppsala. We have received reports from Jens and from Marylou. Jens Allwood has many activities where members can participate. We also need to ask the group of local chapter convenors to discuss who should be the coordinator of all chapters and let us know. It is better for the group of local chapter convenors to propose their coordinator than for the board to propose. We have discussed appointing

the convenors to the Board, not least in view of the fact that the local chapters will possibly get their own budget for the local chapters. We will return to that later.

Marketing and member recruitment for the Academy - everyone's responsibility, but at the last board meeting, Per Flensburg and Peter Währborg were given a special responsibility

Per Flensburg and Peter Währborg are now a duo who will work on the marketing. They may involve several members and propose a text for the assignment to market. A clear mission and planning of a new strategy are needed. They will constitute the start of a new marketing group that will also develop a marketing strategy. We have previously had a marketing group that was discontinued, but it is absolutely necessary that we start a new marketing group.

It is the members who are our organization. We really need more members and all members are expected to recruit. Recruiting new members to Strömstad Academy does not have to be so complicated.

Dare to ask prospective members! The most common reason why someone is not in Strömstad Academy is that this person has not been asked about membership. We must both be seen and heard and we must show that we actually exist and that we want more members. You can very well start with yourself. What made you choose to join Strömstad Academy? What is good about Strömstad Academy? Emphasize the positive things when talking to new members. We may be able to invite potential and future members to both the activities of the local chapters and to the Science Festival and show what a fantastically interesting and lively association we have.

We can even have a special meeting for new and prospective members during the Science Festival where we talk about Strömstad Academy. We can spread information about our meetings on the website, on Facebook and in other social media. If we succeed in bringing in new members, we must also take good care of our new members. We have to make sure that they feel welcome and that we are good at informing about upcoming activities. Feel free to use our website for membership recruitment as well!

Courting the Minister of Education to get support for Strömstad Academy

We, Per, John and Åsa have been working on an approach for the Minister of Education since a long time back. We have put together a request to be allowed to visit the department and present the Academy, and in addition to being allowed to present our Academy, we are asking the Minister of Education for financial support for our activities. We have also drawn up a description of our activities that we will use at the presentation. We have also compiled a publication list for the Academy. It looks very impressive. We are careful to talk about what we can offer the Minister of Education if the department chooses to use Strömstad Academy. We must ensure that the Minister of Education gains something substantial from meeting us from Strömstad Academy. We request in the first place to have a physical meeting with the minister. If that doesn't work, we'll have to go to a digital meeting. We can also, of course, meet a political secretary. Of course, it depends on how our request is received by the Minister of Education.

We naturally link to all the work that former Chairman of the Board, Peter Fritzell, did to make Strömstad Academy known to the government. Peter Fritzell arranged a much-appreciated visit to the Parliament.

The past year 2023 and the coming year 2024

We have chosen to finally reflect on the past year. Of course, we all have our own pictures of the past year. Our pictures are sure to differ too. We have prepared many changes, but we

have not implemented that many. Change is not easy. We wanted to establish a new statute but the old statute from 2017 is still in effect. We wanted to change the annual plan. We still have the old annual plan, although we received good advice from our bank to change. We have communication problems with an uncontrolled e-mail distribution. Everything is sent to everyone. We have not managed to get routines in place to report cases to the Board. We need to take it up a notch in 2024. We need to get better routines for reporting cases to the Board. We have a large board, but the routines in the board's work with, for example, reporting absences etc. have not been established. We can work more efficiently and in accordance with good association practice. Clear routines also reduce the need for administration, and we all appreciate that.

One explanation for the fact that so little has happened could be that a number of disease cases have occurred. First, Per got covid-19 during the summer, had to stay in the hospital for a month and then had oxygen at home for five months. Peter Währborg suffered a severe infection and was operated on three times. Finally, Gudmund broke the neck of his femur. It was important people for the Academy's work who became unable to work.

Reflecting on the past year is important for all of us. It actually creates self-awareness. We learn from our experiences. Reflecting on our actions and their results provides valuable insights. Maybe it can lead to more thoughtful decisions in the future? Maybe we can get better at planning for our goals. We may be able to set more attainable goals in the coming work year. It is important to set realistic goals.

In 2024, Per has announced that he intends to resign. This means major changes for Strömstad Academy. A new Vice-Chancellor election must be held. Happily, we got a new member in the Nominating Committee. A very experienced member. It will be Gudmund Bergqvist, if he now stands up. We hope he does.

Per Flensburg: A Christmas treat

A Christmas treat

Per Flensburg

It's a quarter past eleven on Christmas Eve. I just finished watching midnight mass from Rome. Not that I'm particularly religious, but it was a tradition in my previous family and I uphold it from time to time. This year, the Pope gave a very nice sermon where he started from the two themes of the Christmas Gospel: The tax collection and the birth of Jesus. He thought it was remarkable that the gospel spent so much time on the tax collection, it would have been enough to mention it in passing. But the Pope saw the tax collections as a way of counting heads, while the birth of Jesus meant seeing the face of the individual person. He described an administrative, dividing and calculating approach and a human, humanitarian and spiritual opposite. Unsurprisingly, he felt that more of the latter was needed.

Earlier we had had an interesting discussion in the family about all the misery in the world and who gained from it. The arms industry was a given winner, but we never found out if it was really them that initiated all the wars we see in the world. However, the oil industry is largely to blame for climate work going so slowly, so the risk that the earth will become uninhabitable for our grandchildren is imminent. Short-term, monetary gains outweigh the future of humanity. Why is it like that? Are the oil sheikhs so ignorant that they don't see how they are thwarting the future of their family? They are greedy, but not stupid. Maybe the Pope's idea of tax collection versus humanity can explain part of the matter?

Before I get to this interesting question, I want to address two concepts I read about many years ago in a book by the Norwegian sociologist, Dag Østerberg. The name of the book was *Förståelseformer* (Comprehension patterns) and it was published by Korpens publishing house in the late 70s. His concept was exterior and interior thinking. While the exterior thinking is based on catalog logic, i.e. the Pope's tax collection, the interior thinking is based on analogy and dialog, i.e. the logic that, according to the Pope's opinion, should be a consequence of the Christian faith, manifested in the birth of Jesus. Now, there are countless examples of religion, based on a message of peace, leading to horrible atrocities. Think of the crusades, witch-burnings, the 30-year war and for that matter the current war between Hamas and Israel. Admittedly none of the latter are particularly peace-seeking, but they use religion as a justification for horrible atrocities.

Our Christmas dinner discussion wavered back and forth and of course we didn't solve the world's problems, but I came to the conclusion that a contributing cause of the misery in the world is our tendency to sort people and things into compartments. We generalize the individual to fit into a special compartment. Example: Muslims oppress women, Swedes, especially the Sweden Democrats, burn the Koran, young immigrants shoot around wildly, business directors, especially bank directors, only think about quick bonuses and ignore the environment, etc. I want to emphasize that these are templates, and gross generalizations and I don't condone any of them. But - and now I act inappropriately - doesn't science deal with generalizations? Doesn't it generate templates into which it inserts its survey objects? Doesn't science contribute, at least indirectly, to the catalog thinking that taxes the world?

Having come this far in my thinking, I return to the oil sheikhs and wonder if they are aware that their actions are thwarting the future of their dynasties, indeed all of humanity? I actually don't think so. My opinion is based on the fact that in the 70s I worked as a night watchman at Addo in Malmö. Addo made advanced mechanical calculators that could handle all four methods of calculation. My parents had one of these in their office and when divided, it would hold on for a long time and hiss and spin and the rods with numbers would go up and down with a terrible noise. As we know, these monsters were outcompeted by electronic calculators that, at a fraction of the price, did the same thing much faster and quieter. But when I talked to the guys at the factory, they said that these electronic calculators didn't stand a chance against Addo's calculators, which were durable and trouble-free and based on a well-known technology. These views were filtered through all the reports sent to the management, which consequently achieved a distorted view of reality and that's how it went: Addo went bankrupt. This was later described to me as the gate-keeper phenomenon. We see something similar with our sheikhs: Information about the climate crisis and the significance of oil in this respect is downplayed, trivialized and even omitted by their subordinates.

A similar process takes place in the major oil companies. It is important for the owners to show bright future prospects and continue the share dividend. Consequently, the gate-keeper phenomenon kicks in here as well and Earth continues to be destroyed. The tax collection works on! But many industry leaders have realized that the catalog logic does not hold up. We cannot keep taxing the Earth but must engage in dialog with the evil forces and convince them that they are wrong. We can't just be outside, we have an inside too.

As a researcher, you should ask yourself the question: What is this due to? Are there any changes in society that lead to these phenomena? I want to remind you of the talk I gave at Strömstad Academy's Science Festival in 2019. There I claimed that a number of extensive paradigm shifts took place during the period 1970-1990 in many sciences. But then it was the other way around from a catalog perspective to an analogical/dialectical one. It is now close at hand to speculate about whether this is a recurring phenomenon and if so, what is

driving it? The matter is, in my opinion, worthy of investigation and it is very likely that I will begin such an investigation. However, I need help with that and therefore invite you, Dear Reader, to participate in this excursion into the history of ideas in human society.

Åsa Morberg: Sweden should leave the PISA survey

Sweden should leave the PISA survey

by Åsa Morberg, PhD in pedagogy, docent in didactics

We have been able to read about the results of the latest PISA survey of the Swedish youth. The Minister of Education characterizes the results as "a historic loss of knowledge" and uses the results of PISA for political purposes. The government has made several efforts to raise the knowledge results in Swedish schools and to strengthen the conditions for the students who face the greatest challenges.

The government's measures are about increased state control of the school system and a complete renovation of the independent school system, investments in security and study peace as well as several different changes to ensure that students acquire basic skills in reading, writing and arithmetic at an early age. The government has also helped finance more special teachers, special teaching groups and school social teams. A review of teacher training has also announced.

Let me start by describing PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment). It endeavours to measure how 15-years-old pupils in different nations are "equipped to meet the future" when leaving school. The project is run by OECD and focuses on four areas: math, science, reading comprehension, and solving problems. OECD has been established to further economic and general development by exchange of ideas and experience in areas which are important for the economic development of democratic nations with a market economy, particularly within the 38 member states. Its head office is located in Paris.

PISA cannot, in my opinion, measure how well our Swedish 15-year-olds are equipped to meet the future. The PISA examinations are conducted every three years. The goal of the PISA project is to test and evaluate the performance of school pupils around the world. An underlying purpose of the surveys is to be able to develop better teaching methods and better results. What methodological development has PISA actually achieved? How can better methods be developed based on a simple survey? What methods have been improved through the PISA surveys? How can PISA's impact on method development be controlled?

The test is carried out having 5,000 students from each country can take the test, which takes two hours. What conclusions can one really draw from a study based on a sample of students answering a number of questions during two hours? The attention that PISA receives indicates, in my opinion, an overconfidence in what conclusions can be drawn from the study's results.

Since PISA's start in the late 90s, the results of the PISA surveys have received more and more attention in the media. 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". From the ministry, we can now read headlines such as "Historical loss of knowledge!" According to the Minister of Education, Swedish pupils' skills have greatly deteriorated in mathematics and reading comprehension. In addition, the results show an increased difference in results between groups of students with different socio-economic backgrounds.,

What the articles dealing with the PISA survey have in common is that they use the results of the PISA surveys, without in any way critically examining the PISA survey, critically examining the results and questioning their validity. Rarely or never do you see an article that scientifically critically examines the PISA examinations.

It is important to highlight criticisms of the PISA surveys and its principal, the OECD, specifically criticisms relating to the content and quality of the PISA surveys and its interpretation and use of the results. There are good reasons to question the PISA examinations. In my opinion Sweden should leave the PISA examinations since they add absolutely nothing new!

As a researcher, you naturally say that both non-response and response rate affect the final result. That is basic knowledge. The PISA survey is losing relevance, says Norwegian professor Svein Sjøberg at the University of Oslo. He thinks, just like me, that Sweden should leave the survey. Using the survey as a measure of quality in Swedish schools is absurd because it is not quality that is being measured.

In summary: Sweden should leave the PISA project.

Jena Allwood: Book reviews

Jens Allwood

STRÖMSTAD ACADEMY publishes many books, but we have problems getting information out and selling the books. One of the reasons is that too few book reviews are published.

We, therefore, would like to invite all members of the Academy to read and review the books. The reviewer can then send the review to a suitable newspaper/journal.

If the choice of newspaper/journal is difficult, it would be good if the Academy can create a review committee where we, in addition to writing reviews, also can help finding appropriate newspapers/journals.

If you are interested in participating and writing reviews, please send an email addressed to Peter Währborg, Anders Gustavsson and Jens Allwood (peter@wahrborg.se, anders.gustavsson@ikos.uio.no, jens@allwood.se)

We will then be back with suggested books to review.

If you have a suggestion of your own this is also welcome.

