



News Forum Strömstad Interdisciplinary Academy

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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. Morberg calls on all members to write a story about why they are a member of Strömstad Academy.

Teacher, Educator and Religious Researcher Carl Olivestam continues the series about survivors with an article about Balthasar.

Pediatrician Gudmund Bergqvist writes about the population issue in the world and warns against the legalization of cannabis.

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 July issue of the Newsletter sent to my e-mail address with deadline on 27 July 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 Reprint Series and the Free Series to: per.flensburg@stromstadakademi.se

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Report from Chairman and Vice-Chancellor

June monthly report by Per Flensburg, Vice-Chancellor, and Åsa Morberg, Chairman of the Board

We would like to thank you for pleasant and stimulating company during the science festival 10-13 June 2024. We would also like to thank the local planning group consisting of Lars Broman, Peter Fritzell, Sveza Filipova, Sven Moosberg and Rosa Jörgensson. It was solid work with all arrangements that provided many opportunities for social interaction and intensive networking. The togetherness between the members is sparse in the Academy if you don't count the web meetings. Communication via the web has too many limitations. We know that all too well. But we don't have the finances to meet physically continuously and have to make the best of the situation. Per Flensburg writes about this elsewhere.

Reflections after the science festival

Both the Vice-Chancellor and Chairman write separate reflections elsewhere. There is a lot to think about, but most of it can probably be solved.

Preparations for the financial/fiscal year 24/25 – charter and operations

At the annual meeting we adopted new statutes. These govern the association's activities. The most important thing in the statutes is that it is clear why the association exists at all. "The meaning of the association" it is usually said. The statutes must therefore contain a clear and distinct purpose for the activity. This is expressed in fairly general and overarching terms. These need to be concretized and made operational. Work on this began at the members' meeting on 10 June. A report from that will appear elsewhere in this news forum.

The Board's working methods

This is described elsewhere.

Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee is a very important body in the association. We need candidates who have no other positions of trust. They must add a unique and important dimension to the Board's work. Having the right skills on the Board is absolutely crucial for our association to be able to make well-founded decisions and achieve our goals in an efficient manner. The Nominating Committee should make careful considerations when we choose board members next time. By finding the right candidates, we get effective control and management of Strömstad Academy. Before the Nominating Committee starts working next time, we must define what is important for Strömstad Academy. What skills and experiences are needed to address the challenges our association faces. What background or skills are needed on the board? We also need members who share the association's ethics and who have the ability to look out for the association's best interests.

Now we are taking a long and wonderful break until late summer or early fall and wish the members of the Academy a really lovely, relaxing and pleasure-filled summer!

Per Flensburg: About digital aids

About digital aids

Per Flensburg

Elsewhere in this news forum, I describe my vision for Strömstad Academy and what is needed to make it a reality. It is about the Academy consisting of a number of islands, a number of projects, each of which studies an interesting phenomenon. These interesting phenomena are the core of the Academy, it is around them that all activities must revolve. Someone takes the initiative for such a theme, gathers around them some members who then together further develop it in the form of anthologies, articles, and themes in our magazine. The marketing is aimed at these themes, which are described in an appealing way and where other people outside the Academy can also get involved. At least initially, we of course want to have them as members as soon as possible.

In this article I will mainly focus on which IT aids are needed. That such an idea is needed is quite clear, the members are spread all over the world and there is no possibility of regularly gathering them for physical meetings. Nevertheless, these discussions are the foundation on which the Academy is built.

It is the theme that is the main activity of the Academy. In each theme, different kinds of results can be produced, usually in the form of anthologies or a theme issue in our interdisciplinary journal "Acta Academiae Strömstadiensis" (AAS). But it can also be something else, a lecture series, a course, a film, yes, the possibilities are many, it's just that resources are missing. I describe this in my vision.

It is mainly simple digital but powerful tools that are needed. We have tried to introduce discussion groups on a couple of occasions, but the use has been extremely moderate. We have two Facebook groups but there is no major activity there. However, where things sometimes happen is the e-mail, but for the type of activity needed in a thematically structured organization, the usual e-mail does not work.

A system that could possibly work is to use mailing lists using the program LISTSERV. There the user can start or end a subscription, but I suspect you can only discuss one topic at a time. You can imagine a LISTSERV for each theme. There will be maybe ten members discussing in each list and it is affordable. I'll investigate further and maybe do a test install.

Discussion forums are otherwise the classic way to discuss digitally. In the attempts we have made members have had problems creating an account, think only one succeeded but with great effort. But even if you have an account, it is required that you go in and check at regular intervals. If you make a post, you can be notified via e-mail if something happens in that discussion thread, but you have to activate. And very few did, so it all died out.

Discord is another interesting program. It is made for chat, mainly around various forms of games, but can also be used for serious purposes. Thus, the Partiet Vändpunkt used discord when it established itself. However, it requires that you have an account there and can add friends who also have an account. I will look into the matter further.

Requirements for discussion programs

1. Anyone should be able to register as a user without any problems
2. Should work on all platforms (Mac, Windows and Linux)
3. Must be able to signal if something has happened
4. Should be easy to make new posts and also create a completely new discussion

5. Must be able to exclude unauthorized persons from registering (conflicts with No. 1)
6. Should be able to shut down/block spammers who have entered.
7. Must be able to attach files of various types to their posts
8. Have the option of easy formatting
9. Should not involve too much administration

I can fairly confidently say that there is no program that meets these requirements. But I will penetrate the market and get as far as I can at a reasonable cost. Maybe we have to buy an education.

Video recordings

The publication series that is growing the most is our video series. This indicates that video recordings are something that interests our members and we should encourage this interest. Most of the recordings are made in connection with lectures or courses, but it should also be possible to make a recording for the purpose of creating a debate. This is not something I have seen anywhere and it means a certain inconvenience for the participants. Perhaps it can lead to the posts being well thought out.

It is quite easy to make a video recording in Powerpoint and likewise in Keynote for those who use it. However, you must leave room for the image of yourself in the presentation. But it's quite easy to get an acceptably large picture of the presenter without obscuring the text. I will make an instructional video of this. In this way, we can bring about a discussion using all media as tools. I will do a test installation here: <http://stromstadakademi.se/PPtest>

Per Flensburg: On interdisciplinary

About interdisciplinary

Per Flensburg

My vision for Strömstad Academy is based on an interdisciplinary approach. We must then make it clear to us what interdisciplinary means and really also what science means.

Jens Allwood talks about four kinds of interdisciplinarity (Allwood, 2021):

- Multidisciplinary
- Interdisciplinary
- Transdisciplinary science
- Interdisciplinary science (meta-science)

Multidisciplinary means that several disciplines work on the same problem. They work separately, based on their own thought model (Liliequist, 2003). This way, the problem is illuminated from different perspectives, but each perspective is isolated and it is the reader's task to integrate them into a whole. Ex: Our anthology on pandemics.

The terms "thinking model" and "thinking style" come from Ludwik Fleck, who in the 1930s noted that young researchers adopt the approaches, problems, methods and theories of their collaborating colleagues (Fleck, 1935). It is the same phenomenon that Berger & Luckmann describe in their famous book on the sociology of knowledge (Berger et al., 1998). Thomas Kuhn addressed the same phenomenon in his book on the structure of scientific revolutions (Kuhn, 1962). He knew of Fleck but did not quote him. Later, the different approaches came to be called "paradigms", taken from linguistics, where it means inflectional patterns. It is important to realize that many of these styles of thought are in-

commensurable, i.e. they cannot be compared because their view of the world is fundamentally different.

Interdisciplinary means collaboration between methods and theories from different subjects. Our method book is a typical such example (Allwood & Ahlsén, 2023). It can also mean the transfer of theory/method from one science to another. Here, informatics is an excellent example because theories from organizational theory, work science, cognitive science and design are used there. Among others!

In transdisciplinary science, theories/methods from other sciences are incorporated in the same way as in interdisciplinary science. But here you transcend the different sciences and create a theory/method that is common to all of them. Again, computer science is an example. But what is common to several sciences such as statistics, mathematics and logic can also be seen as transdisciplinary sciences. Finally, transdisciplinary science can be applied science, which has, so to speak, transcended the scientific and become a practical application.

Interdisciplinary science involves the integration of several disciplines in a joint study. An example is Linköping University's interdisciplinary investment in e-health (Nyenger, et al.). Students from the Faculty of Medicine and Technology work here together to develop digital solutions. Even modern archeology is a typical interdisciplinary science where physics, chemistry, history and geology are mixed. Interdisciplinary science requires cooperation, trust, ethical awareness and knowledge of the approaches of the various disciplines, thus a more intense collaboration than the other three. Interdisciplinary science requires the ability to compare or transfer some aspect of one discipline to another discipline but not necessarily the ability to work within multiple disciplines

In the general debate, interdisciplinary is used to denote any form of such science. I will continue to use this convention and use the term "interdisciplinary" without further precision.

Problems with interdisciplinarity

The first problem involves not understanding. Understanding each other means interpreting the same phenomenon in the same way. It requires having the same or at least a similar background (context, discourse, paradigm, style of thinking).

Lack of understanding can be due to having different terminologies that you are not familiar with. The concepts are unknown. But it can also be that one does not understand or know the underlying theories. Different theories focus/study different aspects of the studied phenomena, which leads to different perceptions of what is important and relevant.

You can also think that you are not in agreement when in fact you are, but describe the phenomena in slightly different ways.

Within interdisciplinary disciplines, there is a risk of conflicts. They often have their basis in the fact that a researcher believes that the person's perspective is superior to all others and that the problems he or she is studying are the most important ones. If several researchers have different views on this, conflicts arise. These can be of various kinds (Allwood, 2021)

- The pursuit of hegemony and/or political power
- Individual career that partly seeks support in a given style of thinking, partly fights competitors with more or less decent means
- National, cultural and linguistic factors that lead to misunderstandings and lack of understanding

This often leads to the parties claiming that their particular style of thinking is good science, while the opponent is more or less a charlatan. In our book on power structures there are numerous examples of this (Gustavsson, 2024).

Being interdisciplinary does not mean only getting an overview of one's own discipline, in order to explain it to researchers outside it, but also to study the discipline/disciplines with which one wants to interact or collaborate, so that common understanding is facilitated. Being interdisciplinary means finding a problem that seems to require interdisciplinary work and finding researchers from other disciplines who can collaborate on the problem. Finally, it is important to find interdisciplinary funding.

Interdisciplinary funding is required, either centrally initiated or obtained for individual researchers. It requires an organization that is flexible and that facilitates collaboration across borders. A forum is also required, both for academic and non-academic meetings and ditto between different disciplines and stakeholders. It also requires the opportunity to pursue an academic career by combining several disciplines, and finally interdisciplinary journals are required, either general or within specific areas.

The Swedish Research Council (Sandström et al., 2005) has a slightly different definition:

- **Disciplinary research** (monodisciplinary research) can be described as institutionalized science delimited to a discipline with education, research training, professional methods and with a defined and agreed upon core knowledge.
- **Multidisciplinary research** involves collaboration between different disciplines which do not have obvious unifying links between them, e.g. ecology and business economics. The collaboration does not lead to any actual changes to the research front in each discipline, but each contributes in its own way to illuminating a defined and common problem based on the current state of knowledge.

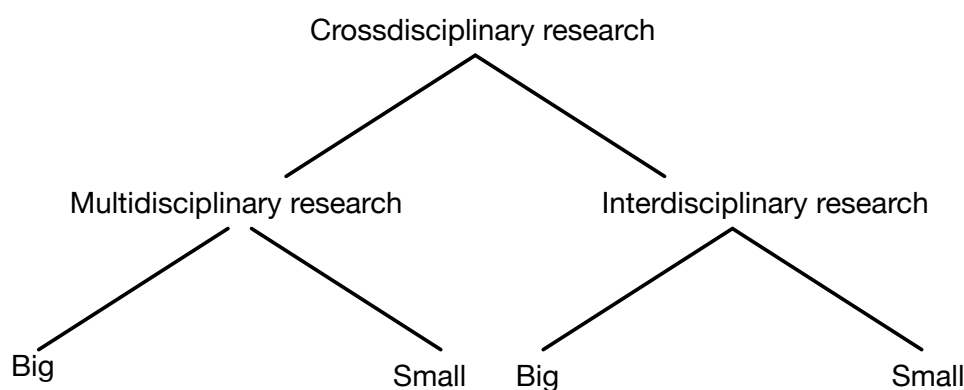
The collaboration is additive in nature.

- **Interdisciplinary research** denotes integrative collaborations between two or more scientific disciplines. In interdisciplinary collaborations, integration takes place content-wise, methodologically, theoretically and organizationally. Researchers trained in their respective disciplines strive towards an integration of knowledge and jointly try to move the research front. The various fields of knowledge are oriented towards common terms and concepts. A project is not interdisciplinary just because several researchers from different disciplines work together, but only becomes so when they participate in an active exchange of theory and method.

There is a concept called interdisciplinary distance (Sandström et al page 17)

The interdisciplinary distance matters. We should distinguish between "big" and "small" interdisciplinary, where the former concerns subject areas that are at a significant disciplinary distance from each other, e.g. physics and medicine or materials technology and socioeconomics, while the latter concerns related branches of science such as physics and electronics. There are also strong reasons to be careful about the difference between process and product: is it the result of the research (knowledge content) that should involve a synthesis, or is it the research process that should involve the integration of different disciplinary perspectives? A process-focused approach highlights the long-term value of cross-fertilization regardless of the immediate outcome.

They summarize their view in the following figure (my translation):



We see from this that interdisciplinarity is not at all as simple as one might think and it is a concept we must familiarize ourselves with. It demands that one must respect the opinions of other races; you don't have to share them but try to un-

derstand them. There is no unified science and trying to create hegemony and claiming that others' views are not scientific only leads to unnecessary strife. The strength of interdisciplinary science is cooperation, its greatest enemy is division.

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Vice-Chancellor's vision

Vice-Chancellor's vision

Per Flensburg, Vice-Chancellor

At the members' meeting that preceded the annual meeting, the purpose and goals of Strömstad Academy were discussed. This is the vision I presented at the time and it went down relatively well.

I started from history. Strömstad Academy started as a residence for forced-retired researchers. I know that many people react to that word, but it is a fact that it happened and as researchers we must stick to the facts. However, we can avoid calling ourselves pensioners, we are seniors just as capable as our younger colleagues and much more experienced.

Since Lasse founded the Academy, there was initially a strong focus on solar energy and science communication. But as the Academy gained more members, there were also more subjects. As a consequence of this, the cohesion became less as the subjects profiled themselves. Today, we have approximately 90 different subjects represented among our members.

Our statutes state:

The Academy's members are academics engaged in research, education and information. Its purpose is to be a residence for researchers who, for various reasons, **lack an academic connection** or want to **supplement the one they have**.

The Academy's goal is to **stimulate dialogue and exchange of ideas between researchers** and to promote collaboration between them. The intention is also to inspire multi- and interdisciplinary research. The purpose is also to create conditions for **good communication between researchers and the surrounding community**, especially Strömstad municipality. The Academy must be a positive force in the development of society.

In the first paragraph, target groups are defined:

- Persons with no academic connection
- People who want to supplement the one they have

The next paragraph states what the goal is:

- Stimulate dialogue and exchange of ideas between researchers
- Good communication with the surrounding community

I will now give a more detailed account of what I put in these points.

Target group

Lacking an academic connection is traditionally the main reason for entering the Academy. It tends to be considered the only reason, but this is misleading. The possibility of starting something completely new in a completely different environment must be emphasized more if we want to reach the second target group: Those who want to supplement their academic connection.



Do any want to supplement a well-paid permanent job with being a member of Strömstad Academy? A good justification is needed here. One risk is that it will be those who are dissatisfied and unsuccessful within the traditional academy who are drawn to Strömstad Academy. This may entail the risk of poorer science. But there is another group of creative and challenging researchers/teachers who feel too restricted in a traditional academic environment; who want to break out of the cramped academic cage. These can become an injection in Strömstad academy.

Stimulate dialogue and exchange of ideas between researchers

This means interdisciplinarity, something that is also stated in the statutes where there is talk of multidisciplinary. We must then make it clear to us what interdisciplinary means. This concept is far from simple. I write a little about it elsewhere in this news forum.

In our Academy, we have about 90 different subjects ranging from choral conducting to pharmacology and physics. It goes without saying that all of these cannot cooperate. Possibly in a multi-disciplinary publication on the same theme. We have done it in our anthology book. The problem is to find a theme that all 90 subjects can be interested in. But subjects that lie quite close to each other, have a short interdisciplinary distance, may very well do so.

The presentations at this year's science festival can be easily divided into a few themes, which we did. There was a theme about school and education with Carl, Åsa and Inga-britt. There was a medical theme with Peter Währborg, Peter Fritzell, Gudmund Berrgqvist, Lennart Wetterberg and Margareta Berg. So we had a big theme that can be called energy supply with Rune Wigblad, Göran Bryntse, myself, Lasse Broman, Tomas Kåberger, Arne Fagerström and Agneta Sundström. We can also see approaches to an economic theme with Bengt Johannisson, Per Staffan Boström, Rune Wigblad and myself. Finally, I believe that we need a theme that deals with interdisciplinary in all its forms.

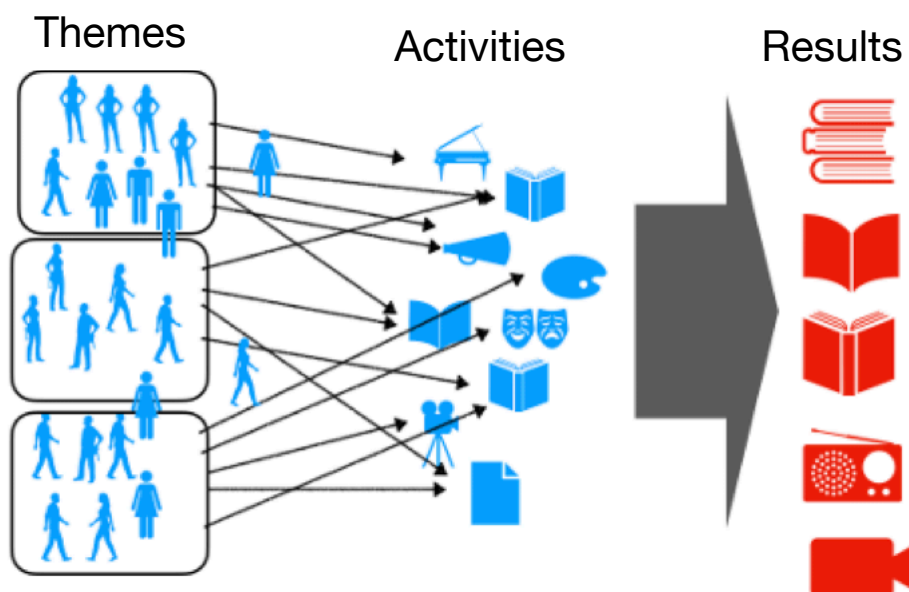
My vision for the Academy means that we create a number of themes much like I described above. These themes are loosely composed and self-governing groups. For practical reasons, there must be a convener who calls to meetings. These can take place physically or digitally. The latter is probably the most common. A prerequisite is that each group has access to a digital forum where discussions can be conducted in a reasonably structured way and not as now in long email chains. I have tried a couple of times to set up such forums/fora but with little success. In connection with our changing web hosting, I will install some form of discussion forum, as simple as possible. Each group should also have its own website, which they manage themselves. The web host must therefore provide an easy way to make your own websites.

A person can belong to several themes if the person so wishes. A theme may cease and new themes may arise. A large theme can be divided into several, but a theme should have at least 3-4 members. In the theme, you discuss different things, you can write anthologies, you

can write articles in scientific journals, you can record lectures, you can write debate articles, yes, you just have to let your imagination run wild. See picture to the left.

Journal

As for scientific journals, I want us to start one called **Acta Academiae Strömstadiensis**, where each issue has a certain theme. These themes are announced



well ahead of time. The journal is published on the Royal Library's platform <https://publicera.kb.se> where there are already around 30 journals. The advantage is that we already have a collection (76 pieces) of articles in our AAS writing series that we could use. However, the idea is that they should mainly be newly written articles within the given theme and they should preferably be as interdisciplinary as possible. The journal must be reviewed just like all other scientific journals. There is also another reason for the name and that is that on Publicera magazines are listed in alphabetical order. AAS probably comes first and has a better chance of being noticed. If I understood correctly, Publicera will provide a review system and help with doi: numbers. I see Publish as a replacement for DiVA and given that it is run by the Royal Library, it should be significantly better marketed than our AAS site, which will however remain for those who do not wish to publish in our journal.

A more detailed program statement for this journal will be published on the website and in the next issue of the news forum. What I want now are suggestions for themes or activities that Strömstad Academy can carry out. One such is a statement to the Ministry of Economic Affairs about the need for higher technology readiness that Rune, Carl, Bengt and Inga-Britt are planning. But more are needed, it's just a matter of drumming up old friends for interesting projects and get started.

Åsa Morberg: Calling all members

Calling all members of the Academy! Together in joy towards common goals! Write a short story about why you are with Strömstad Academy!

By Åsa Morberg, Chairman of Strömstad Academy Board

We in the management of Strömstad Academy work continuously with marketing of Strömstad Academy and we try different things to increase the number of members and strengthen the Academy as an individual member.

We will now try to collect short stories on our website about why you are a member of Strömstad Academy and, above all, what membership can provide. We will now try this as a marketing idea. We in management believe in the good example and the good model.

Such a positive story can of course be presented in different ways. The author has of course full freedom. What is interesting is, for example, when you became a member and how you chose to use your membership. It should inspire other colleagues to join Strömstad Academy. That is the overall purpose of the stories.

There are certainly different ways to use your membership and all good examples are welcome! For example, you don't have to be a so-called activist, but one may well be a member and enjoy maintaining social contacts with academics.

Many choose to become a member of Strömstad Academy in order to continue to devote themselves to their research, in collaboration with other researchers. If you have lost your affiliation with your college/university, Strömstad Academy is an alternative or a supplement.

The reasons why you are a member of Strömstad Academy are of course several and that is just fine. Here we let diversity come to the fore. Many of our members have been members for a long time. The reasons why one chose to become a member are certainly many different. Tell others about them who are thinking about joining Strömstad Academy.

Welcome with your texts to the Vice-Chancellor and Pro-Vice-Chancellor. Send them by email. We in management thank you for your contribution and are happy to read about the reasons for being a member!

Gudmund Bergqvist: The population issue

The population issue

Gudmund Bergqvist

At Strömstad Academy's summer conference in 2023, a session was devoted to the so-called population issue and its impact on global warming and biodiversity. Those interested can also follow the issue in a network with Johanna Deinum (johanna.deinum@telia.com) as a hub. A brief description was made in the January Newsletter/News Forum 2024.

The debate continues in the media, often with an emphasis on the harmful effect of low birth rates in many countries such as the EU, the United States, East Asia, and how this is something that must be opposed with child benefits and other benefits to avoid a declining population. This apparently is a dominant opinion according to many. In countries like Russia, the regime is investing heavily in increasing the population, and 8 children would be optimal

An interesting editorial and article in *The Economist* (May 25) analyzes the economic impact of women having children at different ages. For university-educated women in the United States, the average age at which they have their first child has increased by a couple of years, but this does not affect the number of children born per woman.

One group that would be affected is the young women who have their first child at the age of 15-18. This is a subgroup with high morbidity, drug abuse and poor educational outcomes for the children. These groups burden society financially. If you can delay the time when they are having their first child from 15 to 22, the woman will have a significantly higher income, have fewer children e.t.c. and does not burden society in the same way, i.e. is in different ways economically and humanly advantageous. *The Economist* considers "cash for kids", i.e. trying to increase childbirth with economic stimulus, therefore counterproductive and it does not lead to good results. The decision to have children should be the couple's and not society's.

A slowly declining population is a manageable condition. Working longer and a more flexible labor market together with future different technical solutions in society as a whole, as well as research that reduces the need for nursing and healthcare.

The population issue has been touched upon in several of the Academy's series. SAV 54 and 74 and free series 34, 38 and 39.

Cannabis Legalization

Gudmund Bergqvist

On this issue, Staffan Hübinette, a debater that is well-known to Strömstad Academy with several lectures in our video series, once again pointed out problems with legalization of cannabis. An issue where the cannabis industry is active. He has in SvD on June 11 a debate article "The effects in Canada are discouraging" and in response also to a rebuttal by the "drug liberal" Sara Skyttedal and a representative of the cannabis industry, Hübinette re-

sponds together with Peter Moilanen (head of the Drug Policy Center)) on June 17: "Legalization creates more problems than it solves".

Read them!

Carl Olivestam: Balthasar

The Series about - The Detective about - The Legend about – Facts about Balthazar

Carl Olivestam

The name Balthazar evokes different associations, even though in 2020 there were only 18 people in Sweden with this name. Most probably think of the cartoon character, the helpful and inventive Professor Balthazar, who helps his friends when they encounter problems. Nothing is impossible for him.

Someone might have delved into Balthasar Brun's detective agency and the Mystery of the Missing Cat. Henny is an only child, home alone because her mother is at work, and there doesn't seem to be a father around. Henny is bored and heads to the library, where she spots an advertisement: Balthasar Brun's detective agency is looking for an assistant. Exciting, thinks Henny, and Balthasar Brun gives her a chance. If Henny manages to solve the case of the missing cat Flamma, she will get the job.

Others might think of the story of Jesus' birth and how the Wise Men came to offer their congratulations, with one of these Wise Men being named Balthazar according to legend. He, more than anyone, understood even then which star was born to change the course of world history: a Before and an After Christ.

A more fact-based Balthasar, with the surname Hubmaier, lived a short but challenging life that ended at the stake in Vienna. In the April issue of the Newsletter, I wrote about Thomas Müntzer (1489-1525), who paid with an untimely death but is still remembered five hundred years later. Here, I return with a contemporary of his (1480-1528) who is also incredibly influential – still bringing life 500 years later.



Statue in Zagreb, his hometown.



Sculpture in the city of Natal in Brazil.

This Balthasar had a life trajectory similar to that of Thomas Müntzer and, lacking the survival instinct possessed by the cartoon character Balthazar, could not be saved by any talented detective. Both were Catholic priests who began to question the tradition they had grown up in, received their education in, and practiced their profession in. Both had brilliant careers, but despite this, they could not endure. For Thomas, it was Martin Luther's Protestantism in Germany that triggered his crisis and departure. For Balthasar, it was Huldrych Zwingli's corresponding Reformation in Switzerland. From being perceived as devo-



Memorial plaque on Dr. Karl Lueger Platz in Vienna set up to honor the memory of Dr. Balthasar Hubmaier who was burned as a devil in front of the Stuben gate. He who was the founder of the religious idea of tolerance in his time and claimed that Christ did not come to slaughter, murder and burn Christians.

ted followers of their respective reformers, both soon found themselves with these reformers as their main adversaries, who, with the assistance of secular authority, had them executed.

However, there were also differences between them:

- Balthasar Hubmaier was executed in a more systematically cruel and prolonged manner than Thomas.
- While Thomas was the sole leader of his movement, Balthasar was only one of many. Nevertheless, he is considered the most brilliant of them all when it came to eloquently expressing his newfound insights with his sharp mind and profound theological knowledge as a doctoral graduate in the subject.
- While Thomas went on to start a popular movement with political consequences and later appreciation, not least with the rise of communism within East Germany, Balthasar was more consistently focused on a credible Christian life.
- While Thomas came to be associated with swords and other weapons in battle, Balthasar came to be associated with baptisms and an ethical lifestyle ideal.

Pierre Abélard's fundamental problem, which he articulated in the first half of the 12th century in advocating for the subjective interpretation of Christianity as opposed to the prevailing objective one, is again brought to light. (In the article that Per Flensburg wrote about Pierre Abélard in the May issue of the Newsletter, Per missed showing how this "Abelardian" revolt survived him and continues to influence theological discussion to this day. Here is proof of that).



Abélard also developed a subjective relationship with his student Héloïse, but underestimated her close relative, Canon Fulbert of Notre-Dame who caught them.

For Abélard, the issue concerned the doctrine of atonement, which he experienced a lack of on several levels. For Balthasar, the subjective doctrinal interpretation materialized into the view on Christian baptism. In the Catholic objective view of baptism, it was God who was the main actor during the baptism. Nothing was required of the individual. Therefore, infants were baptized as a form of life insurance that also covered eternal life. For Balthasar and his associates, this was a misinterpretation that additionally reinforced the church's power. "No salvation outside the church" (Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, d. 258). In the spirit of Abélard, Balthasar asserted a subjective view of baptism, claiming that it was the individual, not God or the church, who held the decision about their fate in their hands. This was a breakthrough for individualism that threatened the contemporary ecclesiastical and secular order.

Balthasar accused the reformer Zwingli of merely changing Catholic traditions but not its doctrines and exercise of power. The Bible, especially the New Testament, contained the original texts to which a true church must be restored. It did not mention infant baptism, but rather believer's baptism. John the Baptist baptized Jesus as an adult as a sign that he had accepted John's teachings (Matthew 3:6ff), and the eunuch traveling with the apostle Philip demonstrated the true pattern in detail: Philip first taught the eunuch about the Christian faith, and when he had accepted this, it was time for a confirming baptism (Acts 8:35). As one might somewhat mockingly express about the prevailing baptismal tradition: It does not say that the apostle and the eunuch both stepped into the baptismal font

Balthasar and his associates were disdainfully called Anabaptists, or re-baptizers, alluding to their opposition to the established baptismal practice. At that time, everyone was baptized as infants according to tradition. They considered themselves Baptists because they were the only ones baptized as it was done in Jesus' time, and they invalidated infant baptism. Baptism, according to the New Testament's prescription, was a confession act that required the individual to be mature enough to understand and embrace the Christian faith. Only with this baptism did they become members of the original Christian church.



The traditional baptism covered already in the 100th century which was challenged by the Baptist baptism.

The Baptist movement rapidly gained popularity, encountering resistance not only from the Catholic Church but also from other more contemporary established reformers like Luther and Zwingli. For the Baptists, it offered an individualistic alternative to the collectivist

structured churches. In this way, they foreshadowed the Enlightenment, while others were traditionalists in this regard.

The church's monopoly on this assurance of salvation was threatened. Suddenly, others appeared offering alternatives by abolishing it as a sacrament and making it the decisive choice of the individual.

The conflict was not only about the time and manner of baptism. Emphasizing the individual's own decision and the consequences of this stance also concerned a subjectively motivated lifestyle. A Christian person was expected to manifest their Christian faith in their way of life. An ethical interpretation of Christianity emerged where each person was to be an example for those who believed that attending Mass and following prevailing rituals were sufficient. Applying New Testament freedom meant freedom from both state and church. This attracted many people, leading to an increase in baptized Christians, which was alarming for traditional churches at risk of losing both power and influence.

Luther, Zwingli, and other reformers were termed "halfway men" for stopping halfway in restoring the original Christian church. Balthasar Hubmaier and others criticized them for not daring to fully restore a New Testament norm for doctrine and conduct. A comprehensive restoration of the church was necessary. This also required freedom from state control and from church traditions. Restoring their original identity also had consequences for the surrounding society. It's no wonder opponents grew, and methods to stop these revolutionaries became increasingly brutal.

Year 1528 marked Balthasar's turn to face misfortune. Persecutions by other churches and authorities were launched to decimate these minority formations. The persecutions were successful, particularly targeting leaders, including our Balthasar. His former friend and teacher, Zwingli, became the chief prosecutor. It began with Balthasar being tortured to renounce his Baptist beliefs. Despite the tightening of thumbscrews and threats of dismemberment, he refused. Eventually, he agreed to read a document dictated by Zwingli from the pulpit of the church in Vienna to spare further torment. As he began reading, everything seemed to proceed as planned, until Balthasar departed from the script and loudly declared his allegiance to the original New Testament church he led. The congregation was disrupted. Balthasar was taken to the churchyard, where he was placed on a pyre and burned. To hasten the destruction of these "devilish doctrines," they also set fire to his voluminous beard. Balthasar Hubmaier became a martyr, but far from the only one. His wife, Elizabeth Hügline, who assisted him during torture and burning, protested continuously and encouraged her husband to endure. Sometime later, she too became a martyr, this time drowned with a heavy stone tied around her neck and body. Another victim of re-baptism! And so it continued. The Catholic Church and established Protestant churches were bitter enemies and competitors, but they united in the eradication of the Baptist movement. The only difference was that Catholics burned Baptists, while Protestants drowned or beheaded them.

The salvation for the Baptist movement came with the New World. Leaders like Balthasar Hubmaier met untimely and often brutal deaths during the 16th century. For Baptist movements in Europe, the following three centuries meant an uncertain existence marked by sporadic persecution and escape. Initially fleeing from Holland and Northern Germany to Poland, Moravia, Russia, and Ukraine, they later moved to Canada and the USA. Many from Switzerland and Southern Germany had already fled to the American colonies by the 17th century. Those who survived in Europe had to practice their faith and convictions in secrecy. Difficulties arose when parents within the movement refused to have their children baptized, turning baptism into a visible sign of belonging where the possibility of a secure

family life clashed with loyalty to faith and ritual. The right to individual freedom clashed with the collective demands for solidarity.

500 years later, Balthasar Hubmaier shows that Baptists were not the winners of the 16th century in Europe. Their views were blurred by their enemies, yet their convictions have withstood the test of time and are arguably more significant today than those of their adversaries. The introduction of democracy stands as the greatest proof of this. Anabaptists provided an alternative to Christianity's monopoly—a protest against the alliance between church and state, church and power, church and coercion, church and wealth. They drew their foundation from the New Testament as a pattern for their lives.

In Sweden and Europe, Baptists lead a dwindling existence. In the USA, two-thirds of Christian Protestants are divided among numerous denominations, where Baptists are the largest, followed by Pentecostals, Lutherans, Presbyterians, and Methodists. Despite resistance, the Baptist movement grows, partly due to it. It offered a religiosity adapted to a state transitioning from European oppression and colonialism to freedom, from tradition to innovation. Today, various Baptist movements not only constitute the largest Protestant Christian church in the USA but also in the Third World, where fusion with the Pentecostal Christian community marks the most expansive branch of Christianity worldwide, including notable success within the Catholic Community, such as in Brazil.

Balthasar Hubmaier became a martyr for a church direction that all contemporary authorities united to eradicate in order to preserve the existing society and the established church as a bulwark against any reform. Balthasar and other martyrs sacrificed their lives for what they perceived to be a true Christian interpretation. Little could they imagine the implications of their actions and the effects that would become even more pronounced 500 years later for individuals, churches, and societies alike.

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