

## THE FORMATION OF SWEDISH MEDIA STUDIES, 1960–1980

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*Around 1960, the politics of the emerging media society in Sweden tended to fixate the formative functions of mass communication. The monopoly of public service broadcast media, press subsidies and new tendencies in film policy were some of the issues around which uncertainty prevailed. New methods to provide reliable data were sought by politicians, since empirical facts were required as arguments for an updated media policy. This article examines the different ways that the field of media studies was introduced in Sweden between 1960 and 1980. We argue that Swedish academic media studies departed from, and emerged within, a rather diffuse borderland between industry, politics and academia. The formation of national media research in Sweden can partly be seen as an effect of politicians and the media industry wanting to be better informed on issues such as media influence, media ownership and the habits and composition of the media audience.*

**KEYWORDS** Swedish media history; history of media studies; Sweden; media policy

### Introduction

In spring 1962, a study was published that attracted a great deal of attention in the Swedish daily press. It bore the title, *Svensk populärpress 1931–1961* [*Swedish Popular Press 1931–1961*] and was written by Göran Albinsson. His book does not come across as a particularly unusual press historical study today. Through measurements of press and magazine circulation, size and content, and by analysing prices and the financial results of publishers—related to the socio-economic status of Swedish readership—Albinsson was able to show how reading weekly press and magazines had gradually increased over the 30-year period studied. The last two years (1960 and 1961), however, showed a marked downturn, which Albinsson attributed to the expansion of Swedish television. Studies using a similar methodology had been done before, primarily in the U.S.; Albinsson referred, for example, to NBC's published television measurements. He also alluded in more general terms to 'American surveys of mass media's ability to influence opinions, values and behaviour'. J. T. Klapper's recently published *The Effects of Mass Communications* (1960) was, in addition, singled out as a 'highly exhaustive summary'.<sup>1</sup>

Nowadays, it might seem somewhat odd that Albinsson's study was commissioned by Åhlén & Åkerlund, the biggest publisher of weekly magazines in Sweden at the time. But just as it appeared increasingly important to study mass media, it seemed unproblematic that media companies themselves would be responsible for studies of their own business. Hence, the circumstance was not subjected to any special criticism in reviews of Albinsson's book—and there were, indeed, many of them. The lavish attention around his study can be perceived as part of an increasing interest in Sweden during the early 1960s around mass

media issues. Debates raged more or less constantly within the public sphere. Journalists, writers and academics attacked or (occasionally) praised the content of media and regularly commented on matters of form. Especially, the significance of television was intensely discussed in Sweden at the time, and mostly in negative terms: falling cinema attendance, decline of newspaper circulation and fewer books being read—everything could be blamed on TV. In one such opinion piece on media, author Arnold Röring, for example, stated in 1961:

The weekly press is one of the links in a dangerous chain—the shackle of the mass media. But the phrase ‘mass medium’ is already so overused that it means nothing to us. We hear it spoken, but it produces no associations in us—least of all any warnings of *danger*. (*Norrländska socialdemokraten*, November 16, 1961)

The interesting point about this article does not concern Röring himself—a relatively well-known writer in Sweden at the time, who published a fine essay on objectionable mass culture. This was a common journalistic theme. What is really striking with Röring’s argumentation is on the one hand that the term *mass medium* in 1961 was so widely used that an ordinary Swedish cultural commentator (as Röring) could express genuine *ennui* about it. On the other hand, he also described different media’s symbiotic dependence on each other, a kind of *media convergence*, as an entirely reasonable idea to be held in mind already in 1961. Indeed, the various mass media in Sweden were so closely linked that they were best captured in the most striking of agrarian metaphors, the *shackle* that tethered cattle (i.e. society, citizens or audiences) in a manner that was as unbreakable as it was painful.

### Understanding (Swedish) Media

In Sweden the term ‘mass media’ had by the early 1960s established itself as a *buzzword* in public discussions. Looking back, the reasons seem obvious: never before had so many platforms, based on so many different media technologies competed for people’s time and attention. There was consequently a need for a common language that described the shifting media landscape of the archetypal Social Democratic welfare state, as well as for novel methods by which media phenomena could be studied.

Around 1960, the politics of the emerging media society in Sweden tended to fixate on the formative functions of communication. If (old media) as art, film or literature could function as instruments for changing the opinions and attitudes of individuals and groups, it was the job of the new mass media (especially television) to convey these instruments (on a national scale) in a fair and effective way. According to the discourse at the time, mass media had the task of providing citizens with the knowledge they needed. But the mass media could also provoke and create opinion, and *influence* the whole of society. The monopoly of public service broadcast media, press subsidies and film policy were some of the issues around which uncertainty about the new media landscape prevailed.

New media methods were consequently sought to provide reliable data for politicians interested in the effects of media, not the least since such empirical facts were required for an updated national media policy. This article examines the different ways that media studies—in more or less academic forms—was established in Sweden

between 1960 and 1980. In a recent Swedish book that we authors have published, *Massmedieproblem: Mediestudiets formering* [*Mass Media Problems: The Formation of Media Studies*] (2015), we argue that Swedish media studies departed from, and emerged within a rather diffuse borderland between the media industry, national cultural politics as well as academia. The gradual formation of Swedish media studies was closely bound up both with political practices and with the media industry as a whole, particularly the press and the monopoly of public service broadcast media.

Initially, studies of media (as the case of Albinsson makes clear) were rarely independent in the classic academic sense. In fact, Swedish media studies in the 1960s tended to be commissioned. Investigations were gradually channelled in various directions—over time Swedish media research was shaped in different contexts, primarily at the intersections between the public sphere, the media industry, academia and politics. The formation of national media research in Sweden can, hence, to a large extent be seen as a pure *effect* of politicians and the media industry wanting to be better informed on issues such as media influence, media ownership and the composition of media audiences. And importantly, during the period, considerable Social Democratic faith was placed in *media policy instruments* for steering media change in a desired direction.

By and large, however, the history of media research remains to be written. Naturally, over the years in Sweden—as in other countries—a few national (more or less nostalgic) retrospectives have been published, almost always written from an intra-academic, media and communication studies perspective. The anthology, *The History of Media and Communication Research: Contested Memories* (2008), is one example.<sup>2</sup> Compared to other humanistic and social science disciplines, old ways of studying media has gained scarce attention. This is somewhat surprising, since the history of media research has a number of socio-political implications. Understanding media, in short, meant understanding society. The consolidation of media research in Sweden during the 1960s and 1970s, for example, was hence far from an intra-academic endeavour. On the contrary, to reduce the formation of media studies to a question of the emergence of media and communication studies (or film studies for that matter) is to miss the point. The central question regarding the formation of Swedish media studies between 1960 and 1980 is *not* about how university research disciplines were established, but rather how a *changing media landscape* prompted a broad social and discursive activity, within government and politics, the media industry and the public sphere—as well as at universities.

Then again, the question remains what media research at the time defined as its objects of study—that is, as *media*—and what was defined as research. In Sweden during the 1960s and 1970s, there were many different interpretations. And almost as many answers.

### **Mass Communication—in Seminar Rooms and Newspaper Columns**

When media scholar to be Kjell Nowak, at the time researcher in Economic Psychology at Stockholm School of Economics, published his overview on Swedish media research *Masskommunikationsforskning i Sverige* [*Mass Communication Research in Sweden*] in 1963, he used a classification system based on 'the now classic model of the communication

process’—communicator, message, channel and recipient—that had successfully been employed by U.S. researchers.<sup>3</sup>

Nonetheless, above these four classic categories, Nowak also formed a twofold main group of ‘1. Structural conditions’ and ‘2. Communication process and its effects’. The categories, ‘communicator’, ‘message’, ‘channel’ and ‘recipient’, were then each found, respectively, under these two main groups. ‘1.2 Channel’, was, for example, a medium within a specific structural condition, and ‘2.4 Recipient’ referred to the effects of ‘mass communication processes’ (with an explicit reference to Klapper). In addition, Nowak found it necessary to further divide his categories into subcategories to better fit all the media research he sought to classify, as, for example, ‘2.41.3 Subliminal perception’.<sup>4</sup>

As is apparent, Nowak’s categorisation was perhaps not the most comprehensible system. However, in his survey, he was able to construct 37 different headings to sort Swedish media research into. Nowak’s study was based on a questionnaire—trendsetting for this type of media research—which had been sent to around 60 Swedish institutions of various kinds. Remarkably, Nowak defined Swedish mass communication research within a strict *behavioural science* frame of reference. Hence, his overview explicitly excluded research into mass media’s historical, political, social, technical and economic conditions, not to mention subjects such as journalism, press ethics, censorship and issues concerning freedom of speech. The fact that *aesthetically* focused research into mass media was not relevant in this context, seems to have been so obvious it did not even have to be mentioned. Regarding the medium of film, a couple of future film professor Leif Furhammar’s early student seminar texts on the effects of watching films were somewhat oddly listed by Nowak. But no books by prolific film historians as Rune Waldekranz or Gösta Werner. Nowak also failed to list any other film literature of aesthetic or historical character, quite surprisingly so, since film was a medium that had been studied in great depth over a long period of time in Sweden.

In his overview from 1962, Kjell Nowak drew primarily on American communication research models. In short, his version of media research traditions in Sweden at the time were predominantly U.S.-oriented. The focus of media research in the political sciences, or at pedagogical, psychological, sociological and business administration departments was thus, following Nowak, either focused on the *structural conditions of mass communication*—i.e. ‘studies that examine the individual components in the communication process *separately*, without any connection to a given communication process’—or *the communication process* itself. Given that articles in the Swedish daily press (on culture and opinion pages) were most interested in discussing exactly those aspects of mass communication that were *not* included in Nowak’s study, a *media discrepancy* is evident, entirely central to the genesis of Swedish media studies. It is as if academic research conducted at the time as mass communication, and the public critical discourse on mass culture and media society, constituted two entirely separate fields.

If nothing else, this discrepancy is evident in the number of Swedish books on mass media that appeared in a steady stream from 1960 and onwards, and even more so in the flood of editorial and culture articles in the daily press.<sup>5</sup> Not surprisingly, there were few linkages between the seminar rooms and newspaper columns. When, for example, a school shooting in West Sweden became national news in March 1961—and the incident was linked to the perpetrator’s love of Western films on television—there should have

been mass communication research to draw upon (see e.g. *Aftonbladet*, March 5–8, 1961). Headings in Nowak's summary such as 'Motivational personality variables', or the four sub-categories for 'Effect studies', at least suggest so. But this type of media research was nowhere to be seen in the twenty or so editorial articles in the Swedish daily press that discussed the dangers of television and the Western genre.

Nevertheless, in the aftermath of the school shooting tragedy, a minor debate broke out between sociology and psychology experts, with some references to the works listed by Nowak. If a study failed to find evidence that violence on television had an effect, there are only two possible interpretations one critic stated: either the purported effect did not exist, or research methods used were not sufficiently sensitive to detect any effect. Within the debate, it was claimed that according to some researchers, no immediate effect on behaviour could be traced back to television. But there was also other research showing that the medium of TV could certainly 'shape viewers' picture of reality. The question was hence how media research should be interpreted. In addition, the *need* for further research was also acknowledged. 'We simply have to know more about mass media society' (*Stockholms-Tidningen*, March 13, 1961), as one critic stated, while another stressed the importance of 'experts who know something about how people react to images and sound' (*Expressen*, March 9, 1961).

These quotations from the media debate surrounding this Swedish school shooting in spring 1961 are symptomatic. It was clear that the *effects* of mass media were an important and debated subject, both within public discourse and in academia. Still, there were no intermediaries. In addition, similar issues were hardly new in neither of these spheres—again accentuating that Nowak's version of media research traditions in Sweden had almost missed more than it included. Discussions on Nick Carter books or the wretchedness of early cinema are just two examples of almost identical questions about *media effects* that had been trotted out in public already half a century earlier.

Then again, the fact that participants in a cultural debate prefer to judge, analyse and interpret as they see fit, without reference to proper research, is hardly an amazing revelation. The interesting point, however, is that while the mass media issues were certainly discussed by some researchers in the public sphere in Sweden, it was clearly thought just as appropriate—if not more so—to discuss such issues without having *any* knowledge of mass communication research. One might, hence, wonder why the research that, based on Nowak's summary, appears to have existed in the early 1960s in Sweden, was not more visible in the public debate, and how this affected the ways that media studies later took shape in Sweden. Was media research also marginalised within the various institutional contexts in which it was conducted? Or was it methodologically too far removed from the discursive practices of opinion pages and intellectual critics?

However, from the reverse perspective, it is also noteworthy how little of the national mass communication research that was picked up by public media criticism. This fact, actually, prompted the researchers Olof Hultén and Dan Lundberg at the Stockholm School of Economics, in 1966 to go on the offensive against the increasingly frequent media criticism. Their example was Barbro Backberger's newly published book, *Det förkrympta kvinnoidealet* [*The Stunted Female Ideal*] (1966). Yet, it mostly served as an example of the 'sweeping generalisations about how mass media [...] affect their consumers' that had become so common (*Svenska Dagbladet*, July 23, 1966). According to Hultén and Lundberg, the

problem with Backberger's analysis was her methodology. She, and a host of other authors who were critical of the media, started with an *interpretive content analysis* and drew conclusions about the effects of the media, despite research having shown that 'the notion of the passive recipient [...] does not stand up to scrutiny'. Content analysis might be appropriate in certain circumstances, according to Hultén and Lundberg, but when investigating how mass media worked in modern society, *audience surveys* were the method to use.

### Media Research—in Swedish Governmental Reports and the Humanities

In 1965, the newspaper *Arbetarbladet* published the first Swedish review of Marshall McLuhan's *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (which was to be translated two years later). The critic described McLuhan's—now well-known, but at the time new—vision of the global village as 'a science fiction dream'. Among all of McLuhan's fanciful notions, there were also countless, stimulating ideas. McLuhan's media research strived to 'ignore what [the media] convey, and instead identify each medium's specific *form*, and see how it affects people and society' (*Arbetarbladet*, January 26, 1965).

The Swedish public debate about the media during the 1960s often focused on their *effects*—and the same was (partially) true for McLuhan as well as the U.S. research tradition that Kjell Nowak defined as mass communication research. McLuhan, however, worked in an academic tradition with different ideals compared to the (supposedly) precise and political science-influenced survey based media research. McLuhan's fundamental questions were, however, way more congruent with, and similar to those being debated in the public sphere: What did new media actually mean for the different cultures in which they appeared? How did media affect each other? To what extent was a new medium in tune with a person's perception and her body? Following the Swedish public perception of McLuhan, the media seemed to generate what was *conceivable* in different historical situations.

Our point to be made is that the influences of American academic research into media effects (listed by Nowak) was by no means obvious in Sweden at the time. Such ideas formed the basis for a *certain* branch of media studies—but far from all of research conducted. McLuhan's sweeping and impressionistic history appeared, for example, to resonate way more profoundly with ideas within the contemporary cultural sphere than the instrumental methods by which, for example, political opinions were measured. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, it hence became apparent in Sweden that media could—and perhaps ought to—be studied in at least two very different ways, basically split into a descriptive (and quantifiable) social and political science tradition, and a more speculative and idea-based humanistic research tradition. This duality came to define the formation of media studies in Sweden—for good and bad. It meant that social science-oriented media researchers and humanists interested in media often felt they were working in entirely different worlds. It is also hence apparent that Novak's study was a pioneering work within Swedish media studies. But it is equally clear that he was an early exponent of the social science-focused variant of media research. Given the claim in our recent book, *Massmedieproblem*, that media studies in Sweden arose at the intersection between the media industry and its public, the needs of media and cultural policy—filtered through governmental reports and official inquiries—as well as academia's newfound interest in

media, at both social science and humanities faculties (a division that in Sweden derives from the middle of the 1960s), this colourful triptych naturally contained a number of different ideals and shifting attitudes towards mass media society.

Then again, the 57 published media-related Swedish Government Official Reports provide perhaps the clearest exponent of how media were described, studied, treated and (perhaps should be) regulated in the political administrative sphere during the period between 1960 and 1980.<sup>6</sup> Beginning with the 1960 radio inquiry and the press inquiry of 1963, more than 50 different similar inquiries into mass media were commissioned by the Swedish government over the subsequent two decades. These media-related official reports, which were all staffed with a number of experts and often worked for a number of years with the given task, were an important engine for the development and institutionalisation of media research in Sweden. Especially, the publications from both the 1963 press inquiry and the 1960 radio (and television) inquiry became central documents for the formation of media studies in Sweden (Figure 1).

From a media historical perspective, a number of the media-oriented governmental reports also illustrate the intricate relationship between the public sphere, the political apparatus, and media research in Sweden (given that a number of academics were involved as experts). The initiative for the press inquiry of 1963, for example, appears to have been driven as much by politicians as it was by journalists. It was the closure of



**FIGURE 1**  
Media-related Swedish Government Official Reports published between 1960 and 1980 (57 in total, ordered chronologically).

the Gothenburg newspaper *Ny Tid* during autumn 1963 that proved a watershed in the reporting on ‘the death of the newspaper’.<sup>7</sup> Within a week after this closure, the Social Democratic Prime Minister Tage Erlander frankly announced the need for an inquiry. The press inquiry thus stands as a key incentive for the perceived need for *knowledge* about mass media, and for enhancing the importance of journalism in a democratic society.

When trying to understand media in Sweden during the late 1960s, there was a recurring tug-of-war between the Nowakian behavioural research ideal and ideologically critical left-wing opinion, which increasingly set the agenda for public debate. In addition, there had emerged a more aesthetically informed research ideal where certain media—mainly film—began to be seen as (expressions of) both art and ideology. In order then to flesh out the formation of Swedish media studies, Nowak’s overview and the different research perspectives expressed in the governmental reports must be supplemented with more humanistically focused media research. Naturally, these varied as they emerged during the mid-1960s and the 1970s in areas of comparative literature, film studies, musicology and art history.

To make the picture even more complex, this humanistic media studies tradition often drew on more or less ideologically charged ways of looking at media content and media cultures, with clear similarities with the public media debate. Towards the end of the 1960s—the age of ideologically driven anti-Americanism—there were also European media research traditions and critical-theoretical roots to adopt (rather than strictly American ones). In the book, *Politik och film [Politics and Film]* (1968), for example, Leif Furhammar and Folke Isaksson decided to analyse a number of propaganda films, with the ambition to study how the medium of film had been used as a means of political influence during the twentieth century.<sup>8</sup> The book was a great success—translated into English in 1971—and hailed in the daily press as one of the best film books ever published in Sweden. Its publication gave rise to a number of other studies into film history and policy, and the adjacent establishment of film studies is hence also central to the formation of media studies in Sweden. Film studies was the first media-related research discipline to be academically institutionalised; in 1970, Rune Waldekranz was appointed Sweden’s first professor of film studies at Stockholm University.

Within film studies, humanities-driven media research clearly set the agenda. In 1971, for example, Erik Skoglund published a historical account of Swedish film censorship.<sup>9</sup> His (and other) film publications were part of a growing discursive and aesthetic interest in modern mass media’s relationship with ideology and politics—but from entirely different points of departure than those of political and behavioural science. Furhammar’s and Isaksson’s focus, for example, was on aesthetic-historical questions. They approached the medium of film from a political perspective, hence their subject was not so different from the opinion research that media-focused social scientists were conducting. And yet the differences in studying media come across as worlds apart.

### **Towards Integrated Media Research?**

During the early 1970s, it became more widely accepted at Swedish universities that film, images and music were media forms that academics could study—alongside the press, radio and television. The latter media formats, however, tended to dominate the



institutionalised media and communication research that began to be established, whereas the former belonged to a humanistic media research tradition. Since a number of thinkers and critical theorists within the German Frankfurt School had been introduced to a Swedish readership during the late 1960s, humanistic media studies tended at the time to be influenced by those ideas. Some of Hans Magnus Enzensberger's media essays had, for example, been translated in the mid-1960s, and the national publisher Bo Cavefors played an important role introducing, for instance, Walter Benjamin's media-related articles and thoughts (from the 1930s) in the anthology, *Bild och dialektik [Image and Dialectics]* (1969). The year before Herbert Marcuse's, *One-Dimensional Man*, had also been translated into Swedish, where he had asked whether it was really possible to distinguish between mass media as an instrument for 'infotainment' and/or as a means of manipulation and indoctrination.

Most of these (and other) publications were a perfect fit for the ideologically critical left-wing public opinion—and Swedish humanists alike. But one can also view some of the Frankfurt School's output as sort of a *pre-scholarly* work on mass media society. As is well known, critical theory's take on media studies was very different from American behavioural science and media effects research (even though some scholars of the Frankfurt School emigrated before the Second World War and *influenced* the later research tradition). In a study into the history of German media studies, Rainer Leschke has hence accentuated this form of pre-scientific altercation—'vorwissenschaftliche Auseinandersetzung'—as a key component why media *and* communication studies in Germany developed in two *entirely* different directions.<sup>10</sup>

This was not the case in Sweden. Then again, the Frankfurt School provided Swedish media research around 1970 with the implicit impulse to consider mass media society in its entirety. Essentially, German critical media theory had asserted that mass media during the interwar years (the press, photography, illustrated press, radio and film) achieved a sort of united media dynamic—a *Medienverbund*—in the form of a dominant (and manipulative) cultural industry that controlled the population, either commercially or ideologically.<sup>11</sup> From a Swedish perspective, such ideas enjoyed a renaissance, since at least some media researchers had an *ambition* to take a collective approach to *all* mass media. Coherent media research that adopted an overarching perspective was hence a recurring rhetorical theme in several academic contexts. 'Striving for research that addresses all media and not just the press, or radio and TV', was, for example, a desire expressed in a governmental report that explicitly addressed Swedish media studies, *Forskning om massmedier [Research about Mass Media]* published in 1977. 'Artificial boundaries within the field [often] prevent the necessary comparison between media', the report stated. It also bemoaned how national media research 'was far too concentrated on individual "channels" such as TV, radio or the press, despite it being generally most advantageous to study the mass media situation as a whole'.<sup>12</sup> Another problem was that department structures at universities were often not suited to *comprehensive* mass media research. In fact, the desire to include several (and different) media forms and formats in comparative studies had been a recurring feature of several media-related governmental reports in Sweden, including the 1960 radio inquiry, the 1972 press inquiry and the 1974 radio inquiry.

Under the leadership of media scholar Stig Hadenius, the governmental report, *Forskning om massmedier [Research about Mass Media]*, eloquently pleaded for unified media

research (although with certain restrictions). The issue was often brought up during 1976, when Hadenius (and his colleagues) worked with the inquiry, at least according to preserved minutes and archived material. In retrospect, however, the most important aspect of this publication is that it shows the societal status of the emerging field of media studies in Sweden. In fact, of the 1533 Swedish Governmental Reports in total that were published during the 1960s and 1970s, only 10 concerned *specific research fields*—one of them being media studies. Arguably, it was not primarily the *intra-academic importance* of media research as a field that made it interesting to the Swedish government. Following Jürgen Habermas' account of the development of the natural and human sciences, and his inquiry into the social, historical and epistemological conditions that made them possible, it is clear that it was the empirical-analytical sciences that were given priority by the Swedish government.<sup>13</sup> The third of Habermas' domains—the historical-hermeneutic disciplines—are entirely absent from the research fields that were scrutinised. All research areas examined in these governmental inquiries were ones that benefited society (rather than classic academic disciplines)—a fact that further strengthens the claim that media studies in Sweden took form at the intersection of the spheres of politics, media policy and the media industry.

### Conclusion—A- and B-Research

Given the statement in the 1977 report *Research about Mass Media* concerning a multidisciplinary media research that could potentially have bridged the gap between social science and humanistic media research in Sweden, a couple of concluding observations are appropriate. In an attempt to establish the extent to which such *desirable* media research was possible, we have examined the preserved minutes from the inquiry (which Hadenius was required to keep). In short, the opinion was divided on the matter. Yet, the minutes are also interesting since they indicate what actually counted as—and would count as—media research in Sweden in years to come.

On the one hand, it is difficult to see clear signs in the minutes of broad media research perspective. It seems, rather, that the diverse media researchers called to *hearings* by Hadenius all preferred to stick firmly with their own views. On the other hand, since chairman Hadenius felt that unified media research was appealing, several proposals regarding multimodal and multidisciplinary research perspectives, were put forward. Hadenius stated, for example, at his first meeting with the inquiry's committee or 'expert group' in March 1976, that

the interplay between media has rarely been studied. There are major gaps in the research. For a government that has to take decisions based on an assumed interplay between different media, the present research must be seen as wholly inadequate.

Still, when the inquiry's first minuted meeting was held two months earlier at the University of Gothenburg, political science professor Jörgen Westerståhl proposed an almost treacherous 'simple classification system for mass media research. A-research = mainly mass media research. B-research = partly mass media research'. It was hardly a classification system that favoured comprehensive mass media research. In fact, it split it up into a clear A-team and B-team. And as if that was not enough, the same minutes

also show that on the subject of an 'institution questionnaire' that Hadenius' group intended to send out to conduct an inventory of the nation's media research—and this immediately after Hadenius had called attention to the fact that 'several historians are working on mass media questions'—Westerståhl also asserted that 'humanistic and historical mass media research [should not] be included in the analysis'.

In other words, achieving a coherent Swedish media research proved difficult. A would always precede B. Interestingly, Hadenius' minutes also show that a great deal of effort was put into defining what Swedish 'mass media research' actually was—as well as ruling out what it was not. Where Kjell Nowak had previously delimited mass communication research based on a strict behavioural science-focused frame of reference 15 years earlier, the perception was now broader—still, the definition fervour remained. Answers as to what constituted media studies in Sweden in the mid-1970s went back and forth; according to the minutes they depended entirely on whom Hadenius and his committee spoke to. When they visited the department for audience and programme research at Swedish Radio, for example, media researcher Cecilia von Feilitzen stated that 'research into gramophone records and books' should be included. When she found out that this was not the case, she critically claimed that 'the parameters for the focus of the research were both odd and erroneous'. But when the committee visited Stockholm Economics Institute for Research, the opposite opinion was expressed; the economist professor Karl-Erik Wärneryd frankly stated that all aesthetic media research should be 'removed, as well as certain technical research'.

In fact, even Stig Hadenius—who certainly wanted to see coherent and multidisciplinary media research—did not want to include 'film, theatre and literature research' within national media studies, because then everything 'would end up as mass media research'. In the final report from 1977 then, Swedish mass media research would come to be defined as 'seeking knowledge and ideas at an academic level with mass media as the object of study'.<sup>14</sup> But the arguments behind the definition indicated way narrower perspectives. It was true that media other than the three primary mass media could be included within Swedish media studies, but then the research should focus on strict media aspects. In order for research into literature to be classified as mass media research, for example, it should focus on issues surrounding the distribution and consumption of books. As a consequence, analyses of content in the press, radio and television were mass media research—but not analyses of content in mass-produced and mass-consumed books or films. A slippery notion of media prevailed, which would continue to characterise Swedish media research. There was no question that Hadenius wanted his report to stress 'how we define mass media research, so that it is entirely clear what type of research we wish to support'.<sup>15</sup> It is another question whether he actually achieved this.

The 1977 report *Research about Mass Media* was published in a time when governmental interest in media research peaked. During the 1980s and 1990s, the faith in the ability of political governance to regulate mass media development waned, subsequently also the attention that media research was given from official institutions slowly faded.<sup>16</sup> An ironic circumstance is that during the very same period media studies was at last established as an academic discipline in Sweden. The slow institutionalisation of the discipline, that started in the early 1980s, was for a long time at least partly based on the methods, theories and issues that characterised the early years of Swedish media studies, and

nearly all the individual researchers that were involved in the institutionalisation of the discipline from 1980 and onwards had their background in the period described. This mutual background of the pioneering Swedish mass media researchers was not only a temporal trait, but also an institutional. Almost all of them had been involved in governmental investigations, worked in media organisations (daily press, public service radio or television, etcetera), or in other ways been engaged in contexts where their research had served interests external to academia.

### Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

### Notes

1. Albinsson, *Svensk populärpress 1931–1961* [Swedish popular press 1931–1961], 44.
2. Park and Pooley, *The History of Media and Communication Research*.
3. Nowak, *Masskommunikationsforskning i Sverige* [Mass communication research in Sweden], 14.
4. *Ibid.*, 48–9.
5. Hyvönen, “Mediekritik i pocketformat” [“Media criticism in pocketbook format”].
6. Official governmental investigations (Statens offentliga utredningar, SOU) holds a pivotal position in both the public and the political life of Sweden. The investigations employs experts as well as politicians and publish their results as accessible books, often of impressive volume. The status of SOUs were especially high by the mid-twentieth century.
7. The closure of *Ny Tid* attracted massive interest from publishers. Most newspapers in Sweden published editorials on November 12 or 13, 1963 commenting on the closure.
8. Furhammar and Isaksson, *Politik och film* [Politics and film].
9. Skoglund, *Filmcensuren* [Film censorship].
10. Leschke, “Medienwissenschaften und ihre Geschichte,” 21.
11. See, for example, Horkheimer, *Traditionelle und kritische Theorie*.
12. Official governmental investigation, *Forskning om massmedier* [Research about mass media], 10–11.
13. For a discussion, see Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interest*.
14. Official governmental investigation, *Forskning om massmedier* [Research about mass media], 21.
15. *Ibid.*, 20–1.
16. Nord, “Massmedieforskning möter mediepolitik” [“Mass media research meets media policy”].

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