



CS1. Studies on national media research capability as a contextual domain of the sources of ROs

The aim of the **first case study** is to describe and analyse the **countries' monitoring capability**: the ability and possibilities of various agents to observe the developments of the media and the changes in society emanating from the media transformations, as well as related risks and opportunities for deliberative communication, and applying the obtained knowledge in making media political decisions.

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SWEDEN

Risks and Opportunities Related to Media and Journalism Studies (2000–2020). Case Study on the National Research and Monitoring Capabilities

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Executive Summary

In this report, we present available data about Swedish media development during the period 2000-2020, but also relevant context to understand the production and availability of these data, and the main monitoring actors. To be precise, in accordance with the theoretical framework of the Mediadelcom project, we focus on data about legal and ethical legislation, journalistic production, media usage, and media competencies. The overall conclusion is that, in the Swedish case, there is in most instances no lack of reliable data about media development, which also means that there are good prospects for mapping such development. Instead, the challenge in this context is often how to select data, and a combination of different data, to give an objective overview of the media development in relation to topics such as deliberative communication and deliberative democracy.

Keywords: media development, Sweden, data, journalism, media use, competencies, legal and ethical regulation

1. Introduction

This report analyses the availability of relevant data in Sweden for the Mediadelcom project. It is structured as follows. First, we will introduce the Swedish context and how it may influence this report and the Mediadelcom study in general (1.1 and 1.2). We will then move on to describe the institutional system in the field of media research and information production, as well as its main stakeholders – actors who produce and finance information about the Swedish media landscape (1.3-1.5). We then look into the specific situation in each of the four domains: ‘Legal and ethical regulation’ (2), ‘Journalism’ (3), Media Usage (4) and ‘Media-related competencies’ (5). Finally, we make an overall assessment of the research and monitoring capabilities and gaps in the Swedish media landscape (6 and 7).

1.1. Explanations of structural peculiarities of importance

If there is anything ‘peculiar’ about the Swedish case, it is the relatively rich availability of data on media development. This does not necessarily mean that there are no data gaps to be found, but that usually the problem may be how to de facto cover all available data and how to select data for a research project such as this one.

In general, the availability of data concerning media development in Sweden is very good. Quite often, this makes it difficult to pinpoint which are the ‘main’ publications for each domain, and/or, as might be the case with some of the other country reports, to list them in an appendix (i.e. why some publications are selected instead of others). Therefore, we have decided to present relevant contributions in the body text below, i.e. in connection to the presentation of the four domains. The publications relevant for understanding media development in the four domains are also presented in the reference list. Due to the extensive size of the Swedish data set, the bibliographical lexicon for the Swedish data is still under development and will be concluded later in 2022.

We have also conducted interviews with 16 leading experts on Swedish media development in the period 2000-2020. These experts were carefully selected and include many of the most prominent and influential names in the Swedish media landscape during the past two decades, evenly divided over four categories: i) academia, ii) industry, iii) politics, iv) administrative authorities and NGOs. They include leading politicians, general directors of public authorities, CEOs of private and public service media, institute directors, professors, and editors-in-chief. This data will be analysed and used in coming reports within the Mediadelcom project, either complementing or triangulating literature-based insights into Swedish media development.

1.2. The main traditions and shifts in the 21st century and current situation concerning the media research and monitoring system

1.2.1. Context: Sweden, the media landscape and its monitoring

Historically, Sweden has been seen as a sparsely populated and linguistically and culturally homogenous country. According to the World Values Survey, it is also the world’s most secularized nation. However, Sweden is also changing – immigration to Sweden has been significant – 19.7 % of the 10.4 million population was born abroad,²⁵⁴ it is one of the fastest growing and fastest urbanizing populations in Europe.²⁵⁵ Official minority languages include both immigrant and indigenous languages Yiddish, Romani chib, Sami, Finnish, and Meänkieli. Descriptions of the Swedish media landscape are by necessity based on history, but should also acknowledge the changing social and demographic context.

Politically, Sweden is a multiparty and consensual democracy historically dominated by The Social Democratic Party, but with a much more fragmented party landscape in recent elections, not least following the increased voter support for the right-wing populist party the Sweden Democrats. Sweden is considered a mature liberal democracy and ranks highly in international comparisons of democracy and freedom of expression:

- Freedom in the World 2021: status “free” (Score: 100/100, stable since 2017).
- Liberal Democracy Index 2021: Sweden scores highly in the top 10% bracket – ranked 2 of 183 countries (Varieties of Democracy Institute, 2021).
- Freedom of Expression Index 2018: ranked 10 of 183 countries, down from 7 in 2016 (Varieties of Democracy Institute, 2017, 2019).

1.2.2. The media landscape

The Swedish media system has traditionally been a mixture of classical liberal notions of the press as an independent and monitoring ‘fourth estate’, and ideas of social responsibility involving necessary relationships between the political and media systems to maintain diversity and public service in broadcast media. From a historical perspective, the prospects for independent journalism could not be better. Sweden was the first country in the world to include a Freedom

²⁵⁴ www.scb.se, 2020

²⁵⁵ CIA Factbook, 2020

of Information Act in its constitution, as early as 1766, and since then, freedom of expression and freedom of information have been embedded in the Swedish constitution, which provides stronger protection than common law. However, this liberal media approach has co-existed with numerous state regulations of the media sector and a reactive media policy.

It could be argued that the tradition of high newspaper readership, high Internet penetration and maturity of digital media markets, and the relatively small broadcasting sector, is a trait shared among the Nordic countries (Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark and Iceland). These similarities also extend into the relationship between the media industry and the state, in what has been characterized as a democratic corporatist model (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). Historically, in this view, a well-functioning system for provision of news and information to citizens has been viewed as a responsibility of the state that cannot be left to market forces alone. The manifestation of the media policy side has resulted in rather extensive regulation of the private broadcasting and advertising sector, large investments in public service broadcasting, and broad support of newspaper journalism as part of what has been characterized as the Nordic cultural policy model (Duelund, 2008) and a “media welfare state” (Enli, Syvertsen, & Mjøs, 2018; Syvertsen, Enli, Mjøs, & Moe, 2014). Regulators have experienced the need to continuously monitor the development of the media sector and the effects of implemented policies via monitoring bodies. Authorities therefore source and analyse data and insights on media development, often in collaboration with other actors in the media environment. This interest in the media sector from a policy-making perspective has also been highly visible in academic research interests in Sweden and the Nordic countries (Krumsvik & Ots, 2016).

1.3. The main media monitoring actors

It is fairly well-known that Sweden, in comparison with many other countries in Europe and across the world, is equipped with rich research data about media development. This data comes from a great variety of sources, such as public authorities, academia, media-monitoring institutes, stakeholder organizations and NGOs.

1.3.1. Government authorities

Government authorities provide a form of governance that is particularly concerned with the implementation of legal regulations (McQuail, 2003). The *Swedish Press and Broadcasting Authority (MPRT)*²⁵⁶ was specifically created to monitor the development of the media market and to govern the implementation of media policy tools, including the issuing of broadcasting permits, administration of press subsidies and execution of industry governance such as public-service value tests, and the ethical reviews conducted by the Swedish Broadcasting Commission (Granskningsnämnden). MPRT regularly collects, analyses, and publishes reports on media market developments, media policy, media economy, media consumption and media trends. The majority of the raw data is derived from various measurement institutes. Other public institutions of relevance include the *Swedish Post and Telecom Authority (PTS)*²⁵⁷, which monitors markets for mobile and broadband and associated public access to these services. *Statistics Sweden* monitors a vast range of issues of relevance to the media sector, including population growth, labor markets, democracy, pricing and culture²⁵⁸. *The Swedish Media Council* monitors media habits of young citizens in order to identify and pre-empt negative media effects.²⁵⁹

The *Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB)* is a public agency that produces regular reports and books on media performance and newsroom work during societal crises and disruptions.

²⁵⁶ <https://www.mpert.se/>

²⁵⁷ <https://www.pts.se/>

²⁵⁸ <https://www.scb.se/en/>

²⁵⁹ <https://www.statensmedierad.se>

The agency also takes a particular interest in threats to journalists and the ability of the media sector to handle fake news and disinformation. Over the years, the agency has proved to be one of the main funders of research of crisis journalism outside of the traditional scientific councils.

In order to guide media policy-making, the *Swedish government* installs parliamentary and/or expert commissions with the task of making inquiries into various aspects of the media market. In Sweden, most commissions relevant to the media market come administratively under the Ministry of Culture. The reports of the commissions are published as so-called *SOU (Public Inquiries of the State)*.²⁶⁰ The production of public inquiries related to different media issues is very extensive and concerns most types of media and the functioning of their respective markets – commercial TV and radio, public service media, newspapers, minority media, digital platforms and Internet from a usage perspective. Between 2000 and 2020, Swedish governments (of different political colors) appointed a total of 102 public inquires in this field, ranging from very limited aspects of the media and communication sector to more general overviews of the current digital media landscape (Nord & Wadbring, 2021).

1.3.2. Trade press and mainstream media

The media themselves also play a role in monitoring the media system, ensuring the accountability and performance of actors within the system, and making the functioning of the system transparent to a wider audience. One such area is the different legal acts that protect the media sector, including violations of freedom of speech and abuses of data privacy by international tech platforms. Court cases and rulings are some of the primary sources of information regarding the functioning of media legislation, enforcement of laws by authorities, and ethical/legal behaviors of media firms and journalists. However, court rulings are not easily accessible or transparent to a general audience. Therefore, this monitoring and deliberation of the Swedish media system relies to a large extent on the media itself – the trade press (Dagens Media, Resumé), union publications and forums (Journalisten, Publicistklubben), but also editorial columns and op-eds in quality dailies (DN Debatt, SvD Brännpunkt). These forums frequently publish and debate court rulings on issues like press freedom, slander and source protection. All of these media channels naturally also discuss many other aspects of the media industry.

1.3.3 Commercial research institutes

All media markets require verified and reliable measurements and metrics, whose key role is to guide advertising pricing. These measurements, which to a large extent focus on media consumption but also aspects of media access and distribution, are conducted by commercial research firms and auditing institutes. These institutes typically audit a specific media type and regularly (often quarterly) publish their data in time series and reports which tend to remain largely descriptive in their analyses.

When it comes to broadcasting markets, TV consumption in Sweden is currently (2021) measured by *MMS (Mediemätningar i Skandinavien)*, whereas radio consumption is tracked by *Kantar Sifo*. Newspaper circulation is traditionally audited by *TS Mediafakta*,²⁶¹ whereas the largest newspapers have tended to rely increasingly on Kantar Sifo. Kantar Sifo also publishes the *Orvesto survey* that focuses on audience reach for all types of media – printed, broadcasting and digital media,²⁶² which is why Orvesto has become the most important source for understanding broad media consumption patterns and trends.

²⁶⁰ available at www.riksdagen.se

²⁶¹ <https://ts.se/digitalnordic/news/>

²⁶² <https://www.kantarsifo.se/rappporter-undersokningar/rackviddsmatningar>

In terms of the Internet, the *KIA Index*²⁶³, administrated by the Swedish National Association of Advertisers, claim to be the measurement standard for Internet sites. KIA monitors all types of domains that are affiliated to the service. As opposed to Kantar Sifo's Orvesto index, KIA measures unique web browsers (rather than studying a representative panel of users). Whereas a number of rural news media and many magazines are affiliated with KIA, most of the larger news media publishers are missing from the index.

Finally, *The IRM Institute for Media and Advertising Market Statistics*²⁶⁴ has monitored advertising investments on the Swedish media market for decades, including which business sectors are investing in media advertising and which media sectors are the beneficiaries. The entry of international social media tech giants on the Swedish media scene has blurred the IRM data over the past decade.

1.3.4. Academic institutions

The media sector and its development is studied at several universities in Sweden – both within the fields of Journalism and Media and Communication Studies (which is represented as a scientific discipline at 14 universities in Sweden), but also within business, political science, education, history of science, etc. There is a continuous stream of research coming out of these institutions in books, reports and international journal publications covering media in the Swedish context. A relatively large amount of scholars from Sweden have been, and still are, successful in publishing their research in the most important international publications and are part of the international research community.

Most notably University of Gothenburg hosts some of the most longstanding and important studies of the Swedish media landscape and relations between citizens and public institutions. The research environment is associated with particular publications, not least the classic course literature book, *Massmedier: Press, Radio & TV i förvandling*, [Mass media: Press, Radio & TV in transformation] for many years co-authored by professors Stig Hadenius and Lennart Weibull (1998). Most Swedish media and communication students are familiar with this book, which is still generating new editions. The research center *Nordicom*, associated with the university, has been collecting and publishing statistics, books, reports and newsletters on various aspects of the media market since the 1970s. *Nordicom* also conducts the annual survey *Mediebarometern* [The Media Barometer] on media use and reach. The neighbouring *SOM institute*, also associated with University of Gothenburg, conducts some of the most well-known and used studies on “society, opinion and media”, including annual reports on media usage and media trust, political opinions, institutional trust, political trust, and public attitudes towards diverging societal phenomena. The continuous work of *Nordicom* and *SOM* has resulted in extensive time series on numerous aspects of Swedish society²⁶⁵, including a vast database of publications based on the surveys²⁶⁶. *Nordicom* also publishes the leading academic journal on media and communication studies in the Nordic countries, *Nordicom Review*, and previously the Scandinavian language-oriented *Nordicom-Information*.

The predominantly statistical, (often) descriptive and nationally oriented approaches at University of Gothenburg, which developed from the 1970 and onwards, also gave rise to the need for other, often more international and/or theory-driven, outlooks and contributions in the research field, which have then been explored and developed at other universities over the last four decades. To a great extent, the varying approaches that developed at different universities and university colleagues were connected to different, and often conflicting, views on science and how best to conduct research. For example, in the wake of the decreasing influence of Marx-

²⁶³ <https://www.kiaindex.se/>

²⁶⁴ <https://www.irm-media.se/>

²⁶⁵ <https://www.gu.se/en/som-institute/publications/results-from-the-som-surveys>

²⁶⁶ <https://www.nordicom.gu.se/en/publications>

ian historical materialism of the 1970s, in debates for or against a more positivistic understanding of scientific practices, positivism was instead challenged in the 1980s and 1990s by emerging approaches such as critical theory, cultural studies, postmodern theory, but also other influences which were often derived from the new research milieus around Sweden. Furthermore, the debates also concerned method preferences, in terms of quantitative/statistical vs. qualitative approaches.

In this respect, the media and communication and journalism research at Stockholm University (at JMK), became associated with pioneering scholars such as K. Nowak, which even forty years ago focused on topics such as globalization and media (J. Ekecrantz), media and national identity or media and youth culture (J. Fornäs). This culture studies-oriented tradition is still very much alive today (and was prevalent during the 2000-2020 period) through the focus on research areas such as media and cosmopolitanism or the visual (K. Becker) and discursive dimensions of media and journalism.

The media and communication research and the journalism research at Södertörn University is to a large extent associated with research collaborations with Baltic/Eastern European Russian institutions and scholars. This is very much due to the implementation of a particular state-funded research fund, *Östersjöstiftelsen*, restricted to research for Södertörn University and established in 1994 following the fall of the Berlin Wall, with the purpose of strengthening and deepening the academic and research cultural infrastructures across the Baltic Sea and between Sweden and Eastern Europe. For several decades, the Media and Communication Department has been producing research influenced by the cultural studies, critical theory tradition and continental theory, while the Journalism Department is more geared towards journalism as a profession (G. Nygren) and technological development (E. Appelgren).

The Media and Communication Department at Mid University Sweden is associated with research about the relationship between media, journalism and democracy (L. Nord, J. Strömbäck, and others), and is also running a program in Journalism. This is also the case at JMK (Stockholm), JMG (Gothenburg) and Linnéuniversitet (in Kalmar). The research program DEMICOM seeks to combine studies about political communication, risk communication, organizational communication and media development.

For a long time, media and communication research at Uppsala University has been associated with a focus on ICTs and thus the role of technology, internetization and digitalization in media development (for instance, O. Finndahl's research), but this picture has been changing lately with more diversified influences.

Lund University has traditionally produced media and communication research about media and democracy, media and politics (P. Dahlgren) and gender and media (G. Jarlbro), while its offshoot (Campus Helsingborg) is associated with contributions to strategic communication research (J. Falkheimer, M. Heide, and others).

Over the last decade, the media and communication department at Karlstad University has developed quite a strong research environment, not least in the field of journalism, including projects about media practitioners' working conditions (H. Örnebring); robot journalism and technology (C. Clerwall); development of journalism in a European context (H. Örnebring); and transparency in journalism (M. Karlsson), to mention just a few examples.

The Media and Communication Department at Örebro University has a long tradition of international conflict, risk and crisis communication research, represented by the work of SA Nohrstedt, and B. Höijer, as well as discourse analytical approaches to media and journalism studies (M. Ekström). A rather important work in the Swedish journalism context emanating from Örebro University is Ekström & Nohrstedt's ethnographic study (1996) *Journalistikens etiska principer (The ethical principles of journalism)*.

Traditionally, media and communication research at Jönköping University has, to begin with, been focusing on media development, public service and press history (LÅ Engblom, and others), but for the last decade there has been a shift towards a sustainability communication perspective on media, journalism and other organizations, which was introduced and developed by U. Olausson. The Media and Communication Department research belongs to the School of Education and Communication. Secondly, Jönköping University is endowed with the research center MMTC (Media, Management and Transformation Centre), located at Jönköping International Business School). MMTC is for the past 20 years an important research hub for studies on the management of media organisations and the business side of media production (R. Picard, L. Küng, L. Achtenhagen, M. Ots). The center is home to the Journal of Media Business Studies.

Media and communication education and research is also provided at Malmö University, Halmstad University College, University Collage of Gävle, Umeå University and Luleå Tekniska Högskola. When it comes to the four domains of the Mediadelcom project, one could say that Swedish media and communication and journalism research has primarily contributed to the journalism domain, followed by the media use domain, and less to media legislations/accountability and media literacy, which have been more reliant on individual contributions (i.e. particular researchers' long-term research rather than the production of a critical mass of research emanating from several directions/research environment).

1.3.5. Trade associations and NGOs

Additionally, there are several sources that are neither arms of the Swedish government nor commercial market-research companies or academic institutions. Though a private non-profit foundation, the *Swedish Internet Foundation* (Internetstiftelsen) is responsible for the .se and .nu domains and monitors the internet habits of the Swedish population.²⁶⁷

Industry/philanthropic and labour market financing has supported the establishment of independent think tanks such as the *Institute for Media Studies* (IMS), which both orders academic inquires and publishes reports on the professional conduct, economic situation and policy of journalism in Sweden. For example, they produce annual reports on the state of the Swedish media, mapping journalistic coverage of, and presence in, local municipalities all over the country.²⁶⁸

Of course, there are also other organizations, institutions and NGOs that conduct research or publish research that may serve to enlighten certain perspectives or agendas in the media landscape, such as *The Union of Swedish Journalists – SJF*. This organization has supported regular research on Swedish journalists' working conditions and role perceptions in collaboration with academic institutions. The *Swedish Enterprise Media Monitor* has been funded by Swedish Free Enterprise Foundation but is now a private company whose objective is to scrutinize and discuss the quality of Swedish news journalism. International monitoring efforts that cover Swedish development include WACC's focus on gender and minorities in the Global Media Monitoring Project²⁶⁹. Interestingly, major think tanks like Timbro and high-profile lobbying organizations have so far not been particularly active in shaping the discourse on the media market arena.

1.3.6. International and transnational institutions

Several databases exist to monitor ownership and economic performance in the media sector. At EU level, there are numerous (often comparative) initiatives that can be useful for monitoring the Swedish media context. International academic efforts that cover Swedish development

²⁶⁷ <https://internetstiftelsen.se/en/>

²⁶⁸ <https://mediestudier.se>

²⁶⁹ <https://whomakesthenews.org/>

include the Media pluralism monitor MPM²⁷⁰, Reuters Institute Digital News Report²⁷¹, and the Media Democracy for Monitor project²⁷² conducted within the Euromedia Research Group²⁷³.

The EU itself produces a vast number of reports every year about media, democracy and digitalization in its member states,²⁷⁴ for instance the Eurobarometer. The EU is consistently developing its capability to monitor and share information on media development. This can be conducted via coordination of national authorities in the member states, such as the European Platform of Regulatory Authorities²⁷⁵, the European Audiovisual Observatory²⁷⁶ or via EU-sponsored projects such as the Media Pluralism Monitor²⁷⁷. Other examples include the database *MAVISE*, that contains data about transnational ownership structures in the audiovisual industry²⁷⁸. Though the Nordic collaboration has been accused of being gradually weakened over past decades, the Nordic countries have a tradition of collaborating in the fields of media and culture with initiatives, projects and publications sponsored by the Nordic Council of Ministers²⁷⁹. Nordicom²⁸⁰ is one such initiative.

1.4. The funding system of media research and monitoring

1.4.1. Scientific councils for funding projects about journalism and media

In a Swedish context, funds for media research primarily derive from the *Swedish Research Council* (Vetenskapsrådet); *Riksbankens Jubileumsfond*; *Forte*, *Formas*, *Vinnova* (innovation-oriented research), *The Wallenberg Foundations*, *Hamrin-stiftelsen*, *Anderstiftelsen*, and EU-funded programs such as *Horizon2020*. In this respect, a relatively widespread opinion among media and communication scholars is that, among Swedish research councils, the very discipline of media and communications is disfavoured in relation to more established disciplines such as political science. It is, of course, difficult to estimate whether negative results in the number of accepted applications (acceptance rate is usually approximately 10%) has to do with structural discrimination or instead a lack of quality among too many media and communication applications. The scientific councils remain important as a possible source of funding as conditions for basic research at universities vary and senior professors are in many cases more or less expected to finance their own research through the funding they attract from external funding sources.

During the examined period (2000-2020) we find several large projects or programs funded by some of the above-mentioned councils, or some other funders. For example, the YES program on youth and media use (M. Ekström) (see more information below) and a project about emotional/civic engagement in journalism (H. Örnebring). Here are some (limited) examples of projects – described here in terms of their topical focus – which have been, and/or still are, funded by the Swedish Research Council and Formas during the twenty-year period; journalism and political accountability (M. Djerf-Pierre, M. Ekström & B. Johansson); journalistic epistemologies in a digital context (M. Ekström & O. Westerlund); journalism and transparency (M. Karlsson, L. Nord and others), journalism and cross-professional, hybridized relations in the case of every-

²⁷⁰ <https://cmpf.eui.eu/media-pluralism-monitor/>

²⁷¹ <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/>

²⁷² <https://euromediagroup.org/mdm/>

²⁷³ <https://www.euromediagroup.org/research/>

²⁷⁴ <https://op.europa.eu/en/home>

²⁷⁵ <https://www.epra.org/>

²⁷⁶ <https://www.obs.coe.int/en/web/observatoire/>

²⁷⁷ <https://cmpf.eui.eu/media-pluralism-monitor/>

²⁷⁸ <http://mavise.obs.coe.int/>

²⁷⁹ <https://www.norden.org/en>

²⁸⁰ <https://www.nordicom.gu.se/en>

day social media communication (P. Berglez, U. Olausson, M. Krzyzanowski); media and trust (F. Stiernstedt) and digital media and human rights (K. Andén-Papadopolous); media/journalism and climate change (B. Höijer, P. Berglez & U. Olausson).

It is difficult to estimate the importance and extent of externally funded research in relation to the available internal resources of each university, as it is usually embedded in the employment (e.g. 10-30 % time for research for an employed full-time lecturer, or 40-70% set aside for an employed full-time professor).

1.5. The national research database and most important journals

Here, there is no particular media-oriented research database for media research to use. However, when searching for media research, the national database *SwePub*²⁸¹ is of essential importance. The database collects publications (articles, books, doctoral dissertations, reports, artistic work, patents, etc.) from all Swedish universities, but also a wide range of other authorities such as the Swedish National Museum and Naturvårdsverket (The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency). The database enables bibliographical data management and analyses. The database is constantly updated and coordinated by KB, the National Library of Sweden. It mainly concerns scientific/academic work, while data from privately owned institutions is not accessible in this context. A related effort is the Digital Academic Archive (Diva), which is a joint effort by 50 Swedish academic institutions to systematize and disseminate all academic publications from the affiliated universities, including graduate and undergraduate student theses²⁸².

In the Swedish and Nordic context, the most important publication is *Nordicom Review*, in which much Swedish media research is published. However, this is also an international journal that publishes research from outside Sweden and the Nordic countries.

2. Publications, data sources and main monitoring actors in the legal and ethical regulation domain

There is good availability of information (sources and data) to map and understand media-related legal and ethical regulation during the period 2000-2020, including central monitoring actors. For relevant publications and other data in connection to this domain, see the text below (2.1, 2.2 and 2.3).

2.1. Freedom of expression

The current key Swedish media laws include The Freedom of the Press Act (SFS, No. 105/1949) and the constitutional law on Freedom of Expression (SFS, No. 1469/1991), which largely protect the fundamental democratic functioning of the press. There are also laws on the functioning of media markets such as the Radio and TV act – outlining who can broadcast, what content and what advertising (SFS 201:696) – and the press subsidy act (SFS 1990:524). Laws such as the intellectual property rights act (SFS 1960:729), competition law and electronic communication act (SFS 2003:389) are increasingly being harmonized with EU legislation. Whereas legislation governs the functioning of the media system, the monitoring and production of information concerning the ‘legal domain’ is a more complex issue. It involves ‘the legal text’ and the court system, but beyond that media policymaking at large. That includes questions about what the purpose and intent of the law is, what it should be in the future, how it is currently interpreted

²⁸¹ <https://swepub.kb.se/>

²⁸² <https://www.diva-portal.org/>

and enforced, how media actors behave in relation to the law, and the consequences of the designs of legal acts for the functioning of the media system.

Freedom of expression is a concept often addressed in academic articles, and one common conclusion is that this freedom can't be taken for granted but needs to be in line with peoples' understanding of its meaning in the digital society, and the challenges posed to the concepts by the increasingly blurring lines between journalism and other forms of media content (Carlsson & Weibull, 2018; Maria Edström, Kenyon, & Svensson, 2016; Kenyon, Svensson, & Edström, 2017; Svensson & Edström, 2017).

Research on freedom of expression that specifically concerns the media sector is quite limited, but there are exceptions (Maria Edström et al., 2016; Kenyon et al., 2017; Svensson & Edström, 2017). With the world's oldest Freedom of the Press Act (celebrating 250 years in 2016) and a strong Freedom of Expression Act, the protection of journalists is very extensive in Sweden. This may explain some lack of monitoring in this area. Nevertheless, there are related areas of inquiry that may merit future attention, including regulation of freedom of expression in social media and increasing hate and threats against journalists (Bladini & Svensson, 2022, personal interview).

2.2 Freedom of information

Sweden has a very old tradition of open government, and the default status for governmental documents since 1766 is for them to be public. They are open to anyone, not just to journalists, although journalists are more experienced than ordinary citizens in gathering and using public documents. During the past 50 years, secrecy clauses have become increasingly common in legislation. The motives for this are said to be privacy concerns due to the openness of digital documentation, protection of personal privacy, and protection of commercial and state interests. Swedish citizens and journalists still have very good access to most kinds of governmental documents.

2.3 Accountability system (media sector legislation and code of ethics)

When it comes to monitoring the relationship between media and the state, there tends to be a wider interest in policy than in pure legislation. 'Policy' is in this sense a broader term that indicates the overall direction and intent of political actions and debates used to create a functioning media sector (beyond what is institutionalized in legal acts). There are many different types of legislation that have the potential to affect the production and consumption of journalistic news in a country, including areas of culture, taxation, competition, digital infrastructure, data storage and personal integrity (Nord & Ots, 2019). *Academic research* has mainly been concerned with the policies and regulations that directly and specifically target the media market, for example in terms of providing financing via subsidies (further discussed in the domain of Journalism) (Krumsvik & Ots, 2016). Media policy making and particularly the issue of press subsidies (paradoxically) are an issue of waning public and political interest (Ohlsson, 2014).

Policy developments of concern for the media sector are monitored and compiled by the Swedish Media Authority (MPRT, 2021). The reports, which are released annually, include overviews of recent debates and changes in Swedish, Nordic and EU perspectives and policies in the media sector. Other government institutions such as the Authority for Cultural Analysis also produce (less regular) policy overviews (Myndigheten för kulturanalys, 2022).

Media-related issues are regularly addressed in public inquiries appointed by the government. The latest *parliamentary inquiry* of Press Freedom and Freedom of Speech, initiated in 2018, discussed the possibility of giving public service media legal protection in the constitution but could not reach the requisite broad agreement (SOU 2020:45). Consequently, conditions for public service media remain the same as before and it is possible for the political system to alter

basic conditions, such as financing, from one year to another via a single decision in parliament. In the press domain, several inquiries have tried to adjust the press subsidy system to a digital environment (e.g. SOU 2016:80). The deliberation of such inquiries regularly continues in op-eds in daily newspapers. Overall, there is a growing theme in the commentaries that the Swedish media policy seen as progressive 50 years ago when the press subsidies were created are now seen as rigid and passive. Media policy is largely seen as caught between an incapacity to reconcile the role of national journalistic media in a fast-moving globalized digital environment (Nord & Truedsson, 2021), and an incapacity to reconcile national policy needs and visions with needs for European harmonization (Ots, Krumsvik, Ala-Fossi, & Rendahl, 2016).

Besides the legal system, with its strong constitutional protection for freedom of information and freedom of speech, Sweden is characterised by a system of *institutionalised self-regulation* in the print market (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). The Swedish Press Council, founded in 1916, was part of this corporatist structure. Although the Swedish Press Council was not affiliated with the government, changes to make it more accountable to the public were encouraged by parliament. The council took decisions on media ethics issues in public and published regular reports with considerations and explanations regarding its policy positions (von Krogh, 2016). In 2020, the council changed its name to the Media Ombudsman and the Media Ethics Council²⁸³ broadened its scope to include radio and television.

The Publicists' Club, which is a member of the umbrella organisation the Press Cooperation Committee, upholds a continuous function of self-criticism with regular panels and debates on key media matters. Top editors at leading national news media regularly comment upon current publicity debates and publishing decisions taken by them. The self-regulation system is frequently the subject of debate in Sweden, but has hitherto shown its strength and is generally respected by media companies.

Media accountability/media criticism and its practice in times of market expansion (Kenyon, Svensson, & Edström, 2019), looser regulation of public service and new technological opportunities for public interaction have been investigated in doctoral dissertations and numerous essays (von Krogh, 2012; von Krogh & Svensson, 2019). To conclude, legal protection of freedom of information is traditionally strong, as is the system for institutionalized self-regulation in the media sector, even if market developments and political polarization may challenge the stability hitherto enjoyed.

3. Publications, data sources and main monitoring actors in the journalism domain

There is good availability of information (sources and data) to map and understand journalistic developments between 2000-2020 in Sweden, including central monitoring actors, although some sub-domains might be richer in data than others (i.e. this domain is endowed with many sub-domains). For relevant publications and other relevant data in connection to this domain, see the text below (3.1-3.4).

3.1. Market conditions

With regard to ownership diversity, foreign interests, and the labor market, the trend of media-market concentration on the Swedish newspaper market is clear and undeniable. Specific data and reports on ownership concentration over time are available via Nordicom's databases²⁸⁴ and the Swedish media authority (MPRT). The issue of ownership has therefore been salient in

²⁸³ <https://medieombudsmannen.se/about-the-media-ombudsman/>

²⁸⁴ www.nordicom.gu.se

the public debate as well as in Swedish media research. A large number of studies have empirically explored and described the decision processes and the various consequences of newspaper mergers on journalistic work, journalistic output and the market consequences for local societies (Alström & Nord, 2000, 2002, 2003). Other studies have described the possible effects of different ownership forms (Achtenhagen, Melesko, & Ots, 2018) and how the effects of ownership concentration stimulate the growth of newspaper chains and networks that initiate various forms of collaboration and coordination of production services (Ots, 2012). This trend is also visible on the broadcasting markets, which were deregulated as late as the 1990s. However, the initial political visions of commercial market diversity (Norbäck & Ots, 2007) have been turned into a more realistic acceptance of a new reality, with large international owners of large radio chains and TV networks focusing on music and entertainment rather than journalism and local content (Engblom & Wormbs, 2007; Forsman, 2011). Recent studies have started to discuss the relationship between market-level structures and the form and shape of journalistic output in specific areas, such as cultural journalism (Widholm, Riegert, & Roosvall, 2021).

One of the core objectives of the Swedish media policy has been to monitor the economic development of the newspaper sector. Consequently, there are both raw data and an annual report series named “Dagspressens Ekonomi” [The Economy of the Daily Press] that has been issued by the Media Authority (MPRT) since 1975 and analyzes the economic conditions of the Swedish newspaper. Based on information from annual statements, the reports describe trends in both profit margins and revenue structures. Recently, the authority has also started to focus explicitly on the editorial expenses of newspapers. On the advertising side, the research institute IRM²⁸⁵ produces quarterly statistics and analyses on advertising income in all different sectors of the media and advertising markets. Together, these incomes provide a comprehensive picture of economic developments on the media market. Additionally, three large parliamentary inquiries since 2000 have investigated the conditions for the press and published extensive reports on the topic (SOU 2006:8; SOU 2013:66; SOU 2016:80).

Regional and local journalism has held a strong position in the Swedish media landscape. Sweden has relied for decades on a few national morning dailies and a strong sector of regional media houses. Information on local media production and consumption is accessed via Nordicom’s databases on media ownership or data from Dagspresskollegiet²⁸⁶ on local media usage. Though the declining income in the newspaper sector, the cost reductions and redlining of operations are not only an issue for the regional media houses (Wadbring & Bergström, 2017), the reduction in local editorial offices has left more peripheral areas without journalistic coverage. The phenomenon was already being discussed two decades ago (Nord & Nygren, 2002) and has since then been revisited in several studies (in particular by Gunnar Nygren) (Nygren, 2019; Nygren & Althén, 2014; Nygren, Leckner, & Tenor, 2018). Recently, the Institutet för mediestudier launched a database on the development of geographical dynamics of local journalistic coverage²⁸⁷.

The broadcasting sector that was deregulated in the 1990s quickly morphed from independent local stations into national networks and has since then had difficulties producing meaningful local journalistic content, thereby not doing anything to moderate the local situation (Forsman, 2011; Norbäck & Ots, 2007). On the contrary, the largest commercial television network, TV4, opted to close all their local news offices as soon as they were given the legal/political opportunity.

Market conditions are generally satisfactorily exposed in academic work and in reports produced by public authorities, which often provide productive inputs to policy making discus-

²⁸⁵ <https://www.irm-media.se/>

²⁸⁶ <https://www.gu.se/forskning/den-svenska-mediepubliken-fd-dagspresskollegiet>

²⁸⁷ <https://kommundatabas.mediestudier.se/>

sions. Still, extensive data in this area is mainly descriptive and focused on economic indicators and may not capture all dimensions of current market developments such as the democratic effects of increased owner concentration and closure of regional and local news offices, for example.

3.2 Public service media

Public service media's autonomy, role and mission are mainly a topic for regular public inquiries, initiated by Swedish governments as the start of a political process that ultimately results in a new charter for public service companies (SOU 2008:64; SOU 2012:59; SOU 2018:50). During this process, there is often a public debate on autonomy issues. Besides the public inquiries, most attention to the relation between public service and politics is given to the issue of partisan programs and whether public broadcasters are remaining independent in their coverage of political issues. Program content has been regularly analyzed by academic scholars in collaboration with the *MRTV Authority* and presented in annual reports, but for some years these studies have ceased to be conducted (Asp, 2017). Public service companies themselves produce annual reports with information on program content and diversity.²⁸⁸ Academic research on public service media conditions in Sweden has to some extent been produced by *Nordicom* in Nordic comparative projects on politics, markets, programming and users, as well as by *The Broadcast Media Foundation* which analyzes the role of public service media in the digital media landscape (Carlsson, 2013b; Carlsson & Harrie, 2010; Jönsson & Strömbäck, 2007; Lowe & Maijanen, 2019; Nord & Grusell, 2012). Doctoral dissertations on public service have mainly focused on content diversity and relationships with the audience (Edin, 2000; Jönsson, 2004). Finally, there are individual articles examining the reporting of public service media during election campaigns, public service television company strategies regarding relationships with politics and markets (Lindén, 2011; Thorbjørnsrud, 2013) and PSB responses to digital change (Widholm & Appelgren, 2020).

The autonomy of public service media is an often-discussed political issue, where a majority of political parties in Sweden have historically supported the arm's length principle of distance and 'firewalls' between media companies and political institutions. In recent years, however, criticism from the political right has increased, accompanied by proposals to monitor public service media's activities to a larger extent.²⁸⁹ The lack of regular academic input in this discussion during this period poses a risk to rational political decision-making, as empirical evidence is replaced by ideological rhetoric. On the other hand, an ongoing and mutual 'politicization' of the issue may result in increased interest to study the topic from academic perspectives in the future.

As with autonomy, the issue of financing models for public service media is mostly analyzed and discussed in the frequent public inquiries. Sweden had a long tradition of the license fee system, but then decided to replace the system with a new model in 2019, in which the public service fee was integrated into the annual taxation of citizens and administrated by the Swedish Tax Authority. The issue was broadly and thoroughly discussed in the latest two public inquiries on public service media (SOU 2012:59; SOU 2018:50). This transformation – and possible market-orientation of media policy – has been discussed in a comparative work on public service in the Nordic countries (Edelvold Berg & Brink Lund, 2012). Scholars have also introduced the idea that financing should be based on general principles of journalism as a public good (Allern & Pollack, 2019).

Financing models of public service media are generally described in academic textbooks and overviews of media systems. In the case of Sweden, in-depth analyses of advantages and disad-

²⁸⁸ SR and SVT Annual Reports.

²⁸⁹ <https://moderaterna.se/nyhet/sverige-behover-en-ny-mediapolitik/>

vantages of different alternatives are most often discussed in public inquiries. The academic input to the societal debate is fairly limited and the issue is most often viewed from diverging political perspectives. Topics related to the conditions of public service media are generally linked to the political decision-making process, while a large amount of data on public service media performance, audiences and trust is provided on a regular basis by research institutes like Nordicom and SOM-institutet. Thus, public service media is an area in which several actors contribute to increased knowledge about current developments.

3.3. Production conditions

Media research on digitalization has been relatively extensive in the areas of online journalistic conditions and news production processes. A number of important studies on the digitalization of journalism have been focusing on how algorithms and audience metrics are influencing newsroom decisions (Widholm & Appelgren, 2020). Comparisons of how commercial media and public service media face digital challenges display important differences, with the commercial sector being more dependent on digital data in news production (Andersson Schwarz, 2016). One three-year-project, financed by the Swedish Research Council, also investigated digital journalism and transparency from different perspectives. A general conclusion drawn by the project was that audience participation in digital news production was not particularly appreciated, either by journalists or by citizens (Karlsson, Bergström, Clerwall, & Fast, 2015). Finally, the digitalization of journalism has been discussed as a main topic in the latest comprehensive media inquiry in Sweden (SOU 2016:30).

The studies on digitalization of journalism in Sweden generally address potential risks for the quality of journalism should news production become more algorithm- or metric driven. Data traffic-related news decisions that increase the number of ‘click bates’ or personalized news are perceived as a problem in the making. However, the results of the studies also indicate some resilience to digitalization effects in news production in Sweden. News processes are not completely digitalized and computerized but to a considerable extent still influenced by independent editorial decisions and based on professional journalistic values, particularly in public service media. Studies also show that journalists often stick to professional guidelines when working with social media (Appelberg, 2019). There is considerable attention paid to the digitalization of journalism within media studies, offering valuable results on the consequences of digital developments for newsroom production.

Investigative journalism is highly valued among active journalists in Sweden, but academic research into this genre of journalism is rather sporadic. One of the most well-known investigative TV programs, “Uppdrag granskning” (SVT), has been explored in a dissertation thesis (Danielson, 2016), and its working methods, such as hidden cameras and recording, discussed in a book (Andén-Papadopoulos, 2003). More comprehensive studies on investigative journalism were mainly conducted in the period 2001-2006, when the Swedish Association of Local and Regional Authorities sponsored a research program on local investigative journalism. The program financed two bigger research projects on the topic and both projects concluded that there were substantial challenges facing local investigative journalism (Ekström, Johansson, & Larsson, 2006). The projects found that investigative reporting at a local level was extremely rare, and that most media outlets lacked the resources for investigative reporting. At the same time, Swedish journalists participating in international surveys such as the Global Journalist Studies, hail this norm of investigative journalism and perceive it as the single most important mission of journalism in a democracy (Strömbäck, Nord, & Shehata, 2012). There is also a national association for investigative reporters (Grävande Journalister) arranging annual conferences at which working methods and current cases are discussed.

The limited number of academic studies exclusively focusing on investigative journalism in Sweden makes it difficult to draw any general conclusions in this area. The few studies available

confirm that the area of investigative journalism is strong. However, a common theme in most studies is the difference between journalists' ideal perceptions of the genre and their actual performance. Even if a few major national news organizations actually have spent more resources on investigative journalism in recent years, the lack of resources is generally a big problem. There is also the risk from a deliberative communication perspective that the normative ideals with strong support from the media industry and journalists seem to be hard to live up to in practice (Nord & von Krogh, 2021). There is undoubtedly a demand for more systematic research in this area in order to understand the status and potential shortcomings of investigative journalism.

There are very few studies of foreign news journalism and the role of correspondents. Most publications in this area are correspondents' books containing reflections on their work and journalists' memoirs. Among the exceptions is a doctoral dissertation discussing the anthropology of foreign news and observing differences depending on regions, spheres on society, gender and skin color (Roosvall, 2005). Another doctoral dissertation focused on international conflict and crisis reporting (Berglez, 2006). There are also articles examining how foreign, domestic and cultural factors appear in climate change reporting from different countries, and there are studies examining increased consumption in Sweden of transnational news, especially among younger generations (Berglez & Lidskog, 2019; Widholm, 2019).

Overall, this journalistic genre is more or less neglected from an academic perspective and very rarely discussed in public debate. Correspondents are highly visible in news reporting, sometimes appearing in specific foreign news programs and documentaries. Still, systematic knowledge about how foreign news is shaped and processed remains very limited.

Conditions for journalistic production are generally observed and analyzed in journalistic studies at Swedish universities, and there has been a particular interest in the consequences of digitalization and its influence on journalists' working processes and news production procedures. Other areas, such as investigative journalism and foreign news journalism, are less researched to date.

3.4. Working Conditions

Working conditions among journalists and media workers have been a relatively prioritized and highlighted issue in Sweden, which can be explained by several factors. These include the fact that working conditions are an important issue in Swedish society generally; and that journalists represent a professional category with the ability to 'raise its voice', including a strong union (Journalistförbundet, or Journalists' Union) with recurrent reports being written and data collection on this issue (Werne, 2016a, 2016b). The Journalists' Union reports could be viewed as research as they conduct surveys and interview media workers, then present data in a relatively systematic way. However, their reports are not particularly well connected to ongoing academic research. When it comes to studies about working conditions for Swedish journalists/media workers between 2000-2020, some data also derives from particular academic studies, often qualitative ones, that made use of interviews (Örnebring & Möller, 2018). Some of them are longitudinal (Örnebring, 2018) and some data derives from international projects and thus cross national comparisons (Harro-Loit & Josephi, 2020). Overall, the topic includes problems such as the trend of outsourcing and stress, as well the challenges of freelancing and the development in which journalists are increasingly considered as "entrepreneurs". It is also possible to find more textbook-oriented contributions with this kind of focus.

Another important aspect is threats/harassment/hate against journalists. In this context, both academic researchers and other actors (organizations) have been quite engaged in collecting and analyzing data. This topic has developed primarily over the last decade, and perhaps primarily during the period from 2015 onwards. However, even back in 2015, the journal *Nor-*

dicom Information produced a special issue on this topic (Wadbring & Mølster, 2015), demonstrating survey data (from Sifo) about the extent of harassment targeting Swedish editorial offices (Broberg, 2015) and threats and hatred toward journalists (Löfgren-Nilsson, 2015). In the wake of this special issue, quite a lot of new data is to be found from various sources.

3.4.1. Intra-organizational diversity

Some tend to link employment conditions to the issue of *newsroom diversity* and, for example, gender equality concerning wages (M. Edström, 2015).

3.4.2. Journalistic competencies, education and training

With the exception of the recurring survey study at Gothenburg University – Journalistundersökningarna (for overview, see Andersson, 2012) – studies of journalistic competencies are not systematically conducted. However, as an academic area of inquiry it is quite well covered. Both the Institutet för mediestudier (a privately-funded NGO) (e.g. SIM(O), 2013) and the Journalists' Union (Journalistförbundet) have participated in several attempts to map the skills, competencies and values of Swedish journalists. For instance, the Journalists' Union contributes annually to the Worlds of Journalism study, but also publishes its own reports on the state of the profession and the vocational and academic training provided for journalists (Werne, 2018). On the academic side, we can mention studies by Örnebring (Örnebring, 2016), Strömbäck et al (Strömbäck et al., 2012) and Nygren (Nygren, 2012a), who have contributed quite extensive knowledge about the changing character, skills and priorities of journalistic work. On the notion of creativity as a journalistic competence in relation to challenging topics, see Berglez (2011).

3.4.3. Professional culture and role perception

This concerns research about Swedish journalists and/or media workers' perception of what they represent professionally and their role in society. Here, we can mention important research from Södertörn University (Nygren, 2008, 2012b; Nygren & Appelberg, 2013) and University of Gothenburg (Wiik, 2010, 2012). During the period of 2000-2020, the focus is on aspects of de-professionalization of journalistic work and professional identity, and is rooted in more fundamental discussions about 'What is a journalist? Is journalism a profession?' The latter is then influenced by social media development and the rise of alternative forms of journalistic practice (citizen journalism, micro-blogging, blogging, podcasting, etc.)

4. Publications, data sources and main monitoring actors of media usage patterns

There is good availability of information (sources and data) to map and understand media usage patterns during the period 2000-2020, including central monitoring actors. For relevant publications and other data in connection to this domain, see the text below (4.1-4.3).

4.1. Access to the media and diversity of viewpoints in the media system

Knowledge about media usage structures and audience preferences is systematically gathered every year in annual surveys. *The Media Barometer* is produced every year by research documentation center *Nordicom* and is often referred to in public debate (Mediebarometern 2021). The Barometer covers areas such as 'The Media Day' (how much time people spend on different media during the day), reach and average consumption time for text media, sound media and image media. Other sections of the annual report describe the reach and usage of social networks, news, access to media technology and household money spent on subscriptions to different media.

Commercial audience institutes like MMS and SIFO also produce frequent reports on the audience figures and demographics of broadcasting channels, programs, newspapers and webpages. Some of this is openly available whereas other data has to be purchased.

In another annual report, *The Swedes and the Internet* produced by *The Internet Foundation*, focus is on the digitalization of the Swedish data, and extensive survey data is presented for areas such as Internet use and social media use, digital divides among groups of citizens and peoples' worries about digital integrity and hate content on the net.²⁹⁰ Overall, it is noted that digitalization and convergence has made it more challenging to monitor and understand media usage patterns in the media landscape (Andersson, 2014). Increased media mobility and availability have paved the way for low-intensity usage, audiences moving seamlessly across platforms, and multitasking. Such new usage patterns may also affect media's role in citizens' personal lives and collectively at a societal level. Digitalization has also opened up for users' opportunities to engage with journalistic content, to comment on articles, influence journalists, or influence other users' perceptions of journalistic content (Bergström, 2008; Holt & Karlsson, 2015; Ots & Karlsson, 2012),

A third project that deserves attention in this category is the *SOM Institute* publications from University of Gothenburg, which provide annual overviews of public opinion in Sweden and always carry sections on media consumption and media preferences among the public²⁹¹ and/or related to different factors, such as trust in media (Weibull, 2007). The national SOM survey also deals with citizens' perceptions of media trust and other media-related topics that may vary from year to year. Further, worth noting are studies based on longitudinal examinations of news media consumption (Westlund & Weibull, 2013).

When it comes to important longitudinal studies, it is important to highlight the interdisciplinary YES program (Youth & Society), funded by the Swedish Treasury Fund (Riksbankens Jubileumsfond), which has also given rise to a database consisting of data about adolescents' development of political identities and engagement with media consumption. In the longitudinal study, 1,200 individuals are followed over a period of 6 years (Amnå, Ekström, Kerr, & Stattin, 2009). From a deliberative communication perspective, the focus of YES – led by Prof. Erik Amnå at Örebro University but which also included media scholar Prof. Mats Ekström at University of Gothenburg – is quite important. The program focuses on the impact of social media use as well as traditional media including news (see e.g. Shehata & Amnå, 2019).

Hence, media usage patterns and media usage preferences are definitely areas in which accurate and reliable data is regularly produced and made available to the public. Facts from the annual studies are often used in public debate and changing trends in usage behavior are addressed and sometimes inspire further research in related areas. Thus, knowledge about media consumers' activities and preferences is generally robust due to a long tradition of systematic and comparable data. As there is an almost complete domination of survey data, it could be argued that a greater number of qualitative studies would perhaps give more in-depth knowledge about motives and rationales for media consumers' decisions.

The democratic risks and opportunities in media usage patterns have been analyzed in government reports, by research institutes and academic publications. For example, the *Swedish Future Commission* highlights media usage trends and technological access in a digital media landscape as particular democratic challenges (Ds 2013:19). In a media landscape in which public service broadcasting and wide coverage of regional morning dailies was seen as the backbone of the "media welfare state" (Syvertsen et al., 2014), research today points to the fragmentation of media consumption as a democratic risk. Empirical analyses of this fragmentation entails aspects of audiences' social class (Lindell & Hovden, 2018), age generations (Lindell & Sartoretto,

²⁹⁰ Svenskarna och Internet, 2021.

²⁹¹ <https://www.gu.se/en/som-institute>

2018), media channels (Bergström & Jervelycke Belfrage, 2018) and engagement with news (Stromback, 2017).

4.2. Relevance of news media

Here, the recurrent surveys from SOM-Institutet (see above) are particularly valuable.

4.3. Trust in media

In this context, too, the SOM Institute plays an important role. The Gothenburg-based non-profit consortium *Medieakademin* has published structured measurements of public trust in private and public institutions (including media) since 1997, and since 2017 they also evaluate power and dominance in the digital media landscape²⁹². However, there could also be opinion polls produced by companies such as Novus, and Sweden is at times integrated into international surveys, for example by the Pew Research Center (Pew Research Center, 2018a, 2018b). In terms of domestic research, there is a recently launched project at Södertörn University (F. Stiernstedt) primarily examining the pandemic period.

5. Publications, data sources and main monitoring actors in the domain of media-related competencies

There is good availability of information (sources and data) to map and understand media-related competencies during the period 2000-2020, including central monitoring actors. For relevant publications and other data connected to this domain, see the text below (5.1-5.2).

5.1. Normative sources

Normatively speaking, the development of the idea that media competencies (literary) serve as an essential cornerstone for fostering democratic values and citizenship is primarily prevalent in academic research and curricula (in which the former examines the latter and gives advice about how to improve the media literacy dimension in the school system). Media literacy is thus obligatory within the curriculum for civics. Is there any information about the quality of media literacy programs in Sweden? Since there are no media literacy programs per se in the Swedish context, the answer to this question is not straightforward. In addition, since media literacy is only one of six core aspects in civics, it may be dealt with differently by individual teachers and/or schools, but there are books about teacher perspectives²⁹³.

5.2 Assessment of media-related competencies among citizens

This domain also includes research and data from media and communication studies, but also from other academic disciplines such as education. In the latter case, we find quite a few relevant contributions from Nordicom (Carlsson, 2014), in which a key researcher is Professor Ulla Carlsson (also associated with her long-term engagement in UNESCO). The focus is very much on the concept of media literacy and its essential role for the sustainability of democracy and freedom of speech. Some contributions focus in more detail on the role of the school system for media literacy, especially in relation to the rise and development of the network society (Carlsson, 2013a). In some studies, Sweden tends to serve as a potential role model for other countries, for example in terms of implementing media literacy as a tool in education (Mihailidis, 2005).

²⁹² <https://medieakademin.se/>

²⁹³ https://gupea.ub.gu.se/bitstream/handle/2077/32107/gupea_2077_32107_3.pdf?sequence=3

While some studies look explicitly at citizens' media knowledge with a focus on media and the role of journalism in society (Oxstrand, 2009), it becomes difficult in the relatively broad field of media literacy studies to distinguish where the focus lies in terms of users' specific competencies in using and understanding media in terms of news/journalism and media competencies in a broader sense. Much research is thus focused on media literacy more widely, which could involve journalism/news but also other media. Sometimes, news media and general media need to be integrated into research, for example when focusing on users' ability to distinguish a traditional journalistic source and a source emanating from non-professionals in the digital age (Alexanderson, 2012; Francke & Sundin, 2019). Some Swedish research has been focusing on the generational aspects and how media use could discriminate against senior citizens (Olsson, Samuelsson, & Viscovi, 2019a, 2019b).

When it comes to research outside academia, a very important role is played by the *Swedish Media Council (Statens Medieråd)*, which is 'a government agency whose primary task is the empowering of minors as conscious media users and to protect them from harmful media influences. The agency also coordinates the national effort for a strengthened media and information literacy in the general population.²⁹⁴ The Council annually produces reports about these issues which are available on its website (www.statensmedierad.se). The focus of these reports is on the younger population, where the idea is to contribute knowledge about how to prepare children and adolescents for citizenship and to contribute to deliberative communication, and ultimately deliberative democracy. The data is collected every second year through a particular survey, *Young People & Media*, covering a randomly selected sample of children and young people aged 0-18. The *Swedish Media Council* also coordinates MIL (Media and Information Literacy), which is supposed to strengthen media and information literacy. It consists of a multi-stakeholder network, which is continuously mapping policy initiatives in the field.

A recurrent report is *Unga & Medier (Young people and media)* (Statens Medieråd, 2005), also available in English, which includes data and analyses of young peoples' media consumption; how much time is spent on different media, including news, social media, gaming, etc.; the role of interaction with parents, and what causes anxiety, etc. which means that this data is also connected to the media use domain. However, the work of Statens Medieråd very often focuses on competencies for how to develop better, more meaningful, harmonious, and knowledge-driven media consumption. There are also reports which focus on young peoples' news consumption (Statens Medieråd, 2019b). In this context, the topics – which are mainly examined through surveys – are understandings of what defines news; how news is consumed; what kinds of news primarily interests them; motives for consuming news, and news as a social practice. Other aspects include news and the reliability of sources (see also above in this section); the ability to discern the differences between professional journalism and other types of communication and information, such as influencers' accounts and advertisement-driven media content (or advertisement content); and the demographic and socioeconomic dimensions of news media consumption.

In order to represent the entire (young) population, the research also concentrates on particular groups, such as young people with intellectual disabilities (Statens Medieråd, 2019a). The topics/variables focus on their abilities and capacities to participate in the media-dominated society. Among the examined topics are access to different media; the extent of news consumption; and interaction with parents about media-related activities and consumption.

²⁹⁴ <https://www.statensmedierad.se/ovrigt/about-the-swedish-media-council>

6. Analysis of research and monitoring capabilities

6.1.1. Availability of data

In relation to availability of data for each of the domains, our prognosis is that *there is no emerging lack of data concerning the four domains covered by the Mediadecom project*. The *legal domain* is well discussed in legal texts. Parliamentary inquiries provide information on the implementation, functioning and results of the laws and policies. This could be deemed a sufficient foundation of information, while specific issues, particularly regarding the implementation of certain policies, may also have to rely on single academic studies. *The journalism domain* is well covered in all aspects of markets conditions, production conditions and public service data. The Swedish research tradition, Nordicom and information produced by the media authority MPRT ensures the domain is well covered. The weakest set of information will be in the area of journalists' 'working conditions' – an area that falls outside much of the remit of MPRT and Nordicom's databases. Furthermore, the *media usage domain* is very well covered by both commercial research institutes (where access to data could become an issue in certain cases) and by Dagspresskollegiet and Nordicom. Finally, the *media competencies domain* is perhaps the area with the weakest support from available data. Even though there are academic studies that help us to understand the area, they do not provide the recency and continuity of data found in the journalism and media usage domains that can show complete time series for all years 2000-2020.

6.1.2. Usefulness for media policy

Media policy development relies to a large extent on the investigative work of commissions and parliamentary inquiries to propose legislative changes. The working groups often consist of politicians, experts from relevant ministries, expert academics, a non-political chairman and secretary, as well as invited guests from relevant stakeholders like industry, measurement institutes and monitoring authorities. The overall perspective produced by these commissions corresponds fairly well to the data sources described in this paper. Media literacy perspectives and working condition perspectives have also been relatively marginalized in these policy development processes, and more recent attempts (e.g. SOU 2016:80) to invite the audience as a stakeholder into the policy-making process caused loud protests, particularly from industry stakeholders.

6.1.3. Trust and reliability

It is our assessment that sufficient access to different kinds of data makes it possible to focus on research and data primarily emanating from reliable sources (research institutions, authorities, organizations, etc.), while other data could serve merely as a complement.

6.1.4. Availability of experts and/or specific research structures

There are many experts in Sweden with extensive knowledge of one or several of the domains. Media and communication studies, including journalism, has been a well-established field for the past 50 years with well-renowned research groups at several Swedish universities. When it comes to available research structures, we would again like to highlight the important role of Nordicom Media Institute at University of Gothenburg and its long-term collection, organization and dissemination of data connected to all four domains, although perhaps primarily in the field of media usage.

6.2. Comparative analytical overview on other sources and access to these sources

6.2.1. Complexity of data-gathering

In the Swedish market it is not the lack of accessible data that constitutes a challenge. Rather, it is the abundance of data in relation to the broad scope of *Mediadelcom* and how to select and identify the most appropriate sources. It is challenging in our current world to identify and interpret the relevance of data that was not created with the purpose of addressing the *Mediadelcom* tasks within specific domains. Adding to the complexity is the varying types of data available for the different domains, where for instance media consumption and the economic conditions of journalism are quantitatively monitored over time by various institutions, while other domains rely on more fragmented qualitative data that requires a more subjective assessment to provide some sort of comparable interpretation.

Further, in our overview, we have discussed the increasing complexity of monitoring the domains – largely due to digitalization. This includes, for example, how the advertising market now contains several different competing standards for online media reach and usage, where media houses tend to align to the standards that are most suitable for their interests. Despite rapidly increasing digital opportunities for media producers to measure and track their audiences, there is also an agreement among researchers that measuring the collection and analysis of audience data has become more complex. In summary, a complete, structured collection and comparative interpretation of all material produced in Sweden concerning the four *Mediadelcom* domains, from all sources, including government institutions, commercial institutions, trade associations and NGOs, academic institutions and the media industry itself, not to mention financing bodies and court cases, would be a large-scale project with little hope of succeeding. However, a more selective approach to identify and use the most relevant sources in each domain looks more promising for the purpose of this project.

6.3. Monitoring capabilities and the quality of data and knowledge

In the four domains of *Journalism*, *Media competencies*, *Legal and ethical regulations*, and *Media usage*, our analysis has focused on understanding how suitable current forms of media monitoring are in terms of exercising media governance of media's role in deliberative communication.

In our overview, groups of actors contribute the lion's share of information regarding the media sector – government institutions, commercial institutions, trade associations and NGOs, academic institutions and the media industry itself. It can be noted that none of these institutions aims to specifically monitor media's role in deliberative communication in its entirety. Some have the purpose of monitoring specific areas of deliberative communication in society (like some government institutions), whereas commercial institutions, for example, have the objective to audit and verify the value of news media's products on commercial markets. However, such information can also be useful in trying to understand deliberative communication.

It can also be noted that the different 'domains' in our study are not distinct empirical constructs and that the same stakeholders can produce information of relevance for several domains. Moreover, data collection is not always connected to the act of media monitoring. Stakeholders may collect their own primary data as well as re-purposing available data from other stakeholders for their analyses.

The *Legal and ethical regulation domain* appears well covered at first glance. Laws are clearly described in the Swedish Constitution and a number of *government institutions* (as described in our article) have been created to monitor their enforcement (e.g. MPRT etc.). Also, the process of shaping media policy has been described quite well over the years in both public inquiries (SOU) and in academic research. Institutions like MPRT, Nordicom (and the European Commis-

sion) also produce annual reports on media policy development. However, when it comes to analysing how compliance with media laws and ethics is faring; how media laws are interpreted and to what extent they are enforced by courts; and how ethics are implemented in practice, information is much scarcer. In the monitoring and debating of court cases, court rulings, and their perceived consequences for the industry, we suggest that the media trade press plays an important (yet little acknowledged) role in bringing the information to relevant stakeholders' attention.

The *Journalism domain* has a wide range of different information mechanisms at play. Market conditions in the news media sector are generally well monitored. The monitoring of news media's economic development is part of the Swedish media policy and *government institutions* like MPRT are tasked with monitoring and producing information and analysis on the economic state of the sector. *Academic institutions* like Nordicom have systematically collected information on aspects of media, including ownership and market concentration. This information production relies not least on the availability of annual statements produced by *media companies* themselves and enforced by corporate law. Furthermore, *commercial institutions* and private research institutes like IRM contribute to the overall production of information.

In terms of media production conditions, there are far fewer monitoring bodies and information production relies to a large extent on *academic institutions*. Whereas trade associations and NGOs have a shared interest in illuminating the conditions under which journalists and journalistic organizations conduct their work, their capacity for structured information production and monitoring is limited.

In the *media usage domain*, it can be noted that there are many different stakeholders contributing to the market information regime – particularly various *commercial institutions*. Data on media reach, readership, subscription, page views etc. is abundant. However, many of these information producers (including commercial market research institutes) are primarily there to monitor and verify news media's product-quality performance on the commercial market. In other words, their purpose as institutions and in selecting the information they produce, is to support correct pricing of advertising – not to support deliberative democracy. As a consequence, information about how many people consume news, when, and for how long, is well-monitored by commercial actors. However, information about *what* users learn from, or act on, the news, is of less interest to the commercial information producers even though it could be of relevance for deliberative democracy. As our overview has shown, this gap has instead been filled by *academic institutions* such as Dagspresskollegiet. One risk we see with these audience and usage measurements is that they tend to be subjected to the affordances of the technical platforms and what can be quantitatively measured. Second, in order to ensure comparability over time and also conform to the agreed measurement standards of the information regime, the measurement instruments tend to be quite rigid over time and not particularly receptive to new media usage patterns.

Finally, in the *media competencies domain*, information providers are less distinct. No actor is specifically designated to produce information on this topic. Nevertheless, there are both *Trade Associations and NGOs* that are interested in monitoring, debating and informing society about the skill sets and transformative exercise of journalism. Further, the extensive interests of *Academic institutions* in the field has resulted in both longitudinal data sets (Gothenburg University) and comparative cross-national studies (e.g. Örnebring, 2016). On the audience side, the situation is similar to NGOs such as Internetstiftelsen that produce annual studies on audiences' digital competencies, while the SOM institute at the University of Gothenburg studies audience trust in media institutions and media content. Additionally, the Swedish Media Council, a *Government institution*, has been created to specifically monitor and improve media literacy among young people. While these sources collectively provide a reasonable overview of the competence domain, the overall picture remains somewhat fragmented. With no clear view or institutionalized

rules on how to monitor or measure the field, information production on media competencies is left to the whims and interests of various actors.

6.3.1. Recency and regularity of data

Our preliminary observation is that the recency and regularity of data for the period 2000-2020 is satisfactory. Several institutes, including MPRT, Mediebarometern, and commercial market research institutes produce annual or even quarterly reports, and public inquiries are conducted at regular intervals of around 5 years.

6.3.2. Access to data

In general, as we understand it, public access to data about Swedish developments is relatively good. This is because most data is produced by public authorities, such as universities or governmental institutions, which are publicly funded and thereby obliged to make the results available to citizens. However, whether or not citizens de facto find their way to this data and use it for different purposes is another issue. Furthermore, as in many countries, there is of course data which is less available but is of great interest to the public and for media researchers. The most obvious example is algorithmic data about media use, which is produced by private media organizations.

6.3.3. National databases: functionality and accessibility

In this respect, as already mentioned above (see 1.5), the national and thus publicly accessible database *SwePub* (<https://swepub.kb.se/>) is of essential importance. The database collects publications (articles, books, doctoral dissertations, reports, artistic works, patents, etc.) from all Swedish universities, university colleges, and many others. The database is constantly updated and coordinated by KB, the National Library of Sweden. Consequently, however, this mainly concerns scientific/academic works, while data from privately owned institutions, courts, NGOs and government bodies, for example, are not accessible in this context.

6.3.4. Researchers and their roles

Due to the large number of media and communication studies departments in Sweden, many scholars have, and still are, contributing to knowledge about the Swedish media development during 2000-2020. These include both male and female scholars, although the former gender tends to dominate. First, there is a category of scholar which has explicitly been focusing on media development, referring to it as a field of research. Here, we find researchers such as L. Hedman and J. Ohlsson, I. Wadbring, G. Nygren, E. Appelgren, and several other scholars, although their research does not necessarily relate to the four defined domains of *Mediadelcom*. Second, there are many scholars who have contributed important knowledge about the particular domains, such as H. Örnebring and his colleagues at Karlstad University in the journalism domain, or Ulla Carlsson at the University of Gothenburg regarding media literacy, but not necessarily always in terms of longitudinal knowledge and/or with a focus on the period 2000-2020. Consequently, it is very much a central task of the *Mediadelcom* project to generate this diachronic and holistic understanding of the media development in Sweden during these two decades by means of the various research data and other forms of information and sources.

7. Conclusions

Overall, due to the well-developed government institutions, mature commercial markets and strong academic interest in the overall field of journalism and news media, there is a rich landscape of media-monitoring institutions in Sweden. However, the current system is not designed to fully monitor the co-creative interaction between journalism producers and media users in society. As different monitoring agents have different objectives and incentives to monitor the media, clear definitions of deliberative communication are lacking, and there is a plethora of different measurement standards (or lack thereof), there are also challenges or risks to the system.

Although the results are preliminary and data collection remains to be conducted, we would like to point out some potentials and risks concerning the Swedish case here:

An obvious *potential* is the great availability of data, often of acceptable quality, which enables in-depth and full-fledged understanding of Swedish media development. It enables different actors in Swedish society to foresee media development and to conduct deeper inquiries into certain aspects, be they business models for the media sector or increasing hate and threats against media workers. In all domains, there is a variety of reliable data sources from different sectors of society (government, academia, research institutes, monitoring agencies).

However, the vast production of data in all domains, demonstrating good overall economic resources among many actors to contribute to the understanding of the media development, is also associated with a particular *risk*, namely over-production of data, and thus data which is perhaps not innately useful either for the media sector or for wider society. At times, data that is easy-to-measure is over-exposed, while more complex analyses of the media situation in relation to democratic values remain under-investigated.

Here, an assumption is that scarce resources are not necessarily purely negative but could also lead to greater focus and a rational prioritization of what data is essential to produce. Another risk is parallel production of data among several actors with different standards – a risk which has also been identified by other national teams and case studies. We do however note an increasing focus on coordination and collaboration between publishers of media data. For instance, Nordicom, the Swedish Media Authority (and sometimes also international institutions) often collaborate and use the same sources and researchers in their reporting. While we think this coordination and cross-publication of results is good for the quality, prioritization and circulation of information, decision-makers within the media system should also be aware that while the variety of sources appear plentiful at first sight, the underlying basis of research sometimes appears larger than it actually is.

Finally, in Sweden, as in many other countries, knowledge about media development within a particular domain is sometimes relying on the activities of one or a few researchers or other actors.

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Footnotes: Institutional sources and databases

Center for media pluralism and media freedom <https://cmpf.eui.eu/media-pluralism-monitor/>

CIA Factbook, 2020

Dagspresskollegiet <https://www.gu.se/forskning/den-svenska-medi epubliken-fd-dagspresskollegiet>

Digital Academic Archive (Diva) <https://www.diva-portal.org/>

Euromedia group <https://www.euromediagroup.org/research/>

European Union publications office¹ <https://op.europa.eu/en/home>

European platform of regulatory authorities <https://www.epra.org/>

European Audiovisual observatory <https://www.obs.coe.int/en/web/observatoire/>

Internetstiftelsen <https://internetstiftelsen.se/en/>

Internetstiftelsen/svenskarna och internet <https://svenskarnaochinternet.se/>

Institutet för mediestudier <https://mediestudier.se>

Institutet för mediestudier – kommundatabas <https://kommundatabas.mediestudier.se/>

Institutet för reklam och mediestatistik <https://www.irm-media.se/>

Kantar Sifo <https://www.kantarsifo.se/rapporter-undersokningar/rackviddsmatningar>

KIA index <https://www.kiaindex.se/>

Mavise <http://mavise.obs.coe.int/>

Medieakademin <https://medieakademin.se/>

Medieombudsmannen <https://medieombudsmannen.se/about-the-media-ombudsman/>

Myndigheten för Press Radio och TV <https://www.mpr.se/>

Nordicom <https://www.nordicom.gu.se/en/publications>

Nordiska rådet <https://www.norden.org/en>

Reuters institute <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/>

Post och telestyrelsen <https://www.pts.se/>

Riksdagen www.riksdagen.se

SOM-Institutet <https://www.gu.se/en/som-institute/publications/results-from-the-som-surveys>

Statens medieråd <https://www.statensmedierad.se/ovrigt/about-the-swedish-media-council>

Statens medieråd <https://www.statensmedierad.se/>

Statistiska centralbyrån www.scb.se

Sveriges radio www.sr.se

Sveriges television www.svt.se

Swepub <https://swepub.kb.se/>

Tidningsstatistik <https://ts.se/digitalnordic/news/>

Who makes the news <https://whomakesthenews.org/>

