In-between strengthened accessibility and economic demands: analysing self-service libraries from a user perspective

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Introduction

Technological progress in interaction with social and political development in the industrialised world has resulted in expectations on round-the-clock service (see e.g. Kuroda and Yamamoto, 2012, p. 1037). Nowadays there are shops that never close and via the Internet you can make transactions and pay your bills in the middle of the night and look at your favourite television series whenever it suits you. This fact also influences the users' expectations on public services, such as libraries. In Southern Sweden (Region Skåne), an increasing number of public libraries have developed a service of extended opening hours for their users, with no staff in the facility. This service is called "meröppet" which literally translates into "open more". In this paper, we will look closer at this development from a user perspective. We understand libraries that are "open more" – or self-service libraries – as one expression of how libraries try to adapt to the societal changes sketched above. We are interested in what implications such adaptations may have for the relation between user and society and therefore in the role the public library may play today. Libraries, as well as other public institutions, are integrated in, and contribute to, processes of societal changes and at the same time are shaped by these same processes. In that sense, we understand the implementation of self-service in libraries as an expression of changes in society, changes to which self-service libraries also contribute to.

The number of self-service public libraries in Sweden is increasing. However, self-service libraries are not an exclusive Swedish phenomenon. In Denmark the implementation of self-service took off in 2010 (Johannsen, 2012, p. 340) and self-service libraries also exist in for example Singapore and Taiwan (Ngian Lek, 2003; Tseng, 2009). Nevertheless, Swedish self-service libraries diverge in one important aspect from, for example, Danish self-service libraries. Several communities in Denmark established self-service libraries in order to cut costs (Johannsen, 2012, p. 335), whereas in Sweden the financial issue has not usually been put forward as the reason for the implementation (cf. Johansson et al., 2014, pp. 2-3).

"Self-service libraries" as a term is somewhat confusing as there are several other terms used to describe these libraries.[1] The concept the terms refer to may vary as well. Throughout this paper, we use the term "self-service library" to describe a library that during some of its opening hours is unstaffed but open for registered users to enter and use its services.

A library is a complex institution, including a physical space, the materials and services the library provides, and a staff. These aspects in combination shape, among other things, the users' expectations about and perceptions on the library. If one aspect is excluded, in this case the physical presence of staff, it is reasonable to assume that the users' expectations and perceptions will be affected. Our aim in this paper is therefore, by means of interviews and observations, to look into how the implementation of self-service affects users' expectations and perceptions of the library. Furthermore, we aim to explore how the self-service library and the users' expectations can be understood in a library-context that is characterized by

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[1] Terms used are e.g. "staff-less libraries", the Danish "Åbne biblioteker" which translates into "Open libraries" and the Swedish "Meröppna bibliotek" which literally means libraries that are open more.

political, technological and societal change. The purpose is to contribute to a greater understanding of public libraries in general and self-service libraries in particular and to deepen the knowledge of users' relations to the library. To accomplish this, we raise the following research questions:

Does the implementation of self-service change the practices at the public library and, if so, how?

Are the users' expectations and conceptions of the public library affected by the implementation of self-service and, if so, how?

The disposition of the paper is as follows. First, a background introducing research on self-service libraries and critical LIS-research is presented. Then, the theoretical framework – consisting of concepts from critical LIS-research, Fairclough's critical discourse analysis and Habermas' theory on the systems colonisation of the life-world – as well as the methodology used are introduced. The theoretical framework is then used in the analysis of the empirical material. Finally, some probable implications for users and libraries in a societal context are derived from the analysis and pointed out.

Background

Although the number of self-service libraries is increasing in Sweden and elsewhere, thus far, not much research has been conducted in the field. A few papers and scientific reports have been published. Johansson and colleagues (2014) examine the consequences of the implementation of self-service on public libraries in the south of Sweden, regarding both the staff's professional role and the libraries' function in the community. Johannsen's (2012) study of self-service libraries in Denmark explores characteristics of users of self-service and their practices at the library. Both the Swedish report and the Danish study adopt a perspective that includes the social context discussing self-service libraries in relation to the surrounding community.

In contrast, papers describing self-service libraries in Singapore and Taiwan focus on technical solutions and demands. Ngian Lek (2003) describes the use of RFID and "cybrarian service" at a self-service library in Singapore. Tsengs (2009) case study on a self-service library in the subway in Taiwan focuses on practical and technical aspects, but it also includes reasoning about users' needs and expectations. The departure point in Tsengs and Ngian Leks studies differs from that of this paper, as we strive to analyse and discuss a process rather than to describe the self-service library.

This paper relates to critical LIS-research concerning the changing societal role and position of public libraries. We are inspired by research that positions the public library in a complex context with different relationships between social and economic circumstances and power. Such research includes Carlsson's dissertation (2013, p. 12), in which she discusses how technological innovations and new demands from users as well as politicians contribute to what at times is referred to as a crisis for the public library. Some researchers call upon new technologies or "the information age" as explanatory factors of this crisis (see e.g. Chowdhury et al., 2006). In contrast, Buschman (2003, p. 170) argues that it is "the lack of debate or consensus on the reconstructed economic purposes of librarianship in information capitalism that is the source of much of our crises culture".

Buschman is not the only one exploring the consequences of the economic discourse in public libraries. Kann-Christensen and Andersen (2009, p. 209) argues that libraries tend to "/.../take over a neo-liberal way of thinking" when quantitative measurements and cost-effectiveness are encouraged and related to the legitimacy of libraries. For libraries, the question on legitimacy is vital in order to maintain funding and public support. However, legitimacy is not a new issue for libraries, although the focus on external legitimacy is. External legitimacy relates to the last decades' breakthrough of New Public Management (Hansson, 2015, p. 9-10). Accordingly, public libraries legitimize their activities in relation to perceived economic outcome and strive to increase their visibility in a struggle for attention (Hansson, 2015, p. 11; Jochumsen and Hveenegard Rasmussen, 2006a, p. 188).

When depicting the risk of an increasing influence from an economic discourse, Buschman (2003) makes use of Habermas concept *the public sphere*. Libraries contains the potential of public spheres, places where multiple publics with diverse perspectives and discourses can meet and communicate as an essential part of a democratic culture, Buschman (2003, pp. 178-179) argues. However, if logics derived from economy is incorporated into the library, democratic values are undermined (Buschman, 2003, p. 176).

The notion of the library as public sphere is closely related to the library as place. The library as place is a useful concept to understand physical as well as social aspects of libraries (Fisher et al., 2007, pp. 135-136). In this context, the framework of *third places,* a concept originally coined by Oldenburg, is also relevant. Oldenburg mentions cafes and bookstores as examples of third places – places for social interaction that is not at home and not at work (Aabø and Audunson, 2012, p. 141). In a field study, Fisher et al. (2007, p. 152) concludes that the Seattle Public Central Library meets three of Oldenburg's seven criteria for third places: the library occurs on neutral ground and users may come and go as they please, the library is accessible to all and thus encourage social interaction, and the library is "home away from home". In addition, Fisher et al. (2007, p. 153) highlights the library's ability to link people of "different types" together.

The diversity that characterize library users is also a defining aspect of what Aabø and Audunson (2012, p. 140) refers to as *low-intensive meeting places*. At low-intensive meeting places a person whose main interest in life is for example flowers may bump into a person searching for information on a specific football player or material concerning an ongoing election, and thereby might be exposed to a complexity of interests and values (Aabø and Audunson, 2012, p. 140). Libraries' ability to enable such meetings is an important aspect of the library as public sphere. However, social interaction and diversity are threatened by the commodification of public places such as libraries (Leckie and Hopkins, 2002). Thus, Leckie and Hopkins (2002, p. 360) believe the ongoing ideological shift in libraries towards an "encroachment of private interests" risks the library as a public place. This risk may even be more prominent today since the relationship between public libraries and political goals situated outside the library, such as economic growth, tends to deepen (Carlsson, 2013).

Budd's (1997, p. 307) discussion on "the notions of library users as customers and of library services as commodities" is another example of how democratic values are threatened when economic discourse penetrates the library. Budd (1997, p. 313) discusses how using the word

"customer" implicates the library user as a purely economic being and the relationship between the library and the user as a relationship between business and customer. However, the library user is not a purely economic being, because the user is not able to maximize his or hers utility, partly due to difficulties in establishing beforehand what the library has to offer (Budd, 1997, p. 314). In addition, the relationship between a user and a library is not the same as between a customer and a business. For example, if private businesses like McDonalds do not meet all people's needs it is not a problem, because McDonalds only target specific groups (Budd 1997, p. 315). In contrast, public libraries are supposed to provide equal access to information to all (Buschman 2003).

The notion of users as customers relates to what Vestheim (1998, p. 448) refers to as *the instrumental mistake*. If librarians do not distinguish between a social action in a relationship with another human being on one hand, and an instrumental action in a customer-relationship on the other hand, the mistake is conducted (Vestheim, 1998, p. 448). A consequence of the instrumental mistake may be a dehumanisation of the relationship between users and librarians.

Like aforementioned scholars, D'Angelo (2006) criticizes the influence of an economic discourse. However, D'Angelo takes a partly different departure point. For example, while Buschman (2003, p. 180) stresses the need to discuss questions like "What is the dividing line in emphasis between entertainment and more serious material in the library?" and puts the discussion per se in focus, D'Angelo (2006, p. 85, 118) advocates the librarians role as gatekeepers *knowing* the difference between "high and low culture" and simply addresses infotainment as a threat to reason and eventually also to librarianship. Thus, there are several ways to conceptualize how the economic discourse is affecting the library and different approaches on how to address these changes.

At the same time, the function of public libraries as democratic and empowering spheres is not an axiomatic issue. Hansson (1999), Skouvig (2004), and others have shown a historic tension within public libraries, including for example a struggle between those who strive to supress conflicts and those who strive to strengthen the working class or other marginalized groups. This tension relates to the question how libraries constitutes public spheres and if libraries via low thresholds, free accessibility to information and focus on user needs can favour users' abilities to be active citizens. The tension also highlights the changing and dynamic character of public libraries and libraries democratic role.

We situate self-service libraries in this complex and dual setting, which in a simplified manner can be described as constituted by on one hand the influence of an economic discourse, and on the other hand a democratic potential. For example, self-service libraries can be assumed to strengthen local identity, and therefore contribute to socio-economic utility, and to be a cost-efficient way to "brand" the library in a modern light, which relates to an economic discourse (Carlsson, 2013, p. 47, 52). However, the implementation of self-service can also result in increased accessibility and encourage independent use of the library, which relates to, and even may have the potential of strengthening, the library as public sphere.

Theory and methodology

The theoretical framework consists of previous critical LIS-research, including research that analyse library discourses, Faircloughs critical discourse analysis and Habermas theory of the colonisation of the lifeworld. Below, a brief overview of them is presented.

Critical LIS-research, discussing how public libraries are part of societal changes including an overall digitalisation and a political shift that favours effectiveness and measurability (e.g. Vestheim, 1997; Jochumsen and Hvenegaard Rasmusen, 2006a), inspires us. These processes of digitalisation and increased economic influence also reflect, and are influenced by, a cultural policy that highlights events and experiences as important cultural expressions (Carlsson, 2013, p. 12). At the same time as these changes are material and have material effects, such as how the libraries are designed and what activities they pursue, the changes are also embedded in a discursive context.

Hedemark (2009) analyses debates and discourses on the public library in Swedish media between 1970 and 2006. Two of the discourses that she identifies are useful for our study. The first discourse is *the book discourse*, which is associated with good quality printed books and popular education (Hedemark, 2009, p. 4). The second one, *the community centre discourse*, calls for a library that provides different kinds of activities in the centre of the community (Hedemark, 2009, p. 4). In our analysis, we also adopt a third discourse, *the economic discourse*, which articulates the libraries role for other policy areas such as economic growth (Carlsson, 2013, p. 51). In the discussion below, we investigate how these three discourses are in different ways prevalent in the users' apprehensions and understandings of the library. Although they all are still present, the book discourse is foremost associated with the early 1970's (Hedemark, 2009, p. 49) and the economic discourse became more prominent during the 1980's, in conjunction with the breakthrough of New Public Management (Kann-Christensen and Andersen, 2009).

Fairclough's theories on discourses, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), are also drawn upon in our analysis. Fairclough understands discourse as both constituted by and constituting the social structure and describes the relation between discourse and social structure as dialectical, whereas social structure ″/…/is both a condition for, and an effect of, the former" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 71). Discursive practice is always an aspect of social practise. However, a social practice does not always contain a discursive practice, as a social practice can be constituted by solely non-discursive elements. This means that Fairclough differentiates between discursive and non-discursive practises (Fairclough, 2003, p. 25). In the discussion, the interviews are therefore treated as texts and analysed as discursive practices, but are also contextualised in relation to interdiscursive aspects as well as the social practice that surrounds them.

In the second part of the analysis, we combine the discourse analysis with Habermas' theory of the colonisation of the life world, in order to sharpen the analysis of the social practices. The breakthrough of the economic discourse can be viewed in contrast to the democratic role of libraries, which in turn can be understood through the theoretical work of Habermas (1996, p. 276). From a habermasian point of view, libraries embrace a democratic potential because they can be a public sphere for debate and communicative action, as well as organising and making information available (Buschman, 2005, pp. 9-10). However, when economic steering mechanisms, with focus on efficiency and a commercialised view, penetrate the life-world

and public spaces that hitherto have been interlinked with it, the library as a public sphere is at risk.

Our empirical material includes nine semi-structured interviews and seven observations undertaken at three self-service public libraries in Sweden. An additional participatory observation and one interview performed at a public library that implemented self-service at the time the study was conducted, are also included. The observations are referred to as Obervation1, Observation2 etcetera.[2] When conducting the interviews, an flexible interview guide was used, with the interviewer being open to perspectives and twists not planned in advance and the interviewee being able to influence the conversation (Holme and Solvang, 1997, p. 99). The interviews were recorded and transcribed and the chosen statements translated from Swedish. We refer to the interviewees as User1, User2 etcetera.[3]

The analysis begun already by the time the interviews and observations were taking place and it proceeded during the work with and reading of the transcripts and field notes. We have allowed the theoretical framework to influence our readings of the empirical material, at the same time as the material has highlighted certain aspects of the theories. In this process, patterns and analytical access points have been noticed and constructed with the help of CDA. The result of the analysis is presented in two parts, each consisting of themes where the empirical material is viewed through the lens provided by Fairclough's CDA model.

As in qualitative studies in general, the obtained material is limited regarding the number of interviews and observations that have been undertaken and the results are not to be generalized. Nevertheless, the material is rich and in combination with the theoretical framework, it constitutes a productive source for a fruitful analysis and discussion relating to the research questions.

CDA is both theory and method. The methodological implications consist of the procedures undertaken in the analysis and interpretations of the material. Fairclough (1992, p. 71, 2003, p. 3) makes use of a text concept that includes spoken as well as written language. In this study, most of the text, both the interviews and conversations during the observations, is originally spoken language. In order to capture the broad analytical picture of communicative events, Fairclough (1992, p. 72) created a three dimensional model including the social structure on one side of the spectrum and the concrete text on the other. Each dimension relates to an analytic and theoretic tradition, and they are as follows: 1) text (linguistic analysis), 2) discursive practice (analysis of practice from the agents' point of view) and 3) social practice (macro-sociological analysis of practices in relation to structures). The analysis of the *text* focuses on the vocabulary. The following aspects are central for this paper: *metaphors*, *modality* and *word meaning* (Fairclough, 1992, p. 75). A key concept in the analysis of the *discursive practice* is *interdiscursivity,* which is how the text and its discursive elements relate to previous texts and elements (Fairclough, 1992, p. 85).

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[2] A list of the observations, including information on dates and place, is appended at the end of the paper
[3] A list of interviews and corresponding libraries is appended at the end of the paper.

In this paper the first and second dimension in Fairclough's model are analysed together. The purpose of the analysis of the third dimension is to capture the *social practices* that surround the discursive practice (Fairclough, 1992, p. 237). The social practices are also non-discursive and consists, for example, of certain "…practices and pre-existing relationships…" (Winther Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002, p. 62). In this part of the analysis, we make use of the complete theoretical framework described above in order to capture also non-discursive elements that constitute the social practice.

Findings and discussion

Six themes were identified through the analysis of the material produced during the interviews and the observations. The themes are: *to borrow and return material*, *to integrate visits at the library in everyday life, disturbances in the use, the library as place*, *the service* and *accessibility.* The first three themes relate to the users' practice in the library and the last three to the users' expectations and perceptions. The implementation of self-service affected all six themes.

We discuss the themes using Fairclough's two dimensions, text and discursive practice, under the subtitle *Users' library practices and expectations.* Fairclough's analytical concepts – metaphors, modality, word meaning, and interdiscursivity – are each present to some degree in the separate themes. Fairclough's third dimension, the social practice, is treated under the subtitle *The self-service library as social practice,* in which different aspects of the concept accessibility and the library's democratic potential are in focus. In this discussion, we also make use of Habermas theory of the systems colonisation of the life-world.

Users' library practices and expectations
To borrow and return material
To borrow and return books and other material are central practices in a library and, regarded as reading-promoting activities, they are present in many library discourses (Torstensson, 2012, p. 133; Hedemark, 2009, p. 49). Therefore, it is not surprising that the interviewees, without exception, mention handling of books and other material when asked about what they do at the library. At first glance, it is easy to neglect how the absence of staff affects these activities, because the users often borrow and return material on their own on regular opening hours as well.[4] One of the interviewees says: "I don't usually think so much about what time it is. If it is self-service or regular opening hours. Because most of the time I'm about to borrow a book or pick up a reservation and then it doesn't matter" (User1). However, the easiness with which the phenomenon could be neglected is misleading. The practise of returning or borrowing books and other material can be understood as imbedded in a larger practice including, for example, the manner in which the user chooses and finds the book or other material. If so, the practice may differ depending on whether it takes place during regular opening hours or not. For example, some of the interviewees say that they sometimes ask the librarian to help them find or choose a book or other material (e.g. User2), which is only possible during regular opening hours.

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[4] The libraries are equipped with self-help machines that read the RFID-chips attached in the material.

Another common way to find books or other material at the library is to browse the shelves (Björneborn, 2008). User5 explains:

> /…/at first I look at the ones that are newly arrived, that is, or the ones that users have recently returned. You usually find the popular ones there. And then I look at the shelves and first and foremost you see the ones that are lined up so you can see the picture and so on/…/
> *User5*

The browsing itself is not depending on the physical presence of staff, but the staff can enable browsing by making the library easy to navigate through, for example, explicit signs, which is all the more important in a self-service library (Johannsen, 2012, p. 340). In this case, staff as well as users are both imbedded in an interdiscursive context and ideologically positioned within the discourse (Fairclough, 1992, p. 91). For example, User5 tells that she always browses the shelf loaded with newly arrived books first as they often are the popular ones and therefore assumed to be good choices, a behaviour the staff is aware of when making the newly-arrived-books shelf visible.

To integrate visits at the library in everyday life
As a library implements self-service users can access the place at times they otherwise have not been able to do so. This might strengthen the role of libraries as meeting places in the community. The analysis of the interviews and observations show that the self-service library is an integrated part of several users' everyday life. For example, users come to the library to read the daily paper or to study (e.g. User4; User1; Observation1; Observation2). This can be related to Aabø and Audunson's (2012, p. 139) description of the library as a *community square*. They define a square as a space to which everybody has access to (Aabø and Audunson, 2012, p. 143), highlighting the potential of self-service libraries and the increased accessibility that self-service entails. The interviewees mention two metaphors in this context; the library as "hub" (User4) and the statement that self-service means that the users are not "locked out" anymore (User2). The library as hub relates to the library's function as a central place for culture and meetings in the community, a role associated with the community centre discourse (Hedemark, 2009, p. 50). The expanded opening hours favours this function and the increased accessibility connects to the statement that users are not locked out anymore. We also argue that the user's choice of the words "locked out" places the self-service library in a central position in the library discourse, because it normalises the expanded opening hours and implicates that a library with merely regular opening hours is a library that locks people out. It is in this context we consider "locked out" being a metaphor.

Disturbances in the use
Above, we describe library practices both during ordinary opening hours and during self-service. Nowadays, different sorts of technology are fully integrated into many of these practices, with technological development being one important aspect that enable self-service libraries (Johannsen, 2012, p. 340). Nevertheless, in case of technological failure the absence of staff is a complication. The fact that the interviewees only mention problems with technology during self-service, even though problems probably also occur during regular opening hours, can be understood in relation to this vulnerability. It is possible to prevent some of the anxiety that users may experience due to technological failure in absence of staff. For example, staff at the library User1 visits have taken measures to help users navigate if the technology fails during self-service; they have for example installed special boxes to put

books into if the automatic returning machine malfunctions. Nevertheless, disturbances affect the users' practices and the implicit network of users, technology and staff therefore is modified (Carlsson, 2013, p. 23).

You may assume that problems with technology or other disturbances – such as difficulties in finding the material needed when staff are not present – would cause irritation, but the interviewees do not report negative feelings about it. For example, User2 answering the question about what to do if help needed is not available during self-service states: "Then I usually come back the day after during ordinary opening hours". All of the interviewed users in the study had opportunity to visit the library during staffed hours as well, and this probably affected both their attitudes towards possible problems and their answers regarding that. But the absence of negative mood can also be understood in relation to the discourse surrounding self-service, including certain expectations manifested in metaphors, modalities, etcetera, which we discuss further under the heading *The service*.

The library as place
The analysis shows how the users' expectations about the library as well as regulatory documents concerning libraries create a complex web of interlinked and partly contradictory statements about the library as place. For example, the interviewees expect the library to be a calm place while documents refer to the library often as a place for events. We relate these different expectations to separate discourses, the library as a calm place to *the book discourse* and the focus on events to an *economic discourse*. Below we elaborate this argument.

The interviewees describe the library space and its atmosphere with words such as "quiet", "calm" and "relaxed", terms used in a positive manner. The option open to study or work at the library is often included in the descriptions, which strengthens the understanding that "quiet", "calm" and "relaxed" relate to the book discourse and its focus on self-education and culture (cf. Hedemark, 2009, p. 65). Nevertheless, the above mentioned terms are not only used in a descriptive manner, they are also normative. This is exemplified in the following statement:

> I want the library to be a calm place. People are here to study or work with something at the computers. Then they don't want screaming and noisiness. And the parents don't seem to care, they are accustomed to the children's screams so they don't reckon that everything has its place and a library is a place where you keep it down a little.
> *User6*

In the third sentence in this statement, User6 changes the pronoun "I" to "they". We interpret this change of modality as a way to objectify the statement about attitudes towards "screaming" and "noisiness" and to make the statement normative, since in that way the attitudes are ascribed to users in general ("they") (Fairclough, 1992, p. 159). The expectation on libraries being quiet places relates to an interdiscursive context with a forceful history, especially in the book discourse as mentioned above. This expectation can be set in contrast to the library as a place for events, a view associated with the economic discourse, a discourse that, we argue, is prevalent in library policies. For example, the library policy of Lund municipality (Lunds kommun, 2008, pp. 2, 8), where one of the libraries in this study is located, discusses a "society of experiences", setting as a goal that activities at the library are to be "surprising". Such expectations on events in library settings are also grounded in

interdiscursive contexts, for example in Swedish national cultural policy, which emphasises libraries' role in attracting tourists and businesses via experience-related activities (Carlsson, 2013, p. 52).[5]

The service
During the analysis of the observations, we notice how the users' practices at the library differ depending on whether staff is present or not. During ordinary opening hours, the users interact with the librarian, both with direct questions and with comments about, for example, the returned material (e.g. Observation3). Naturally, this is not the case during self-service. Therefore, it may not be surprising that users express different expectations on what service the library ought to include depending on whether staff is present or not. Several of the interviewees report that they sometimes cannot find the material they are looking for during self-service, but this does not seem to cause frustration. For example, User4 says: "/…/maybe I am not really the right person to ask, but I did know I went there at a time when it wasn't open and because of that I have to accept that I can't get all the answers I am looking for. So it really doesn't bother me. /…/". Accordingly, users adopt their library practises, so they visit the library during self-service if they are conducting practises they think they can handle by themselves. If, on the other hand, they need assistance they visit the library during staffed opening hours. User3 for example says: "If you need help from the staff you shouldn't go there on evenings [when the library is unstaffed], that you can't do".

Several of the interviewees describe their self-service library with the exact word "self-service", even though the Swedish term for the service is "open more".[6] For example, User4 says that the unstaffed library has less service and "it is more like self-service". When "self-service" is used in this manner in a Swedish context, we interpret it as a descriptive word – a metaphor – chosen by the user. In this context, the use of the word "self-service" tends to individualise the user and displace the responsibility; the user becomes responsible for managing to seek information or material, or whatever the goal is for visiting the library. This can be put in contrast to the community centre discourse which implies that everybody has the right to access information via the library and the library has an obligation to make it accessible to all (Hedemark, 2009, p. 50). The individualised view on the user mentioned above could instead be related to a discourse in which the user is viewed as a customer who expects to receive the requested service, but the type and quality of the service can vary depending on, for example, price range (Budd 1997; Jochumsen and Hvenegaard Rasmussen, 2006b, p. 43). If users, in this respect, understand the self-service library as an additional service – and if they do not think it is possible to increase the regular opening hours, partly because of the economic discourse that highlights the need to cut costs in the public sector (Kann-Christensen and Andersen, 2009, p. 211) – then they may not have any reason at all to experience or express discontent because they have, despite perceived problems, been given the expected product. Thus,various and sometimes competing discourses shapes users' expectations.

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[5] At the same time a focus on experiences should not necessarily be inscribed in an economic discourse. The word meaning of the term experience is not fixed and it can differ, as the term accessibility, which we discuss further below.
[6] "Self-service" is a literal translation of the Swedish term "självservice".

Accessibility

When the interviewees describe the self-service library, they use different meanings of the term *accessibility* several times. We acknowledge three different features of the term in relation to the self-service library: geographic accessibility, economic accessibility and temporal accessibility. User4 exemplifies temporal accessibility when saying self-service has made the library "more accessible" because it is possible to visit the self-service library when it is convenient. User3 also relate to accessibility in terms of time, by saying that the expanded opening hours makes it possible to visit the library, even if you work until late:

> For many users, if the library closes at six or something and they don't finish work until seven because they work at a store, but then [with self-service] you have the possibility to go there anyway and borrow books. This has made it possible for many more to use it and not only on weekends, you can visit late on weekdays.
> *User3*

Intertwined with temporal accessibility is geographic accessibility, because the expanded opening hours makes it possible for users to visit the local library instead of the main library in the municipality. For example, since the local library implemented self-service User6 do not visit the municipal library any more. Economic accessibility is an aspect mentioned by the interviewees when asked about the library's mission. With economic accessibility we mean that the library provides for example books, databases, newspapers and magazines for free and films and games for free or at a relatively low cost, and hereby making information available to all users. User6 relates to this when saying that the library's mission is to provide "general knowledge". User7 says: "/…/You should be able to really immerse in a writer or a subject or something like that without a great expense. And that is, wasn't that the basic idea, some kind of popular adult education."

The statements above relate to a community centre discourse, in which the library has the role of providing information to everybody (Hedemark, 2009, p. 50). Nonetheless, there are also other aspects of the term accessibility when used in the context of self-service libraries. The round-o-clock society brings about expectations on service's availability whenever it fits the individual and budget constraints are associated with demands on effectivity in the public sector. Self-service libraries can be viewed as a cost effective way to make use of the localities (Johansson et al., 2014, p. 14) and at the same time as contributing to market the local community, in a context where culture is seen as a way to create values and attract capital (Carlsson, 2013, p. 52). These are examples of how accessibility can be also viewed within the perspective of an economic discourse. We therefore understand the term accessibility as positioned on the border in-between several, partly contradictory, discourses. An analysis of the word meaning ascribed to the term accessibility, as sketched above, points at a hegemonic struggle (Fairclough, 1992, p. 92).

The self-service library as social practice

The examples of metaphors, different word meanings and shifting modality that we have observed in the analysis above indicate an interdiscursive struggle in which concepts and functions critical to the understanding of self-service can be understood from the point of view of different discourses. Depending on which discourse is articulated and circulated, the meaning of the concepts and their functions will differ. On top of this, the same expectation –

such as notions on accessibility – can be understood as related to different discourses. This instability implicates discursive change (Fairclough, 1992, p. 92). We will now put these discursive interruptions, irregularities and change, as well as the relatively stable elements in the discourses, in a wider perspective, and therefore make use of both Habermas theory of the systems colonisation of the life-world, previous LIS-research and Fairclough's (1992, pp. 91-96) concept of hegemony. We structure the analysis below according to two important aspects that have taken shape during the analysis of the text and the discursive practices; *accessibility as a democratic potential* and *the library as a public sphere*.

Accessibility as a democratic potential
In the analysis above, we argue that accessibility can be related to both an economic and a community centre discourse. We see these discourses as more or less prevalent in the users' expectations and perceptions at the same time. This can be understood in relation to Fairclough's (1992, p. 92) statement that subjects can simultaneously be positioned by different ideologies, in which the taken for granted is based on previous discursive struggles at the same time as it is an arena for new struggles. An interviewee can therefore lean upon an interpretation of accessibility from the perspective of an economic discourse as well as from a community centre discourse and this can be apprehended as part of a not yet settled hegemonic struggle, a struggle the user contributes to with his or her "articulation, disarticulation and rearticulation of elements" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 93).

This hegemonic struggle visualises interdiscursivity. We have already mentioned that the economic discourse manifests in library policies. For example, the policy that governs one of the libraries in this study connects the staff with costs (Lunds kommun, 2008, p. 15). The economic discourse and the association between staff and costs is also prevalent in users' understandings. One of the interviewee, who appreciate the self-service library but at the same time had preferred generous opening hours with staff, says: "/…/it must be very costly to have someone sitting there every night/…/" (User3). This rearticulation is not necessarily an intentional effect, ideologies can be imbedded in conventions and pre-exist reflection (Fairclough, 1992, p. 90).

In order to deepen the understanding of the interdiscursivity related to the economic discourse we widen our horizon further. In such a context, we interpret the rearticulation of an economic discourse as partly a consequence of the penetration of steering mechanisms from the system, including both money and quantitative measurements, into library arenas hitherto associated with the life-world (Kann-Christensen and Andersen, 2009, p. 209). Those steering mechanisms conspire more and more often to organise the library and they repress communicative action, whereas for instance costs are not a validity claim to be accepted or neglected (cf. Habermas, 1990, p. 201). Increasing demands on libraries to legitimise their activities and services and account for cost-efficiency situates in this context (Kann-Christensen and Andersen, 2009, p. 209). This understanding has bearing for the analysis of the self-service library, since the implementation of self-service can be put forward as a way to increase accessibility and to contribute to the marketing of the city or community without major expenses.

Nevertheless, a pursuit to legitimise the library service also relates to competing discourses, conveying different interpretations. To question the mission and orientation of the library and,

in the lights of an overall social change, to open up for argumentation and discussion therefore does not necessarily result in an instrumental view connected to an economic discourse. In contrast, such discussions can be viewed as being part of the rationalisation of the life-world, in which new parts of the previously taken for granted life-world are opened up for reflection and communicative action (cf. Kann-Christensen and Andersen, 2009, p. 209; Habermas, 1990, p. 316). The implementation of self-service can contribute to this, by making the library more accessible and by putting a stronger focus on the user as an active agent.

The library as a public sphere

In the analysis we notice that the library is a place in which communicative rationality can take place, for example, when users include the library in everyday activities and when it enables unplanned meetings, cultural activities and education. In that context, we would like to emphasise the importance of the library as an undemanding place with low barriers (Carlsson, 2013, p. 51; Buschman, 2003). We argue that self-service can contribute to lower the barriers even more by making the library more accessible and encourage spontaneous visits (once you are a registered user). The self-service library therefore has potential to be a low-intensive meeting place with free access to information that enable communicative action and therefore favours the reproduction of the users' life-worlds (Aabø and Audunson, 2012, p. 140; Habermas, 1990, p. 200). Thus, the self-service library may strengthen the public sphere by "producing and reproducing the circumstances that enables democratic processes" (Buschman, 2003, p. 175).

The library thereby functions as a public sphere, but the sphere is changing. Vestheim (1997, p. 95) claims that the library as a place for meetings is a new form of public function in society. Previously the focus was on the right to know, including free access to information, whereas today the right to freely reside at the library has become an equally important question (Vestheim, 1997, p. 95). Thus, the library's function in relation to the public sphere has become multidimensional. The users' access to the library space is therefore of importance in relation to the libraries democratic potential.

Despite the democratic potential shortly described above, the library's democratic role in society should not be taken for granted. If an economic discourse and steering mechanisms such as money penetrate the library, the library's function as public sphere will be affected (Habermas, 1996, p. 282). At the same time as the self-service library can contribute to create low-intensive meeting places as we mention above, the implementation of self-service can also be viewed as means in the process of attracting business and creating capital. Such instrumental rationality is for example part of the cultural policy in Sweden (Carlsson, 2013, p. 14), as in many other western countries, and it may be a threat to the possibility of communicative action, and therefore in the long term to the democratic role of the library. When libraries are understood from the perspective of an economic discourse they are expected to fill a certain role related to the system in a socio-political context, such as that of contributing to economic growth or of creating attractiveness to tourists and businesses (Vestheim, 1998, p. 143; Kann-Christensen, 2009, p. 2010; Carlsson, 2013, p. 52). This expectancy undermines the libraries democratic legitimacy based on social and democratic discourses from the life-world (Buschman 2003).

The economic discourse also affects the notion of users, and this is relevant to self-service libraries. If library users are individualised and treated as customers, it endangers the public library's mission to provide equal access to information to all (e.g. Budd, 1997; D'Angelo 2006, pp. 65-74). For example, to some users self-service may bring increased geographic and temporal availability, but some may have trouble if staff is not there to help. In such a case, the notion of library users are essential; if library users are conceptualized as customers the possibility that some of them may experience trouble is the individuals' problem, but if they are conceptualized as users the library's responsibility to enable access is emphasized. Access to information is a fundamental part of the public sphere, as information enables a rational communicative process (Buschman, 2003). Therefore, a discussion on how equal access is accomplished in self-service libraries is vital.

Conclusions and implications

The analysis above shows that there are not any straightforward answers. As to the first research question raised in the *Introduction*, the regular opening hours cannot be clearly separated from the hours with self-service. Therefore, it is neither possible nor productive to answer in a simple manner the question about how the implementation of self-service has changed the practices at the library. Firstly, the implementation of self-service is intertwined with a changing societal context affecting the library, including among other things increased influence from an economic discourse, which is related to the penetration of the system into the life-world. This affects both the willingness to implement self-service and the practises taking place at the library. Secondly, the library discourses that we have identified interact with each other and consequently the metaphors that emerged in the analysis can be understood in relation to several of these discourses. Accordingly, the implementation of self-service should not be positioned and interpreted from a single discourse.

The entanglement described above relates to the second research question, about how users' expectations and conceptions of the public library are affected by the implementation of self-service. The analysis implies that users' concepts of the library are versatile, but we would like to highlight the distinct expectations on the self-service library compared to staffed opening hours regarding the service provided. These differing expectations point at important implications as the self-service library is associated with both an increased accessibility and a lower degree of service. If libraries become more accessible, with regard to both temporal and geographic accessibility, it might strengthen their role as low-intensive meeting places, which relates to libraries as public and democratic spheres in society. However, if self-service is implemented in a context with increasing demands of efficiency, cost-reduction and a discourse that transforms users into customers, the democratic role of the library will instead be endangered (Vestheim, 1998, pp. 143-146). We have just briefly mentioned another risk with self-service libraries: that users need to be registered in order to take part of them. An important task for future research is to look into to whom this is an obstacle for taking part of the self-service library; who is left outside?

We argue that it is important to be aware of the complexity of understandings of self-service libraries, specifically when considering the implementation of new ones, in order to avoid understandings flavoured by an economic discourse. When used not as a means to lower costs

but instead as a way to offer better accessibility to their users, self-service libraries hold possibilities for strengthening public libraries role as public and democratic spheres in society.

List of interviews and observations

Library of Kävlinge [Kävlinge bibliotek]
Interviews
User1; User6; User7

Observation
Observation1, 25/2 2015

Library of Veberöd [Veberöds bibliotek]
Interviews
User2; User3; User4

Observation
Observation2, 17/2 2015

Library of Rydebäck [Rydebäcks bibliotek]
Interviews
User5

Observation
Observation3, 24/2 2015

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