



Nordic Perspectives on the Discourse of Things

Sakprosa Texts Helping Us Navigate and
Understand an Ever-changing Reality

Edited by

Catharina Nyström Höög ·

Henrik Rahm ·

Gøril Thomassen Hammerstad

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Editors

Catharina Nyström Höög
Department of Swedish Language and
Multilingualism
Stockholm University
Stockholm, Sweden

Henrik Rahm
Centre for Languages and Literature
Lund University
Lund, Sweden

Gøril Thomassen Hammerstad
Centre for Academic and Professional
Communication
Norwegian University of Science and
Technology
Trondheim, Norway



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Contents

Introduction	1
<i>Catharina Nyström Höög, Henrik Rahm, and Gøril Thomassen Hammerstad</i>	
Texts as Cultural Artefacts: Theoretical Challenges to Empirical Research on Utterances and Texts	17
<i>Kjell Lars Berge and Per Ledin</i>	
Texts Complying with Societal Pressures: Changing Genres in Finnish Companies' CSR Reporting	45
<i>Merja Koskela, Mona Enell-Nilsson, and Cecilia Hjerpppe</i>	
Digital Discourse Networks: Digital Media as a Socio-material Condition for Access and Circulation	71
<i>Jack Andersen</i>	
Sheep, Watch Dogs and Wolves: How the Master in Non- Fiction Writing Formed Actors for the Field of <i>sakprosa</i> in Norway	93
<i>Iben Brinch and Siri Nergaard</i>	

Crisis Communication on Social Media: Informalization in the Hour-by-Hour Struggle for Information	117
<i>Gunilla Almström Persson</i>	
Concluding Remarks: The Power and Potential of the Concept <i>Sakprosa</i> (CPS): A Guided Tour Through Five <i>Topoi</i>	139
<i>Johan Tønnesson</i>	
Index	165

Notes on Contributors

Gunilla Almström Persson is Senior Lecturer in Scandinavian languages and researcher in rhetoric. Her research interests include language and persuasion, focused on politics and authorities' communication.

Jack Andersen is an associate professor doing research in digital media, genre and classification theory.

Kjell Lars Berge is Professor of Textual Studies. Amongst his research interests are writing research/literacy, semiotics, rhetoric, text linguistics, and text historical studies.

Iben Brinch is an associate professor at the University of South-Eastern Norway at the Department of Languages and Literature Studies. Her primary research interests are rhetoric and writing, including rhetorical field work, style, ethos and place-based writing. She edited a book on creative academic writing in 2019 with Norunn Askeland.

Mona Enell-Nilsson is a senior researcher at the University of Vaasa. Her research interests include organizational communication, discourse, (user) innovation and sustainability transitions. Her recent publications focus on discourses of state-owned enterprises and corporate communication.

Cecilia Hjerppe is a doctoral researcher in Communication Studies at the University of Vaasa. Her research interests include discourse and

communication in the contexts of (corporate) social responsibility and consumer culture. Her dissertation focuses on the discursive construction of responsible organizational, consumer and investor identities.

Merja Koskela is Professor of Applied Linguistics at Communication Studies at University of Vaasa. In her research, she focuses on professional discourse and expert communication. Her recent work has included investigations of financial discourse, corporate communication and legitimation of state-owned enterprises.

Per Ledin is Professor of Swedish. He has published widely in many different areas of discourse studies and semiotics, including critical and educational linguistics, multimodality and visual design.

Siri Nergaard is Professor of Norwegian and didactics of Norwegian. Her research interests focus on semiotics, translation, writing and text analysis.

Catharina Nyström Höög is Professor of Swedish at the Department of Swedish Language and Multilingualism, Stockholm University. Her research interests include plain language, genre and discourse analysis, organizational discourse, stylistics and text linguistics.

Henrik Rahm is Associate Professor of Scandinavian Languages at Lund University. Examples of previous research are diachronic journalistic discourse, legitimation strategies of registered nurses and clear language. His latest research includes language use in working life, discourses of state-owned enterprises, language of accounting and ritualization of corporate annual meetings.

Gøril Thomassen Hammerstad is Professor of Applied Linguistics and head of the Centre for Academic and Professional Communication at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology. Her research interests include language and communication across a variety of professional practices.

Johan Tønnesson was the first scholar to be professor in *sakprosa* (factual prose) in 2005. His research interests include science communication, historiography, plain language, oral and written rhetoric, and dialogical text analysis.

List of Figures

Texts as Cultural Artefacts: Theoretical Challenges to Empirical Research on Utterances and Texts

- | | | |
|--------|--|----|
| Fig. 1 | A drawing by the four-year-old Espen, portraying the relationship between him and his father | 24 |
| Fig. 2 | Two folded A4 sheets used by the six-year-old Ella to write her autobiography | 25 |
| Fig. 3 | The first page of <i>Den Danske Mercurius</i> from March 1, 1677 | 28 |
| Fig. 4 | The Norwegian pamphlet “Samtale imellem Einar Jermonsøn og Reiar Randulvsøn paa Opland i Aggerhuus-Stift i Norge”, published in 1771 | 30 |

Texts Complying with Societal Pressures: Changing Genres in Finnish Companies’ CSR Reporting

- | | | |
|--------|--|----|
| Fig. 1 | Genre development | 57 |
| Fig. 2 | Intertextual strategies on corporate sustainability websites | 60 |
| Fig. 3 | Running head in Fortum’s CSR report | 61 |
| Fig. 4 | Submenu on Fortum’s sustainability page | 61 |
| Fig. 5 | Portrait in Huhtamäki’s CSR report (Photo courtesy of Huhtamäki) | 63 |

List of Tables

Texts as Cultural Artefacts: Theoretical Challenges to Empirical Research on Utterances and Texts

Table 1	The levels of description of utterances, text, and constitutive principles	22
Table 2	The frame structure of the pamphlet in Fig. 4	32

Texts Complying with Societal Pressures: Changing Genres in Finnish Companies' CSR Reporting

Table 1	Details of the data	51
Table 2	Stability and variability in CSR reporting	54

Crisis Communication on Social Media: Informalization in the Hour-by-Hour Struggle for Information

Table 1	Posts on Krisinformation's Twitter account hour by hour after the terror attack, with a start at 3 p.m.	125
Table 2	Timeline for posts on Krisinformation's Twitter account after the false alarm	129



Introduction

Catharina Nyström Höög, Henrik Rahm,
and Gøril Thomassen Hammerstad

The purpose of the book is to contribute to a text theory which might enrich the study of *sakprosa* texts. Within the field of applied linguistics, there are several important strands of theory. In the tradition of genre studies, Miller (1984), in a seminal paper, argues for an understanding of genre as social action. Or simply put, genre is to do something when language is used to achieve tasks and purposes. The discussion on genre is ongoing, and important contributions have been made, for example, by

C. Nyström Höög
Department of Swedish Language and Multilingualism, Stockholm University,
Stockholm, Sweden
e-mail: catharina.hoog@su.se

H. Rahm (✉)
Centre for Languages and Literature, Lund University, Lund, Sweden
e-mail: henrik.rahm@nordlund.lu.se

G. Thomassen Hammerstad
Centre for Academic and Professional Communication, Norwegian University
of Science and Technology, Trondheim, Norway
e-mail: goril.thomassen@ntnu.no

Berge and Ledin (2001) who discuss the relation between genre and context of situation, as well as the relation between *genre* and other concepts for text categorization, such as *discourse* and *order of discourse*. A different approach to genre is held by Bhatia, who focuses on genres in workplace settings and aims at exploring the professional space (2004). In his recent works, Bhatia takes this a step further with the notion *Critical Genre Analysis* which aims at an understanding of genres in professional communication as the “demystification of professional practice through the medium of genres” (Bhatia 2017: 9). The adjective *critical* emphasizes an unbiased understanding of the professional setting and the texts, being critical to the analyst’s own preunderstanding of the genre. This means moving beyond Bhatia’s background as linguist, leading to a view where the texts and the genres must be interpreted with lenses and tools not only from applied linguistics but also from any discipline with an interest in a certain field, such as communication, ethnology, rhetoric, education and business administration.

In our post-modern world, where working life as well as public discourse move out of offices (and into homes), across national and regional boundaries and through different sets of activities and organizations, the universe of texts is ever-changing. Types of texts and genres evolve, develop and fade away. Previously solid genre boundaries are dissolved, giving room to infotainment and mockumentaries. Political debate is moving into social media, making the distinction between public and private even more blurry. In working life, orders of power are reorganized into neo-bureaucratic structures where strategic plans, value statements and software for self-reporting play important parts. In the field of text and genre research, the ongoing changes of texts and text patterns have been closely followed by a likewise rapidly growing field of research traditions.

Within the vast fields of (linguistic) research that focus their interest on text and text patterns in our societies, different traditions have emerged, nourished by the international field. This volume is devoted to one such particular tradition, namely the Nordic tradition of *sakprosa* studies and its interest in the texts that manage complex content in our

societies.¹ Since 2009, the journal *Sakprosa*—a Nordic publication based in Oslo—has been publishing articles on different aspects of applied linguistics, rhetoric, textual studies, discourse analysis, literature studies, educational studies, communication and adjoining disciplines. Articles may be published in any Scandinavian language (Danish, Norwegian and Swedish) or in English and to date 90 articles have been published, accessible for a wide audience thanks to abstracts in English. The journal stands an important site for the publication of *sakprosa* studies, with Johan Tønnesson (see “Concluding Remarks: The Power and Potential of the Concept *Sakprosa* (CPS): A Guided Tour Through Five *Topoi*” chapter in this volume) as its editor. The scope of interest can be illustrated by the contributions to *Sakprosa* in 2022—social workers’ digital interactions with clients as well as travelogues on Samí in early indigenous tourism. This volume would hardly be possible without the foundation laid by this journal. In the following section, we will discuss and motivate the choice of using the notion *sakprosa* for this research strand.

The presentation of Nordic research in this book is in some ways connected to a Finnish initiative to form a more cohesive *sakprosa* research environment for Nordic researchers across national boundaries. In 2017, the Finnish researcher Pirjo Hiidenmaa initiated a research network with colleagues from Denmark, Norway and Finland. Through funding from the Joint Committee for Nordic Research councils in the Humanities and Social Sciences (NOS-HS), the network organized a series of workshops for doctoral students and supervisors. Over a period of two years, topics like the development and challenges of Nordic book cultures, the reading of non-fiction and the changes of text and their ecology, were discussed at workshops in the four countries. As an outcome of these discussions, a paper on the relation between *sakprosa* studies and research on multimodality was published (Ledin et al. 2019). The idea of presenting some of the Nordic research for a wider international audience was first discussed within this research network, and this book is one of the results of that discussion.

¹ *Sakprosa* means literally ‘prose concerning factual matters’ and is a concept that will be commented upon and discussed throughout this introduction.

Above we have sketched a very short background to some of the important international research strands that *sakprosa* both builds on and is part of. We have also begun to outline the unique Nordic context of *sakprosa* studies built on the research milieus connected to *sakprosa* as an independent discipline both in Norway and in Finland, and in Sweden from 2023 when the first full professor in *sakprosa* will take office, with an emphasis on the esthetic perspective of *sakprosa* texts and *sakprosa* writing. This will add a new perspective to the Swedish *sakprosa* research within different disciplines since the 1990s. Before we move on to a more in-depth description of the Nordic tradition, we will dwell on a couple of key concepts for *sakprosa* studies.

Truth and Reality: Pivotal for the Concept *Sakprosa*

Many of the texts that surround our everyday lives have one thing in common, despite their variation in format and media, and that is the focus on the factual content. In the words of Johan Tønnesson, *sakprosa* are “texts that the addressee has reasons to perceive as direct utterances about reality” (“Concluding Remarks: The Power and Potential of the Concept *Sakprosa* (CPS): A Guided Tour Through Five *Topoi*” chapter, this volume). Smith (1999) considers texts as accounts being central to the construction of social facts. Adopting a rhetorical perspective, she points to the mediating role of the text in the production and reception of ‘factual’ accounts, and between the actual and the virtual. The dynamics between ‘what happened/what is’ provides the text a role as stand-in for what happened. This points to two other roles texts as factual accounts may have. First, we will mention the role of the text as an artefact or rather a boundary object in institutional and professional contexts. Second, texts are text events situated in communicative activities and encounters where texts and other artefacts are produced, used, consumed and transformed. One possible approach to such texts is to view them from a discourse point of view where the fact, or the truthful relation of events or matters, is in focus. Karlsson and Landqvist (2018), in the

journal *Sakprosa*, take the doctor-patient conversation as an example. Such a conversation might oscillate between facts and feelings, but the goal of the conversation is to reach a point where a doctor can make a decision, based on facts, and the patient can leave the room feeling informed. The interplay between text and talk in medical encounters could also come across as a way of inviting the non-professional to take part in the production of a text. Sterponi et al. (2017), for instance, find that texts in face-to-face encounters foster the patient's participation, for example, when physicians place the text so that the patient can see them, reading aloud and explaining the test results.

Starting from such a discourse perspective on what we might refer to as factual texts, this book attempts to capture and present a selection of research from the Nordic countries. From different perspectives, the six chapters problematize the nature of texts inviting factual reading. What all the chapters have in common is that they are united by the Nordic tradition of referring to this group of texts as *sakprosa*. The word *sakprosa* is a compound noun, analogue to the German word *Sachprosa*, where the first part *sak* is a rather polysemic word which means 'thing' (or 'issue', 'case', 'subject') and the second part means 'prose'. Thus the literal meaning is prose (texts) about things. The term was first coined by the Finnish linguist Pipping in 1938, to define a particular type of style. There are a few different possible translations into English of the term. Common translations are *non-fictional prose*, *subject-oriented texts* or *subject-oriented prose* as well as *non-literary prose*. The choice of translation obviously highlights which aspect of *sakprosa* is in focus in the study at hand. *Subject-oriented prose* might be the preferred translation if you focus on the content of the text, while *non-fictional prose* emphasizes the relationship between writer and reader. Another possible translation would be *professional communication*, emphasizing the professional setting and role and perspective of an authority, corporation or other organization. Translating *sakprosa* into professional communication would mean a new way of translating the notion, combining the content perspective with the role-relationship perspective. One disadvantage would be that the notion of professional communication excludes non-professional communication such as citizen posts in social media on decisions of authorities, private economy, job market or individual text

messages from a friend to another on, for example, upbringing of children. Another important dimension to consider is public communication (such as many posts in social media made by organizations or individuals) or private communication (such as some posts in social media made by individuals or text messages between two individuals). The conclusion of this account of possible translations is that *sakprosa* is the most encompassing notion even though it is not a word easy to pronounce in English. We consider it as a recent loan word into English such as *smorgasbord* and *ombudsman*! (Compare Johan Tønnesson's concluding remarks in "Concluding Remarks: The Power and Potential of the Concept *Sakprosa* (CPS): A Guided Tour Through Five *Topoi*" chapter in this volume.) Rather than using a variation in terminology, we have chosen to use the word *sakprosa* throughout this book. This means of course that a non-English word occurs regularly in the chapters of the book.²

Text, Context, Genre and Discourse: A Practice Perspective on *Sakprosa* Texts

Genre, as already touched upon, is an important notion in rhetoric, originating in Aristoteles speech genres. It has always been a foundational concept in literary studies. Until the 1980s, the notion of genre was mainly used in rhetoric and for defining, sorting and interpreting literary texts with the overarching genres of epic, lyric and drama. Following Bakhtin (1986), the dialogic nature of genres has the consequence that most non-trivial utterances have no complete, finalized interpretations as they connect to previous utterances in the same and other genres. Because of this, intertextuality is a fundamental concept. However, for mostly practical reasons, utterances, discourses and texts are given more definite structures such as opening or closing, a "monologising" aspect (Bakhtin 1986). Bakhtin's approach is often referred to as dialogicity which incorporates both intertextuality and voices. This dynamic nature of genres

²To facilitate reading for non-Scandinavian readers, we use the form *sakprosa* (common to Norwegian and Swedish) in all the chapters, also in Andersen's chapter, where the natural form would be the Danish *sagprose*.

also touches upon the interplay between inner dialogue and outer dialogue when capturing a voice: “One’s own discourse is gradually and slowly wrought out of others’ words that have been acknowledged and assimilated, and the boundaries between the two are at first scarcely perceptible” (Bachtin 1981: 345).

Today, genre is at use in various disciplines. We connect to the definition of Bhatia (2004: xiv): “Genres are recognizable communicative events, characterized by a set of communicative purposes identified and mutually understood by members of the professional or academic community in which they regularly occur.” This definition underlines an interest for *sakprosa* with professional community in focus. Within a certain professional community, various genres are used as in journalism where two overarching genres (with many subgenres) are news and background (Grunwald 2004). A profession or a professional community shares communicative goals. This shared interest is the fundamental prerequisite for a discourse community. The discourse communities of journalism, child care, education, research, business, all contribute to *sakprosa* production from different points of interests, for various purposes and in various genres. What the *sakprosa* texts emanating from these communities have in common is the purpose to be used, to be read and to do something. There are certain mutual expectations of the role-relationship between an authority and the citizens but these are under constant transition. Even though genres not only link people to certain discourse communities or text cultures, they also recognize certain types of texts as genres linked to institutional power. Also, the texts must be true, trustworthy and useful as they are tools, for example, applying for parental benefit or for a course at university.

A Comment on Language Policy

As already mentioned, *sakprosa* is not an easy word to translate. In all translations, certain aspects of the word in the source language get lost. Most clearly the embeddedness in the cultural context is difficult to translate. *Sakprosa*, in the Nordic context, is not only related to a field of research but is also part of our everyday vocabulary, used, for example,

when people look for a certain type of texts in book shops or libraries. It could also be seen as a way to state what is *not* the centre of interest, not fictional prose, rather prose with certain truth ambitions on the issues and themes dealt with. In other words, *sakprosa* can be a signal that the texts typically do not belong to literary genres such as novels or poems. For researchers then, it is a vital discussion to relate the academic understanding to the non-academic and if possibly keep the relation between them. But the academic community in the Nordic countries is, increasingly, English-speaking. We are recommended to write papers in English, most teaching material at universities—at least beyond first-cycle studies—are in English, and discussions of theory and method tend to be heavily influenced by English concepts. There are things to be gained in this process, but there are also things to be lost.

What we gain in using more and more English in research and higher education is of course a closer connection to the international research communities. It is easier to spread and discuss research results and we, as researchers using English as a second language, can both contribute to the international scene, and take advantage of progress that is made. Negative side effects, however, might be exactly the difficulty to communicate our discourse studies which the current case of *sakprosa* illustrates. An obvious advantage when we use vernacular words as technical terms is that the connotation of the word is richer, and that it is easier to communicate and translate research to a wider public.

In the case of *sakprosa*, connotations for Scandinavian speakers include a close relationship between *sakprosa*, citizenship and the welfare state. As can be seen from some of the chapters in this book, *sakprosa* often refers to communication where public authorities play a part. Scandinavians are used to being addressed by authorities and to demand from authorities to make an effort to communicate in a way that citizens will understand. The chapters by Almström Persson and Andersen in this volume highlight those aspects. It is also a part of democratic tradition in Scandinavian countries that literacy and citizen participation walk hand in hand. This tradition forms an important background to the educational project in focus of the chapter by Brinch and Nergaard.

Thus, choosing a Scandinavian word in this book is more than language policy. Somewhere between using only English and using only one

of the official languages in our country, we need to find our footing and discuss if and how we may translate terms into English and bring them into the international discussion, as well as how we from our traditions may position ourselves in the wider field of discourse studies. As the reference lists of the chapters in this book indicate, many research publications on *sakprosa* studies are in Danish, Swedish, Norwegian or Finnish. Thus, this volume is one step on the way to communicate this research to a wider audience.

The Nordic Research Tradition

In Nordic research on *sakprosa*, there is a tradition of noticing texts that allow us to achieve actions in everyday life. When Swedish workers began to organize themselves in unions during the late nineteenth century, one important part of their struggle was to learn and master the genres of society and political organization. They wanted to earn their place in legislative and decision-making bodies by mastering pivotal texts and genres. The access to, and understanding of, discursive tools thus played a major part in their access to power. Parts of the workers' development and the simultaneously ongoing change of Swedish language and textual landscape was depicted in a Swedish research project in the early 1990s (Josephson 1996). The research project made an important contribution to our understanding of the relation between language, text, and power in recent Scandinavian history and is a contribution to the Nordic research on *sakprosa* texts. In this research project, embedded in the framework of ethnography of communication, studying emerging literacies, the term *sakprosa* is used to refer to the many different types of written texts that the workers approached and learned: pamphlets, minutes from meetings and different types of newspaper articles. But the concept *sakprosa* in this project is also used when style is discussed, so the style of Swedish (and Norwegian) *sakprosa* around 1850 is described as influenced by officialese with heavy syntactic constructions (Josephson 1996: 14). This means that *sakprosa* was defined both from a perspective of the text content and from a stylistic perspective.

Thematically related to the research project on the Swedish labour movement is the recent and critically acclaimed Norwegian book on rhetorical power during a 100-year period, *Komme til orde. Politisk kommunikasjon 1814–1913* [To Have Your Say. Political Communication 1814–1913] (Johansen 2019). The author, Anders Johansen, studies changes in freedom of speech and the right to vote in Norway from 1814 to 1913, and through those lenses observes the development of a new or changing society. The book stands witness to the fact that the theme of democracy and of the strive for different groups to find a voice in society runs through the tradition of Nordic *sakprosa* research.

Different research projects have made *sakprosa* more explicitly the object of study and scrutiny. The earliest of those projects was Norwegian and was carried out in the mid-1990s (1994–1998, cf. Brinch and Nergaard in this volume). It resulted, among other publications, in two volumes titled *Norsk litteraturhistorie. Sakprosa fra 1750 til 1995* [Norwegian history of literature. *Sakprosa* from 1750 to 1995] (Johnsen and Berg Eriksen 1998). In another Norwegian research project (2000–2003), which evolved partly from the earlier project, context played an important role, and Berge (2001) mentions the cultural contexts, the institutions and the activities where texts are created as points of interest (p. 19). Instead of searching for text structures that may define text as *sakprosa* or not, the research environment aimed at understanding the sites of activity where the texts that “we in our culture refer to as *sakprosa*” are created (editors’ translation, p. 19). Cultural embeddedness thus plays an important part here.

A Swedish *sakprosa* research project, in some ways inspired by the first Norwegian project, started in 1996 and aimed at studying what was referred to as “the most read texts” in Sweden, from 1750 and into our own time (Englund and Ledin 2003). “The most read texts” was one way of describing the texts defined as *sakprosa*, and the project came to deal with a wide variety of texts such as press texts of different kinds, newspapers and magazines; texts from political and religious meetings, both minutes and announcements; and educational texts from school settings and mass education. Theoretically, the Swedish research project on *sakprosa* was based on discourse analysis and genre analysis, contributing a great deal to the establishment of a Swedish tradition of text and

discourse analysis from various methodological and disciplinary perspectives, in close connection to the international field of discourse studies.

A difference between the Scandinavian research projects dedicated to *sakprosa* was the cultural status of the texts studied, where the Norwegian projects included a wider scope of texts, genres and text cultures, also dealing with the culturally prestigious texts. More important, however, are the similarities and the important contributions of these projects to a better understanding of the history and uses of texts within the respective countries. The research projects on *sakprosa* in Sweden and Norway have contributed to a theoretical understanding of the concept, as well as to the development of relevant methodological frameworks, in line with the international research field of applied linguistics but also connecting to rhetoric, text history, text linguistics and semiotics. However, theoretical foundations for research on *sakprosa*, as well as methodological issues, need to be constantly open for discussion and examined, because as society changes, also text cultures change. An updated understanding of text must, therefore, include different formats (tables, matrixes and plain text), different publication channels (web, paper), different media (TV, radio, newspaper, social media) and above all—different modalities (oral, written, pictorial). The obvious should be underlined—that there are infinite ways of combining in and between formats, channels, media and modalities. The diversity of aspects included in the concept *text* is a richness but also poses a challenge for the analyst: how do we capture all the texts that surround and, indeed, form the base of professional life, in terms of genres, modes or types of texts?

The Chapters in This Volume

The six chapters of this book bring forth different aspects of the concept *sakprosa*. In the first article, Kjell Lars Berge and Per Ledin initiate a critical understanding of the text theoretical framework of Scandinavian research on *sakprosa*. Subsequently, they present a text theory used in a number of Scandinavian *sakprosa* studies (cf. Berge 2007; Ledin 2013). Based on discussions in semiotics, dialogism, literacy studies and text linguistics on how the phenomenon “text” should be defined and

studied, they present a theory of the “text” understood as a cultural artefact. This implies that any text should be defined as a semiotically mediated utterance that competent participants in a specific text culture assigns a specific cultural value. For instance, in the text culture journalism, the text norm constituting this specific semiotic domain qualifies what utterances may be written and read as ‘investigations’, ‘news’, ‘reviews’, ‘columns’ and ‘features’. Consequently, the field of *sakprosa* should be understood as a dynamic and complex collection of different text cultures.

The Finnish researchers Merja Koskela, Mona Enell-Nilsson and Cecilia Hjerpe present a study of an emerging genre, the CSR-reporting from Finnish companies. This genre is emerging as a result of changing conditions in society and business enterprise, and the study—performed in line with the traditions of genre studies—is one example of how studies on *sakprosa* can be performed in today’s society and contribute to a better understanding of today’s complex and multifaceted text universe.

In the following paper, the Danish researcher Jack Andersen delves into the fundamental changes of *sakprosa* culture that the digitizing of communication has brought. This change concerns not only the modes of communication, but digital media is understood here as a socio-material condition for access to and circulation of *sakprosa* texts, or subject-oriented prose. Focusing on two real-life examples, the Danish website for information to citizens and a website of a publishing house, Andersen shows that not least the roles of participants going into communication have changed under these new socio-material conditions.

The Norwegian researchers Iben Brinch and Siri Nergaard take the unique position for *sakprosa* in Norway as a starting point for a study of a master programme for *sakprosa* writing. Such a programme is in itself part of a framework where three Norwegian universities have professorships in *sakprosa*, with institutional support from a freestanding organization of writers. A short presentation of this situation is given in the paper, as a background to their study focusing on how the programme shapes students to be sheep, watch dogs or wolves in relation to the *sakprosa* culture.

The Swedish researcher Gunilla Almström Persson contributes with a study of the use of social media for the distribution of crisis information

from a public authority, connecting to Andersen's discussion. The study compares the rapid flow of information on Twitter with later updates on the authority's website and can confirm Andersen's view of the communicative landscape as significantly changed as a result of digital media practices.

The final chapter is a concluding summary where Johan Tønnesson visits all the papers and reflects on their contributions to the field of *sakprosa* studies. The summary connects to the thoughts touched upon here and continues the discussion on truth, genre and choice of notions for *sakprosa* studies.

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Texts as Cultural Artefacts: Theoretical Challenges to Empirical Research on Utterances and Texts

Kjell Lars Berge and Per Ledin

Introduction: Textual Studies in *Sakprosa* Research

In the last 50 years, extensive theoretical discussions on how to understand what a ‘text’ is have taken place amongst Nordic text researchers and discourse analysts. These discussions took off when text linguistics was established as an active Nordic academic tradition in the 1970s (e.g., Enkvist 1974; Fossetøl 1980; cf. Berge 1993 for critical remarks). Towards the turn of the century, systemic functional linguistics (SFL) became a new paradigm in the Nordic countries for researching (also

K. L. Berge (✉)

Department of Linguistics and Scandinavian Studies, University of Oslo, Oslo, Norway

e-mail: k.l.berge@iln.uio.no

P. Ledin

Department of Culture and Education, Södertörn University, Huddinge, Sweden

e-mail: per.ledin@sh.se

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multimodal) texts (e.g., Halliday and Hasan 1989), and this tradition has also been debated and challenged (e.g., Berge 2012a; Ledin and Machin 2019a, b). In relation to and dialogue with these and other research traditions, we have developed a theory of texts as cultural artefacts, which we will elaborate on in this chapter.

There has been and still is comprehensive empirical Nordic studies on texts mediated through several semiotic resources and in different cultural and situational contexts (e.g., Melander and Olsson 2001; Berge 2007). Such studies encompass, for example, how texts are to be understood in societal and institutional contexts and how texts influence historical events and lead to cultural changes. In other words, this text research has been both synchronically and diachronically oriented. Furthermore, it tends to focus on the widely distributed, used, and read texts, that have had profound and lasting effects on the development and structuring of the Nordic societies' cultural mentalities, political traditions, and institutions.

The notion used to label this research is *sakprosa* (Englund et al. 2003; Tønnesson 2012; cf. Blikstad-Balas and Tønnesson 2020, where the notion is revisited). The notion is similar to what in colloquial English is called 'non-fictional prose', in colloquial German *Sachprosa*, in some text theories 'subject oriented texts' (Schröder 1991), and in other traditions 'faction'. A common denominator of this Scandinavian word and concept is that it does not include or cover texts that may be characterized as 'belles lettres', that is, texts belonging to aesthetics or fiction, such as novels, poetry, and theatre plays. This literature is conventionally named *skjønnlitteratur* (similar to 'belles lettres') in the Scandinavian languages and is often associated with an aura of quality, taste, and advanced intellectual and aesthetic aspirations. *Skjønnlitteratur* has often been given a privileged position in mother-tongue education.

The Nobel Prize in literature given yearly by the Swedish Academy with few exceptions favours authors and texts belonging to this specific literary practice. In addition, twentieth-century literature research in the Nordic countries, including text-historical research, has focussed on conventional 'belles lettres'. The Nordic text research on non-fictional texts

(*sakprosa*), therefore, represents what may be called a new paradigm in textual studies, but, importantly, it also accounts for aesthetic dimensions of texts. Tønnesson (2004), for example, analyses how historians communicate, using the Bakhtinian idea of voices and modelling texts as musical scores.

Critique has been raised that the notion of *sakprosa* is too wide and cover a too vast field of written texts (cf., Tønnesson 2012). Another criticism is that the notion implies a naïve understanding of the relation between a text and its extensional references, so that such texts directly represent the outer world or a subject matter. It has also been argued that the notion is too closely related to paper-based media, such as books, and consequently does not focus on, for example, digitalization and new social media.

In this chapter—partly addressing this critique—we outline a theory of texts as cultural artefacts. We depart from what we take to be the constitutive features of any text. We will stress how the text as a cultural artefact has the quality of at the same time being a unique utterance and instantiating a text norm. Furthermore, a text is part of a text culture, to which other text sharing similar norms belong. Thus, we conceive of ‘text’ as an utterance that competent participants in a specific cultural time and space assign a certain cultural value. We will also discuss basic principles for the structuring of texts.

These constitutive features are first illustrated in an analysis of children’s utterances, which allows us to pinpoint texts as a major means for acting in and experiencing the world. We then exemplify them in an historical analysis of how the text cultures of news and public opinion evolved in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Scandinavia. We will point to examples from empirical work that has been carried out in Nordic research projects and Ph.D. theses. Our main argument is that it is by delimiting the object of analysis, namely elaborating a theoretical understanding of texts as cultural artefacts, the research field of *sakprosa* gains a coherent and sound epistemology. We conclude by discussing the text theory we propose in relation to linguistics and systemic functional linguistics to further clarify our standpoints.

Constitutive Features of Texts as Cultural Artefacts

To pinpoint the basic qualities of texts, we argue that the text as a cultural artefact is constituted by six features. We introduce them below and then exemplify them in the following sections.

1. All texts are unique-situated utterances. In an utterance, meaning is created and conveyed in communicative co-operation between an actual utterer and an addressee in a unique situation. Utterances are, therefore, representations of intersubjective intentionality (Berge 2012b; Ledin 2013). The intentionality of any utterance may be oriented towards and model an addressee representing another human being, but it may also be oriented towards and model the utterer him-/herself as the addressee, as in auto-communication, in what Lotman (1990: ch. 2) in his cultural semiotics approach calls an “I-I language”.
2. All utterances and, therefore, all texts are mediated semiotically, using more or less elaborated sign systems, such as a lexicogrammar, drawing, mathematical notation, and photos. Texts may be oral as well as written. These semiotic resources are realized in different types of materiality, such as sound waves, clay, stones, sticks, parchment paper, digital screens, as has often been noted when looking at the phylogeny and history of writing (e.g., Ledin 2015).
3. The third constitutive feature is that all utterances and, therefore, all texts have boundaries providing them an outer form. Accordingly, a text has a contextual configuration representing its distinctiveness and difference from other configurations. For the child taking a sheet of A4, the boundaries of the paper are often taken as constituting an outer form, the bonds of communication, whereas social media naturally sets up more complex configurations, where, for example, on Facebook, posts and comments are marked as for their outer form and possible responses, and where a given paradigm of emojis is included. This parallels Bakhtin (1986: 71), who in his dialogical theory argues that utterances have “an absolute beginning and an absolute end” that give texts a wholeness and invite “other’s active responsive understanding”.

4. The fourth constitutive feature is that utterances have a more or less developed inner structure. If we return to the Facebook page, the contextual configuration is prefabricated with ready-made posts and comments displayed as boxes. Within this outer form, a post will be written and given an inner structure. Obviously, posts are written differently, so the inner structure can vary, but something must be written for communication to occur.
5. The fifth constitutive feature of any text is that it is an instantiation of a text norm. Text norms may be constitutive or directive (Searle 1969; Berge 1990). Constitutive norms are norms that define the necessary features of any activity, such as the rules that constitute chess as chess, or a doctoral disputation as a doctoral disputation. In this way, constitutive norms define the necessary features of relevant utterances in a text culture. Utterances that are construed according to a text norm are by the competent participants ascribed value as text. Utterances that are not construed according to a text norm are by the competent participants considered as a potential text, or even a non-text. Consequently, the realm of utterances is much wider than the realm of texts. Directive norms target how the text should be construed and specify what is to be considered as culturally adequate, in terms of good, original, unclear, and so on.
6. The sixth constitutive feature is that texts that are instantiations of the same text norm together constitute a specific text culture, such as religion, belles lettres, the juridical system, the news, politics, and science (cf., Berge 2012b, where text cultures are similar to semiospheres in Lotman's 1990, theory). A text culture is characterized by norms that have evolved in social interaction and have become shared. Consequently, constitutive text norms are necessary for the formation of a text culture, as they define the text culture as such. Directive text norms can be more or less developed or explicit. In the formation of a text culture, the directive norms may be unclear, as was the case when the text culture of public opinion was established in different countries, such as Sweden (Gustafsson 2009) and Denmark-Norway in the eighteenth century (Berge 1991, 2015).

Table 1 The levels of description of utterances, text, and constitutive principles

Levels of description (semiospheres)	Research objects	Methods
Unique individual acts in situations	Utterances	Direct access to the object as a material fact Ideographic method
Norms constituting text cultures	Texts	Indirect access to the objects by means of intuitive judgment Nomothetic method
Universal/general level of utterance and texts	Common utterance-/text-constitutive principles	Indirect access to the objects by means of theoretical assumptions/speculation Nomothetic method

These six constitutive features outline, we argue, an epistemology where the object of analysis for text research is delimited. The differentiation between utterances and text, as well as between the realm of utterances and text cultures, and the methodological consequences for text research are summarized in Table 1.

Utterances are unique and individual acts of meaning making. All utterances are immediately and directly accessible for ideographic methodological observation, as we can observe them as oral performances such as political speeches, inscriptions, where a sign system (pertaining to drawing, using the alphabet, or mathematical notation, etc.) is, using available technologies (a pen, a keyboard, an app), materialized (on a paper, a screen, parchment, etc.) (Ledin 2013). An utterance is a cultural artefact, simply because it depends on cultural and semiotic resources that are historically evolved. Artefacts arise when humans modify physical material to represent the outer world and reflect on it. Artefacts are, as Cole and Derry (2005: 4) put it, “simultaneously ideal (conceptual) and material”.

Texts are instantiations of text norms that constitute text cultures. Consequently, texts are only accessible for systematic nomothetic research indirectly by having access to informants that are competent in creating utterances using the relevant text norms intuitively or explicitly. Norms constituting which utterances that are considered texts are often tacit

amongst competent participants in a text culture, and only accessible for systematic research by using different strategies for making explicit the norms using the competent participants intuitive judgments as a methodological strategy. These methods should be considered as reconstructive (Habermas 1984).

The third level of textual research is the general level where theoretical models of text constitutive principles are formulated, which is precisely what we do in this section. This level is based on abductive reasonings on how utterances and texts are constructed and formed based on different semiotic resources. It is important to note that utterance-/text-constitutive principles are not the same as grammatical principles in an everyday language. Any text in any everyday language may be translated to any other everyday language without changing the way the text is structured, that is, its configuration and inner structure.

From Utterance to Text: The Growth of Normative Sensitivity in Children's Scribbling and Writing

In this section, we show how textual features emerge as part of the ontogenesis of writing and the child's appropriation of cultural norms. In Fig. 1, we meet a drawing made by Espen, four years old, in which he mediates and reinterprets his relationship with his father. Figure 2 displays an attempt by Ella, who has just turned six years old, to write her autobiography.¹

Both these artefacts are unique utterances, where the children also engage in auto-communication to make sense of their self and their identities and social relations (text feature 1). They are mediated semiotically, where the sign system used by Espen in Fig. 1 is drawing, or scribbling, whereas the older Ella in Fig. 2 combines drawing with alphabetic writing, and where this is materially expressed by using sheets of A4 paper and felt pens (text feature 2). The children draw upon and use material

¹Ella is Per Ledin's daughter. Espen is Kjell Lars Berge's son. Both are grown-ups now and have accepted that their texts are used in this chapter.



Fig. 1 A drawing by the four-year-old Espen, portraying the relationship between him and his father

and semiotic resources historically developed in culture. The utterances have their origins in family settings. They are made at home and collected by the children's parents.

The outer form that gives the contextual configuration (text feature 3) and makes the text apt for “the responsive understanding of others” (Bakhtin 1986: 71) is for Espen the bonds of the A4 paper, within which he portrays his relationship with his father. Ella deploys a more elaborated contextual configuration. She has folded A4 papers to signal that she is in fact writing a book (in Fig. 2, the sheets of A4 paper are unfolded by us). But Ella also uses writing to meta-communicate. The first page reads (with misspellings not rendered in the translation): ‘Hello. I will tell a story about myself.’ (*HEJ. JAG SKA BERETA OM MEJ SELV.*) This—together with the folded A4 sheets—codes what may evolve as an autobiographical genre, a personal narrative with a chronological structure. It can be noted that in Scandinavia it is common that children use *Hej* and *Slut* (‘Hello’ and ‘The end’) to mark outer form, or “an absolute beginning and an absolute end” of the utterance (Bakhtin 1986: 71), and this also happens in young children's school writing (Ledin 2013). As for the



Fig. 2 Two folded A4 sheets used by the six-year-old Ella to write her autobiography

actual narrative and inner structure (text feature 4), there is just one sentence (found on the next sheet): ‘I was born one day’ (*JAG FÖDES EN DAG.*)

Espen’s drawing draws heavily on the unique context of his family. Here, to get a sense of the inner structure (text feature 4), we have to know that Espen has put himself, drawn in blue, in the middle and his father (also indexed by his car to the left) in yellow at the bottom. The red figure at the top is an elk, with a tree and a sun to its left—here Espen

indexes that he is telling a story to his father, or the theme of what he wants to say. The inner structure of the drawing is thus based on a triptych.

As for these utterances to be an instantiation of a text norm (text feature 5), it is clear, as we have said, that Ella has a sense of the text norm of autobiography. She tells the story of herself since her birth. She has—being six years old—a good sense of this genre tradition and its constitutive text norms, but developing the inner structure, using the linear medium of writing, and aiming for a book, is more than she can handle. Obviously content generation is a problem. She was certainly born, but then it becomes hard for her to remember her early years, which hampers the development of the narrative.

Whereas Ella's utterance qualifies as (an attempt to write) a cultural text, it can be discussed if and how Espen instantiates a text norm (text feature 5). His drawing is embedded in his unique family context, where his father often tells him spooky stories. The relation to his father is semiotically foregrounded, but the roles are reversed, so that Espen positions himself as a self-confident narrator of such a story. This is indexed by Espen's broad smile, to be compared with his father's lips going down, signalling that he is somehow uneasy. Therefore, the utterance both draws on and reverses the traditional positions within his local family context. For someone competent in the domain of children's drawings, where the child and his family are most often foregrounded, such as a parent or preschool teacher, the utterance could be ascribed culture value and viewed as an important semiotic tool for, in this case, visualizing fantasies and anxieties. Such interpretative work by the part of the reader, that is, reconstructing a context of culture, is necessary to relate the utterance to a text norm and ascribe its value.

The general text culture (text feature 6) to which Ella's text in Fig. 2 belongs could, using Miller and Shepherd (2004), be characterized as depending on exhibitionism and voyeurism, where semiotic mediation is about personal feelings and beliefs being communicated and confirmed by others, and where participants consequently have access to others' private and even intimate life. Facebook and Instagram are two of many platforms being designed for this. Ella has a sense of this exhibitionism and try out this cultural norm—she also draws herself to the right of the

written text on both sheets. Twentieth-century autobiographies were written mostly by old and successful men looking back at their lives, but nowadays we can meet autobiographies written by six-year-olds.

As for Espen, his drawing is part of the social and material world of his unique family, where he creates a cultural artefact to reflect and imagine. His drawing allows him to make a representation of and ponder family life and invent events that have never existed—like him reading for his father (cf. Cole and Derry 2005).

The Development of Constitutive Text Norms: Historical Evolvement of the Text Culture of Written News and Political Opinion

We now turn to how public news and opinions were created in the Nordic countries in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and how this provoked profound changes in norms for how written and printed news and political opinions should be structured (Berge 1998, 2015)

In Fig. 3, we see the first printed Dano-Norwegian newspaper called *Den Danske Mercurius*. It was established in 1666 on the initiative from the King Frederik III, but written by the former tutor Anders Bording, and financed by a county in Norway. The newspaper was published in the quarto format and was four pages long. The quarto format was discursively related to colloquial local and international topics and reading practices, and the merchant class and the kings' officials were model readers. The picture shows the edition of March 1, 1677, informing the citizens of the twin kingdoms that the king's most trusted official, and consequently the most powerful man in the kingdoms after the king, Peder Griffenfeld, was overthrown.

What is peculiar is that the newspaper was written in alexandrine verse form, refined especially in the French classical tragedies of Corneille and Racine. This intertextual normativity indexes that it was the absolute king's voice that was mediated in the printed verses where local and international news were presented as small bulletins. The text norms drawn upon reveal that the newspaper was a comprise between the king's

Den Danske
MERCURIUS
 Et den 1. Martii. 1677.
 Danmark.

1 **S**aa frisk er ingen Dm/ saa modig ingen Lofde /
 Saa stærk er ingen Bliem/ de hulle jo behæfve.
 Det er Naturens Skik / at alt det undergaaer/
 Som lefoend hæfver Mand/ om det ey hulle faaer.
 Hoor kæk och hertesfuld en aarlogz Helt sig finder/
 Naar hand i marcken med sin vederpart anbinder/
 Hand maae dog efter lang udfanden mødfomhed
 Fornøden hæfve/ sig at faae til hulle need.
 Al Verden veed/ hoor høn befoerlighed och fare
 Vor Daner Konge med sin dapre ledtngs flare
 For os udturet har udforgangen Nar /
 Hoorfor hand nogen stund sig ud at hulle faaer.
 Thi den umilde Luft och strenge frost/ hvis lige
 Mænd her i voris Egn ey snart af veed at sig/
 Den fik at fires dog: och bleef saa der med spart
 Vel mangel / som af fuld forganget maatte snart.
 Dog see/ hvad skrifver Jeg: Naar saae mand Kongen
 hulle ?
 Naar sandt mand hannem ey paa noget floort at stille /
 Som hannem skaffe land et prisfligt efter nasa /
 Och fremme det som hør til voris fred och gavn /
 2 **D**et Golt/ som hand til Landz udfrefort har och leyet/
 Det sankes midlertid / och vel er fled och pleyet.
 Men at det Bonden dog ey gange skal for nar/
 Da vil hans Magestat forskaffe selfgeboort.

Fig. 3 The first page of *Den Danske Mercurius* from March 1, 1677

information control of local communication in the realm and the merchants and officials demand of reliable facts in their professions and everyday activity. As a result, *Den Danske Mercurius* could not be characterized as communicating propaganda, nor did it mediate ‘fake news’. Still, the newspaper presented news from the angle of the sovereign king, and it was warranted by the absolute monarchy’s economical and ideological interests. Not surprisingly, it could not satisfy the merchants and officials demand for information on the political and economic realities.

The eighteenth century witnessed economic changes related to mercantilism which led to the development, growth, and establishment of a new and dynamic social class which built its position in the society on

trade and investments: the bourgeois. This social class' environment was the city, and the members of the class met at the square, the coffee houses, and the stock market. Trading and economical investments were risky business and demanded access to accurate information on local and international events.

It was this development which established the ground for a new commodity called 'news', which written or in printed form led to a new industry for information sale, called "newspapers", "journals", "avvisi", "gazetta", and so forth. Together the newspapers established a new text culture called 'the press', where the text-producing participants were called "journalists". In many European countries, this need of accurate information went hand in hand with trade and economic growth. The advancing bourgeois class came to challenge the sovereigns' monopoly on information and distribution of information in their realms.

An extreme example of this normative instability is how political opinion developed. In Sweden a quite wide freedom of the press was granted in 1766 (Gustafsson 2009). An even more radical reform was passed in Denmark-Norway in 1770 (Berge 1991, 1998, 2015), creating an international sensation. Not only was it now possible to inform the citizens of actual incidents locally and internationally from a potentially objective perspective, but it was also—for the first time in modern European history—possible to express in written and printed public opinions on the autocratic political system, as well as criticize it. Actually, the royal rescript abolishing censorship expressively invited the citizens to criticize and in this way "inform older times' delusions and prejudices" (Berge 2015).

In Fig. 4, we see one of the over 1000 pamphlets published during this freedom-of-writing period in Denmark-Norway (Berge 1991). It is called "Samtale imellem Einar Jermonsøn og Reiar Randulvsøn paa Opland i Aggerhuus-Stift i Norge" ('Dialogue between Einar Jermonsøn and Reiar Randulvsøn at Opland in Aggerhuus diocese in Norway'). In the pamphlets the authors tried to achieve something rhetorically new, as they wanted to criticize the power elite and call for political action. This called for the enunciation of two speech acts. First, a declarative act where the actions of people with power are defined and presented as more or less 'corrupt'. This act is supported by narratives of the power elites' behaviour in order to warrant the authors' utterance. Second, a directive act



Fig. 4 The Norwegian pamphlet “Samtale imellem Einar Jermonson og Reiar Randulvsøn paa Opland i Aggerhuus-Stift i Norge”, published in 1771

encouraging the reader to take political action, that is, to accept the authors claims as the basis for political intervention.

The pamphlet in Fig. 4 was published in Copenhagen in 1771. It was written by two Norwegian peasants that had been told by the vicar that the King allows them to ‘print books, without that the bishop or other

superiors' censor them or investigate the identity of the author'.² They ask the printer to give the pamphlet to its main addressee, or model reader, which is the King himself. Moreover, the authors swear to God that the book is 'trustworthy'.

The pamphlet's general topic is that the Kings' officials in the peasants' diocese are corrupt. It informs the King that the peasants are ripped off by these officials in the diocese, in the same way as the King himself is ripped off by international money lenders.³ Since the peasants and the King share the same experience and mutually support each other, and thus are allied by an ancient social contract, they request the King to fire and punish his officials in the Norwegian diocese.

A striking fact is that the pamphlet is written in the peasants' local Norwegian dialect. It is the first known example of Norwegian used as written language for serious purposes since the Lutheran reformation in 1536. Still, the use of Norwegian is not consistent throughout the text. When the peasants formulate their direct request to the King at the end, they use a more formal register in Danish, indexing the language of and phrases from the Danish Lutheran translation of the Bible. Consequently, the language of the pamphlet should be characterized as heteroglossic.

Heteroglossic hybridity also characterizes the pamphlets' textual structure. The authors use an elaborated frame composition as the dominant inner structure to achieve their political purpose. The frame structure is presented in Table 2.

We hear the voices of the participants through six different frames (I–VI), where the King is positioned as the texts' model reader in frame I. The King's officials' corruption in the peasant's diocese is documented in narratives in frame VI. The author employs the traditional and popular genre 'didactic dialogue' as a normative resource, thereby indicating that an informed person will communicate to an uninformed person about

² Wii har hørt at Kongen har tillat at trøke Bøker, uten Bispen eller anden Øvrighed skriver paa, eller maae spørge, hvem har skrevet Bogen, vi senner Eder derfor denne Bog, som er saa sanfærdig som Gud skall hielpe" os; men I maae ikke lade nogen vite, at vi har sent Eder den, saa blir vi uløkkelig af vor Øvrighed; thi de vile intet høre Sandhed. Vi unde Eder Bogen og Fortienesten; men ville I ikke trøke den, saa levere den til Kongen, han faaer desverre naak høre det er sant. Forstaaer I den ikke, da faae norske gemeene Kriigs-Folk, de forklarer den naak.

³ The King's money lenders are called 'Fant' in the text, which is a word of abuse referring to a group of vagrants in Scandinavia. Actually, the Kings' money lenders were Jews living and working in the free city of Altona in duchy of Holsten, close to Hamburg.

Table 2 The frame structure of the pamphlet in Fig. 4

	Participants (voices)	Relations between participants	Place of utterance	Time of utterance	Act
Frame	Textual macrofunction	Macroillocutives the text	Macropropositions in the text		Rhetorical situations in the text
I	Einar & Reiar—the sovereign King	Inferior to superior	Copenhagen	1771	Public request to the King (model reader)
	'Direct request' to model reader	DIRECTIVE	Topic 1, Topic 2, Topic 3 repeated		Situation 1: strong engagement
II	Einar & Reiar (actual reader)	Same level	Opland in Aggerhuus diocese	After last Sunday	Conversation
	'Question-answer'	DIRECTIVE— CONSTATIVE	<i>Participants presented: the peasants Reiar and Einar</i>		Situation 2: Truth seeking
III	The vicar (to Einar)	Superior to inferior	The vicarage	Last Sunday	Commentaries on conversation
	'Introduces' commentaries on topic	CONSTATIVES	<i>Participant presented: the vicar</i>		Situation 3: Truth seeking
IV	The vicar (on topic)	–	The vicarage	Before last Sunday	Commentaries on letter/newspaper reading
	'Specification' into three topics	CONSTATIVES	Topic 1, Topic 2, Topic 3		Situation 3

V	Einar & Reiar (on topic)	Inferior on superiors	Opland in Aggerhuus diocese <i>The officials of the diocese are corrupt</i>	After last Sunday	Narratives
	'Conclusions' of descriptives in frame VI, macrolevel of actual reader	DECLARATIONS (PERFORMATIVES)			Situation 2: Truth telling
VI	Peasants and officials	Inferiors in conflict with superiors	The diocese	After the introduction of additional taxes 1762	Peasants in conflict with officials
	'Justifications' of 'request' in frame I + 'Documentations' of macro-proposition in frame V	CONSTATIVES	<i>Identifications of corrupt officials in the diocese</i>		Situation 4: External reference to actual activities

important facts. This takes place in frames II and V. In frame II, the unformed peasant Einar is telling Reiar what the local vicar has told him in the church last Sunday. In frame III (indirectly) and frame IV (directly), the vicar tells the peasants that the King has published a decree telling them that the citizens of the realm now are free to tell the truth and inform prejudices of all possible subjects. The introduction of this topic in frame IV gives Reiar and Einar in frame V the possibility to inform themselves, the actual readers of the pamphlet, and the model reader, the King, that the officials of the diocese are corrupt. In frame VI, Reiar and Einar identify and narrate stories about the officials in the diocese and their corrupt activities.

This rather complicated way of structuring political utterances in the completely new text culture of public opinion is typical of the ways the pamphlets of the first freedom of writing period in Europe were organized. The elaborate frame structure in most of these pamphlets reveals that text norms adapted to this new semiosphere of public opinion were not clear-cut or established. As also Gustafsson (2009) points out for the contemporary situation in Sweden, a wide variety of traditional genres are drawn upon, such as prayers, odes, and so on, to achieve the political purposes. In this way, the Dano-Norwegian freedom of writing period is characterized by text structures being tested out. In the longer term, this led to a recognizable text culture based on clear-cut constitutive text norms for political debates, where also regulative text norms were established as for the structuring of texts.

Comparisons with Other Text Theories Used in *Sakprosa* Research

The view of texts as cultural artefacts that we have outlined is influenced by and must be compared to other theories. Here we will first discuss text linguistics, which since its establishment in the 1970s has profoundly influenced how we conceive of texts, not least in the Nordic countries and continental Europe. Second, we look at systemic functional linguistics (SFL), where seminal work was conducted in the UK and Australia. SFL has, since the turn of the millennium, become a sort of grand theory for the study of text and social context. We discuss these theories to

pinpoint our epistemology. We also bring up these traditions since our theory of texts as cultural artefacts is developed in dialogue with them.

The core question of text linguistics concerns what constitutes textuality, and the answer is based on the notions of cohesion and coherence. In Enkvist's (1974) seminal paper on basic questions of text linguistics, cohesive ties between clauses and sentences are distinguished, such as reference and conjunction, and an important insight is that cohesion by itself does not ensure coherence (cf. Fossetøl 1980). Cohesion does not make a text semantically meaningful by itself. Enkvist notes that it is hard to delimit a non-text, since we as human have a capacity for inventing one or another context where an utterance makes sense. And this in contrast to grammar, where a non-grammatical clause can easily be constructed.

Important in text linguistics is that the text becomes the primary object of enquiry and that texts are treated as meaningful—coherent—wholes. Halliday and Hasan's (1976) classic work on cohesion in English provides a huge taxonomy of cohesive ties and chains in the same vein as Enkvist, where the linear structure of texts is the focus of the analysis. Once again it is determined that a text "is not a grammatical unit" (*ibid.*, p. 5). Thus, we must, as Berge (1990) explains, separate language norms (that constitute separate languages) from text norms (that qualify utterances as texts). Even if this text linguistic tradition had its heydays in the late twentieth century, it continues to have impact, not least in mother tongue instruction and teacher training.⁴

Another important strand of text linguistics aims at uncovering a delimited set of text types (see Ledin 1999, for an overview), where many cognitive models has been proposed, such as Werlich (1976). Werlich' basic text types are description, narration, exposition, argumentation, and instruction. These are seen as idealized principles for text structuring used by humans when dealing with their environment. In description our perception is spatially oriented, and in narration temporally, and this is reflected in language. In Scandinavia, Berge (1990) simplifies Werlich'

⁴A textbook like Nyström (2001)—with the telling title "Hur hänger det ihop" ('How is it tied together')—has been widely used in Sweden to learn teacher students how cohesive ties are employed in different types of texts.

typology and suggest four text types, each based on a specific type of conjunction. These are the descriptive text type based on additive conjunction, the explicative text type based on implicative conjunction, the argumentative text type based on contrastive conjunction, and the narrative text type based on temporal conjunction.

A later and influential typology is suggested by Adam (1992). Here the relations between propositions are foregrounded and form sequences stating explicit text structures. The text types are similar to Werlich's. Adam's sequences have been used in Scandinavian text historical research (e.g., Nord 2008, departs from the instructional sequence when exploring garden books from the seventeenth century until present). It can also be noted that Werlich, Berge, and Adam see the text types as prototypical. We should not expect a text to display features from only one text type, but several—texts are in this sense heterogenous.

As Virtanen (1992) makes clear the issue of text types contains two levels. On the one hand it has to do with the purpose of discourse—Virtanen labels this 'discourse type'. On the other hand, it has to do with language, or text-internal characteristics, as in Adam's sequences. This level is labelled 'text type'. The distinction is an important one and allows for discourse types to be realized by different text types. The argumentative discourse type (where the purpose is persuasive) can in principle be realized by any text type, or combination of text types. As we all know, a narrative, or a long description or explanation, might well serve a persuasive purpose.

Distinctions that resemble Virtanen's model has been constitutive for the teaching on how to write texts resembling *sakprosa* as well as research on *sakprosa* in Scandinavia, as documented in the Wheel of Writing. It is a theoretical construct of writing in Norwegian schools (Berge et al. 2016). Here, writing is construed as both an act (similar to Virtanen's text types) and as a purpose (similar to Virtanen's discourse type). The six writing acts are to convince, to interact, to reflect, to describe, to explore, to imagine, and seen as existing independently of the six purposes of writing, which include, for example, persuasion, knowledge organization, and identity formation. So, acts are related to purposes in a flexible way, and the model elaborates how combinations of acts and purposes might be semiotically mediated.

So far, we have pointed out how research on *sakprosa* has been and still is influenced by text linguistics and its tools and analytical distinctions. What text linguistics lack, we argue, is a notion of text that takes in cultural norms and thereby distinguishes utterances from texts. In the text linguistic and cognitive paradigm texts most often come out as tied to psychological processes (Berge 1993), as in the widespread work of Beaugrande and Dressler (1981: 3), who defines “TEXT” (upper case in original) as a “COMMUNICATIVE OCCURRENCE which meet seven standards of textuality”, where cohesion and coherence are the first two standards, and others include, for example, informativity and acceptance.

A text thus becomes a unique linguistic occurrence of communication, coded by universal cognitive operations. In other words, a text is conceived of as meeting criteria—or standards—for cognitive processing. Differences between texts are consequently explained by individual differences between actors as for the cognitive processing. This means that actors are stripped off culture and social context, and that the text as a cultural artefact disappears.

Returning to Figs. 1 and 2, the children’s texts by Ella and Espen, we have argued that they—like all texts—must be seen as utterances. These utterances are cultural artefacts, where materiality is shaped in ways possible in the actual culture and conceptual worlds are set up in communication. They are contextually configured with an outer form, within which an inner structure unfolds. This also explains the wholeness of utterances and texts, or coherence. Coherence, we argue, does not, as text linguistic theory proposes, arise as a function of universal cognitive processes, but is inherent in the utterance as a cultural artefact. When an utterance instantiates a text norm, it comes to be valued as text, which is the case for Ella’s utterance in Fig. 1, where the genre of autobiography is evoked and tried out.

The impact of systemic functional linguistics (SFL) on all sorts of discourse studies has been enormous, and it has certainly influenced research on *sakprosa*. Here, we will discuss the SFL notion of text and pay special attention to SFL approaches to multimodality and educational linguistics. SFL defines text as “any instance of living language that is playing some part in a context of situation” (Halliday and Hasan 1989: 31). This

means that dialogue and spoken interaction becomes fundamental for making meaning, where the context of situation unfolds over time. In written texts—or text as a product—the context is encapsulated in and can be recovered from the text (*ibid.*, p. 11). Important here is that texts are made of meanings and that these meanings are systemic and formalized in the three metafunctions. These three strands of meaning are ideational (construing experiences), interpersonal (construing social relations), and textual (construing coherence).

The metafunctions resonate with the context of situation, where ideational meanings relate to field of discourse (what is going on), ideational to tenor (who are taking part), and textual to mode of discourse (the role assigned to language). This means that the communication itself, the social situation, is seen as a metafunctional configuration, and that the organization of semiotic resources also reflect the metafunctions, a view that in SFL is coded in models of stratification.

So SFL wants to understand and describe the systemic resources that humans use when making meaning through texts. It is a universal semantic theory, often labelled social semiotics, which means that texts can be coded in different semiotic systems. The most influential work here is Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) attempt to construct a visual grammar. Kress and van Leeuwen developed their model from the first edition of Halliday's Introduction to systemic functional grammar (1985) and made this grammar applicable to images.

The basis for this is to develop metafunctionally organized systems where meanings are formalized as choices and then analyse texts according to the choices made (cf. Jewitt et al. 2016: 49). So, for example, in Halliday (1985), the ideational metafunction is formalized in a systemic network of processes, such as material and mental processes. Kress and van Leeuwen (1996: 73) adopt and revise this network, where we, just as in language have material and mental processes, where the former can be agentative or not and the latter just as in language code propositions. This means that the ideational metafunction, formalized in systemic networks, not least for processes, is presented as the entry point for studying any semiotic mode or material. So, for example, when Ravelli and McMurtrie (2016) develop what they call SDA (Spatial Discourse Analysis), a similar

systemic network for processes recurs when analysing architecture and buildings (p. 31) (cf. Ledin and Machin 2019a).

Kress and van Leeuwen's visual grammar has had an immense impact, also on Nordic research on *sakprosa*. The detailed analyses of images appealed to linguistics and sparked all sorts of historical and multimodal analyses of the evolution of different texts and genres: encyclopaedias, textbooks, the weekly press, garden books, and handbooks of different sorts (see Melander and Olsson 2001, for such examples). There are many textbooks which, in a simplified and pedagogic manner, explains Kress and van Leeuwen's work, for example, Björkvall (2009) in a Nordic context. An overview of this tradition and a discussion of multimodal *sakprosa* research in the Nordic countries are found in Ledin et al. (2019).

The grammatical approach is characteristic for different SFL analyses and focuses on how systemic resources are used in texts. An 'outside-in' approach is taken, where texts are divided into discrete semantic units pertaining to the metafunctions. This approach risks to shatter the wholeness of texts, and, as in text linguistics, its qualities as a cultural artefact disappears (Berge 2012a). Also, since the metafunctions link language to context, both are rendered as metafunctional configurations, and actual social contexts and actors might well disappear. As Ledin and Machin (2019a) argue, SFL tend to become a 'grand theory' for researching any semiotic system in more or less the same way, regardless of their materiality, sociohistorical origins, the rhetorical exigences in a certain context, and so on.

To be fair, this critique does not apply to all SFL approaches. There is also an 'inside-out' analysis, where systemic resources used and foregrounded in the actual text are pinpointed. Still, if we go to Martin and Rose (2008), a genre model with a stratification of context is proposed, in which different outer levels are realized in inner ones in a strict 'outside-in' fashion. Genre is an outer layer in this model, which means that social purposes and generic structures are reified. Genre is then realized through register, discourse semantics, and lexicogrammar, with the metafunctions cutting through and resonating in all levels (Martin and Rose 2008). As for developing a genre pedagogy, there might be advantages with modelling cultural resources in this way, as the reification makes culture visible.

For our purposes, in developing our theory of texts as cultural artefacts, this structuralist view of genre, and of texts as being determined by pre-given systemic networks, is not productive. Following Bakhtin (1986), we see every text as an utterance, existing in a unique context of situation, where linguistic patterns and generic structures are more or less stable. The eighteenth-century pamphlet in Fig. 4 exemplifies this. It is an utterance taking political stance, so in this sense, in recognizing it as expressing a political opinion, we can talk about a very general constitutive text norm. But the pamphlets produced in this era showed extreme variation as for different textual patterns and did not follow clear-cut regulative norms.

Also, the inner (and generic) structure of texts exists within the outer form of a text, such as in Ella's utterance in Fig. 1. Here, a mutual intentionality is coded in the general frame of 'this is me telling you about myself'. The outer form creates a wholeness that is not accounted for in SFL. Furthermore, both SFL and text linguistics models mostly linear structures, for example, conjunction on a local level or the staging of the text on a global level. As we have shown in the analysis of the pamphlets documented in Table 2, frame structures, in which different voices are positioned, are a fundamental textual and communicative means (Berge 2012a; Ledin and Machin 2019b).

Final Remarks on Epistemological Status of the Theory of Texts as Cultural Artefacts

In this chapter, we have outlined a theory of texts as cultural artefacts. In developing this theory, we have drawn upon different other theories, for example, cultural semiotics (e.g., Lotman 1990), dialogism (e.g., Bakhtin 1986), and cultural psychology (e.g., Cole and Derry 2005). In order to position and explain the theory, we have related it to text linguistics and systemic functional linguistics, two traditions that have had an immense impact on text research in the Nordic countries and elsewhere and that we both have worked within. Our aim is not to criticize these traditions per se but to point to how we conceive of, for example, coherence as a

function of the qualities of an utterance as a cultural artefact and not, as in text linguistics, as a function of universal cognitive processes, or how we view unique utterances with a contextual configuration and shared intentionality as being the fundamental means of communication, not grammar or genres, as in systemic functional linguistics.

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Texts Complying with Societal Pressures: Changing Genres in Finnish Companies' CSR Reporting

Merja Koskela, Mona Enell-Nilsson,
and Cecilia Hjerppe

Introduction

Changes in society tend to bring along changes in the institutional production and consumption of texts, including those representing the business world. For example, sustainability reports of companies are today available for interested publics online, following the increasing requirements of openness and transparency by different stakeholders. Thereby, the number and diversity of potential readers of these reports have increased, which has had consequences for both content and form of the texts.

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M. Koskela (✉) • M. Enell-Nilsson • C. Hjerppe
University of Vaasa, Vaasa, Finland
e-mail: merja.koskela@uwasa.fi; mona.enell-nilsson@uwasa.fi;
cecilia.hjerppe@uwasa.fi

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In this chapter, we study—in the spirit of the Nordic studies of *sakprosa* (*non-fictional prose*)—texts, through which listed companies conduct their sustainability reporting. In a company context, this is usually referred to as *corporate social responsibility (CSR)* reporting. CSR is often understood as incorporating economic, environmental, and social dimensions of corporate social responsibility (for the so-called triple-bottom-line framework, see Elkington 1999). The CSR reporting texts represent professional discourse and language for specific purposes, LSP, but they can increasingly be considered as everyday texts in today's society, where the public is continuously showing more interest in sustainability issues. Still, it can be contested whether the reporting counts as genuine *sakprosa*. However, following Berge (2001: 10), *sakprosa* can be defined pragmatically according to the variable contexts of text production, including cultural, institutional, and business settings. From this perspective, CSR reporting texts hold interest for *sakprosa* research as texts reflecting a changing society, where companies present their reports as factual, objective, and informative descriptions, while most readers interpret them as combinations of informative and persuasive goals (see e.g., Bondi 2016).

CSR reports may be understood as representatives of a *genre*, given that they constitute linguistically realized activity types and thus also communicative events that share communicative purposes, which are recognized by the discourse community. Moreover, they belong to the established *colony of reporting genres* (Bhatia 2004) and are closely connected with other genres, to the degree that it is possible to talk about a *genre system* and *genre embedding* in the sense that the CSR reports are often incorporated as parts of annual reporting and corporate websites. (For definitions of the genre-related concepts, see e. g. Mäntynen and Shore 2014.)

The aim of this chapter is to analyse how generic and intertextual resources are used in Finnish companies' CSR reporting over a time span (2016–2020) when regulative conditions for the reporting have been changing. A major change during the studied time span concerned larger companies in the EU, which from the 2017 financial year onwards have had to report on their non-financial and diversity information annually (under Directive 2014/95/EU). Thus, we present two research questions:

- (1) Which reporting formats have been and are prevalent in the context of companies' CSR reporting?
- (2) How is intertextuality manifested across CSR reporting formats and online disclosures on corporate websites?

The first research question focuses on the reporting format, which we understand as an important generic resource for corporate disclosure. Changes in reporting format indicate changes in communicative practices, which again may imply changes in the text-society relationship.

Based on the answers to the first question, that is, focusing on companies following different logics in their reporting practices, the second research question sets out to study the relationship between the CSR report genre and texts about CSR on the companies' sustainability web pages. Because the communicative goals and intended audiences of the reporting genres differ from those of the corporate websites (see Malavasi 2018), we seek to find out how different intertextual and interdiscursive resources are used to serve the needs of CSR communication in the two channels. We assume that there is a connection between the selected reporting format and the use of intertextual and interdiscursive resources, such as genre embedding, genre hybrids, mixing and blending, for example, when it comes to using the affordances of digital media for combining informative and persuasive elements.

In line with earlier *sakprosa* research, we are interested in the relationship between texts and changes in society (see Andersen 2021: 15). We also align with earlier Nordic studies of *sakprosa* (e.g., Rahm and Sandell 2016; Skärlund 2020) in that we illustrate how a change in the societal context has consequences for regularly published texts.

Regarding the first research question, we apply a longitudinal approach, as recommended by Yu and Bondi (2017: 288), who call for more studies of the diachronic variations of CSR reports in order to shed light on how the rapid development of reporting activities is reflected in the generic features of the reports. We address the second research question by focusing on the latest online CSR texts of selected companies and thereby contribute to the discussion raised by, for example, Malavasi (2018) about the differences and similarities between CSR reports and CSR communication on corporate websites.

In the next section, “Genre Perspectives on CSR Reporting,” we present an overview of relevant earlier studies of CSR reporting as a background for our analysis. Subsequently, we explain our data in more detail and explicate the methodology (Section “Data and method”), after which we present the analyses of the reporting format and intertextual relations (in the section “Variability and Intertextuality in CSR Reporting”). We conclude this chapter by discussing the implications of our findings for *sakprosa* research as well as for research on CSR reporting (“Discussion and Conclusion”).

Genre Perspectives on CSR Reporting

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) reporting has attracted a great deal of scholarly attention during the past 20 years. Not only has it been the object of study in business economics and accounting, it has also been studied in disciplines such as sociology, political studies, and philosophy (Gonzalez-Perez 2013: 3). From a communication, language, and discourse studies point of view, CSR has been analysed for more than a decade already (e.g., Bondi and Yu 2018; Raupp et al. 2011). In particular, the seemingly objective reporting combined with corporate image construction and reputation enhancement in CSR communication has proven to be a fruitful starting point for many studies.

The emergence of the CSR report is discussed by Fifka (2013: 122), who explains that it can be traced back to the development of the social report as a corporate reporting format in the 1970s as a reaction to an increasing external demand for information about companies’ social care for employees. In the 1990s, the environmental report was established as a reporting format—a result of increasing public demands for reporting on environmental aspects. From the turn of the millennium, greater emphasis was placed on reporting on social and economic aspects in addition to environmental aspects, which gave rise to the first CSR reports. Consequently, the pressure from the stakeholders’ side has been increasing. As Eccles and Krzus (2010: 161) point out, integrated reporting that combines the disclosure of financial and non-financial

information offers a possibility to meet growing demands and, ultimately, achieve a sustainable society.

In a recent study of legitimation strategies in corporate discourse, Lin (2021) introduces earlier research on CSR reports, including studies of communicative purposes and rhetorical moves of the reports (e.g., Bondi and Yu 2018; Catenaccio 2012; Yu and Bondi 2017), of linguistic features, such as appraisal, stance, tense, and metaphor (e.g., Fuoli 2018), and promotional and future-oriented talk (e.g., Bondi 2016). In many of these studies, the genre perspective has been highlighted. For example, Catenaccio (2012: 65) concludes that there is a standard type of CSR report, which large companies publish on their websites to represent themselves in a positive light. On the other hand, Bondi (2016: 286) states that CSR reports form a complex and extended genre characterized by *hybridity*, combining informative, descriptive, and argumentative textual elements, which are interwoven with each other intertextually and connected through interactive links. Bondi and Yu (2018: 182) study the macro generic structure of CSR reports. They see the CSR report as a complex and extended genre with semi-independent part-genres, conventional sections and established rhetorical moves, often similar to those in annual reports. According to Bondi and Yu (2018), and relevant for our study, the genre is characterized by an increasing complexity as it is more and more integrated with corporate accounting and corporate communication. They also found strong cross-cultural convergence, which indicates that there are global trends in CSR reporting (see also Enell-Nilsson and Koskela 2020). Even though Bondi and Yu (2018) emphasize hybridity, referring to different types of blending, mixing, and combining that occur in genres and texts (see Mäntynen and Shore 2014: 738), they do not mention the role of the CSR report as an *embedded genre* within the context of annual reporting or corporate websites.

The broader genre system around CSR reports is addressed by Malavasi (2018), who compares stand-alone CSR reports with sustainability websites of large European companies as different tactical means to demonstrate their own responsibility. According to Malavasi (2018: 230–231), the combination of a dedicated report and corporate website is the preferred way for companies to publish information about their CSR achievements and goals. The focus of Malavasi's (2018) study was on

textual, multimodal, and linguistic configurations. The results show that websites tend to be more popularized and easily readable than the reports, which are highly informative and focus on results, actions and progress. On the company websites, more attention is given to goals, values, partnerships, and projects. The contents of the websites have been adapted to the type of media and a broader target audience, and therefore both contents and multimodal and lexical resources are different from those in reports. Consequently, the reports contain factual self-descriptions while the websites are more emotional and “down-to-earth” (2018: 246). The result is in part explained by regulatory requirements concerning the reports but not the websites.

Further, while Malavasi (2018: 246) calls for more research on the differences between “hard-copy” stand-alone reports and digital CSR disclosures as adaptations to different media and target audience, we recognize that the question of the media in use and the adaptation to them is steered by many different (and sometimes even conflicting) forces, including global, multi-national, national, business-field specific regulations and guidelines as well as corporate-level social practices. In this regard, digitalization offers the optimal solution, as it accommodates for a wide range of hybrid forms, which companies can then make use of while striving to demonstrate to different audiences that they are responsible and trustworthy actors.

Our contribution here is that unlike Malavasi (2018), we do not focus on digitalization as the driver of changes and variations, but combine an analysis of genre development (i.e., longitudinal changes in reporting format) with an analysis of intertextual variations to account for a broader perspective, in line with Nordic *sakprosa* research.

Data and Method

In our analysis, we look at two types of data: CSR or annual reports and corporate websites. The first data set consists of CSR or annual reports of companies listed in the Nasdaq Helsinki Stock Exchange (OMXH25) on 1 June 2021 for the financial years 2016–2020 (published 2017–2021). They were chosen since the EU Directive 2014/95/EU concerns them as

large companies, and they typically serve as models for other companies to follow, for example, in terms of CSR reporting, in their respective branches. The second data set includes sustainability contents of corporate websites (collected in July 2021) of three selected companies among the aforementioned: Fortum, Huhtamäki, and TietoEVRY. These companies were chosen specifically because the first data set revealed different profiles in the reporting format within the analysed time span. Furthermore, they represent different types of industries with diverse sustainability issues and were seen as utilizing dynamic reporting conventions. The two types of data were collected, first, to include the companies' CSR reports from a time span covering reporting years both before and after the EU directive entered into force, and second, to include different reporting practices and, consequently, (sub-)genres used in CSR disclosure. A longitudinal perspective can be applied to the reports, which must be archived and are downloadable on the companies' websites, whereas general website content is continuously edited and thus does not easily translate for longitudinal studies. The details of the two data sets are presented in Table 1.

Our research method is a qualitative data analysis inspired by traditional genre analysis (see Bhatia 2004: 164–166). Given that we are interested in changes and variations, our approach carries some features of a

Table 1 Details of the data

Data set 1: CRS reports or annual reports for the financial years 2016–2020		
Cargotec	Metso Outotec	Sampo
Elisa	Metsä Board	Stora Enso
Fortum	Neles	Telia Company
Huhtamäki	Neste	TietoEVRY
Kemira	Nokia	UPM-Kymmene
Kesko	Nokian Renkaat	Valmet
Kojamo	Nordea Bank	Wärtsilä
Kone	Orion	
Konecranes	Outokumpu	
Data set 2: Sustainability contents of the corporate websites		
Fortum	Huhtamäki	TietoEVRY
https://www.fortum.com/about-us/sustainability-report-highlights	https://www.huhtamaki.com/en/sustainability/	https://www.tietoevry.com/sustainability

comparative constant method (see Glaser and Strauss 2006 [1967]) in that we applied inductive coding where data was compared with data to identify similarities and differences.

In the first phase, we searched for and identified the CSR or annual reports for the financial years 2016–2020 on the websites of the most traded listed companies (Helsinki OMX25) and coded them according to the *reporting format*. For this coding, the starting point was a categorisation into stand-alone reports (i.e., the CSR reporting as a report of its own) and combined reports (i.e., the CRS reporting as part of the annual report) (see Maniora 2017: 759). However, some reports seemed to fall in between these categories, and as our interest lies in the changing and hybrid nature of the CSR reporting genre, we paid specific attention to deviations in our data. Where in most cases the categorization could be made based on the overall form and title of the report (e.g., “Annual report” or “Sustainability report”), some reports needed to be read more closely, namely if there were different versions available for downloading. We also searched the reports for *metatalk*, that is, explicit comments about the CSR reporting and communication, in order to understand how the companies themselves defined their reporting and described how they have reacted to the changes in regulations.

In the second phase, we located sustainability-themed contents on the three selected case companies’ websites: Fortum, Huhtamäki, and TietoEVERY. We focused our data collection on the section which was explicitly labelled “sustainability”, even though there often was sustainability-related information elsewhere as well, for example, on investor pages and on the front page. We then compared the contents and form of the three selected companies’ most recent CSR reports and sustainability sections on the websites. The most recent CSR reports were published in spring 2021, and the website data was collected in July 2021, which gave reason to assume that there would be similarities between the contents of reports and websites. Consequently, we analysed the data from the perspective of intertextuality (see e.g., Bhatia 2004: 126–127) through close-reading and comparing the reports and websites side by side per company. We looked for similarities, on the one hand, and variation, on the other; how much and which things were copied and pasted, and what was disclosed only in the report or on the website.

Variability and Intertextuality in CSR Reporting

In this section, we present the results of our data analysis. In light of the longitudinal analysis, our findings paint a picture of the CSR report as a complex genre characterised by variation in both form and content. The analysis of the reporting format shows that form is a layered concept stretching from micro-level linguistic choices to macro-level choices in terms of subgenres and variable use of generic and intertextual resources. In the following, we discuss the findings in more detail and present examples of companies following different logics in their reporting practices. First, we discuss the CSR reporting practices, where the focus is on the (longitudinal) stability versus variable reporting formats of the OMX25 listed companies (in the section “Stable versus Variable Reporting Formats”). Second, we present a more detailed analysis of recent CSR disclosure of the three companies Fortum, Huhtamäki, and TietoEVRY from the perspectives of intertextuality (in the section “CSR Reporting on Corporate Websites from the Perspective of Intertextuality”).

Stable Versus Variable Reporting Formats

Out of the 25 Finnish most traded companies listed at the point of company selection for our study (1 June 2021), the CSR reporting formats of 23 companies from the time span 2016–2020 could be investigated (see Table 2). Due to company mergers, the longitudinal perspective could not be applied for two companies, and the data collected regarding these includes only the reports for the financial year 2020.¹

The longitudinal data shows stability in terms of reporting format in the sense that the majority—in total 15 companies of the 23—used the same reporting format from year to year. However, there is a clear division between those preferring a stand-alone report versus a combined report: Out of the 15 companies, 8 consistently presented a stand-alone CSR report; whereas 7 companies used a combined report throughout

¹Metso Outotec and Neles presented combined reports for the financial year 2020. They were founded in July 2020 when Outotec and Metso Minerals merged, and the remaining parts of Metso were transformed into Neles.

Table 2 Stability and variability in CSR reporting

Type	Reporting format (years 2016–2020)	Companies	Quantity (n = 23)
Stability (n = 15)	Stand-alone report	Elisa, Fortum, Kone, Nokia, Nokian Renkaat, Nordea Bank, Orion, Outokumpu	8
	Combined report	Cargotec, Kemira, Kojamo, Telia Company, UPM-Kymmene, Valmet, Wärtsilä	7
Variability (n = 8)			
- Selective variability	From combined report to stand-alone report	Konecranes, Sampo	2
	From stand-alone report to combined report	Huhtamäki, Metsä Board	2
- Hybridity	E.g., interactive PDF file, integrated report	Kesko, Neste, Stora Enso, TietoEVRY	4

the investigated time span. This indicates that reporting practices may be slow to change. However, our analysis shows that even companies which did not change their reporting format, to some extent experimented with digital affordances, such as audio book format as an additional feature.

Nokia is one of the eight companies which reported in a stand-alone format from year to year using the same title “Nokia People & Planet Report” combined with the reporting year in question. In this case, the choice of the stand-alone report with this consistent, distinctive title can be seen as a branding strategy by Nokia. Interestingly, the main part of Nokia’s metatalk about the reporting format was also formulated in the same way from year to year. However, Nokia comments on the changes due to the new requirements related to the EU Directive 2014/95/EU in the report for the financial year 2017:

- (1) We have published annual corporate responsibility reports since 1999 and the reports are available in digital format on our website from as far back as 2003 at www.nokia.com/sustainability. Sustainability and corporate responsibility topics are also discussed in our official annual reports,

including the annual report on Form 20-F that is filed with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission in the United States*. The Board Review of 2017 Annual Accounts includes non-financial information as required for the first time by the Finnish Accounting Act implementing the EU Directive on disclosure of non-financial and diversity information. (Nokia 2018)

Kemira is one of the seven companies which consistently presented a combined report in the analysed time span. The change in regulation did not seem to affect the reporting format of the company, but there were changes in report content for the financial year 2017 onwards, such as sections and tables including non-financial and diversity disclosure.

For the remaining 8 companies of the investigated 23, the longitudinal data exhibited variability of two types. The first type is what we call *selective variability*, meaning that one change in the reporting format of a company occurred within the investigated time span, otherwise there was stability in the reporting format. In our data, examples of change in both directions could be found. There were two companies changing the format from a combined report to a stand-alone CSR report, and two companies going from a stand-alone CSR report to a combined report during the investigated time span.

In the metatalk, the change on the regulative conditions was explicitly mentioned, for example, in Sampo's first stand-alone report for the financial year 2017:

(2) This is Sampo plc's first Corporate Responsibility Report (CR Report). The Report has been prepared to meet the regulatory requirements on non-financial information in accordance with Chapter 3a, Section 5 of the Finnish Accounting Act and EU Directive 2014/95/EU. The purpose of this Report is to be transparent and disclose Sampo Group companies' business and their impact on environmental, social and governance issues. The Report also highlights the Group's progress during 2017 and sets the tone for group-level corporate responsibility reporting in the future. (Sampo 2018)

Huhtamäki is one of the companies which moved from a stand-alone CSR report to a combined report from the financial year 2020 onwards.

This was stated in the metatalk of the report, but the reasons for the change were not explicitly commented on (see example 3). Nonetheless, the report contained several references to the company's renewed sustainability ambitions, which might indicate that the change in the reporting format was connected to an overall change in strategy.

(3) The Huhtamäki Annual Report 2020 is comprised of four sections describing our 2030 Strategy, sustainability and financial performance and governance. Huhtamäki does not publish a separate sustainability report for 2020. (Huhtamäki 2021)

The remaining four cases are characterized by the second type of variability, which we call *hybrid forms* or *hybridity*. Hybridity is variability in the sense that the reporting format has characteristics typical of, on the one hand, an annual report and, on the other hand, of a stand-alone CSR report. One example was Stora Enso, which used the wording “as a part of our annual report” regarding the CSR report, even though the CSR report had its own independent page numbering, and the company was elsewhere referring to their CSR or sustainability report as if it would be an independent report. These different hybrid forms are enabled by the digitalized format, giving the companies a variety of possibilities to, for instance, provide interactive PDF files where the users themselves can pick and combine parts of the available reporting materials of interest for them.

Finally, in addition to the terms *stand-alone CSR report* and *combined report*, the term *integrated report* is used in previous research in the context of hybrid forms of CSR reporting. At its core, the concept of integrated report refers to reporting that integrates sustainability information with strategic and financial information that is presented in the annual report. Thus, the term *integrated reporting* is not limited to the reporting format but has a much wider scope. This reporting trend, stemming from the 2010s, has been promoted by leading accounting firms and relies on the notion of *value creation* as its central argument (Catenaccio 2018). However, it is still considered vague and idealistic. For example, Eccles and Serafeim (2014: 8) have found that recognizing which reports really are integrated and which are not is impossible. According to them, there

are companies that claim to be following an integrated reporting strategy, but are in fact not, and also companies that implement integrated reporting without using such a label.

The vagueness of this concept was also reflected in our data, and we were not able to identify clear criteria for distinguishing an integrated report from a combined report. The references to integrated reporting in the data were formulated with caution. As illustrated by example 4, the ICT company TietoEVERY stated that they have “taken inspiration” from it.

(4) In preparing the value creation model shown on the next page, we have taken inspiration from the international <IR> Framework. (TietoEVERY 2021)

Such cautious formulations may stem from the ideological, disputed, and vague character of the framework, as stated by Catenaccio (2018) and Eccles and Serafeim (2014).

Figure 1 summarizes the CSR report genre development as presented and discussed above. The section “Past,” on the left, depicts the early stage of the emerging CSR report genre as a stand-alone report, developed from the social report via the environmental report, and added to the genre system of corporate reporting (see Fifka 2013: 122). The section “Present” (referring to the time span 2016–2020), in the middle, illustrates the reporting formats represented in the longitudinal data of our study. As presented above, the stand-alone report and the combined report are used as the two main reporting formats. Selective variability,

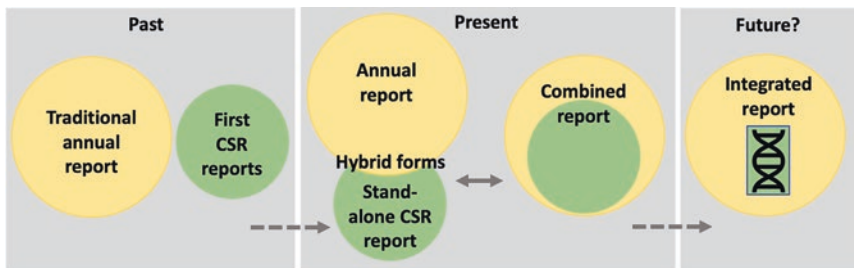


Fig. 1 Genre development

meaning a change from one main format to the other, is indicated with the arrow between the two main reporting formats: Some companies using a stand-alone report were moving towards a combined report and other companies were going from a combined report to a stand-alone report. In addition, hybrid forms that have characteristics typical for both the annual report and the stand-alone report were present in our data, representing the other type of variability. However, most of the companies investigated kept the same reporting format throughout the analysed time span.

The section “Future,” on the right, depicts a potential direction for future genre development. As the cautious formulations regarding integrated reporting presented above demonstrate, there are indications that sustainability is gradually being embedded in the core of the companies’ business strategies. For example, on its website the company Huhtamäki claimed to be “Embedding sustainability in everything we do.” Similarly, TietoEVERY stated that “Sustainability is in our core.” According to our earlier research (see Koskela et al. 2021), corporate communication practitioners frequently use the expression “sustainability is in our DNA.” Therefore, we have chosen to use this DNA metaphor in Fig. 1 to visualize the integrated reporting format.

CSR Reporting on Corporate Websites from the Perspective of Intertextuality

The relationship between the CSR reports, which are downloadable on the websites, and the contents of the sustainability websites of the same companies can be characterized as *intertextual* at many levels (see e.g., Malavasi 2018). In this section, we answer our second research question about how intertextuality was manifested across CSR reporting formats and online disclosures by concentrating on three cases with different patterns of stability and change in their reporting format: the companies Fortum, Huhtamäki, and TietoEVERY.

These three companies’ CSR reporting is affected by different industry-level sustainability issues, as well as company-level choices. What was topical for the CSR reporting of the state-owned energy company Fortum

in the analysed time span was that, in 2020, it acquired the German energy company Uniper, making Fortum one of Europe's biggest polluters according to environmental organizations (Greenpeace & Europe Beyond Coal 2019). In a broader context, Fortum's CSR communication can be seen as responding to this criticism. The acquisition is reflected in the reporting through explicit references to Fortum's and Uniper's distinct operations and reporting practices. Our second case company, the food packaging company Huhtamäki, was special from a sustainability point of view in that it emphasized its role in enabling responsible consumption through providing sustainable food packaging solutions and reducing food waste. Our last case company, the ICT company TietoEVERY, was founded through a merger by Tieto and EVERY in 2019. In its sustainability reporting, TietoEVERY highlighted the perspective of being a responsible employer and spoke for diversity and inclusion.

Throughout the analysed time span, Fortum's reporting strategy has been consistent in the sense that it has published a stand-alone CSR report as a part of its "reporting entity" from the financial year 2016 onwards. Huhtamäki, again, published its first combined report in 2021, while previously the company used a stand-alone CSR report. Utilizing the technological affordances of online reporting, TietoEVERY's reporting was characterized by hybridity as the report was downloadable both as an annual report and a CSR report (i.e., the annual report without "governance" and "financials" sections). This user-friendly approach gave the reader the choice of the reporting format (see Eccles and Krzus 2010: 192).

All case companies had a section labelled "sustainability" on their websites, and the CSR report archives were accessible through a submenu. As pointed out by Malavasi (2018), the two types of contexts for CSR reporting have different conditions: while the annual (and/or CSR) report is a highly institutionalized genre, as regulations and guidelines strongly steer its contents and structure, the corporate websites allow for more leeway in terms of what to disclose and in what manner. According to our study, however, companies choose different strategies for taking advantage of the relative freedom on the websites.

One of the case companies closely followed the structure of the CSR report on its website. We call this intertextual strategy *convergence*, referring to a high degree of similarity between the CSR reporting and the

sustainability page. The second company applied some reformulation, thus representing the intertextual strategy here called *adaptation*. The third case company had a less apparent connection between the texts, which we interpret as the intertextual strategy *divergence*. Next, we discuss the most prominent features of these three *intertextual strategies* in our data.

Figure 2 illustrates the intertextual strategies, convergence, adaptation, and divergence, applied by the case companies in our data. The figure is based on the most used strategy between the case companies' different CSR report formats and sustainability pages; that is, resources of the three strategies can be seen in all cases. However, there is a connection between the reporting format and online disclosure in our data when looked at from a genre perspective. The stand-alone CSR report (Fortum) was to a large extent similar to the online disclosure in the sense that the sustainability page was clearly based on the report. The combined report (Huhtamäki), again, had a more two-way relationship to the sustainability page, evident in the way in which the different genre conditions had been taken into account. Lastly, TietoEVRY's hybrid form of the CSR report and sustainability page showed a great deal of divergence as genres, even though they both draw on the same idea of integrated reporting and value creation.

Convergence between the report text and the web text can be recognized by the use of a similar heading structure as well as by the copying and

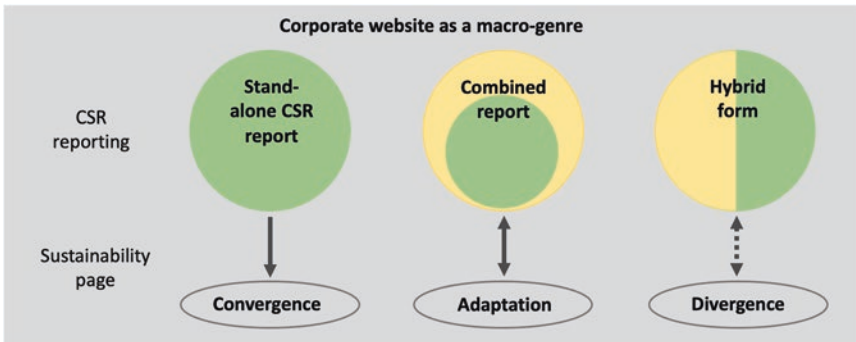


Fig. 2 Intertextual strategies on corporate sustainability websites

pasting of information. In Fortum's case, the sustainability section on the website mirrored to a large extent the sustainability report. Items were presented in the same order and mostly under the same headings (see Figs. 3 and 4). Huhtamäki, again, mostly used tables and illustrations from the report as such on the website. This can be considered the “copying and pasting” method (see Malavasi 2018: 238), as often especially the beginnings of chapters are “recycled” as part of the website. Not all the information a lengthy report holds can be included on a website, and the



Fig. 3 Running head in Fortum's CSR report

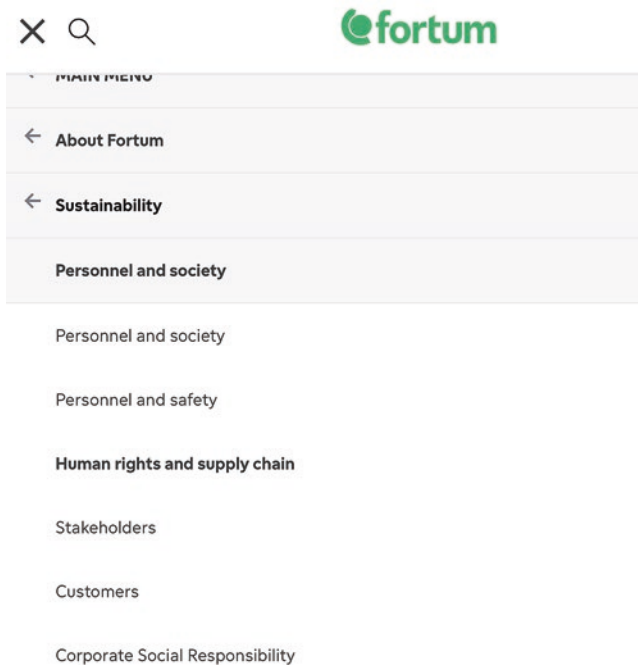


Fig. 4 Submenu on Fortum's sustainability page

different media as well as different target audiences require some level of adaptation (Malavasi 2018: 246).

Adaptation as an intertextual strategy includes editing the text in terms of form and content and making adaptations to the modes of expression, either to account for the different needs of readers or to make use of the affordances offered by an online environment. One prominent starting point for adaptation is multimodality. Corporate annual reports often utilize multimodality to a high degree, as they feature graphs, figures, and photographs (Bondi and Yu 2018: 180). The conditions for multimodality of a PDF file (let alone a paper version) are however limited, whereas the corporate website allows for the use of several semiotic modes. For example, the digital environment enables the utilization of interactive visuals so that the website user can click on a figure to get more information, which in the report is presented in a separate table. This was the strategy applied by Fortum, for example.

Besides structure and content, other resources characteristic for the annual reporting genre were also utilized on the corporate websites, indicating adaptation between the genres. For example, where Huhtamäki used portraits and signatures of board members in its annual report (see Fig. 5), some sub-sections on TietoEVERY's sustainability page contained the name and portrait of a person relevant to the subject, such as a "Head of Sustainability" (see Fig. 6). This can be read as an authorization strategy (see Van Leeuwen 2007: 94), in that the information disclosed is given a face and a "voice" (see also Bondi and Yu 2019).

Divergence is characterized by dispersed information on the website and the variance of different multimodal resources. In TietoEVERY's case, most infographics from the CSR report were not imported on the website; instead, short videos and photographs were uploaded. This can be seen as adaptation, as in utilizing different digital affordances, but also as a divergence strategy, in that the online disclosure genre is inviting a more pervasive emotional approach compared to the official report (see Malavasi 2018: 245). Thus, the information dense figures are left to the report, and pictures often representing people are included on the website instead.

Furthermore, hyperlinks indicate intertextuality inside the corporate website, considered here a macro-genre (see Fig. 2). This was especially



Business Overview

President and CEO's foreword
How we create value
Our journey to 2030
The future of food packaging
Transformative megatrends
Our 2030 Strategy
Growth and competitiveness
Culture and ethical behavior
Digitalization and innovation partnerships
Developing our talent
• Embedding sustainability in everything we do
Our businesses
Celebrating our 100 years
Financials
Governance
Sustainability Performance

Aligning with the UN Global Compact and the UN Sustainable Development Goals

Our sustainability focus is in line with the 10 principles of the UN Global Compact Initiative, which covers the areas of human rights, labor, environment and anti-corruption.

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) set out a holistic approach and areas of focus. We recognize their value ensuring a sustainable, resilient and inclusive future in which no one is left behind. In 2020 we reviewed our contribution to the SDGs and identified the areas within the 17 SDGs most relevant to what we do. This resulted in the alignment with three main goals and four supporting goals as a basis for our 2030 sustainability ambition.

Defining where we have most impact in the Sustainable Development Goals

- By assessing the relevance and importance of the issue to our value chain and our stakeholders.
- By identifying our potential to drive positive change and mitigate possible negative impacts together with our stakeholders across the value chain.
- By outlining key actions which we can implement directly to make a difference and drive change.

Acting on climate change by defining our Science Based Targets

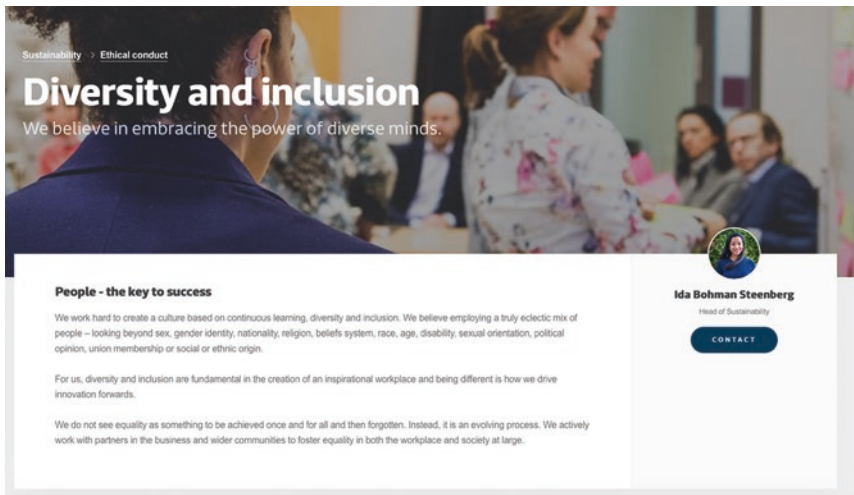
We have set ambitious high sustainability ambitions for 2030, with carbon neutral production as one of the key goals. In line with this, in 2020, we committed to our **emission reduction targets aligned with the Science Based Targets Initiative (SBTi)**. Our assessment is that the SBTi provides the best way to develop our emission reduction targets in line with climate science. We plan to submit our targets for emission scopes 1, 2 and 3 in spring 2021 in order to have them validated and published by the end of 2021.

WE SUPPORT

"We support the UN Global Compact initiative. Our sustainability ambitions are in line with the ten principles, which cover the areas of human rights, labor, environment and anti-corruption."

Charles Hälsä
President and CEO

Fig. 5 Portrait in Huhtamäki's CSR report (Photo courtesy of Huhtamäki)



Sustainability > Ethical conduct

Diversity and inclusion

We believe in embracing the power of diverse minds.

People - the key to success

We work hard to create a culture based on continuous learning, diversity and inclusion. We believe employing a truly eclectic mix of people – looking beyond sex, gender identity, nationality, religion, beliefs system, race, age, disability, sexual orientation, political opinion, union membership or social or ethnic origin.

For us, diversity and inclusion are fundamental in the creation of an inspirational workplace and being different is how we drive innovation forwards.

We do not see equality as something to be achieved once and for all and then forgotten. Instead, it is an evolving process. We actively work with partners in the business and wider communities to foster equality in both the workplace and society at large.

Ida Bohman Steenberg
Head of Sustainability

CONTACT

Fig. 6 Portrait on TietoEVRY's sustainability page (Photo courtesy of TietoEVRY)

prominent in TietoEVRY's case, perhaps explained by its overall approach to CSR. As discussed earlier (see example 4 above), TietoEVRY described how it has taken inspiration from the framework of integrated reporting in its value creation model. Integrated reporting is not merely a question of producing a report, as it also entails providing information in a more

integrated and interactive way on corporate websites (Eccles and Krzus 2010: 191). The idea of sustainability as integrated into all operations was echoed on TietoEVRY's website, for example, under the heading "Diversity and inclusion" on the sustainability section, where there was also a link to a career page stating: "We encourage applications from all." Sustainability information was thus linked to other pages on the website in a prominent manner, not by mere reference but as integrated. Consequently, the report and online disclosure seem to reflect the same underlying idea—having sustainability in the DNA of the company (see the section "Stable Versus Variable Reporting Formats")—even though as texts representing different genres they are characterized by divergence.

Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the use of generic and intertextual resources in CSR reporting of listed companies in a context where regulative conditions for the reporting are changing. We analysed the variability of reporting formats and the logic of changes, and qualitatively studied patterns in the intertextual ties between CSR reports and corporate websites. Through our analysis, we have from the perspective of CSR communication contributed to the tradition of the *sakprosa* studies interested in the relationship between text and society.

Our findings illustrate a text-society relationship where it is possible to discern how a genre emerges, evolves, develops, and may potentially vanish. The CSR report is an excellent example of the relative stability of genres, given that they are in constant flux. There are driving forces, such as changes in directives or regulation, as well as factors slowing down the developments, such as consolidated traditions and established practices related to reporting. From being separate and scattered content items in the annual reports of listed companies, the importance of different aspects of sustainability is highlighted due to societal pressures, audience interest, self-regulation, and legal requirements. This, together with the companies' goal to look as responsible as possible, leads to the emergence of a CSR report, which is either published as a stand-alone report or embedded in the annual report. Connected to different company practices, this

can gradually lead to hybrid forms. Finally, when sustainability becomes an integrated part of the companies' business-logic and strategy, a return to an embedded CSR report may be expected, which again may lead back to sustainability issues being a singular, but central content item along with others.

In a parallel manner, the corporate website as a macro-genre contains a dedicated sustainability section, which does not need to follow the strict guidelines for reporting. As our results show, companies use the technological and promotional affordances offered by the website context to different degrees. When the affordances are not used, prevalence is given to the official CSR report genre, and simultaneously trust is created among selected audiences, such as (potential) investors and regulators. On the other hand, utilizing the relative freedom of the website indicates that the company wants to reach the general public for branding or other promotional purposes. According to our results, the choice is connected with the business field and strategy. In the case of CSR reporting, the following question remains relevant: What does it reveal about society that when required to report publicly on how they handle economic, environmental and social issues in a responsible way, companies turn responsibility into a competitive advantage?

A potential interpretation is offered by the ideological dispute of neoliberal free market economy and government regulation versus self-regulation. Already Max Weber (1978 [1921]) noted that economic actors are always influenced by noneconomic phenomena including community, networks, culture, habits, traditions, and values. Indeed, Weber's (1978 [1921]) fundamental insight that social action, social structures, and cultural norms are interconnected, is a valid starting point for studying the text-society relationship in corporate social responsibility (CSR) reporting. The trends in the prevalence of the two macro-genres, annual reporting and corporate websites, form an interesting topic for future studies. Furthermore, cross-cultural studies might reveal different tendencies reflecting the text-society relationship with different dynamics between stability and change, established tradition and potential future developments.

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Digital Discourse Networks: Digital Media as a Socio-material Condition for Access and Circulation

Jack Andersen

Introduction

Many years ago, in the late 2000s, I was part of a working group which aimed to reform our program at the former Royal School of Library and Information Science in Copenhagen. One course we specifically talked about was 'Literature', and it was suggested that the course should be called 'Digital Literature' to align with the then high-profile digitization discourse in society and in academia. Suddenly, an old professor in the field shouted: 'There is no such thing as digital literature. It is bullshit. Take a look at what people are buying and reading: physical books!' The professor was and is still right. People still buy and read physical books, and people listen to audiobooks and read e-books. But the professor forgot one thing that also characterized literature back in the late 2000s: these books were produced digitally, all the way from the author's word

J. Andersen (✉)

Department of Communication, University of Copenhagen,
Copenhagen, Denmark

e-mail: jack.andersen@hum.ku.dk

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processor to the production chain. Today, digital-only has still not entirely replaced physical and analogue literature (fiction and non-fiction), but the infrastructure in which literature is embedded and inscribed is completely different, configured by a digital media which shapes access and circulation. We have social media sites for promoting and discussing literature, platforms such as ResearchGate, search engines affecting access and circulation, publishers' online catalogues, and other forms of digital media platforms without which literature, its use, and circulation in digital culture, would be unthinkable. So, while the actual literary work comes in both analogue and digital forms, it does so within a digital infrastructure that tracks, traces, counts, recommends, shares, or links. This infrastructure is characterized by a double flow of data: the tracking and tracing of users' actions feeds data back into the infrastructure, which then algorithmically archives, processes, and further circulates data. In the following, I consider these infrastructures as forming the socio-material conditions for the circulation of, and access to, *sakprosa* (English: 'subject-oriented prose'; see Berge and Ledin in this volume and the introduction).

The chapter sets out to present a theoretical and conceptual discussion of the conditions and functions of *sakprosa* in digital media culture by looking at the effect(s) imposed by digital means and modes of circulation and access. Digital media culture has a different set of affordances, implying that the circulation of *sakprosa* goes through a range of different agents (humans or algorithmic) producing many forms of (meta)data and paratexts affecting access and reception. I argue that we must work towards specifying the possibilities of circulation and their effects. The consequence of this argument is that we need to understand digital media culture as a socio-material condition for *sakprosa*. In order to clarify what this means, I adapt the concept of a discourse network from the German media theorist Friedrich Kittler (1990). I thus argue for the necessity of a firm understanding of this condition in order to make sense of what exactly the role of digital media is regarding *sakprosa* and its configurations in current digital culture. My hope is that this argument sparks an understanding in *sakprosa* research of digital media as not in opposition to *sakprosa*, but rather as a material condition in digital culture, just as print was some time ago.

The chapter furnishes the modern research conversation about sakprosa in digital culture with a vocabulary and modes of understanding that enables us to see how digital materiality not only surrounds sakprosa but also has performative effects shaping how we perceive, access, and make use of it. The novelty of the approach taken here with regard to sakprosa is to introduce a set of concepts and analytical gaze from materialist media theory and use that as a point of departure for examining and understanding how digital media culture works as a socio-material condition for the circulation and access to sakprosa, how to read and write it and what we, on the whole, make of it.

I approach my discussion in the following way. Having made some initial methodological remarks, I introduce Kittler's notion of discourse network and how I adapt it here. Next, supplementing the notion of discourse network with some observations on digital archives and algorithms serves to establish some conceptual building-blocks for the next two examples. Analyzing how a particular scholarly publishing house encourages authors to think about their contributed articles and their circulation, and how a Danish public authority website communicates and grants access to state-based information, serves to show how a digital discourse network sets up conditions and possibilities for the circulation of, and access to, sakprosa.

Methodological Remarks

Before venturing into the discussion about digital media as a socio-material condition for the circulation of, and access to, sakprosa, some initial remarks are needed about the relationship between sakprosa, digital media, and digitization. As sakprosa is many things (e.g., scholarly treatises, textbooks, administrative records, account books), so are digital media (e.g., games, word-processing, databases), and there has always been a close relationship between any given discourse and the media available for articulating and circulating it. Speeches, for instance, are a historical product of primary orality (Ong 1982) while the list is a product of writing (Goody 1977). While some may regard this as a mere historical circumstance, I deal with it here as an analytical point of departure.

As such close relationship is another way of saying that the media technologies available shape what we consider and study as sakprosa; that it is not pure free-floating spirit. There is something that makes our historically formed conceptions of sakprosa (and other kinds of cultural artifacts) possible and that is the medium into which it is inscribed. I am also not going to talk about the digitization of sakprosa and what is lost and gained; that is, the process of converting analogue material into digital form. Rather, I am going to speak of both analogue and digital sakprosa and digital forms, and how they feed into and are accessed in a digital media culture. I am going to examine digital media culture as a precondition for both analogue and born-digital forms of sakprosa. Using 'precondition' is not the same as being deterministic. It is a way of claiming that digital media set up an infrastructure providing different sets of affordances for our everyday involvement with and in communication, written or oral. Of course, the mundane use of communication is shaped by the people using its means and modes, ranging from the accidental to the strictly routinized use. For citizens, audiences, publics, or users in most Western cultures, however, digital media and their communicative affordances play, if not a key role, then at least some kind of recognizable role in our daily interactions with sakprosa. It is not a question of whether digital media are good or bad for our involvement with sakprosa. That may well be the case. Rather, it is a question of what kind of material configurations (i.e., digital media) shape our perceptions, use, and production of sakprosa.

We can easily interrogate sakprosa without necessarily resorting to any reflection of digital media and vice versa. However, as many of today's cultural forms and social interactions are being shaped by digital media, this would be close to a fallacious mission. Theoretically, empirically, and methodologically, we cannot approach sakprosa any longer as if it is only a product of print. Whether we like or not, digital media are the communicative currency without which we are unable to tap into any understanding of sakprosa and its involvement in digital media culture. We are way past the point of discussing how analogue and printed texts are converted to digital form. In current culture, many forms of communication are born digital (e.g., social media); that is, they have no print or analogue equivalent, but of course remediate previous forms of text. As Jack

Goody (1977) reminds us regarding the written list: some forms of communication are medium-specific. Born digital, then, means that these forms of text carry with them features fairly unique to the digital medium, and these features shape our conceptions of and practices with digital media and the discourses they affect.

Clearly, sakprosa becomes a different thing with digital media, but of course it also inherits remediated things from its analogue and print condition (Bolter and Grusin 1999). This chapter ventures into the kind of thing that sakprosa is materially and supposedly becoming (as opposed to an ontological category), when looked at from the point of view of the means and modes of digital access and circulation.

Digital Media as the Contemporary Discourse Network for Sakprosa

Friedrich Kittler's book *Discourse Networks 1800/1900* (Kittler 1990) can serve as a useful conceptual tool with which to, initially, frame sakprosa and how it is constituted by digital media. But what does Kittler mean with his notion of a discourse network? In general, Kittler's notion of discourse network is to be understood as the assemblage of technologies, power, and institutions that make meaning, or more precisely the production of meaning, and something like literature and cultural artifacts in general, possible. It 'can designate the network technologies and institutions that allow a given culture to select, store, and process relevant data' (Kittler 1990: 369). Of interest here is Kittler's use of information theory concepts such as selection, storage, processing, and data, and the relationship to institutions. This indicates his undertaking: to produce an understanding of what makes literature possible in particular epochs with particular technologies and particular forms of institutionalizations (e.g., the university) affecting how we perceive literature, but with a vocabulary not usually applied to describe such a situation. For Kittler 'Media, from books to cinema to computers, were not reducible to either content or to sociological conditions, but had to include considerations that took into account how media technologies afford specific forms of perception and

modes of memory as well as social relations' (Parikka 2012: 68). Here we see how the notion of a discourse network is similar to Foucault's (1972: 127) idea of a historical *a priori*, which is not a surprise given that Kittler's book is partly a Foucaultian take on media technologies in its ambition 'to map out the epistemic conditions of media' (Parikka 2012: 68). But it is also a broader take on media than usual in media and communication studies, as Kittler applies it 'to all domains of cultural exchange' and as that which is 'determined by the technological possibilities of the epoch in question' (Wellbery 1990: xiii).

In dealing with (fiction) literature as a media system, Kittler (1990) analyzes how literature functions as, and is made up of, channels of communication emphasizing how the very medium, consisting of sense and nonsense, noise, and information, with its own characteristics, or affordances, shapes the kinds of messages going through it and our perceptions of these messages. In this take on literature, Kittler offers a rethinking of it through classic media terms such as 'recording', 'archiving', 'messages', 'communication', 'noise', and 'transmission', at the expense of the hermeneutical paradigm of meaning, understanding, and interpretation: 'if literature is medially constituted—that is, if it is a means of processing, storage, and transmission of data—then its character will change historically according to the material and technical resources at its disposal. And it will likewise change historically according to the alternative medial possibilities with which it competes' (Wellbery 1990: xiii). In doing this, Kittler indicates how literature becomes something other than hitherto conceived of in literary criticism; namely, literature as a product of a specific technology called writing. With the rise of what Kittler calls 'technical media' (gramophone or film), or in Benjamin's (1977/1935) terms, a media of mechanical reproductions, writing becomes one medium among other media capable of recording, storing, and producing discourses such as the gramophone and film (and nowadays digital media). As such, literature, and *sakprosa* too, can be discussed and compared with other forms media communicating and recording their specific parts of human experience (i.e., sound, motion, or writing). This is also similar to what Ledin et al. (2019) have called multimodal non-fiction.

Kittler (1990) identifies two prevalent discourse networks: the discourse network of 1800 (Romanticism) and the discourse network of 1900 (Modernism). The former is characterized by the dominance of the writing technology and its monopoly as the key storage medium: 'The discourse network of 1800 functioned without phonographs, gramophones, or cinematographs. Only books could provide serial storage of serial data' (Kittler 1990: 116). The medium of writing universalized people's experiences and perceptions of the world in that writing conditioned what could be stored and communicated: 'writing functioned as a universal medium—in times when there was no concept of medium' (Kittler 1999: 5–6). This means that, in the discourse network of 1800, the storage of sounds, for instance, is dependent on musical scores—a product of writing. This implies that perceptions of sound are determined by a medium other than sound. This insight of Kittler's is essential if we are to understand what kinds of discourses (in a broad sense) are possible given the presence of particular media technologies.

The discourse network of 1900 is characterized by the advent of the gramophone and film as two major technologies challenging and ending the monopoly of writing as the main storage medium: 'The ability to record sense data technologically shifted the entire discourse network ca 1900. For the first time in history, writing ceased to be synonymous with the serial storage of data' (Kittler 1990: 229). With the gramophone and film, acoustical and optical data could be stored without the use of writing, thus enlarging the foundation on which we perceive, store, and communicate knowledge about the world. Simply put, with gramophone and film, we are able to sense other things (sound and vision) than what the written word is capable of.

Phenomenologically, writing, gramophones, and film, respectively, represent different modes of articulating and organizing experience and perceiving our worlds. Today, written, acoustical, and optical data still work as distinct media with their distinct discourses and affordances, but they are also integrated in digital media, which configures their production, circulation, and access. In fact, books have been digital in their production for a long time, although it is only within the last decade or

so that books have been digital in their consumption mode, thanks to, for example, e-readers, tablets, mobile phones, and other digital formats. Film and music streaming services also provide access to acoustic and optical media, but their very access and circulation are conditioned by digital media.

A discourse network, as argued by Kittler, thus serves as the medial condition for the production, circulation, and reception of cultural data, and therefore *sakprosa*. Nowadays, with digital media as the discourse network, the infrastructure, or even as ontology (Kittler 2009; Peters 2015) of our communications, it is almost unthinkable not to consider its communicative and epistemic force, due to its calculative capabilities and hardware and software power. This makes it possible to speak of digital media discourse networks or infrastructures. Digital infrastructures may serve as what Kittler calls ‘the unarticulated as background of all media’ (Kittler 1990: 302). With the notion of the ‘unarticulated’, we will once again have to understand Kittler’s information theory inspiration. Given that information is a selection among probabilities, there will always be something behind it (the unarticulated), which is not part of the message as such, but part of making the message possible. In the digital media discourse network, this takes the form of data and algorithms. Background digital media play a central archival role due to their connection with databases and algorithms that are designed to track, trace, sort, calculate, and arrange our communicative activities based on some sort of data collection.

The take-home message for *sakprosa* is clear. Looked upon from the notion of a digital discourse network, *sakprosa* is inscribed in an environment of software, algorithms, and archival undertakings. Whether in print or in digital form, access to and the circulation of *sakprosa* happens against a background of digital media processing and storing various sorts of data because of the dialectical relation between users’ actions and algorithmic actions producing new forms of data, and thus access points.

The Background of Digital Media: The Archive, the Database, and Algorithms

While Kittler (1990) does not discuss the role of the archive (or database) and algorithms in a discourse network at any length, but implies them, I am going to briefly explain the role of the archive and algorithms that make up particular features in understanding digital media culture. This understanding will be used in the two examples, together with Kittler's notion of a discourse network.

Obviously, the idea of an archive is not a product of digital media. Since the invention of writing, human cultures have been able to store items externally from mind and body. It is not unfamiliar for sakprosa to be connected with the notion of an archive; for example, several scholarly journals use 'archive' in their titles, such as 'Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie'. Here an archive is alluded to in the sense of a repository, or a static collection of papers. It is 'writing that stores writing', as Kittler (1999: 7) puts it. What positions the archive in such a central place in digital media culture, however, is the computer as a medium; as a medium of storage, communication, and transmission in one place, in one medium. The particularities of digital media lie in their fundamental configuration as archival media, a view taken seriously in media archeology by scholars such as Wolfgang Ernst and Jussi Parikka (Parikka 2012), and which is similar to logistical media as dealt with by John Durham Peters (Peters 2015).

Archiving and archives in digital culture and with digital media, in contrast to traditional archives (e.g., state or bureaucratic ones) which are rather static, can be understood with reference to Eivind Røssaak's (2010) notion of the 'archive in motion'. Archives in this sense are 'associated with the advent of computer technologies and ultimately, the Internet, where constant transfer and updating functions as well as "live" communication and interaction redefine the temporality of the archival document itself' (2010: 12). The notion of temporality is crucial, as archiving takes place in real-time and archives real-time action, implying an ever-changing archive and a differentiation from traditional archives. What defines the archive in digital culture is therefore 'the dynamics,

permanent updating, and conflation of software with search' (Parikka 2012: 123). Archive in a digital sense, then, is not determined by the medium of writing but by the digital medium. This means 'a turn from object-centred archiving to objects in the software sense, their searchability and transformation into forms that make them viewable and experiential through encoding, streaming and other software techniques' (Parikka 2012: 124). Digital media as multimedia archives store words, sounds, or images by treating them on the same (binary) level and not with reference to their modality, which is a phenomenological feature. Multimedia is an 'interfacial betrayal' as there are 'no multimedia in virtual space but just one medium, which calculates images, words, and sounds indifferently because it is able to emulate all other media. The term *multimedia* is a delusion ... Multimedia, then, is for human eyes only' (Ernst 2013: 118–119, 121). This anti-phenomenological stance taken by Ernst is useful, as it makes us aware of how the computer as a medium handles cultural data (such as *sakprosa*) on its own media-technical premises, thus shaping how it is represented, stored, and circulated.

Lev Manovich (2001) is another scholar considering the relative uniqueness of digital media with reference to some sort of collection: the database. By means of the database, Manovich (2001: 218) claims that the computer age introduces a correlate to narrative: 'Many new media objects do not tell stories; they do not have a beginning or end, in fact, they do not have any development, thematically, formally, or otherwise that would organize their elements into a sequence. Instead, they are collections of individual items, with every item possessing the same significance as any other'. Looking at, for instance, search engines, we can see how such a media object does not tell a story, while users on Instagram, another new media object, claim to be posting stories. But the point for Manovich is that these media objects 'appear as collections of items on which the user can perform various operations—view, navigate, search. The user's experience of such computerized collections is, therefore, quite distinct from reading a narrative or watching a film or navigating an architectural site' (Manovich 2001: 219). This distinct experience on the part of users, according to Manovich, is what makes the database a cultural form. While Manovich here differs somewhat from Ernst, he

nevertheless conceives of the computer as a medium emulating all other media (Manovich 2001: 25). As the background of media, the database acts as the unarticulated, only demonstrating its existence through the various operations we perform in order to interact with digital media.

Applying the idea of archives and databases to sakprosa in digital culture enables us to understand how many forms of sakprosa come to us in archival, database, or list forms (cf. Goody 1977; Ledin 2015; Young 2017) enabling communicative interactions such as searching, navigating, and looking things up as supplements to reading. As mentioned, the notion of the list is of course not new with regard to sakprosa, but because digital media in many ways are media that arrange, list, and/order items, they hold a certain communicative 'logic' that is consequential regarding how sakprosa circulates and is accessed in digital media. With this, we might go as far as to say that this is what makes sakprosa become its own archive or turn into an archive; an archive that is both dynamic and processual in contrast to classic physical archives (Parikka 2012).

Another key feature of digital media and digital archives is algorithms. For some time now, the importance of algorithms has been recognized in many fields outside computer science. While much research on the role of algorithms in digital culture has focused on what they do to audiences or users, and their black-box nature (Pasquale 2015), other kinds of research focus on what we as publics, audiences, consumers, readers, or users, do with algorithmic systems by means of living with, interpreting, or decoding algorithms (Andersen 2020; Bucher 2017; Gillespie 2014; Lomborg and Kapsch 2020). Almost by 'nature', digital media are algorithmic systems (Seaver 2014) or automated media (Andrejevic 2020) due to their calculative powers. Algorithms in digital media networks control, curate, monitor, sort, recommend, and/or predict based on the data circulating as a result of the actions of users and the databases imbedded in various platforms. Algorithms, therefore, communicate, and thus shape communication. This means that sakprosa produced and accessed within a digital media network must, to some extent, be sensitive to algorithms and their performative effects. As I show below, academic publishing houses encourage their authors to think carefully about titles so that they can be found by, for instance, search engines and their algorithms.

Sakprosa as Digitally Configured: The Case of Borger.dk

‘The state, that’s sakprosa’, writes Tønnesson (2008: 61; my translation). It is hard to conceive of the modern form of the state and its exercise of power and governance, its articulation of rights and obligation, without texts: laws, government orders, financial statements, evaluations, contracts, memos, pamphlets, reports, and their corresponding forms of archiving. State and society at large are to a very large extent organized by means of sakprosa (Goody 1986). This is a sphere where power is textual and textually motivated, mediated, and enforced, entailing that communication between public authorities and citizens is to a large extent textual and articulated discursively through a range of genres. With the use of digital media in the sphere of the state, this form of communication is somehow changed or re-configured. In Denmark, this change was emphasized with the introduction of the common public portal Borger.dk (www.borger.dk) in 2007, where state-based information and services are communicated.

Established in 2007, the Borger.dk portal (see Fig. 1) is today the main communication channel between Danish public authorities and citizens. Before the introduction of this portal, communications from public authorities came in both oral and print media, and in such diverse genres as meetings, in person inquiries, consultations, letters, brochures, or pamphlets. As part of a general national digitization strategy, the purpose from the outset was to develop one comprehensive access point for state-based information and services. The portal was developed through three versions. First, the whole idea of a common citizen portal was the product of a survey among citizens which was completed in 2005. The results showed a huge number of public homepages and the need for a general guide to state-based information. The second version of the portal was launched in 2008, with ‘My Overview’ being added and thus personalizing access, which has been a significant part of the portal since then. Through ‘My Overview’, by means of a NemID, citizens can now gain access to personal information from the Danish Civil Registration System (CRS; in Danish CPR), income information from the tax authorities and

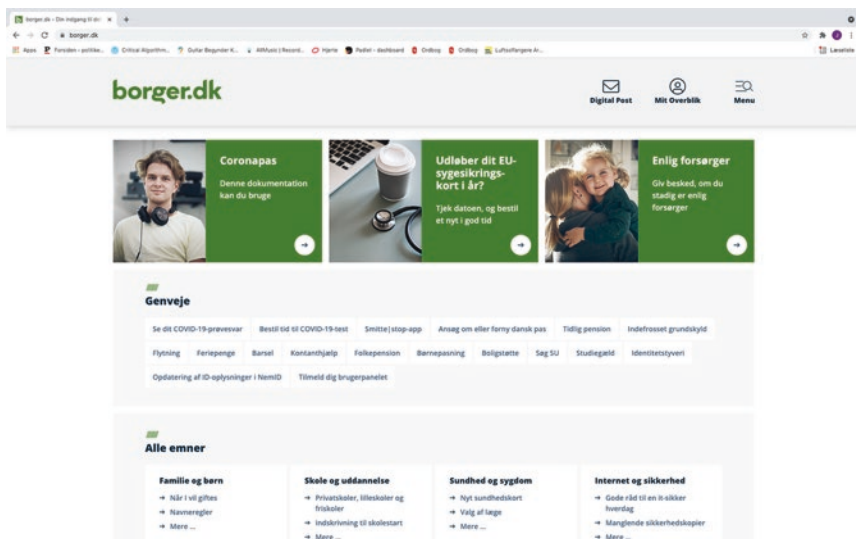


Fig. 1 Borger.dk. Screenshot

individual contacts with the health-care system. In the third version, there is now an emphasis on a good user experience by means of user-friendly communication, clarity, and action-oriented texts with the hope of guiding citizens to self-service. Most popular categories and sites on the portal have now been assigned their own category, such as ‘Retirement pension’ and currently, ‘Corona passport’.

With these changes in communication and assemblages of text, Borger.dk is now an established site for state-based information in Denmark, shaping citizens’ interactions with a variety of sakprosa genres discursively articulated in action-oriented texts configured by the digital medium through which Borger.dk is launched. Borger.dk is now basically a hypertextual archive, with links, keywords, and categories. Many texts, a great deal of data, and a range of public homepages have been converted and transposed to one access portal consisting of action-oriented texts, and one main list of hypertextual categories with the hope of providing an overview, user-friendly communication, and self-service. Old genres and old media disappear and are transposed to the interface of Borger.dk. As Kittler (1990: 275) points out, ‘Transpositions liquidate

the medium from which they proceed'. The old media (and old genres) are liquidated in the sense that the features determining their access and circulation are determined by the new medium affording new communicative actions too (Andersen 2017, 2021a). This is evidenced by the hypertextual categories at play and demonstrates how sakprosa is inscribed into a background with different set of affordances. The consequence of this kind of inscription is that, beyond the disappearance of old media, what we see as users are categories, hypertexts, and keywords as a means to access and ultimately make sense of state-based information. This inscription practice further testifies to the conflation of storage and transmission that is so common with digital archives (Parikka 2012).

Examining the Borger.dk portal shows how this form of communication today is shaped and enacted by the digital medium. There is a shift in genre and communicative demands. At the expense of the visibility of particular forms of texts such as pamphlets, leaflets, or forms, there is a shift towards hypertext, navigation, and searching a collection of items (a database) as primary communicative actions enforced by the very materiality of digital media (Finnemann 1999). As Manovich (2001: 128) points out regarding our actions with digital media: 'almost every practical act involves choosing from some menu, catalogue, or database'. We can see this with Borger.dk, where a user is, at the initial point of access, invited to choose from the menus or categories. Recalling Manovich (2001: 219), what we see is a collection of items on which we are invited to perform operations such as viewing, navigating, and searching in order to communicate with Borger.dk. We are not presented with a beginning or end, as Borger.dk, with its categories, hyperlinks, and menus, does not tell a story on the interface level. Borger.dk thus brings with it a new textual-communicative condition for our perceptions of state-based information. Compared with, for instance, print-based archives, interaction at Borger.dk, with its hyperlinks, navigation, and search features at the forefront, is changed from the act of reading to an act of re-activating the archive (Ernst 2013: 121). The user is re-activating, not reading, Borger.dk by means of every click or navigation action on the site. This practice of re-activating also creates a new editorial boundary: self-service, the declared goal of Borger.dk, but it is self-service as a communicative action and as means to interact with the texts. One implication of this is

that the demarcation or visibility of genres (e.g., pamphlets) disappears, as they are 'converted' into hypertextual categories to be navigated and searched in order to make sense of them.

Nowhere is the citizen invoked as a citizen ('borger' literally translates into 'citizen') but rather as the user of a service made available by the state. The sender is the state but in the form of the state as a service institution, not as a public institution informing people of their rights and duties and offering expertise. This is further indicated by the persistent personal form of approach: You, I, your, and/or yours. The individual person thus takes center stage, responsibilities and choices are personalized, and there is no appeal to the public institution as a public good.

A final note on Borger.dk involves its plain language (klart sprog/klarspråk). If we are to assess the language employed on Borger.dk, we need to consider the medium in which plain language is supposed to be put into action. As Borger.dk is not a plain traditional text with a clear beginning and an end, it does not make sense to assess it against the written medium. We must look at the digital medium and what makes up plain language here. Obviously, if we were to assess language on Borger.dk as determined by the written medium, we would say that it is not plain at all, with its categories, links, and keywords, but from a digital medium point of view, categories, links, and keywords make sense, as that is how digital media configure communication, precisely because of its database nature. In order to assess plain language on Borger.dk we would have to, among other things, interrogate the naming of the categories, what is included in them (and not), and how this forms expectations on the part of users.

This small example of one public-authority website has served to show how the discourse network of digital media shapes both access to state-based information and shapes what kind of thing it is. Communication from the state happens through hypertextual categories with their underlying databases. The disappearance of the old print media and genres such as forms makes the interaction with, and ultimately our understanding of, state-based information a matter of navigation and a re-activation of the archive, all conditioned by the very digital medium. Radically, this condition may also imply that not only do the genres and media disappear, so too does the state: it has no public buildings, visible office

workers, or forms of communication that would testify to it. The state and its public discourse are turned into hypertext, keywords, and a real-time archive; a discourse configured by digital media.

Sakprosa as Digitally Configured: The Case of SAGE Publishing

The availability of various digital platforms such as search engines, social media, and sites of publishing houses means that sakprosa is increasingly exposed to algorithmic calculations and processing. An examination of SAGE Publishing as a case in point gives us a sense of how these kinds of archival and algorithmic infrastructures shape access and the circulation of sakprosa. We can see how sakprosa changes in this medial alignment with digital media. SAGE Publishing encourages their authors to think carefully about their choice of language, titles, and keywords for their articles, because those articles are supposed to be recognized and circulated by search engines and social media. Under the headline ‘Help Readers Find Your Article’, SAGE Publishers provide an example of this feature. In order to optimize the chances of being discovered by search engines and academic audiences, SAGE encourages authors to ‘repeat key phrases in the abstract while writing naturally’ and to get the title right by making sure it is ‘descriptive, unambiguous, accurate and reads well’, and to make a creative title a subtitle of the more descriptive title. SAGE also suggests adding at least three or four keywords, and further encourages authors to link to their article and encourage others do to so as well, in order to align with search engines like Google (<https://uk.sagepub.com/en-gb/eur/help-readers-find-your-article>). These four aspects, (repeating key phrases, descriptive titles, creative subtitles, and keywords) demonstrate how the circulation of, and access to, academic articles is conditioned and regulated by the medium of the search engine relying on, among other things, ‘hyperlinks, well marked-up source code, the volume of incoming links from related websites, revisits, click-throughs’ (<https://uk.sagepub.com/en-gb/eur/help-readers-find-your-article>). Here it makes up the digital discourse network of academic prose. It configures

and inscribes itself into the scholarly article itself in order for it to be able to circulate and be accessible.

Examining a particular SAGE journal, in this case the *European Journal of Communication*, shows ‘the unarticulated as background of all modern media’ (Kittler 1990: 302) and its communicative force and effect. Metric labels such as ‘Most read’, ‘Most cited’, and ‘Trending on Altmetric’ (see Fig. 2) work in the background by algorithmically picking up data traces from users/readers and codifying this data into communicative labels (Andersen and Lomborg 2020). They are not part of the specific scholarly article per se, but they form part of its network or ecology (Casper 2016) and are a result of the algorithmic and archival actions of digital media. Thanks to these actions, they form part of the way that a scholarly article materializes and circulates on a digital platform:

This last example with SAGE Publishing shows, on one level, how a digital infrastructure, with its algorithmic forms of curating and its archival foundation, enters into the rhetorical work of scholarly authors. On another level, the example also shows how the unarticulated is inscribed into journals affecting circulation and access. Together, the examples

The screenshot displays the SAGE Journal website for the *European Journal of Communication*. The page layout includes a navigation bar with options like 'Journal Home', 'Browse Journal', 'Journal Info', 'Stay Connected', and 'Submit Paper'. A search bar is positioned on the right. The main content area features an 'About this journal' section, a 'Most Read' section with three article cards, and a 'View More' button at the bottom.

About this journal
The *European Journal of Communication* is interested in communication research and theory in all its diversity, and seeks to reflect and encourage the variety of intellectual traditions in the field and to promote dialogue between them. Published to monthly, the journal reflects the international character of communication scholarship and is addressed to a ...

Most Read

Article Title	Author	Issue
Deplatforming: Following extreme Internet celebrities to Telegram and alternative social media	Richard Rogers	Jun 2020 - Vol 35, Issue 3 First published 08 May 2020 View & download: 822 Citations: 11
Anti-immigration and racist discourse in social media	Milica Doman	Dec 2019 - Vol 34, Issue 6 First published 10 Dec 2019 View & download: 419 Citations: 9
The disinformation order: Disruptive communication and the decline of democratic institutions	W Loren Berens, Steven Livingston	Apr 2018 - Vol 33, Issue 2 First published 02 Apr 2018 View & download: 357 Citations: 261

[View More](#)

Fig. 2 SAGE Journal. Screenshot

show how a digital discourse network consisting of technologies and institutions allows a given culture to select, store, and process relevant data (Kittler 1990: 369). It shows, in short, how sakprosa is medially constituted by a digital discourse network that is considered a means of processing, storing, and transmitting data.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have tried to argue for and demonstrate a medial conception of sakprosa; a conception adapted from Kittler's (1990) notion of a discourse network. Employing this notion was meant as a conceptual tool helping to argue how digital media constitute the circulation of and access to sakprosa, here exemplified through the digital communication of state-based information and SAGE Publishing. In arguing this, I have shown how the digital discourse network inscribes itself into and constitute the circulation of and access to sakprosa. The chapter has contributed to the research field of sakprosa with a vocabulary, discourse, and understanding that situates sakprosa in a digital media conversation strongly emphasizing the materiality of media as a means of storing, processing, and transmitting information. This is no shame. It is consequential to the fact that digital media are no longer something in which cultural artifacts are converted. Digital media are the modern communicative infrastructure in which all other cultural artifacts either are embedded or inscribed into. Among other things, this entails that we as users are still situated in actions of understanding and interpreting such infrastructure in our daily efforts in order to make sense of it (Andersen 2020). Not recognizing this in research on sakprosa risks leaving it as a dusty form of literature with no bearing on society and culture. But we know better. Much more, and in a very different way, than fiction literature, sakprosa is fundamental to the workings of modern society (Andersen 2021b). The very same form of society is now saturated with many forms of digital media as a background shaping our everyday social interactions. The research implications of the argument presented are, first, that sakprosa is, or is becoming, a different thing when operating in a discourse network consisting of software, data, archives, and algorithms. Sakprosa in a digital discourse network becomes a thing to be

tagged, archived, or searched for, in addition to writing and reading (Andersen 2021a), and as such presents a new form of textuality. This needs to be recognized when studying sakprosa in these spheres. Another implication is the need for sakprosa research to engage more with digital media conversations so as to inform these conversations. Discussing and understanding sakprosa in light of digital media is, therefore, crucial.

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Sheep, Watch Dogs and Wolves: How the Master in Non-Fiction Writing Formed Actors for the Field of *sakprosa* in Norway

Iben Brinch and Siri Nergaard

Introduction: Exploring a Master's Programme in the Developing Knowledge Field

Non-fiction is central to the knowledge society because it is about dissemination of knowledge. To understand knowledge societies, we must understand knowledge practices, or *epistemic practices*, using a concept developed by Karin Knorr Cetina (Knorr Cetina 2001: 186). The epistemic perspective points to the “machineries of knowledge construction” and not just knowledge production (Knorr Cetina 2005: 68). In this chapter, we analyse the writing pedagogy and learning activities of a master's programme in non-fiction writing as “epistemic practices” and as a “machinery” for knowledge production about non-fiction—or “sakprosa”

I. Brinch (✉) • S. Nergaard

Department of Languages and Literature Studies, University of South-Eastern Norway, Kongsberg, Norway

e-mail: Iben.Brinch@usn.no; Siri.Nergaard@usn.no

as it is called in Norwegian.¹ Knorr Cetina's conceptualization of epistemic practices are included in the concept of *epistemic cultures*, defining cultures of "knowledge settings" like this: "Epistemic cultures are cultures of creating and warranting knowledge" (Eriksson and Lindberg 2016; Knorr Cetina 2005: 67). Other theorists talk generally about social practice (Reckwitz 2020) as generating certain knowledge production and preferences for valorization of cultural products, Knorr Cetina's conceptualization zooms in on how epistemic cultures function in such processes. As the discussion of the field of non-fiction writing will show, an original loose field of shared cultural-political interests in all non-fiction areas has developed with help from different organizations and institutions to also include academic agents and educational institutions. The growing epistemic culture and institutionalization has formed a named and recognized profession of the *sakprosa writer* ("sakprosaskribent") or *sakprosa author* ("sakprosaforfatter") and a space for the expansion of *sakprosa* ("non-fiction texts"). The purpose of the master's programme was to educate agents for the field of non-fiction and citizens with the agency of writing non-fiction texts and critical evaluation of non-fiction in the greater knowledge society.

According to Knorr Cetina's theory, it is the epistemic practices that make the cultures, which means that we can explore the epistemic cultures by investigating the epistemic practices. This points to analysing who, where, when and how people develop theories and central concepts and use them in rhetorical and social interactions in places and by material objects, as well as analysing the products that are made. In our analysis of the institutionalization of the concept of *sakprosa* in Norway, we will use Bourdieu's field analysis of how human activities tend to organize in relatively autonomous fields of production. The perspective on cultural investigation calls for analysis of how institutions take form and how central concepts are developed and used. This again calls for text

¹ As explained in the introduction chapter in this book, the Norwegian concept "sakprosa" can be translated into the term non-fiction, but as the authors of the introduction explain something is lost in the translation. This means that the term *sakprosa* is used when we refer specifically to the Norwegian understanding of the term.

analysis of “objects” that are used and produced in terms of the epistemic practice, and for ethnographic methods of observation and participation along with a great deal of reflexivity from the researcher. We will get close to the epistemic practices of the knowledge culture of non-fiction by analysing the master of non-fiction writing by such ethnographic rhetorical methods (Brinch Jørgensen 2019; Middleton et al. 2015; Senda-Cook et al. 2019). Over time the *nexus* of epistemic practices will show the emerging, and ever-transforming, “epistementality” of the epistemic culture (Brinch Jørgensen 2021; Knorr Cetina 2005: 370; Scollon and Scollon 2004).

Due to the relation between epistemic culture as field and practice, we begin this chapter with a background description of the development of the field of *sakprosa* and the programme’s position within it. We continue with a discussion of the theoretical and methodological approaches we use in our case study with a special attention to theories that prepares for a study of the “nexus” of the practice that we discuss, and the “motives” we meet the students with introducing them to the epistemic practice. Further, we present the genre theory and genre didactics that is behind the architecture and learning practices before entering the analysis and discussion of the master’s programme as epistemic practice. First, we present the architecture of the master’s programme and the learning activities as successive processes; second, we analyse the learning processes through three steps tracing the formation of distinct roles of the student of non-fiction writing, which we have named *sheep*, *watch dogs* and *wolves*. (1) *The sheep* follow instruction and other’s example and participate in the non-fiction textual field according to the general and accepted standards, traditions and culture. (2) *The watch dogs* warrant the epistemic culture of *sakprosa* participating in interactions of feedback and criticism. (3) Finally, *the wolves* are agents that go their own ways, experimenting and crossing borders of genre, participating with a distinct voice of their own. The text corpus of the student texts that we analyse represent the progressive roles that they epitomize, thus representing most aspects of the pedagogy of the programme.

Background: The Epistemic Culture of *sakprosa* in Norway

The aim of educating *sakprosa* authors and actors is strictly connected to the wider cultural project that started in Norway in the 1990s aiming at giving more visibility, credibility and consideration to *sakprosa* authors and their texts, to compensate on the secondary and inferior consideration of non-fiction compared to fiction. Until then fiction writing occupied a “monopoly position” (Berg Eriksen 1995: 16) in the Norwegian literary field: only fiction texts were considered worth recognition, academic interest and research, as well as economical support.

The relatively strong position that *sakprosa* has achieved over the years in Norway, both inside and outside the universities, is mainly a result of the initiative and strong support of an important, and rich, institution working strategically and politically, namely the Norwegian organization of non-fiction authors and translators (Norsk faglitterær forfatter- og oversetterforening, NFFO). To straighten the position of non-fiction writers, and the prestige of their texts, NFFO has taken several initiatives such as creating scholarships, research projects, non-fiction literary prizes, seminars and publications, contributing with financial investments. This has resulted in a progressively stronger institutionalization, also within academia, of the concept of *sakprosa* together with a wider attention and acknowledgment of texts belonging to that category. Advancing so strongly into the literary field, *sakprosa* engaged in a kind of competition with fiction, which we according to Bourdieu (1996) can define as a battle characterized by forces competing to achieve the power to define and create an autonomy in the cultural field. Today, as the institutionalization of *sakprosa* in many ways can be considered is a “success story”, we can recognize the existence of a relatively autonomous textual/literary fields which means that a battle has ceased to be as aggressive.

Two big research projects (Norsk *sakprosa* 1994–1998 and Norsk *sakprosa* 2000–2003) primarily financed by NFFO, and headed by emergent scholars, are the main initiatives that sign a turn for *sakprosa* as episteme. They produced a high number of publications, which framed what *sakprosa* is and what it wants to be in Norway. These projects have played

a strong political role in confirming and consolidating the institutionalization of *sakprosa* and have in turn shaped the epistemic culture of *sakprosa*. Our master's programme, which started in 2007, reflects these statements and was also founded to bring them forward in the practice field of non-fiction writing.

In this panorama it is essential to insist on the fact that much of the investment on the sake of *sakprosa* was addressed to the academy, aiming at introducing it in its curricula, as an academic subject, as a research field, again parallel to that of fiction. This is particularly relevant considering that non-fiction writers working outside academia compose the organization NFFO and that the origin of the organization is that of a kind of trade union whose primary aim is defending the interests of its members. This was at least its initial occupation, while today its area of interest and ambition is much wider. In what we may call a *sakprosa project*, which we also define as aiming at the constitution of an epistemic culture, we may argue that the trade union evolves from defending its members to defending a text type. Replacing the until then more frequently used term "faglitteratur", *sakprosa* progressively positions itself as something new, which also implies a new perspective on non-fiction texts that in turn corresponds to higher consideration of them as texts, as valuable literature. To achieve this, getting access to the academic field is certainly among the most important steps in creating a central position for non-fiction in the greater knowledge society. Moreover, the development mirrors a trend of the knowledge society to use epistemic cultures in the definition of what is knowledge.

Another important investment on academia by NFFO consisted in financing a full professorship for three years at the three biggest universities of Norway. The master's programme in non-fiction writing founded at University of South-Eastern Norway, in 2007, is another academic support of non-fiction partly financed by the same organization. The name of the programme does not involve the concept of *sakprosa*, but the broader concept "faglitterær" (literary non-fiction). The creation of the master's programme in non-fiction writing can be considered as a kind of bridging between the greater field of non-fiction and the epistemic culture with a local and specific epistemic practice. Thus, the students were ideally seen as the future authors of a growing and expanding field of

sakprosa. Professors as well as students that occupy this “new” field are all agents of a certain habitus that they both epitomize and produce according to a principle of circularity (Bourdieu 1996).

Introducing the study and analysis of non-fiction texts at the universities, providing them—thus implicitly—with equal consideration and prestige as fiction texts, represented an important part of what we can call a project of transforming the epistemic culture of *sakprosa*. This process was contributing to the very institutionalization of a field and the creation of what we have now defined as a new and progressive episteme. Positioning *sakprosa* so strongly, also at the universities and in education, is also to be considered as quite unique for Norway. The initiatives of creating new professor positions and university courses have of course been financially extremely expensive, an aspect that should not be underestimated and which invites to reflection on ideals about free research and knowledge, as well as it triggers questions of power relations. Which are the cultural, political and social impacts on a society’s cultural life and knowledge production when one institution has the economic power to introduce and support a new field of study, research and publications?

However, the positive effects the institutionalization has had for the development of a strong epistemic culture of *sakprosa* is unquestionable. One of the most important attainments is probably that of finally giving scholarly attention to the most common and numerous texts that surround our ordinary lives, the so-called *hverdagstekster* (ordinary life texts), or bureaucratic texts, or white books (Bjørkdahl 2018; Tønnesson 2012). In addition, this attention has generated research on important engines of the democracy.

On the other hand, from a theoretical point of view, institutionalizing *sakprosa* as a text type, and as an academic field of study and research (i.e., episteme), nevertheless, presents a few problematic questions. If a definition like that of *sakprosa* serves as a category to define the texts that certain authors write (products or objects) and thus support these texts’ authors accordingly, one can avoid dealing with theoretical questions with epistemological if not even ontological implications. However, as soon as we use that term to create a new academic topic, a new research field, or a new programme, we are obliged to define the term and its theoretic foundations, delimiting its range, deciding which texts are included in the

category and which are not. How can we create such definitions without risking becoming essentialist? How can we include certain texts considering them as *sakprosa*, without excluding others as not belonging to the category without recognizing the risk of rigid fixity that it encompasses?

Kjell Lars Berge discusses exactly this in an article on the scientific study of *sakprosa* published in 2001, recognizing exactly the essentialist risk of considering and defining certain traits as proper to *sakprosa*, as if they were stable and universal, excluding automatically other traits. Nonetheless, the conceptualization of *sakprosa* that is dominating both inside and outside the academy is quite categorical, insisting almost exclusively on its direct relation to the reality. Johan L. Tønnesson, Norway's first *sakprosa* professor, defines *sakprosa* as "texts that the addressee has reasons to consider as direct utterings on reality" (2012: 34), implying that fiction are texts in which the relation to reality, or the real world, is indirect. Tønnesson promoted this definition in his book, *Hva er sakprosa*, and it has become seminal and often it is used (improperly) as a measure for fixed genre definitions and distinctions.

It is precisely in this complex textual landscape of texts, categories, research and theories that our master's programme positions itself. For us it has been a leading both epistemological as well as pedagogical challenge managing to create courses in *sakprosa* writing and authorship without operating with definitions and boundaries taken for granted. Insisting on the fact that genres and text types are cultural constructions and as such dynamic and changeable, we have tried to let our students explore and interrogate the possibilities of textual creations, experimenting genres. Our master's programme stays somewhat in the middle of a tension between a category—that of *sakprosa*—which on the one hand wants to be recognized with a defined identity, and on the other strives to avoid rigid limitations and fixed genres for the texts that it wants to foster. The programme shows the true nature of any epistemic objects like "sakprosa", trying not to be fixed but in continuous transformation (Knorr Cetina 2001). As will be clear from the analyses in the next paragraph, we try to have as few fixed a priori definitions of what a *sakprosa* text is and might be, letting the students explore and experiment around a theme or a genre, or both, to thus elaborate it and gradually define its language, its style, its voice, its proper genre.

Theories: Conceptualizations and Practicing of Genres

Determinations in a *nexus* of Practices

There are two main purposes of running the master's programme: Graduating students and educate better non-fiction writers. The second purpose is a question of making/training a variety of authors serving different purposes in the cultural and epistemic field; agents for general participation, warranting of professions, and innovation, that we have named *sheep*, *watch dogs* and *wolves*. With what theories and methods can we explore how the pedagogy of the programme clears the way for this to happen? In an ethnographic rhetorical case study, one can follow the symbolic actions and search for repeating patterns of motives, and by that explore the “nexus” that over time will reveal some of the machineries of the rhetorical—or epistemic—practice and make the different types of agents (Brinch Jørgensen 2019, 2021; Scollon and Scollon 2004). The different forms of addressing the students intersect, the epistemic practices also overlap, and by that, the programme mirrors the nature of intersection and diversity and complexity of agents, actions and objects created in the greater field of non-fiction.

In an article on how Norwegian law students are “enrolled” in the expert culture that uses the method prescribed by Karin Knorr Cetina, namely an ethnographic method of observation and interview to grasp the epistemic practices (Jensen et al. 2015), a finding from the analysis of the architecture of the course and the teaching showed that

small and somewhat larger cycles of investigation and problem-solving become linked in productive ways and, through these connections, the students become introduced both to the local world of being a law student and to the wider epistemic machinery of the profession. However, the epistemic practices did not emerge from students' work alone. Rather, these were mediated in significant ways by profession-specific tools, such as knowledge resources and methodological approaches, and were framed within the overall epistementality of the professional knowledge culture. (Jensen et al. 2015: 877)

In other words, the learning resources (or “knowledge resources”) and the teachers’ planning and actions had impact on the making of professionals as well. Not surprising, but important, because it points to the necessary method of ethnographic inquiry to understand how the epistemic practices (including use of tools (subject-object) and interactions (subject-subject, and the subject to itself or reflexivity)) form epistemic cultures. When we study the nexus of epistemic practices, we must consider that the materiality in form of things and places and the time (especially when it comes to the first ratio addressing the students as students) not just have impact on the practices but interact. This means that not just traditional learning recourses like the curriculum, books and articles together with instructive texts from the teachers are important study objects, but also the objects used like writing software and the places for writing (home, the café, the office, the library) and places for teaching and social interaction (auditoriums, the library, cantina, cafés, festivals). These recourses must be analysed together with the learning activities and social actions that supported the human relations. The *switching* between self-study/writing, collective discussions, writing groups and mingling is also a practice that counts as central for the epistemic culture of *sakprosa*. To make use of all learning resources, being able to navigate in this nexus of epistemic practices and transform it is the agency that is provided for the students according to the agent-scene ratio. It makes sense to conceptualize the agency aimed for as “transformative agency” (Lund and Vestøl 2020) because we took for granted that the students accepted the fluency of practices and knowledge presented to them and tried to make them capable of navigating in this epistemic culture.

We must mention the role of the teachers in the nexus of learning practices. Jensen et al. state the significant role of the teacher in their study when it comes to enrolment to a profession in higher education: “We suggest that being introduced to methodological principles to define, explore and solve legal problems in relation to various sources is a key mechanism for enrolment in the professional knowledge culture” (Jensen et al. 2015: 878; Nerland and Jensen 2012). The way of instruction, the teachers’ use of central concepts as *sakprosa*, and the teachers’ performance as authors and critics of non-fiction, together with the texts they produced themselves were not just contextual settings for the

learning practices but *learning recourses* that contributed to educate the students for the epistemic culture of *sakprosa*. The teachers' actions and engagement spanned contexts and time and created a mix of what Rachele Esterhazy calls "epistemic and social relations" (Esterhazy 2019: 3): as epistemic relations the practices generated by the teachers relates to the greater cultural and epistemic field of *sakprosa*, and as social relations the participation of the writing teachers is part of the "relational-affective" that has proved to be as much important for the quality of the learning, despite of the programme or course (Esterhazy et al. 2020: 170). The master's programme is with Mikael Bakhtin's, terminology, polyphonic in that many voices join in the learning activities and speak through the participants and all the texts in the nexus of the practice. Anyway, it is the team of teachers that is the conductive power.

Genre Didactics: Rhetorical Genre and Dialogism

Central in the structure of the master's programme was the genre. The methodological principles of understanding non-fiction were strongly connected to the activities of reading examples and writing in different genres, as well as the study of genre theory. As we have discussed in the paragraph on the field of *sakprosa*, the conceptualization of a new, or at least a revised genre was the driving machine behind the development of the field of non-fiction both as a cultural-literary field and as epistemic culture. Carolyn Miller writes about genre as the link between the actual objects like books and abstract, cultural structures and institutions (Miller 1994: 70). In her discussion of the knowledge objects, Karin Knorr Cetina (2001) says that we cannot understand the epistemic environment without understanding how the participating professionals relate to the epistemic objects. For the non-fiction writer/author or the academic scholar, the epistemic object is not that easy to define.

Since epistemic objects are always in the process of being materially defined, they continually acquire new properties and change the one they have. But this also means that objects of knowledge can never be fully attained, that they are, if you wish, never quite themselves. What we encounter in the

research process are representations or *stand-ins* for a more basic lack of object. (Knorr Cetina 2001: 190, our emphasis)

We like to see our approach to *sakprosa* as an epistemic object using genres and different texts as “stand-ins”: By introducing to the variety of genres in our teaching, we showed the ever-transforming, overlapping complexity of *sakprosa* and by the writing pedagogy of writing in many genres, we opened the creative room for the students for both epistemic conceptualization and diverse writing practices connected to the different genres (Brinch Jørgensen and Askeland 2019).

The non-fiction literacy we aimed to teach each student was predominantly based on genre theory and genre didactics. We introduced the theory of rhetorical genre for the students already in the introduction course, pointing to “genre as social action” (Miller 1984), and we practiced writing for actual rhetorical audiences to make this theory into agency. The importance of creating writing tasks that are not just imitating writing for a public audience but make the students taking part in real debates is important, not just because the students perform better, but also because they become engaged citizens and develop their individual voices (Carlo 2020). Genre as “markers of identification” is discussed in a recent article in *Text & Talk* (Makmillen and Riedlinger 2021), and the authors point to the fact that writing in different genres makes the students play out identity and agency, including the playing out of the “we as” a certain profession (2021: 175). Writing as a “method for thinking” is well established in the epistemic culture of *sakprosa* (Brinch Jørgensen 2020; Johansen 2012), and reflexivity has long been seen as a central part of the practice in the writing pedagogies (Moon 1999).

The selection of different genres for our curricula was based on the idea that each genre has its own “affordance”, as Fiona English writes in *Student Writing and Genre. Reconfiguring Academic Knowledge* (2011): “Genres are chosen because they afford particular communicative possibilities for a given set of circumstances. Its specific communicative ‘-ableness’ results from the semiotic resources themselves. We choose the genre because of what it does, or allows us to do, rather than what it consists of” (English 2011: 80). By some of the genres, the students practiced the affordances of genre as rhetorical agency in a digital knowledge society

(Hart-Davidson et al. 2005). The selection of genres in the curriculum shows how the team of teachers interpret the greater field of *sakprosa* as cultural and epistemic culture: what is interpreted by the faculty to be important to not just to know about but to *master* when it comes to the writing itself.

Findings and Discussions: The Roles of Sheep, the Watch Dogs and the Wolves

The Architecture of the Programme

The main idea of The Master in Non-fiction Writing was to introduce the students to (writing in) different non-fiction genres, through a continuous practicing of writing in the genres along with the study of theoretical texts and examples of the genres. By the knowledge, skills and practice, the students were supposed to acquire the ability to write a longer non-fiction text ready for publication, which was their final master's thesis. The master's thesis consisted of a book manuscript or a collection of texts and an introduction analysing and discussing the manuscript/text collection academically using theories from all thematic subjects.

From 2007 to 2020, 7 groups of students with 20–30 students in each class were matriculated which gives a total of about 200 students. Common for many of them is that they have a profession, a specific competence or a special interest that they want to learn how to communicate through writing. As most of the students were adults who were already employed and busy in their jobs, the study was organized in three two- or three-days sessions per semester, while the rest of the time they studied and worked on their writing at home. The programme would be a full-time master in two years, but it was functioning as a part-time study over three years.

With a few variations during the years, the master's curriculum included the following subjects:

- (1) The *Introduction subject* had a curriculum which included the definition of text and non-fiction, theories on the personal essay, the travel essay and the formal essay, together with multimodal theory and

practice in working with illustrations and text design. The writing tasks were writing a pastiche, writing essays or travel essays and a formal essay in their original profession. The subject also consisted of theories of the creative writing processes.

- (2) *Biographic texts* concerned writing tasks and theories in biographies of living persons and historical persons as well as personal biographic texts and the ethics of representation. The writing pedagogy focused on (auto)biographic aspects in all kinds of texts, not only traditional biographies but also personal biographic writings and representations of single persons or a group of people.
- (3) *Dissemination and publishing* included a curriculum with texts on literary sociology theories and discussions on the literary field historically and contemporarily. The genres to be written by the students were reflections on the role and positioning of themselves as an individual writer and a book proposal which included a discussion of the possibilities of being published (including digital publishing and self-publishing). The students practiced copy editing and reviewing of each other's texts as a genre.
- (4) *Narrative documentary* focused on writing genres within documentary and journalistic texts and text analysis of narrative non-fiction texts. Literary theory of telling and plotting was used to guide the students together with theories of new journalism.
- (5) *Rhetoric and debate* with a focus on argumentation and use of examples in non-fiction writing, and theories from modern rhetorical theories with an emphasis on "the rhetorical situation". The genres to be written were debate, manuscript for a speech performed before an audience of teachers and fellow students, and rhetorical criticism of a media text selected by the student.
- (6) *Academic writing* had a focus on academic style and use of correct citation and reference techniques. The curriculum consisted of a wide range of discussions on traditional academic writing and creative academic writing, and texts on audience-oriented writing for professionals.

The roles as *sheep*, *watch dogs* and *wolves* correspond to diverse types of non-fiction writers that we during the programme wanted the students to epitomize and can be seen as the actual outcome—or products—of the

programme together with the “knowledge objects” (Knorr Cetina 2001) like books, academic articles and so on. The *sheep* are agents that consume non-fiction and participate as audience in seminars and festivals, and authors that write within known frames for a consuming audience. The *watch dogs* are those who explicitly are warranting the professions, both their individual, original profession and the profession of non-fiction authors, by arguing for certain standards in their own texts or by criticizing other’s texts. The *wolves* are the artists of both the epistemic culture of *sakprosa* and the writing processes in and across genres; they are inventive and have a distinct voice as authors. As the architecture of the programme shows, the students develop the roles in a mix, but still successively.

The teachers had a significant impact on the epistemic practice, not just as individuals building a bridge to the field of *sakprosa* and academics who cleared the road for the graduation, but also as engines in the machinery-making agents. The team of teachers running the programme consisted of six active members of the faculty and three associated members, one being the editor of the master’s programme’s own online journal *Textualitet*. The teachers were processual writing teachers and supervisors for a writing group of four to six students in every semester. The epistemic and social relations were the engines of the writing pedagogy in the writing groups. One evening at each gathering, the whole group, including the teachers, went to a café together where some of the students (often one from each feedback group) would read aloud from their own text. The sharing of texts and gathering around texts of quality mirror the greater field of *sakprosa* like festivals and public lectures by non-fiction authors reading from their texts.

The selection of genres and transformations of subjects over time mirrors the evolution in the greater field of *sakprosa* over time in Norway, both as a field of culture and as epistemic culture. The introduction subject and the subject on biographic texts were bearers of the tradition of non-fiction and to start here while showing the students the many possibilities of writing even in traditional genres opened the room for developing voice and being creative. To make a close connection to the epistemic culture of *sakprosa*, rhetoric and debate, which were subjects introduced at a second moment, gave room for working on non-fiction genres like debate books and for the oral tradition within the field

exemplified with speeches. The subject introduced rhetorical criticism and a greater focus on the current rhetorical audience in Norway. Moreover, the subject had a profound impact on the learning environment: the student's developed a greater awareness of each other because of the speeches hold and the group as a miniature of the greater field of *sakprosa* became clear in an early stage.

We had frequent guest lectures by non-fiction authors to demonstrate and shape the understanding of the rhetorical functions of texts. The lectures came from both other academic institutions, but foremost it was non-fiction authors representing the different genres. This machinery of guest lectures made the connections and power relations in the epistemic culture of *sakprosa* clearer for the students. Each semester censors were selected from the academia or the field of *sakprosa* (authors in the genre, publishers, etc.) to grade and give feedback to the students' texts. The machinery of the epistemic practice also included a great amount of reflexivity, preparing the students for participation in a reflexive knowledge society: All students were supposed to keep a digital blog on a specific platform to be shared with the other students (and the public, if the students decided to). Every exam consisted of a collection of the three texts that the students had been working on during the course, and with an introductory essay with a discussion on the texts and process of writing them, using the theories from the curriculum. This collection with an introduction was read by an external examiner and discussed with the student and his or her supervisor. All the epistemic practices had a strong emphasis on conceptual-reflective epistemic work: we challenged our students to reflect on *sakprosa* by discussing the genres as stand-ins for the knowledge object of non-fiction.

The Roles in the Student's Texts

In the introduction, we introduced our three diverse types of agents that the master's programme made for the epistemic culture of *sakprosa* or general field of non-fiction—maybe as communicators of their original profession. In the following, we discuss how the student practices different roles by their writing and texts. Below, we analyse a few of the

students' texts that were submitted for the exams in some of the subjects presented above. The texts represent most aspects from the pedagogy of the programme as well as the tasks from the six subject courses of the programme.

We begin with the *sheep*. The sheep learn to write, read and participate in the non-fiction textual field according to the general and accepted standards, traditions and culture. To make the students able to act like sheep, we have used a pedagogy of imitation as well as a curriculum of general rhetoric and composition on narrative writing, academic writing as well as introducing them to the principles of publishing. When we address the students as students, this role is activated. In the text corpus, we have three texts from the very first task in the first semester. The task was to write a pastiche of a non-fiction book selected by the teachers. The writing task of writing a pastiche is a true way of strengthening the role as sheep: to identify, but not criticize, the style of another writer to make a similar text. You must be detailed in the imitation on several levels from choice of words and sentence lengths, use of focality and modality to the use of subtitles and the visual design over to use of the same topics and narration. The students do the analysis to be able to imitate, but without knowing it and without evaluation or devaluation. One text manages to imitate the style of an essayistic book by reproducing the topics very closely and even use a piece from musical lyrics just as the text imitated. Another student, in a course in which they were supposed to imitate a kind of debative, ironic book of self-help, imitates the use of subtitles and the significant use of concluding sentences of advice or "things to remember" and she imitates doing an interview with an "expert", meaning she imitates one of the methods used in the book. However, the topics discussed are how and why she has chosen the master's programme and what she expects to learn. She answers the addressing to her as a student and as a writer in her original profession and a better writer in general. The text succeeds in being ironic and self-criticizing and imitates the use of short and long sentences, scenes and essayistic discussions of other books. Nevertheless, the student only refers to one other book and by that appears as a student and not a true essayistic writer with many intertextual references. The use of "I" and the focality are done very precisely, so it appears that the student had done a close analysis on this to imitate.

The writing task prepared the students for the next role, the *watch dogs*, because they were taught to be observant, close and slow when reading other texts, and they started to prepare for finding their own voice in the role of the wolf, because they sensed that their own writing not that easily could be done like someone else's writing.

Watch dog is the second role that the students are invited to embody responding to a pedagogy of feedback on texts, with the aim of letting them make further steps to become actors that participate actively in the field by identifying, herding and watching over their own and other's growing profession. The teaching situations in which the exercise of the watch dog role is most practiced is that of the writing groups where the students give feedback to their colleagues' texts. This exercise takes place in all the writing groups during the whole master's programme since we consider the analytic ability to assess texts as crucial for becoming an active text practitioner; the master's is an education of not only future authors but also of critics, teachers, editors and in general of people who participate actively in the public debate.

Another *watch dog* exercise was that of acting as editors of a colleague's book proposal, which in turn is partly also a sheep exercise since the students must imitate both text types and professional roles. Learning to become a watch dog means being able to consider, analyse, discuss and judge other texts. This ability is of crucial importance, since it is propaedeutic for the development of the capacity to evaluate one's proper texts, which in turn is a mandatory skill that the students will exercise more deeply when they become wolves. While the role of the watch dog mainly gets developed through the analysis, reaction and comments to colleagues' texts, we can add that it also gets exercised—albeit more indirectly—through the analysis that the students are doing along the whole master of their own texts. In conclusion, the role of the watch dog goes in both direction outwards, towards texts written by others, and inwards, towards one's own texts.

As an example of the watch dog learning, we look at that in which the students simulate/embody the role of an editor responding to a student's book proposal, in which they are invited to follow the standards for such specific text types, trying to use them as frames for the evaluation of the potential qualities of a manuscript. As editors, the students are supposed

to consider issues such as structure, language, style and length, as well as the text's possible market and possible publishing channels, including suggestions for how the manuscript can be improved.

Many students choose to follow quite closely a model for how to write an editor's response and since this specific genre gives little freedom to develop creatively a personal style, it is exactly the student's analytic and evaluative skills that get emphasized. Interestingly, though, one of our students chose to use the three classical categories of persuasion in rhetoric (ethos, logos and pathos) as a frame through which she developed her response to a colleague's proposal. This is an example of how the students on the one hand through practice learn the "rules" and conventions of different genres, at the same time experiment how these genres can be challenged, developed and transformed. Of course, not all the experiments are successful, but they are all the same very useful learning tools, as they help the students becoming more conscious about genres and their rhetorical, stylistic and communicative potentials. In this specific example, using the rhetorical categories helps the student in focusing on how the colleague's text can improve in becoming more persuasive.

Finally, *the wolves* can be described as agents that go their own ways, experimenting and crossing borders of genre; and in the programme they live by the teaching and curriculum that opens for creativity, development of individual voice and capability to capture the right moment and place for being published. The third and last role that we have tried to develop in our programme is also in temporal terms the last role that the students are asked to epitomize in their final thesis. At this point of the students' course, they should have developed certain abilities such as choosing the appropriate language, genre and style for their texts, having a theoretic overview, which enables them to draw on the suitable theories for these same texts, together with the analytic ability of evaluating their own texts on a metalevel. To this, we can add the capacity to intersect different genres and roles in their texts. They are also supposed to have developed a certain confidence with genres and styles so that they can use them creatively, developing thus a proper voice. Finally, embodying the role of the wolf means that the students can act in the literary landscape being able to understand in which publication channels their texts are appropriate.

In one of our students' master's theses, the candidate, who is an obstetrician, writes about what she calls "birth stories", based upon six interviews with six different women who tell about their experience giving birth. Most of the master's theses submitted at our programme comprise the manuscript of what is meant to be a published book in the future and an academic article in which the candidate discusses and explains the linguistic, structural and stylistic choices made in the manuscript and the theories drawn upon.

The future publication of the birth stories is supposed to be a textbook for future obstetricians. The candidate's choice of writing such a book, basing it primarily on interviews, is an example of her having developed the features of a wolf, and actually this student was the one starting with a pastiche answering as a student and thereby performing like a sheep. Textbooks are required to communicate exact knowledge and skills in an objective and neutral way, which are qualities that certainly do not correspond to interviews, which commonly are considered as subjective, personal and less precise. As the candidate explains in the dissertation's theory chapter, she chose interviews after having experimented other genres, finding that the personal stories she achieved from the interviews combined with her scientific comments could guarantee exactly what she was seeking: readability, immediacy and scientific knowledge. Supplementing theory with experience was also a means to attain both pathos as well as ethos, since the interviews opened for identification, and the comments assured credibility. Moreover, the interviews were the best solution for giving voice to a variety of points of view, creating thus a text characterized by a plurality of voices, and however united.

Having created a somewhat ad hoc genre for her texts, breaking with traditional conventions and expectations, the candidate developed "wolf-skills" such as autonomy and individuality; she is nevertheless not an experienced author yet, as the uncertain first-person voice in the texts uncovers. Although appearing as an expert in the comments of the manuscript, her proficiency and expertise do not emerge in the very neutral voice in the interviews. In addition, as the examiners note in the explanation of the grade, the women interviewed should have been more clearly located in their environment, both geographically as well as socially, in order to create a stronger identification as well as a deeper

understanding of their stories. The candidate's unclear discussion on what she defines as the essayistic characters of her manuscript reveals that the wolf is still young, necessitating more study and more writing experience, but that there is good potential for becoming an independent author contributing actively to the expansion of the field of *sakprosa*.

Conclusion: The Master's Programme as Epistemic Practice

From the very introduction and establishment of the concept of *sakprosa* in Norway, we argue that our master's programme has had an active role making agents for the field of *sakprosa*. Moreover, the programme has practiced the episteme and by that over time contributed to sustain, warrant and develop the epistemic culture of *sakprosa* according to the different roles that the study practice and pedagogically develop—sheep, watch dogs and wolves. First, the programme included the double process of standardization and growth of the field of *sakprosa* that briefly is described above. A recirculation of the epistemic culture in the form of non-fiction genres is central in this work. Second, the programme succeeded in aims at a purpose of professionalization of authors—in the professions and as non-fiction authors. Third, we focus on the creative process not just developing innovative writers that can bring the epistemic culture into the future, but to create genuine agents that address back to the field and reform the very epistemic culture. We saw that the architecture and machinery of the programme and the students' texts, the progression of subject and the variety and repetition work together to reach the purpose of making the students graduate and make professional writers and non-fiction writers for the field of non-fiction. The emphasis of both social and epistemic relations created a learning environment for growth of both sheep, watch dog and wolves.

The epistemic culture of *sakprosa* might have changed in new directions since the master's programme ended in 2020 so that the programme would have had to implement other genres or even leave the architecture and machinery based on genres and more intensively work with rhetorical

situations, larger audiences and free samplings of genres. We might have made a clone of the sheep and wolf to make more loyal and solidary artists and train the watch dogs to become more critical and able to participate outside their professions to benefit the larger knowledge society.

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Crisis Communication on Social Media: Informalization in the Hour-by-Hour Struggle for Information

Gunilla Almström Persson

Introduction

In April 2017, Stockholm suffered a terror attack. A man highjacked a small truck and drove it at high speed down a pedestrian street. Five people were killed, and more than twenty persons were badly injured. In this situation, Twitter turned out to be the main source of official information (Krisinformation.se).¹ However, during the first six hours after the attack, all authorities lacked information and could not determine the extent of the threat. Yet, as time passed the situation became clearer and knowledge about the attack was heightened. A few months later, in

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¹ For a broader description of the Swedish authority Krisinformation.se, see Section “Data and Method”.

G. Almström Persson (✉)
Department for Swedish Language and Multilingualism, Stockholm
University, Stockholm, Sweden
e-mail: gunilla.persson@su.se

July 2017, the official warning signal for war and other dangers² was transmitted by mistake. This caused a storm of worried questions, aggression, and derision from citizens on Krisinformation's Twitter account.

In modern society, crisis situations are coming more into focus due to the global character of societal crises and the fact that anyone can be affected (Beck 1998). This has also increased the need for information from authorities. At the same time, there has been a development of authorities' information in social media (Bouvier et al. 2016). Social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter are used to make it easier for authorities to reach the public in official matters and at the same time facilitate the public's contacts with authorities. Social media offers immediate responses and straightforward answers in a convenient, clear, and concise way. As a result, new conditions of immediacy and conversational style have arisen. Due to social media's demands for speed, the delivery of correct information and knowledge of solutions may be challenging. This becomes especially clear in situations such as crises in society like a terror attack. In these situations, official knowledge is often scant while citizens' need for information is insatiable. Providing comprehensive information in the role of the authorities might, therefore, not be possible (Almström Persson 2018). In parallel, authorities turn into interlocutors due to the interactive nature of social media, something that may change the terms for language style and perhaps more importantly might change, or rather develop, a social role in relation to citizens. In social media, like Twitter, relations with given roles are frequently put out of play. Social media is based on simultaneity, and social relations can change instantaneously. In social crises, which are in focus in this study, authorities do not always have comprehensive knowledge while the citizens' need for information is extensive. At specific occasions, citizens might even have more information than the authority itself, which is why interactions play an important role in the overall knowledge in society. At the same time, social media formats have their own logic regulated by anonymity and sometimes extreme informal and offensive praxis. This tension may be demanding for authorities, and crisis communication on social media shows

² Previously referred to as Sweden's Air Raid signal.

communicative conditions that may shed new light on the concept of sakprosa as it takes shape in interactive media.

Authorities' use of social media reflects a change in the discourse of public communication, which may be undergoing an informalization. The changes in linguistic characteristics in social media have drawn the attention of scholars studying neologisms, affixes, compounds, abbreviations, and emotional expressions (Chrystal 2001; Dijkman et al. 2020; Postegiullo Gómez 2003). However, the changes in communicative conditions and the possible changes in public discourse into a more informal character have not been fully discussed.

Purpose of the Study

Against this backdrop, this chapter concerns crisis communication in social media in an empirical study and pays special attention to conditions of knowledge and authoritativeness in interactions regarding the role of authorities. The discussion pays attention to the assumed development of informalization in authorities' sakprosa by examining the Twitter communication from Krisinformation.se, which is the authority that gathers verified information on social crises from all other Swedish authorities. This study has three objectives. The first is to add new perspectives of reciprocal aspects of sakprosa understood as interactive, informal, and emotional (cf. Pipping's discussion of style in sakprosa, 1938). The second is to investigate communicative strategies when the Swedish authority Kriskommunikation lacks knowledge. And finally, the third and possibly too wide purpose for one single study is to discuss whether the public discourse, reflected in authorities' sakprosa, undergoes informalization or not.

The following research questions are especially addressed in this study:

- What interactive strategies does Krisinformation use to handle the fact that they do not have an overall picture and knowledge of a crisis? How is knowledge communicated hour by hour in examples of crisis communication on Twitter?

- How does Krisinformation balance the role of being authoritative against a new relatively informal role?
- Is there an informalization of discourse for sakprosa?

A social crisis can be understood as an extraordinary event that affects society at large, for example, natural disasters, fires, and toxic emissions (Vigsö 2016). A social crisis can also be a sudden event that is characterized by the fact that someone wants to hurt society or citizens badly. In a fire, authorities can make forecasts even though the fire in question was not expected. Experience over time of major fires means that society has prior knowledge and some preparation for such a crisis. A terrorist attack like the one in Stockholm, however, is unexpected and is characterized by lack of information, and the course of events is difficult to predict (Almström Persson 2018). A mistaken official warning from the authorities can cause worries and thereby a strong need for confirmation.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical approach used in this chapter is critical discourse analysis (Wodak and Meyer 2016), which entails a constructivist perspective in which linguistic acts are assumed to be shaped by social relationships and processes, while at the same time language is assumed to shape the social relationships and processes (Fairclough 1995; Wodak 2001). This study's critical approach is connected to the tradition in the field of research to study the language in social change processes and the idea that hybrid texts arise when society changes. The social change highlighted in this chapter concerns the assumption of increased informalization of the Swedish public sphere.

When texts are described as hybrid, this refers to the boundaries between different discourses being shifted or to different discourses being blended. "Social and cultural changes very often manifest themselves discursively through a redrawing of boundaries within and between orders

of discourse” (Fairclough 1995). Discourse and orders of discourse are key concepts in this study. Discourse is associated with rules, routines, and conventions that are shaped within institutional knowledge production, but it is also viewed as the ways of realizing or representing social practices as well as ideas and attitudes associated with these practices. The term “orders of discourse” is defined as a set of genres, discourses, and styles, within a social practice (Fairclough 1995).

As mentioned above, sakprosa in social media has been described as hybrid by the blending of oral and written text. Hybrid texts are to be understood as being multi-discursive or blended discursive. Sakprosa in social media is a type of communication that encompasses both the authoritative discourse and the interactive discourse. The interaction and the complexity of the text may be described as lying within the tension between, on the one hand, the professional and the formal, and on the other the everyday and the informal. Particular attention must be paid here to the boundary between the formal authority’s discourse and the informal interactive discourse and how this drawing of boundaries is realized linguistically in the Twitter communications following the ideas of Fairclough and Wodak:

Describing discourse as social practice implies a dialectic relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institution(s) and social structure(s) which frame it. (Fairclough and Wodak 1997:258)

When it comes to social media, Hagren Idevall (2016) points to three textual aspects of social media that she believes refer to an objectivity discourse: (1) statements without modification, (2) statements that lack a voice, and (3) statements that contain references, sources, and links. Her study examines interaction chains in commentary fields in news media. What has not been discussed to any significant degree is how authorities communicate within the tension between their assignment to give well-substantiated information to citizens and social media’s demand of informality.

Literature Review

The development towards informality in the public sphere has been associated with periods of transformation in society that have enabled new social roles. Researchers in the rhetoric field have discussed how equality ideals and changes in social hierarchies through history have altered official language in the direction of a more oral style (Öhrberg 2011). The sociologist Barbara A. Misztal draws attention to modern society when she defines formality as the impersonal sphere of formal institutions and connects informality to the personal domain of the primary group. At the same time, she asserts that the relationship in society between formal and informal is being eroded by new electronic means of communication and that this requires open, unrestricted, and reciprocal communication (Misztal 2000). Further, in contemporary Swedish society the public sphere has been more subject-oriented, partly due to what Foucault (1991 [1980]) mentions as ‘governmentality’. This concept refers to governance as a joint project in the relation between citizens and society and has in recent years been canalized through social media (Almström Persson 2022).

From the linguistic field, a shift from formal to informal is stated without any broader discussion. Informalization is described as a general pattern towards a more oral style in written text in English-speaking societies (Biber and Finnegan 1989; Montero-Fleta et al. 2008). Sarangi and Slembrouck (1996) argue that modern society has been commercialized with the result that even official language has elements of advertisement-like linguistic strategies such as different types of addresses and offers. Studies of company–consumer connections in social media have shown the importance of using a relationship-oriented personal voice, conversational capabilities, and prompt responsiveness (Dijkman et al. 2020). The style of *sakprosa* in social media has been described as a blend of oral and written text (Chrystal 2001; Dijkman et al. 2020; Postegiullo Gómez 2003) in contrast to the style in traditional authoritative communication (Nord and Sörlin 2017; Nyström Höög, 2015). Almström Persson (2018) has shown how the pragmatic function and modality of statements differs in authorities’ action tweets and response tweets. However, the description of the change of discourse concerning informality has so far not been fully investigated and described.

Data and Method

Krisinformation.se is a website run by the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (Myndigheten för samhällsskydd och beredskap, MSB). Their assignment is to compile and convey alerts and emergency information from the authorities to the public. Krisinformation is in other words the utmost authority to gather and publish verified and confirmed information by the responsible authority or actor (such as power network operators, telecommunication, the police, or health-care authorities). They publish alerts and news on their website and on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Twitter is in focus in this study since Twitter is the fastest and most interactive of the three social media platforms mentioned.³

There are two arguments for studying crisis communication when focusing on informalization in social media. The first argument is that crisis communication demands accessibility and simultaneity, which in itself motivates the use of social media. The second argument rests on the fact that the Swedish authority Krisinformation.se was the second Swedish authority to use Twitter when it was introduced in April 2009. An assumption is they are accomplished and experienced in this modus of communication.

This study includes two corpora from Krisinformation's Twitter account. The first corpus, Case A in this study, is the Twitter conversation during the terror attack mentioned in the beginning of the chapter. The second corpus, Case B, is a Twitter conversation from the event when the official warning signal for war and other dangers was transmitted by mistake by the authorities. The terror attack corpus has been chosen due to the fact that authorities for eight hours suffered a lack of information, and it shows the protracted process of communication and interaction between the authority and the public. In complement, the corpus from the transmission mistake is more of a punctual event when the situation was clarified after 11 minutes and then communicated to the public. The second corpus shows how citizens on a public platform discuss authorities' mistakes. This chapter analyses the complete samples of tweets hour by hour from the terror attack in Stockholm in 2017, including a total of

³ Interview with editor Jeanna Ullén, editor at Kriskommunikation, 15 March 2021.

139 tweets, and the complete samples from the mistake of the warning signal in 2018, including 1795 tweets. The tweets were originally in Swedish but were translated to English.

Analytical Approach

The present study is a corpus analysis of the complete samples of tweets from the two corpora. The tweets are separated into Krisinformation's information tweets (action tweets), Kriskommunikation's responses to the public's tweets (response tweets), and finally tweets that are initiated by the public (citizens' tweets). Crisis communication tends to develop into an extended process. For this reason, empirical studies of crisis communication often make use of a timeline, which also is the case in this chapter (cf. Strandberg and Vigsö 2016). The timeline supports the research question about what communicative strategies Kriskommunikation employs in a communicative channel governed by interaction. Further, the study has a qualitative approach to the data motivated by a general cultural assumption that various individuals or groups in interaction give voice to different perspectives (Marková et al. 2007). The methodological consequence of this assumption is that this study concentrates on close reading of both the content and the style in the interaction between tweets posted by Kriskommunikation and response tweets from the public. Finally, formal style is defined as writing-oriented language following the lexicon and grammar in Swedish handbooks, and informal style is defined as speech-associated language and typical social media language such as neologisms, affixes, compounds, abbreviations, and emotional expressions (cf. Chrystal 2001; Dijkman et al. 2020; Postegiullo Gómez 2003). In addition, the two persons from the editorial staff at Krisinformation gave detailed and clarifying information about the two events in interviews. The interviews concerned the editors' reflections on their strategies as interlocutors in Twitter interactions.⁴

⁴The interviewed editors were Anna Toss and Jeanna Ullén.

Data Analysis

Since the two corpora to some extent correspond to different questions in the study, the presentation of the result is divided accordingly. The first corpus, the terror attack, responds to the question about communication strategies when the authority lacks information. The second corpus, the false alarm, shows how Krisinformation deals with informal interactions. All examples are presented in Swedish after the English translated example.

Case A: Terror Attack

The 139 posts connected to the terror attack on Krisinformation's Twitter account are arranged according to the time they were published, hour by hour. The attack started just before 2:50 p.m., and the first tweet from Krisinformation was published at 3:03 p.m. It turned out to be a lone perpetrator and he was arrested at 8 p.m., that is, the sixth hour in Table 1. The information on Twitter was running for 26 hours. Krisinformation's tweets are assorted into 31 action tweets and 42 response tweets. The total posts from the public include 58 tweets, and other authorities' contributions, like the police and transport authority, include 8 tweets. Table 1 shows the timeline during the whole process. In

Table 1 Posts on Krisinformation's Twitter account hour by hour after the terror attack, with a start at 3 p.m.

Hour	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	TOT
Krisinfo: Action tweets	9	-	5	5	4	4	1	1	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	31
Krisinfo: Response tweets	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	13	1	2	1	-	9	5	2	-	-	7	42
Public's tweets	2	-	1	4	1	6	1	6	1	1	5	-	10	13	1	-	1	5	58
Other authorities' tweets	2	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	8
TOTAL	15	2	7	9	5	10	2	20	3	3	6	1	21	18	4	-	1	12	139

the top row of the table, number 1 corresponds to the first hour between 3 p.m. and 4 p.m., number 2 corresponds to the second hour between 4 p.m. and 5 p.m., and so on. From midnight until 8 a.m. (10th to 17th hours), there was no Twitter activity.

The timeline shows that Krisinformation posted 11 tweets in the first hour and most of them, 9, were action tweets. The main information is the fact that a truck has been driven down a pedestrian street. During the second hour, there is a vacuum of information. The action tweets during the first eight hours are statements in declarative clauses, links, and imperative clauses, see examples 1–3, which are typical examples of the information provided by authorities. The language style is formal written-oriented language following the lexicon and grammar in Swedish handbooks.

- (1) The Swedish Transport Administration has suspended train traffic passing through Stockholm Central Station at the request of the Police. [Trafikverket har stoppat tågtrafiken förbi Stockholms central, på uppmaning av polisen.]
- (2) The police authority on the events in central Stockholm. [Twitter.com/polisen_sthlm](https://twitter.com/polisen_sthlm) [Polisen om händelserna i centrala Stockholm. [Twitter.com/polisen_sthlm](https://twitter.com/polisen_sthlm)]
- (3) Be thoughtful when using the telephone networks in Stockholm city right now. Keep in mind that many are trying to reach their relatives. [Var eftertänksam när du använder telenätet i Stockholms city just nu. Tänk på att många försöker nå sina anhöriga.]

From the third hour and ongoing the public starts to tweet, but with no responses from the authority. Primarily, they have questions concerning the attack: Is it more than one attack? Is there a shooting going on at Fridhemsplan? Can I pass the Central train station?, and so on . Only in the eighth hour does Krisinformation start responding to the public's tweets. When citizen NN38 asks if there is more than one attack because the information in an earlier Krisinformation tweet was written in the plural, "attacks", the editor answers in a personal way, "The editor had a slip of his fingers", and then he thanks NN38 for pointing out the mistake. Further, when citizen MB gives credit to the work that

Krisinformation does on Twitter, the editor answers saying, “Thank you”, example 5. During the 26 hours, there is a problem with Krisinformation’s application. Citizens criticize the authority for their technical problems and the answer from the editorial staff is to admit “we have to work a lot to make it work” and they do that in an informal style, calling it a “crappy app”, example 6.

- (4) @NN83 No, just one attack. The editor had a slip of his fingers. Thanks for pointing this out. Now changed. [Nej, bara ett attentat. Redaktören slant med fingrarna. Tack för påpekandet. Ändrat nu.]
- (5) @MB Thank you! [Tack!]
- (6) @SN Crappy app. No more no less. We have to work a lot more to make it work. Kim/ed [Kass app. Vare sig mer eller mindre än så. Vi får jobba en del på att få den att fungera. Kim/red]

Worth noting is that in the eighth hour, the situation around the terror attack is relatively clear, and the police have arrested a man for the attack. Thus, only when there is evident information does the authority start answering questions from the public and to respond to praise and criticism. In comparison to Krisinformation’s action tweets characterized by declarative clauses and imperatives, the response tweets have a more informal style. Linguistically, there are signals of interaction with an explicit text-voice: “No, ...”, “Thanks for pointing that out”, and “We have to work a lot more to make it work”, the latter being an answer to criticism. A relationship-oriented voice is mirrored in the response tweets when an interlocutor appears by use of the pronoun “we” and in the signature “Kim/ed”. Editor’s signatures with a first name are only found in response tweets.

A day after the attack, in the 21st hour, the police are completely sure that there is no more threat against society. The crisis is over. Krisinformation’s Twitter communication then develops even more into interaction and the authority-voice changes from giving information in declarative clauses and imperatives to a more conversational style addressing citizens. Krisinformation turns primarily into an interlocutor. Most responses begin with a greeting phrase and first name “Hello NN!”.

In these response tweets, pronouns and signatures are common. Personal feelings, such as “it warms” are also expressed, see example 7.

- (7) @DD Hello Linn! Thank you for your message, it warms our hearts. We will take your point of view further; many people agree with you and your point is important. /Jess, ed. [Hej Linn! Tack för dina ord, det värmer. Vi kommer att ta med oss din synpunkt, många håller med dig och den är viktig. /Jess, red.]

With the beginning phrase “In fact”, example 8 has the form of an excerpt from a dialogue about the technical problems that occurred. The tweet also has the informal wording “nutty code”.

- (8) @X1 In fact, the error was not due to congestion, but to nutty code in an update release. A technician may develop this more understandably in the future. /UJ [Faktum är att felet inte berodde på överbelastning, utan knasig kod i en nyhet. En tekniker får utveckla detta mer begripligt framöver. /UJ

Interestingly, the authorities’ lack of knowledge is verbalized. The editor appears as an ordinary person by stating that another person, a technician, must make the method more understandable. The understanding of this verbalization of the deficiency can be interpreted as a signal that the editor and citizen X1 are social equals; a ‘we’ is created in the conversation, ‘we’ against ‘them’, them understood as the technicians. By showing a lack of knowledge, the editor can be said to apply to a feeling of affinity between herself and the citizen in question. The power balance between authorities and the public is thereby eliminated.

A consequence of Krisinformation’s assignment to collect and convey other authorities’ information is that many of the tweets have references in the form of links to other authorities’ websites and Twitter accounts. These references may indicate an objectivity discourse similar to what Hagren Idevall (2016) points out in her study.

The empirical study of action tweets in the terror attack corpus has pointed out references to the objectivity discourse such as links, declarative clauses, and signatures of the professional function. The style

throughout is formal written Swedish. I understand these linguistic characteristics as ways of representing the social practice of authorities as we know it, and I claim that objectivity is also a practice that is expected from the public. That being said, I do not see a change in the authorities' discourse on social media concerning action tweets.

Case B: False Alarm

The timeline of the mistaken transmission of the warning signal in July 2017 is arranged differently in Table 2 in comparison to Table 1. This is due to the difference in how the communication on Krisinformation's platform developed. In this situation, interaction between the authority and the public is scant. At 10 p.m. sharp, the official warning signal for war and other dangers was transmitted by mistake. One minute later the public starts to ask questions on Krisinformation's Twitter account about the warning signal. It takes the authority 11 minutes to communicate that the alarm was transmitted by mistake, that is, at 10:11 p.m. Table 2 shows that citizens posted 330 tweets during the first 11 minutes. Krisinformation posts two more action tweets that day, at 10:35 p.m. and at 11:22 p.m. The day after they post two more, at 9:57 a.m. and at 4:40 p.m., for a total of five action tweets. In comparison, the public posted a total of 1790 tweets during the five days from 9 to 14 July.

The first 10 minutes, citizens' tweets are mostly questions about why the alarm went off: "Why is there an alarm right now?", "What is going on?", "Is this a test?", and "Why air raid warning now?" There is no

Table 2 Timeline for posts on Krisinformation's Twitter account after the false alarm

Time	10:00 p.m.	10:11	10:35	11:22	9:57 a.m.	9:57 4:40	TOTAL
	->	10:11 ->	10:35 ->	11:22 ->	->	p.m. ->	
Krisinfo, action tweets	-	1	-	1	-	1	5
Krisinfo, response tweets	-	-	-	-	12	5	17
Public tweets	330	594	287	293	187	99	1,790

interaction between authority and the public during these 10 minutes. Instead Krisinformation posts their first tweet at 10:11 p.m., example 9.

- (9) The alarm went off at 10 p.m. all over the Stockholm Region. It is a fault and not a real alarm, according to SOS Alarm/Editor on duty [Hesa Fredrik gick vid 22-tiden igång över hela Stokholms län. Det är ett fel och inget riktigt larm, enligt SOS Alarm. /Vakthavande red.]

In an interview with the editorial staff, they explain that it took them 10 minutes to confirm the information about the mistake. However, they did not communicate or respond to the 330 questions while they were waiting to get the information confirmed. Their choice was instead to remain silent without interaction. Concerning language style, it is worth noting that they use a formal written language and the signature is not a first name but a professional functional title, “Editor on duty”.

After the first action tweet from Krisinformation, the account explodes with tweets from citizens, including 594 tweets in 24 minutes. Many of these are informal, like examples 10 and 11, and use emojis to show their emotions. Others are in responses to other citizens on the platform, like examples 12 and 13.

- (10) I choked on my evening tea!!: O [Satte kvällsteet i halsen!!: O]
 (11) And I ran down to the basement:-) [Å jag som sprang ned i källaren:-)]
 (12) Apparently a false alarm [Tydligen falskt larm]
 (13) I am glad that people are reacting so quickly [Det glädjer mig dock att folk reagerar så snabbt]

Thirty-five minutes later Krisinformation posts their second tweet shortly declaring, “False alarm in Stockholm”. After this the public partly changes tone and starts to either criticize the authority, see examples 14 and 15, or makes ironic jokes about how Krisinformation handles the incident, examples 16 and 17.

- (14) It is damn not approved that it takes 10 minutes to come out with that info [Det är fan inte godkänt att det tar 10 minuter att komma ut med den infon]
- (15) Exactly. If they have fucked up, they can at least tell us the story [Precis. Om de ändå har “fuckat upp” så kan de väl åtminstone fortsätta hela linan ut]
- (16) False alarm but Putin invades then [Falskt larm Putin invaderade då]
- (17) The wood has run out ... there were no smoke signals [Nä veden var slut ... kom inga röksignaler]

The informal, emotional, critical, and ironic posts from citizens are never answered by the authority. The tweet corpus from the false alarm shows how Krisinformation avoids being a part of the content and style exemplified in examples 14–17 above. Instead, they remain silent and communicate as little as possible. They do not interact. When they post their third tweet one and a half hour after the false alarm, they use a formal style and quite simply state that they have seen the reactions and the questions but will stick to informative posts, example 18.

- (18) We have received many questions and reactions on the false alarm that went off in the Stockholm area at 10 p.m. We will return with more info. [Vi har fått många frågor och reaktioner på det felaktiga VMA-larm som gick ut i Stockholmsområdet vid 22-tiden. Vi återkommer med mer info.]

The day after at 9:57 a.m., Krisinformation publishes their fourth post informing that they read all tweets on their platform and give feedback due to capacity, example 19.

- (19) Thank you for your questions and comments regarding the incorrect warning alarm that was transmitted from SOS Alarm yesterday. We read everything and give feedback according to our capacity to so! [Tack för frågor och synpunkter angående det felaktiga VMA-larm som gick ut från SOS Alarm igår. Vi läser allt och återkopplar efter förmåga!]

After this tweet, Krisinformation posts 12 response tweets with the main message that they will start an investigation to find out why the alarm was transmitted by mistake. In other words, they still do not respond to the over one thousand tweets from the public. Finally, in the afternoon, they post their fifth and last action tweet with a link to their own website, example 20.

- (20) Regarding Sunday's incorrect alarm in the Stockholm area. We have collected information from the authorities about the warning signal here: krisinformation.se/nyheter/ [Angående söndagens felaktiga VMA-larm i Stockholmsområdet. Här har vi samlat info från myndigheter och om VMA: krisinformation.se/nyheter/]

In summary, Krisinformation communicates in a formal written language in all their tweets. The information posts are short and clear. The signature in the first action tweet has a formal reference to the organisation when the alarm is stated to be a mistake and that there is no social crisis, no danger, and no cause for concern. In this corpus, there is a huge number of tweets from the public. During the first 10 minutes citizens ask for information. Again, similar to the terror attack corpus, when the authority does not have information they do not communicate. In addition, they do not respond to emotional, ironic, or informal tweets from the public. Instead, Krisinformation comments on the number of public comments, and confirms that they read everything, but in practice their Twitter account lacks true reciprocity.

Conclusion and Discussion

Does an informal practice of sakprosa such as the use of greeting phrases and first names indicate that there is an informalization of public discourse going on? Not necessarily, or rather both yes and no. The development of authorities' communication on social media entails new communicative conditions. This study of crisis communication on social media give prominence to not only new conditions but also parallel conditions that affect the discourse. The parallel conditions are sometimes also contradictory, which I will discuss further in the following.

The overall aim of authorities' communication is to give information by presenting confirmed facts to the public. Hence this study shows that by linguistic means there are references to both an objectivity discourse and a knowledge discourse. The survey of action tweets in the terror attack corpus and the mistaken signal corpus points out references to the objectivity discourse such as links, declarative clauses, and signatures of the professional functionaries. In addition, the style throughout is formal written Swedish in the action tweets. I understand these linguistic characteristics as ways of representing the social practice of authorities as we know it, and at the same time an expected practice from the public. That being said, authorities still communicate on social media in association to a formal authoritative discourse.

When it comes to conditions that are specific for crisis communication on social media, this study presents a new aspect concerning the knowledge discourse. Both the terror attack and the false alarm are situations that entail a need for constant information. The chronological mappings of both corpora show that the practice of giving information and being authoritative collide with the demands of the media itself of being fast and thereby continuously producing solid and confirmed knowledge. The strategy that Krisinformation follows is to refrain from giving information if they do not have new and updated information. This practice is confirmed by the editorial staff at Krisinformation who declare that their policy is to communicate only when they have new verified information. When other authorities such as the Police and the Security services do not have information, Krisinformation have simply nothing to tweet.⁵ The "silence" strategy challenges the public's demands on authorities as active interlocutors on social media. The reciprocal character of Twitter encourages an informal tone and more or less demands quick responses. As a consequence, pointed out in the study of the false alarm, the public expresses dissatisfaction with the non-appearance of interaction. Lack of response in the false alarm study opens for the public to post criticism, jokes, and emotional expressions. A result of not giving information or simply explaining that authorities do not have new or confirmed information is that Krisinformation may contribute to disrespectful social and linguistic practice on their platforms and may thereby

⁵Since 2017 and 2018, this practice is undergoing a change.

contradictorily contribute to an informalization of their own social media channels. This finding needs to be further investigated.

In an interview with the editorial staff of Krisinformation they express a wish that their presence on social media would make their communication more open and more clear in order to reduce the distance between the authority and the public. The hour-by-hour study of the false alarm shows that when Krisinformation did not tweet and respond to citizens' questions, citizens started to interact with each other. Hence, authorities' social media platforms can turn into forums open for public communication out of authorities control. This can be desirable because citizens may have more information than the authority. In the terror attack corpus, for example, there is some advice in a tweet from a citizen concerning overloading of the telephone network. But opening for the publics' internal communication may possibly also pose a risk that the authority cannot control the information on their own platform and thereby open for, on the one hand, informal and harsh language and content, and on the other hand develop a discourse of disrespectfulness for authorities and other citizens.

I would say that the question of authorities' social media platforms as open agoras is a core issue with respect to sakprosa on social media. Barbara A. Misztal argues that only societies that achieve an appropriate balance between the informality and formality of interaction will find themselves in a position to move forward to further democratization and an improved quality of life (Misztal 2000). However, this chapter give prominence to the strategy of not communicating when the public expects interaction can be devastating. The role of being authoritative is obviously still very important. The harsh and ironic expressions from the public in the false alarm study should be understood against expectations on authorities as giving information and being open. But the informal discourse of personal emotions forms a contradiction when this does not happen. The yearly attitude survey at Gothenburg University underline the deeply rooted tradition of high confidence in Swedish authorities and their communication (Martinsson and Andersson 2020). An interesting result of the terror attack study is the clear tendency that both the objective discourse and the knowledge discourse are fully connected to action tweets, that is, when Krisinformation takes the initiative to post information on Twitter. On the contrary, in authorities' response tweets

interactive and informal style associated to an informal discourse is in use. In the response tweets, interactive qualities like explicit text-voice, pronouns, addressing formulations, editor's first names, and emotional language with a personal voice that is relationship-oriented are to be found. The interaction reveals a change in linguistic practice into a more personal and informal discourse only when there is no longer a threat to society. This shows that editors of authorities' sakprosa use formal practice in acute situations such as a social crisis and then use informal practice when they interact. On Twitter, the authority sometimes appears as an authority, and sometimes as a person. In social media, boundaries within the public discourse are yet not blending and are rather parallel. This study shows that the editorial staff at Krisinformation make conscious choices about when to act in the formal authoritative discourse and when to act as an interlocutor in an informal discourse.

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Concluding Remarks: The Power and Potential of the Concept *Sakprosa* (CPS): A Guided Tour Through Five *Topoi*

Johan Tønnesson

Introduction

Let us imagine that the term *sakprosa* works like a mountain guide who leads us to places with a view to other places—or *topoi*—suitable for expanding our understanding of socially embedded utterances and texts. Coined by Finnish-Swedish Rolf Pipping in 1938, the term *sakprosa* is, until now, mostly developed in the mountain countries of Sweden and Norway. Maybe the success of the term and the concept, especially in Norway, can be explained through specific Nordic conditions, as Berge and Ledin implies in their chapter in this book. Nevertheless, in my opinion, the *sakprosa* concept may be of interest far beyond this region. The great obstacle is, however, that the potential in the prefix “sak” (close related to German “sach”) cannot be realized in today’s *lingua franca*.

J. Tønnesson (✉)

Faculty of Humanities, Department of Linguistics and Scandinavian Studies,
University of Oslo, Oslo, Norway
e-mail: johan.tonnesson@iln.uio.no

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Neither “subject”, “objective”, “issue”, “cause” nor “case” are satisfactory synonyms to “sak”. I, therefore, recommend the Scandinavian idiom over time to be accepted as a foreign word to English, as has happened with the idioms, “slalom” and “ombudsman”.

In this chapter, for the most written as a commentary to my Nordic colleagues’ chapters in this book, I will start up by giving a brief presentation of the concept’s Scandinavian history. In the rest of the chapter, I will discuss its potentials by visiting five places or *topoi*, metaphorically named *the city*, *the anthill*, *the choir*, *the thing site*, and *the borderland*.

Sakprosa: From Anti-rhetorical Style to Textual Super-genre

The mountain guide, who in the following will be equipped with the initials CSP (the Concept of Sakprosa), starts by turning the historical binoculars placed on the mountain top towards her own genesis. She lets us see Finland during the run-up to World War II, where linguist Rolf Pipping, who had Swedish as his mother tongue, in 1938 introduced for the first time the idiom *sakprosa* about a particularly objective style that would respond to “the intellectual need for release” (Pipping 1938: 271–273). This style and the need for release stood in contrast to, respectively, an expressive style conditioned by emotional needs and a will-driven need producing persuasive texts. His article did not go down well with contemporary theories of literature, language, and communication (Englund et al. 2003: 39), but the term he proposed has gradually gained a significant foothold, though increasingly with a strongly changed content. To insist, as he did, on the value of an objective style in a time dominated by demagoguery and fake news, appears today as an ethically reasonable program (Tønnesson 2012: 143, 2019: 98–99). The perception of *sakprosa* as a style is, however, still alive, as Almström Persson’s present chapter illustrates (see also Englund et al. 2003: 36–42). In the Swedish Academy’s dictionary, the entire definition of *sakprosa* is “prose (style) without (distinct) artistic intentions, normal prose” (SAOB 2021), whereas in the Norwegian Academy’s dictionary one of two meanings is

“relatively sober and impersonal prose (such as in dissertations and textbooks); normal prose” (NAOB 2021, my translation).

Pipping’s justification for the term *sakprosa* has rightly been criticized for being anti-rhetorical, in that he wanted to push both emotions and consideration for the audience completely into the background (Berge 2001). Today, it is widely accepted that a well-functioning subject-oriented text, as rhetoricians have always known, includes all three Aristotelian *pisti*: that is, *ethos*, *logos*, and *pathos*.

Moreover, CPS quickly became a genre concept that encompassed large parts of the non-fictional part of literary prose, such as essay writing, travelogues, and scholarly literature. In parallel, the genres’ common property *non-fiction*, seems to have become more dominating, at the benefit of stylistic criteria, in the understanding of *sakprosa*. This is not at least the case in Denmark, where the Danish national dictionary symptomatically defines “sagprosa” just as “Factual, not fictional, prose” (in Danish: “Saglig, ikke opdigtet, prosa”). From the early 1950s, *sakprosa*-texts were included in Sweden’s and Norwegian school curricula (Englund et al. 2003; Eide 2010; Skjeltbred 2010). This must, of course, have promoted the frequency of the idiom in various contexts.¹

When the first Norwegian research project on Norwegian *sakprosa* began in 1994, the premise was that books and journals were *the sakprosa* media. However, the Swedish research project that started two years later wanted to study “the much read”, which also included small print, newspapers, magazines, and speeches (Svensson 1999). Such criteria will be discussed in the final part of the present chapter. Several definitions concerning CPS’ intentional (text-internal) and extensional (text-external) aspects have been in circulation, but today it is common to include texts in a large variety of genres and media—from the instructions via the textbook to documentaries and doctoral dissertations. In Denmark, there is a tradition of using “non-fiction” mostly about texts outside the literary institution (Detlef 1988; Fibiger 2007). Since the turn of the millennium, the internet has obviously become both a medium and a

¹ A search in the comprehensive, digital Norwegian national bibliography *Bokhylla* which covers the period up to 2010 shows that the word did not appear in Norwegian books or newspapers before 1950. In the period 1960–1969 it was used 99 times in books and 200 times in newspapers, while it was used 2157 times in books and 11663 times in newspapers in the period 2000–2009.

communication channel for a major part of *sakprosa* (see Andersen's chapter in this book), which raises new issues inside and outside what I will name "the borderland". One can truly, with Berge and Ledin (in this book), talk about "the vast and dynamic field of non-fictional texts".

In addition, *sakprosa* has, most of all in Norway, been a keyword for a series of cultural-political efforts to promote non-fiction literature and to raise awareness of the textuality of a wide genre of utterances in politics, government, business, and daily life (search for "The relatively strong position" in Brinch and Nergaard's chapter in this book). The present chapter will argue that our mountain guide (CSP) is capable to contribute both descriptively and normatively to the study and practices of this large field of texts.

Methodology

This commentary will address the potential for scholarly activity in the, until recently, exclusively Nordic concept of *sakprosa*. Reading the other chapters in this book forms an important basis for this discussion. Inspired by the *inventio* phase of classical rhetoric, I have, as already mentioned, organized the discussion as a rhetorical journey. Wanderings in the *silva rhetorica*, the rhetorical forest, or in this case the mountain, to identify relevant *topoi* (Greek) or *loci* (Latin) is, of course, a classic-rhetorical way of establishing an argument (Aristotle 2007, book XII; Gabrielsen 2011; Söderberg 2017; Tønnesson and Sivesind 2016). Instead of naming my topics conventionally as, for example, the Community, the Societal Organism, the Political and Forensic Institutions, the Text, and the Definitions, which are all conventionalized metaphors (cf. the tradition following Lakoff and Johnson 1980), I suggest some less conventionalized ways of grasping "places in the landscape of consciousness, branches on the tree of ideas", as O. Tøgeby once defined *topoi* (1986).

The present chapter is not an empirical study but an academic meta-discussion based on rhetoric, guided by a purpose: I want to argue that *sakprosa* has not only academic potential as social facts to study. In my opinion, it is also a concept well fit to discuss and strengthen the quality

of socially and culturally important texts in a democratic-ethical perspective. In my doctoral dissertation (2004), I did close reading of two texts in this genre where the authors argued for the value of “discourse analysis” and “psychoanalysis” as methodological tools in historical science. According to my analyses, both authors created, with varying degrees of success, a certain type of multivocality, where opponents were let into the texts. Still the “melody voice” was not to be mistaken. It is my hope that the present chapter has some similar qualities.

The Five *Topoi*

The City

From the mountain top the guide (CSP) shows us a city in the distance. She points to it and says: In this city there is not, as in antiquity, one square (agora), but a multitude of squares where people meet, express themselves, and exchange texts. Originally, “prose” meant colloquial speech, and prose may still connote the utterances in the streets and squares and today’s sites of social media. Today “prose”, however, is most often understood as written texts, and prose does also connote literary ambitions.² If the utterances shall make good sense for those who interact, norms must be developed that can give the utterances status as texts. Textual norms do not only distinguish between texts and utterances that are not (yet) texts, but also between texts of higher and lower quality, and thus decide who gets a breakthrough in the squares of the city (*search for* “an instantiation of a text norm” in Berge and Ledin in this book). There are a great number of buildings in the city, and the norms for utterances vary greatly between them. What is inappropriate in the church fits well in the town hall, and what makes good sense in the courthouse can be almost incomprehensible in the café. In the academy, all ideas must be

² Cf. this part of Merriam Websters definition of prose: «a literary medium distinguished from poetry especially by its greater irregularity and variety of rhythm and its closer correspondence to the patterns of everyday speech»

allowed, but the text norms here are particularly strict (*search for* “the research article” in Brinch and Nergaard’s chapter in this book).

Most of the utterances and texts in the city describe and comment things in a directly and tangible way, but often people compose narratives or create allegories and metaphors, to get their points across and engage the audience. Poets, novelists, and playwrights are those who take the time to process the language and the composition of the text in the smallest detail. In this way, their prose becomes “*belle lettres*” with certain artistic qualities. But even many of those who do not regard themselves as creators of art, understand that the old Latin commandment *Rem tene, verba sequentur* (grasp the subject, and the words will follow) does not hold true. The words do *not* come by themselves. Even when prose, not to mention poetry, is to write about the world and reality without establishing a fictional or abstract-poetic contract with the reader, one must work hard with what the rhetoricians call the *elocutio* phase. This is, however, not really a separate phase, but a process fused with *inventio* and *dispositio*, the phases where the *rhetor* seeks out knowledge from various *topoi* to build arguments and arrange them.

Text norms are often based on well-known genres, from everyday greetings and letters via the school’s written assignments to the newspaper report. Following Miller (1984), genres should be considered as formalized responses to recurring challenges in what Berge (1990) named text cultures. On the other hand, genre innovation often means shaping new text norms, as shown by Berge and Ledin’s examples in this book of children’s utterances and the genesis of the newspaper genres. Such innovation or evolution (Miller 2016) is often to be regarded as responses to political challenges. Koskela, Enell-Nilsson, and Hjerpe’s meticulous inquiry in the present book of minor changes in the genre systems of Finnish business Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) reports provides valuable insight in the ways that mighty actors navigate rhetorically in a landscape of commercial, political, and ethical demands. One finding is that the correspondence between naming and content of a genre may often be blurred, a fact we must believe has consequences for the reception of such seemingly socially responsible reports. Almström Persson’s inquiry in this book is also about genre innovation. Not very far from

Finnish firms' alternation between traditional reports and websites, we learn that contemporary Swedish authorities alternate between classic internet-based information and social media communication during crises. In both cases, the technological preconditions seem to determine innovations in style and content.

Many inhabitants of the city commute between different buildings and thus between text cultures with their specific norms. The city (or nation, region, continent) certainly has its "Öffentlichkeit", a common public sphere with a dominant text culture. But many buildings have historically been closed to parts of the city's population. They have had to build their own houses—in Scandinavia literally "Folkets hus" (houses for the people)—or they have had to meet in their homes to read and study to prepare for a struggle that may not yet be fully defined. Here, too, some actors may choose to create fictions to promote their interest. But first and foremost, the rhetorical struggle is fought through *sakprosa*. In the history of the Nordic welfare model, such popular association activity has been a vital emancipative force.

One of the most exciting activities for the text historian is to examine how new text cultures are created, either through the renewal of old genres or on the ruins of them. Such renewal can be determined by technologically and materially changes, as described by Andersen in this book. Renewal also takes place when new groups break into the common sphere, as convincingly and well-documented described in *sakprosa* professor Anders Johansen's rhetorical history of the emergence of Norwegian democracy, *Komme til orde* ("Have a say"; 2019). In Brinch and Nergaards chapter, we learn about how a non-fiction writers' education—once founded to make a less prestigious group of authors having a say—contributed to the establishment of what they name a new epistemic environment. As teachers in the programme, they reason self-reflective on how an educational programme in *sakprosa* writing can create students as "sheep, watchdogs and wolves" who, respectively, reproduce, renew, and exceed the environment's text norms. These writers in this text culture should be understood as individual *authors* with identities far from the collective *sakprosa* writer in, for example, the bureaucracy, one of the institutions constituting our next *topos*.

The Anthill

Just below the tree line, we can imagine the mountain guide drawing attention to an anthill. Up to half a million ants work here with a huge number of specialized tasks. In the human anthill, we are not, contrary to the city, very concerned with discussing and developing new textual norms, but just with getting the job done. In an age of automation and digitization, however, the job is not primarily to transport building materials by hand and convey eggs to the queen ant. Instead, or in addition to physical work, most people in occupational work such as truck drivers, home carers, and shop assistants exchange utterances and texts (Karlsson 2006). Of course, many of us produce, give, and exchange physical goods and services, but more and more of the tools to achieve these goods and services are semiotically mediated. Before ordering an item online, we often go through fairly large amounts of texts to find the item in question (Andersen 2021). The order itself, which today is often identical to the payment, has more the character of a directive speech act than yesterday's handover of coins and banknotes. After ordering, there may be a series of alerts about where the item is in the transport chain, and finally we receive the confirmation that we can pick it up, now for the first time as a physical artifact. If we are dissatisfied and want to complain and return the item, we again must deal with several texts, that is, cultural artifacts. We have thus been through an entire chain of utterances and texts where the physical actions themselves only constitute one or two links (cf. my brief discussion on circulation below). Here, too, it makes good sense to call the texts *sakprosa*, as they are often about very specific matters and because the word "prose", if connoted to literary ambitions, can remind us of how important the texts' design and language is to make them function. Hence, we can describe such non-fiction texts as *functional* because they are so intimately connected with their intended functions (Tønnesson 2012: 34).

The same applies to public services. Applying for and receiving or not receiving welfare benefits involve huge cycles of texts, often in writing, and almost always on the internet. For most of us ants, this can be a relief: What previously required paper, mailing, and phone calls can now be

replaced with a series of customized operations on a smartphone. Artificial intelligence is about to make application processes redundant: the machines ensure we get the welfare benefits we are entitled to. In this contemporary and slightly futuristic context, the ant metaphor actually becomes even more apt than applied to previous societal formations: today we automate communication. By becoming aware that the frequently robotized utterances are still semiotically mediated, we have the opportunity to become less naïve and obedient “recipients”. Despite the positive possibility to interact by answering standard questions like “Did this answer help you?”, it has been argued that our role as readers is diminished in the digital service system (*search for* “interaction is changed from the act of reading” in Andersen’s chapter in this book). When considering the form which we have in front of us as a text, where the authorities and ourselves are both authors and readers, we may realize that both the text and genre could have been different. The ant may stop and reflect before wandering its daily route around its tuft. Through such reflection, the inhabitants can strengthen their rhetorical citizenship (Kock and Villadsen 2012; Seljeseth 2021; *see also* “nowhere is the citizen invoked as citizen” in Andersen’s chapter). And by naming the texts *sakprosa*, we can at the same time draw critical attention to the *sak* (case/subject/object/fact/issue) and the prose. Clear or plain language has for a long time been a field of research, education, and public communication among Nordic *sakprosa* researchers, especially in Sweden. In Norway, there has been a strong growth in this field during the last ten years as the result of governmental efforts in combination with new educational programmes and research initiatives (Nord et al. 2015; Tønnesson 2021).

Jack Andersen’s chapter in this book describes and theorizes the technological preconditions for interaction through *sakprosa* in today’s ant-hill. His task is to promote

**an understanding in sakprosa research of digital media as not an opposition to sakprosa, but rather as a material condition in digital culture, just as print has been some time ago.*

A well-known feature in media history is human’s tendency to use old technologies to understand the new ones. Certainly, much *sakprosa*

research, not only text-historical studies, is still bound to printed media, even when the texts are digitally communicated. The interweave of archive, database, and algorithms in today's circulation of texts opens for great opportunities. But also, as numerous scandals during the last decade have revealed, it opens for until now unknown forms of abuse of power as well.

To regulate power and interest is not the anthill's business, but the task of another hill, to which we will soon return. But how is communication done in the city and in the anthill?

The Choir

On a mountain top, an entire choir has lined. The guide tells us that they are about to perform songs composed or arranged according to three principles: One-voiced (monophonic) song, multi-voiced song with a clear melody (homophony), and polyphonic song where the voices are independent, where no one is unequivocally subordinate to another voice (Tønnesson 2001, 2004, 2007). This model sounds well with the etymology of the word *textus*, which originally means "tissue". The textual piece can consist of a single thread, but most often several voices are woven together. Polyphony fits best with the fictional prose, as Bakhtin has argued in his famous study of Dostoevsky's poetics (1984). Most of the non-fiction is multi-voiced, though homophonic, as stated by Bakhtin himself. When Julia Kristeva coined the word "intertextuality" in 1966, it was to a great degree inspired by Bakhtin, and the connection between voices and texts-in-texts are today regarded as obvious.

In the present book, Koskela, Enill-Nilsson, and Hjerpe contribute to intertextual theory by proposing three forms of intertextuality, distinct from the "phonic" models above: convergence, adaptation, and divergence. They acknowledge these to be intertextual strategies. This taxonomy enlighten our understanding of genre change in general, as well as in the politically and commercially important topics sustainability and social responsibility.

As we learn in Berge and Ledin's chapter, there has been a strong development in the understanding of what texts are, or can be, during the last

50 years. This process is described as a move from text linguistics, with its strong emphasis on internal cohesion and coherence via more contextually oriented studies, to multimodal and sociosemiotic textual research that first and foremost considers the text as a cultural artifact. Most such artifacts of today are not only multimodal—multimodality should be regarded as a feature for all texts—(Ledin et al. 2019)—but *utmost* multimodal. Andersen informs us in his chapter about radically technological changes that shape new conditions for *sakprosa*, and thereby a demand for a new understanding of CSP. He pinpoints that digital texts are no longer multimedia, there is only one integrated medium. A most often very multimodal one, we must add.

The text—or chorus—sings in a unique situation every time the choral work is performed. Moreover, the text is performed not only for us but also with the choir itself as addressee. This tension between the speaker-in-text's self-communication, with its Bakhtinian latent corresponding utterances, and a more outward communication, forms the first of six constitutive features of text, according to Berge and Ledin (search for *unique situated utterances* in their chapter). The next two constitutive features in their list are that all texts are semiotically mediated, as we have already indicated, and that the text, although it can be part of long, intertextual chains, has clear boundaries that make it possible for the addressee to respond to it. An interesting result in Almström Persson's chapter is concerning such boundaries: Somewhat contra-intuitive, the stylistic features of the actual Swedish authorities' ordinary information on the internet and their communication in social media do not blur but co-exist in parallel.

The next constitutive feature in Berge and Ledin's list is that any text has a genre-determined inner structure. To reconstruct this structure, frame models and identification of explicit and implicit voices are often more productive than using linear or two-dimensional models like, for example, Propp's old actant model.

Despite being Berge/Ledin's two final characteristics of the text, we remember that the mountain guide chose to start with introducing the relationship between text cultures and text norms by her first topos, "the city".

Due to latent opposing class and identity interests both in the anthill and the city, a large amount of the *sakprosa* texts is about negotiation and struggle.

The Thing Site

Our mountain guide thus points to an elevation in the landscape down in the valley, a tinghaug—a site for “things” in the Viking ages, which was both a place for forensic and deliberative negotiation, cf. today’s terms at the democratic national assemblies in Denmark, Iceland, and Norway: the Folketing, the Allting and the Storting, or the Norwegian “tinghuset”, meaning a courthouse. At the thing site, exchange of utterances and texts have been crucial from the first moment; the assemblies were supposed to replace or at least regulate the use of physical force, as known from the emergence of rhetoric in Greek antiquity.

In courthouses and parliaments there has always been controversy over the prose in general as over concepts. Conservatism in debates on law language reform is, as an example, well-founded in the argument that an established legal concept has a long forensic interpretation history and should not be disturbed by efforts to make the language plain or clear. This dilemma has called for *sakprosa* studies which have to be sensitive towards legal traditions specific for regions and nations (Orrbén 2020). In politics: what does the concept “freedom” mean, for example? It is a word that everyone acknowledges, but partly interprets diametrically opposite. Another utmost polysemic word of our time is “sustainability”, an idiom that really entered the globally verbal war zone with the Brundtland Commission’s report *Our Common Future* in 1987. Episodes from this “war” has been studied in recent *sakprosa* research, as documented in Koskela, Enell-Nilsson and Hjerpe’s chapter and its reference list. While power may be hidden by subtle textual strategies in The Anthill and is distributed unfairly among text cultures in the City, the deliberative and forensic assemblies should be regarded as places for open and legitimate exercise of power. This calls for *sakprosa* studies of chains of governmental texts, not at least concerning of the powerful report genre (Bjørkdahl 2018).

Law texts are, globally, in the core of the “sak” in all discussions about plain language in communication between authorities and citizens. Very few letters are sent, or forms filled, without an explicit or implicit juridical component in the text. In an “anthill” perspective, plain language is very much a question of effectivity. In the “thing site” perspective, however, it is about handling the necessarily asymmetric power relation between institutions with the authority to distribute welfare benefits as well as to prosecute and punish—and the public. A necessary precondition for the rule of law is, of course, a reciprocal confidence between the police, the forensic institutions, and the public. This confidence is for the most shaped by utterances and texts.

The thing site will nevertheless serve here as a metaphor for deliberation and ensuring rule of law in a much broader sense. First, the conditions for politically and legally informed *sakprosa* are determined by the today’s “things”. When there are genre renewals and negotiations related to the slogan “sustainability” in Finnish companies’ annual reports, they are partly stimulated by law and political orders and partly by companies’ desire to make profit and secure their reputation. Here, CSP can be helpful for the understanding of small changes in the way the *sak* is constructed through prose.

Nonetheless, the arenas of democracy and the rule of law do also consist of the common, public conversation. “The authorities of the state shall”, it is stated in the “freedom of expression clause” (§ 100) in the Norwegian constitution which was revised in 2004 (The Constitution), “create conditions that facilitate open and enlightened public discourse”. Public discourse may concern major political topics, as well as current affairs like the two crises in Stockholm analysed in this volume (*see* Almström Persson in this book). Somewhat contra-intuitive and encouraging, the main conclusion in that chapter, based on Critical Discourse Analysis, is that the authorities did a good job, with one important exception—that they chose to be silent when they had no new news to present. To translate this into a Norwegian constitutional discourse: They succeeded in facilitating an open and enlightened discourse.

Rhetorical citizenship is a condition for being able to participate in this open and enlightened conversation in the public sphere. Democracy erodes if this citizenship is not maintained, developed, and expanded.

The undoubted democratic potential of the internet with its blogs and other social media has gradually been strongly challenged, even counteracted, by the innumerable algorithms sat in turn by the major communications giants. This is another justification for broad as well as narrow *sakprosa* studies.

In my opinion, it is fully legitimate for *sakprosa* researchers to engage in open and enlightened discussions in the political domain. As intellectuals, our right to do so is obvious. As researchers we should be encouraged to contribute to public debates where our academic competence is relevant. Our topics and perspectives have certainly often political implications. The most explicit political text in this volume is discussing the somewhat political mountain guide—the CSP herself. Brinch and Nergaard take a critical stance to the legitimacy of, with financial support from a writers' copyright fund, to build what they name an epistemic culture with *sakprosa* as its unifying episteme. For this reason, I will stage a short dispute at the thing site, with myself as a combatant. I quote:

What are the cultural, political, and social impacts on a society's cultural life and knowledge production when one institution has the economic power to introduce and support a new field of study and its associated research and publications? (Brinch and Nergaard in this book)

This is a legitimate question, raised by two very competent actors in the epistemic culture in question. Being another actor with high involvement in the mentioned strategic work as well as in the academic activities for a quarter of a century, I will answer: The internal structures of the academic, the literary and cultural-political institutions, as well as the school, have for a long time been in favour of literary fiction as privileged objects of study and promotion. In addition, the level of consciousness about everyday texts as culturally important and powerful artifacts has been low. When an association of non-fiction writers chose to put their copyright revenue into a collective fund and spend some of this fund's income to stimulate academia to cultivate *sakprosa* and *text* as skill and area of knowledge, this is highly legitimate.

This said, academia must of course have full freedom to make their own choices when it comes to theory, methods, topics, and perspectives, not at least when research involves critique of one's own sponsor.

The Borderland

The mountain guide has now focused his and our eyes on *topoi* that include almost all texts and utterances in the past, present, and future. She points to the horizon in all compass points. Does no outer border exist to the land of *sakprosa*? If any borders, where are they, and which texts are in the borderlands? Self-ironically, she quotes Shakespeare:

And, like the baseless fabric of this vision, the cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces, The solemn temples, the great globe itself, Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve. And, like this insubstantial pageant faded, Leave not a rack behind. (1998/1611: 19)

If CPS is to cover everything, it will mean nothing. Berge and Ledin mentions this dilemma briefly in this volume (*search for* “the notion of *sakprosa* is too wide”). However, they do not point to other solutions than the demarcation towards “belle lettres” before they propose an epistemological basis for continued *sakprosa* research. This is in line with how Englund, Ledin, and Svensson reasoned in 2003 (p. 36):

both a shopping list and a scientific dissertation become sakprosa. This also means that sakprosa can hardly be regarded as a scientific concept in the narrow sense—it is simply too wide. Rather, it becomes a kind of compass that points to texts that for various reasons are not considered fiction and to different text cultures. (My translation)

I wrote in the introduction to these concluding remarks that the idiom's meaning has partly changed from Pipping's concept of style to a concept of an increasingly global super-genre. How can the concept still become academically beneficial and politically-culturally valuable? Should the research community draw some borders?

Descriptiveness Versus Normativity

Our first possible borderline goes between description and assessment and will be a follow-up of my reasoning about ethically engaged research above. Should the ambitions in *sakprosa* research be just to map the textual worlds or also to change the world? All chapters in the present anthology seem at the first glance to be basically ambitious in their *descriptive* ambitions: Through their critical-constructive perspectives on CSP, they widen our insights in some significant historically and contemporary areas in a vast and dynamic field of texts. Is analytical description the single purpose for the research field to be internationally introduced in this volume?

This is of course a rhetorical question, but the mandatory “no” must be a nuanced one. I will recommend a moderate normativity. Such research practice may be illustrated by some examples from the current volume: Berge and Ledin’s chapter is a significant contribution to text theory *sakprosa* with texts in the core. This implies that they support—normatively—the efforts to study a vast field of texts which have been strongly under-acknowledged in literary studies and not sufficiently understood by linguists. In addition, it is further fully possible to interpret the chapters analysis of the child Espen’s drawing as an acknowledgment of children’s capabilities in re-shaping culture. Even more implicitly normative is the attention of Norwegian peasants Einar and Reier’s achievements to have a say towards the authorities in the eighteenth century.

Koskela, Enill-Nilsson, and Hjerpe’s conclusion is not explicitly political, but a potential interpretation of the following quote is that the authors are sceptical to the values underlined by me: **“A potential interpretation is offered by the ideological dispute of neoliberal free market economy and government regulation vs. self-regulation”*. Almström Persson’s analysis of crisis communication ends up with implicit recommendations to the authorities concerning choices of style and media.

Jack Andersen’s critique is partly directed towards *sakprosa* researchers for not taking the radical consequences of digitalization sufficiently into consideration. This is a normativity in line with existing norms concerning scientific debate, though the wordings are tough, in that his colleagues’

indifference implicitly is characterized as “close to foolish and not least [...] arrogant and ignorant”. His chapter also includes a critical-normative stance towards Danish government’s all-in-one public website *borger.dk* for being individualistic and lacking “appeal to the public institution as a public good”. Additionally, in the description of his second example, the SAGE publishing system, there is an immanent critique of the technology’s power over academic publications, hence over academic research as a whole. It goes without saying that his re-use of German media researcher Friedrich Kittler’s somewhat prophetic expression from 1990 “the *unarticulated* as background of all media” (my italics) in the discussion on today’s algorithmic power does inherit normative assessment.

Brinch and Nergaard’s critical stance, mentioned above, towards the effective, copyright-financed efforts to support *sakprosa* as an epistemic culture is clearly normative, as is their three-phased strategy for authors’ education.

Is, then, the promotion of *good sakprosa* a legitimate task for researchers in their research activities, or does this produce a non-scientific bias? In literary studies, it is an obvious task to identify and assess the qualities of literary texts and cultivate norms for this scholarly activity. Controversies around norms will arise, and this may cause a shift of paradigm. When it comes to everyday *sakprosa*, plain or clear language are frequently used as normative concepts. A crucial motivation for plain language research is just to promote plainness, though there are ethically grounded controversies around what plainness means (Seljeseth 2021). First, in dialogue with plain language activists, the researchers’ contribution should be to offer solid research-based knowledge, and correct non-scholarly perceptions, for example, the popular belief that nominalization—to make a substantive of a verb—a *priori* promotes unclearness. On the other hand, the researcher’s motive will most often be to promote clear language for the sake of democracy, the rule of law, effectiveness, or other values.

In conclusion, I will argue that no border should be drawn around the field of *sakprosa* research that excludes ethically grounded normativity. However, this does not imply a recommendation of a restitution of Marxist-feminist ideology-critical research practices well known from the 1960s and 1970s, where narrow ideological standpoints pre-determined the results of the analyses. Neither does it call for an academic activity of

today where researchers are obliged to demonstrate solidaric humbleness towards all social groups who claim respect for just their identity project. *Sakprosa* research should neither return to a positivist position apparently free from values, where the researcher's ethical situatedness is hidden, or the opposite: Activist research where the results are prefabricated.

“The great globe itself, Yea, all which it inhabit”

Which genres, modalities, and texts should be excluded from CSP to make it operational?³ Our suggestion for a definition of “sakprosa” (Tønnesson 2012/2008) was launched as a practical or pragmatic definition, not an absolute and philosophically fully acceptable one. The most voluminous part of our definition delimits the *sakprosa* universe and divides it into two:

[...] *Sakprosa*-texts communicate through verbal language, but often this happens in interaction with other sign systems.

Literary *sakprosa* are texts written by named authors and published by publishers. The authors are understood here as individuals. The author addresses himself as an independent writer to a public sphere that is publicly available. In literary *sakprosa*, all literary means are available, [...]. The media of literary *sakprosa* are currently electronic and printed books, booklets and magazines.

Functional *sakprosa* are publicly available texts written by private or public institutions or by named or unnamed individuals. The authorship should be understood as collective. The author addresses himself as a writer on behalf of an institution towards the general public or other institutions. The genre requirements of this *sakprosa* are intimately associated with their intended function. Functional *sakprosa* media range from books via newspapers radio, brochures, and subtitles, and includes a variety of Internet media. (Tønnesson 2012: 34, my translation).

³Though I was the author of the book *Hva er sakprosa. (What is sakprosa)* (Tønnesson 2008/2012) where a definition was launched in 2008/2012, a larger environment of researchers and students had taken part in the previous discussions. Hence, I use second person plural in the following.

Let us briefly comment on the parts of the “great globe” which are excluded by this definition:

Totally non-verbal texts: It would, of course, be possible to regard a picture or a piece of instrumental program music as “prose”. But to do so, we reasoned, would mean to water down the CSP too much. Hopefully, perspectives from *sakprosa* research can inspire experts in e.g., musical, and visual communication and vice versa. As “interaction with other sign systems” indicates, multimodal texts should not be excluded, quite the contrary (Ledin et al. 2019).

In *sakprosa* studies, relevant contexts must always be taken into consideration. Often the text will be part of a chain of non-verbal utterances and actions that together can explain the phenomenon we are studying. After describing, among other things, a process of diagnosis and communicative processes concerning a fetus with heart defects, Anna-Malin Karlsson and Mats Landqvist have argued:

If none of these [multi-semiotic and pragmatic processes. JLT.] were to be regarded as sakprosa, in our opinion sakprosa would be a very narrow concept that does not contribute sufficiently to our understanding of texts as a resource for fact-based knowledge building in the public. (Karlsson and Landqvist 2018, my translation)

There should be no reason to exclude such research of processes and circulation of texts and practices from *sakprosa* research (cf. Maybin 2017; Sörlin 2017).

Anonymous authors of literary texts: this is not an important point of exclusion, as such authors may very well be regarded as named through analogy.

Texts published by non-publishers: this criterion is slightly problematic in a period of rapid changes in publication practices, as texts from own publishers or texts published in authors’ blogs are excluded.

Texts that are not publicly available: this is not problematic with regard of literary *sakprosa*, since the definition obviously connotes the literary institution, where the notion of “publishing” is synonymous with public publishing. But the definition has been intelligently challenged by

scholars studying the semi-public genres of social media (Juuhl 2013; *see also* Berge and Ledin in this book, *search* “social media”). The private/public border is often blurred, following information-technological innovation.

“The baseless fabric of this vision?”

More disputable are these excerpts of the definition:

Sakprosa are texts that the addressee has reasons to perceive as direct utterances about reality.

[... in literary non-fiction, all literary means are available,] if the contract of the fundamental, direct connection with reality is maintained.

This formulation, which is a further development of Danish Claus Detlef’s definition (1988: 6), anticipates some objections (cf. Berge and Ledin in this book):

There do not exist any direct utterances about reality: this is true, as any linguist after Saussure probably will agree in. However, in the *doxa*, the contemporary system of common senses we identify with, it is a common perception that factual texts have a *more* direct relation to reality than fiction texts have. In everyday conversations, as in literary texts, we expect an implicit contract between text and reader/listener which says: Text A is factual, text B is fictional, and text C is something in-between.

The definition is essentialist, in that it states that the relationship text/world is an ontological matter: This is not the case. The definition refers only to the addressees’ ontological anticipations, cf. the statement from Englund, Ledin, and Svensson from 2003 (p. 45):

A [...] division between non-fiction and fiction is made by Detlef (1988), whose reasoning lands in an explicit definition: “A sakprosa text is a text that the addressee—based on his expectations—perceives as a direct statement about reality. The expectations are created i.e. in the context of the text. “Note that the definition must be seen as non-essentialist. (My translation)

Due to the two objections above, it is of course legitimate to criticize our definition for defending a naïve and conservative perception about the text/world relationship. Such legitimate critique is raised in Brinch and Nergaard's chapter in this volume. However, I (the following is my sole contribution) do not find the basic distinction factual/fictional neither naïve nor contra-progressive, in that I have proposed "the *regime of accountability*" as a precondition for vivid democracies:

Democracy is based on trust at all levels: Voters must have confidence that the candidate they are voting for will act accountable. Candidates must mean what they say, and they must not speak out against knowing better when they state facts. How can voters trust a candidate who is missing one clarified relationship to the distinction between fiction and reality? If politicians express themselves falsely according to general perceptions of the distinction between truth and untruth, it gives a good reason to cast them at the next election, if not sooner. (Tønnesson 2012: 128, my translation)

These words were published five years before Donald Trump was elected president, and they may sound naïve in light of political history in the last decennium: Many democracies are less arenas of truth-seeking deliberation than of harsh struggle and verbal wars. In my opinion, this development gives no reason to give up the *accountability regime* as an ideal.

Certainly, the response to fake news and the decline of sincerity may easily turn into primitive positivism, as I warned in 2012 (pp. 140–141):

An extreme defense [of the accountability regime] is often provided by scientists who want to distance themselves from all "alternative" thinking and who find it pressing to define such as a hoax. Such accountability fundamentalists will often be anti-religious and show little professional interest in phenomena that obviously cannot be handled with reason alone: love, intuition, the sublime—to name a few. And in the journalistic community, we can come across many actors which can be called fact-fetishists.

However, in my opinion, today's political situation globally asks for a basic amount of sincerity, accountability, and *saklighet* (German:

sachlichkeit), as the brutal international context asked for in 1938, when Pipping coined this essay's core idiom.

Sakprosa should be regarded as a social fact, two chapters state in this volume (Brinch and Nergaard; Berge and Ledin). I agree. Obviously, to regard *sakprosa* as a transhistorical and universal ontological genre, based on presumed common human worldviews stored like universal grammars in brains of *Homo sapiens*, would be to ignore the major achievements in philosophical thinking in social science and the humanities during the last 70 years. On the other side: we—researchers, teachers, intellectuals, writers, and readers—and all other citizens—ought to use our capacities to consciously create and cultivate social facts along the way. There should be no opposition between studying and cultivating cultural and social facts like *sakprosa*, and “singing” in choirs that promote ethically desirable changes at the thing sites, as well as in cities, anthills, and borderlands.

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Index¹

A

Agora, 134
Algorithms, 73, 78–81, 88
Archives, 72, 73, 79–81,
83–86, 88
Argumentation, 35

C

Context, 2, 4, 6–7, 10
Contextual configuration, 20,
21, 24, 41
Crisis communication,
117–135
CSR reporting, 45–65
Cultural artefact, 17–41
Cultural psychology, 40
Cultural semiotics, 20, 40

D

Databases, 73, 78–81, 84, 85
Description, 22, 35, 36
Dialogism, 40
Digital media, 71–89
Discourse, 2–11
Discourse networks, 71–89

E

Epistemic practice, 93–95, 97, 100,
101, 106, 107, 112–113
Exposition, 35

G

Genre, 1, 2, 6–13, 45–65, 95,
99–107, 110–113

¹Note: Page numbers followed by ‘n’ refer to notes.

H

Higher education, 101
 Hybridity, 49, 56, 59
 Hybrid texts, 120, 121

I

Ideographic method, 22
 Informalization, 117–135
 Inner structure, 21, 23, 25, 26, 31, 37
 Instruction, 35
 Intertextuality, 47, 48, 52–64

K

Kittler, Friedrich, 72, 73, 75–79,
 83, 87, 88
 Knowledge discourse, 133, 134

M

Materiality, 20, 37, 39, 73, 84, 88

N

Narration, 35
 Nexus analysis, 95, 100–102
 Nomothetic method, 22
 Non-fiction, 93–113
 Non-fictional prose, 5

O

Offensive praxis, 118
 Order of discourse, 2
 Outer form, 20, 21, 24, 37, 40

P

Professional communication, 2, 5

R

Reporting format, 47, 48, 50–60, 64

S

Sakprosa, 1–13, 3n1, 6n2, 46–48,
 50, 64, 72–89, 93–113
 Semiotic mediation, 26
 Semiotic resource, 18, 20,
 22–24, 38
 Sign system, 20, 22, 23
 Subject-oriented prose, 5, 12
 Subject-oriented texts, 5
 Systemic functional linguistics (SFL),
 17, 19, 34, 37–41

T

Text, 1–12, 17–41
 Text culture, 19, 21–23, 26–34
 Text linguistics, 17, 19, 34, 35,
 37, 39–41
 Text norm, 19, 21, 22, 26–35,
 37, 40
 Text type, 2, 7, 8, 11, 35, 36
 Twitter, 117–119, 121,
 123–129, 132–135

U

Utterance, 17–41
 Utterance-constitutive principles
 text-constitutive
 principles, 22, 23

W

Writing, 20, 23–27, 29, 34, 36
 Writing pedagogy, 93, 103,
 105, 106