This is the published version of a paper published in Scandinavian Journal of History.

Citation for the original published paper (version of record):

Norén, F. (2018)
'6 to 8 slices of bread': Swedish health information campaigns in the 1970s
Scandinavian Journal of History, 43(2): 233-259
https://doi.org/10.1080/03468755.2018.1430567

Access to the published version may require subscription.

N.B. When citing this work, cite the original published paper.

Permanent link to this version:
http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:umu:diva-144755
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‘6 TO 8 SLICES OF BREAD’

Swedish health information campaigns in the 1970s

Swedish health information, conducted by the National Board of Health and Welfare in collaboration with private participants, expanded rapidly in the 1970s. This study examines a controversial bread campaign, which declared that the National Board, in collaboration with the private Bread Institute, wanted citizens to eat six to eight slices of bread every day. Why and how could such a seemingly unholy alliance come about? Contextualizing the collaborations with the industry, with a network governance approach, this article seeks the answers by investigating the organizational conditions behind the various campaigns. Different conflicting dilemmas influenced the campaigns and their outcomes. For example, the desire to maximize the dissemination of information, and at the same time controlling it, as well as the imbedded power dynamics between private and public sector. The result points to a shift from strong to weak interdependence between the government agency and collaborating parties, basically due to the agency’s diminishing campaign resources, which opened up for a stronger commercialization of the bread campaign.

Keywords Sweden, health information, network governance, health education, information campaign, public information

In 1968, the General Director of the National Board of Health and Welfare, Bror Rexed, saw an increasing need for health information to fulfil the agency’s mission and responsibility towards the citizens. He vigorously declared that, despite people’s knowledge about how to protect and improve their health, they did not apply this knowledge to themselves. The task for the Swedish health authorities was, therefore, to constantly produce and disseminate such information. Additionally, and more importantly, the aim was to make people act on the health information given by the state. Rexed concluded that this objective demanded ‘imaginative ideas’ for how and where to insert the health information.

Thus began the expansion of Nämnden för hälsoupplysning (the Committee on Health Education) and their experimental health information. A few years later, in

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March 1976, this development culminated in a public controversy. On large street posters, the National Board urged the citizen to eat six to eight slices of bread; every day. Big brother was not only watching his people; he even wanted to control and regulate food consumption. The campaign caused a wave of criticism in the press, accusing the agency of trying to infiltrate the everyday lives of citizens. Referring to George Orwell’s 1984, headlines declared: ‘No, I do not want to eat 6–8 slices of bread/day’, and ‘Big brother wants...’ (Figures 1–6). It was reported to both the Justice Ombudsman and the Consumer Ombudsman, and was even debated in the Swedish Parliament. Despite the fact that the campaign was fully funded by a private interest group, the Bread Institute, in consultation with the agency, it is still referred to as an iconic example of a paternalistic welfare state.

Why and how could such a seemingly questionable alliance between a state agency and an industry association come about, at the height of the welfare state? Using archival material from the National Board of Health and Welfare, this study aims to answer this question by exploring the circumstances, historical contexts, and information strategies concerning the collaborations between the agency – through the Committee on Health Education – and the participants from the food industry. By establishing a collaborative organizational structure, similar to what is known today as network governance, it laid the groundwork for an expanding range of communication. However, it also allowed for conflicting dynamics, which had an impact on the campaigns. These conflicts, further discussed in the analysis, were characterized by communicative dilemmas for the agency. It both desired to disseminate the health information and, at the same time, control it. There was also a conflict between governmental information versus commercial advertising, as well as health versus profit, and the problematic relation between promoting an entire concept of health as opposed to highlighting certain products.

As in other Western countries, Sweden has had a long tradition of government attempts to change people’s behaviour regarding bodily health by using information as a tool. Like Germany, for example, Sweden has a history of considering the soil, and the people who lived on it, as properties and resources owned by the state. Furthermore, the idea of a healthy population that could work, pay taxes, and fight in wars was often associated with economic arguments. In this sense, the human body was political – both in terms of the physical body of each citizen and as an analogy for society – and remained so in the 1970s.

There are a variety of reasons why Sweden, along with other countries in the late 19th century, pursued the path of welfare reforms, and engaged in health information activities. Industrialization created an urban migration that eventually rendered obsolete family structures, as well as local-based social security systems. The working class started to put pressure on the authorities; simultaneously, different ideological and social movements were campaigning for health reforms. The answer to these demands was often universally constructed social reforms. In this endeavour, statistics and research became important tools, and instruments for social engineering in the service of the welfare state. While the outcomes of these reforms varied in countries such as Sweden, Germany, and the United States, they all increased the flow of information between the individual citizen and the bureaucracy.

During the 1930s, the political concern for the health of people increased, and what was thought to be an unhealthy body became a potential threat to society. At that time, health information was based on what was considered to be objective good health. The rhetoric of the time framed the issue of the healthy body less as an abstract
FIGURE 1  The famous poster ‘The National Board of Health and Welfare Wants us to Eat 6-8 Slices of Bread a Day’.

Source: RA, NHU, F III hd vol. 2, Brödkampanjen.
interest and resource of the state, and more as a social political project, which emphasized the life opportunities of the individual. Moreover, a nationalistic concern about the degeneration of the Swedish people – an idea partly imported from Germany – demanded political action. Over time, the public health project was to include different aspects of what was perceived as health. For example, nutrition and dietary issues, gymnastic training, and family values generated a comprehensive notion of health.

There was a consensus that the nationwide public health project, and the responsibility for one’s health, could and should not be left to the individual alone. It had to be shared between the citizen and the state. In fact, the idea of good public health united the whole of society, from the industry and civil society to the bureaucracy. Hence, it created a unity for the greater good of society, regardless of who you were and where you came from. Maintaining one’s health was considered – and taught – as the duty of every citizen. And as the aspirations of public health grew, so too did the means to achieve them, with sterilizations as a culminating consequence. While the idea of a shared responsibility remained the same in the second half of the 20th century, the focus on how to achieve and maintain citizens’ good health changed.

Health, as a social political project, came to represent an intersection between science and politics. While health information was based on medical research, its practices were characterized by converging disciplines. This trend intensified in the second half of 20th century, starting in the 1970s, with inspiration taken from
As issues regarding health and hygiene were often situated within the voluntary sphere of politics, information became part and parcel of the health education. In the first half of the century, strict scientific facts were perceived as the ideal way to present health information to the people. The messages were supposed to be delivered from the position of expertise to an anonymous mass, often with a more-or-less explicit — however, publicly accepted — paternalistic attitude. Then, in the second half of the century, health authorities began to realize that people did not change their behaviour just because of repeated facts.

At the time, lifestyle marketing had emerged in the United States. The trend was later imported into Sweden and other European countries, such as the UK and France. It would influence the health information, as well as the whole advertising industry. This new direction focused on emotion-driven promotion of personalized ideals as a way to generate better health. The trend was partly influenced by growing research fields within the social sciences such as media- and communication studies.

At the time when the approach of health information was starting to change, it was, more than ever, crucial for the Swedish state to successfully communicate with its citizens. The expansion of social reforms in the 1960s and 1970s required an informed citizenry in order to ensure the efficiency of the welfare state. For the bureaucracy, information had become a crucial factor in establishing a relationship with citizens as a means to legitimize political decisions and visions. Hence, as attention to lifestyle...
marketing increased, so too did the interest in information and public relations. In fact, using information to change the attitudes and beliefs of the public became an important objective for the state apparatus. ‘Often, the purpose must be to change or strengthen the values and behaviours of citizens through transfer of knowledge’, as a 1969 government report on public information stated. Furthermore, the successful campaigns that preceded the changeover to right-hand traffic in the late 1960s, organized by the state, became inspirational models for both public and private sectors.

FIGURE 4 A satire of the bread campaign. Source: Svenska dagbladet, 26 February 1976.
‘Information’ was suddenly on everyone’s lips, often associated with something inherently good, but also with problems such as information overload, information noise, and information divide. In the 1970s, the continued belief in educating the people in physical health converged with the changing approach to health information, and with information as a dominant discourse of the state. It was also at this time that the Committee on Health Education embarked on its rapid administrative growth. From having one full-time employee in 1965 to 15 in 1970, it reached a peak of 50 co-workers by the end of the decade.

The collaborations between the Committee on Health Education and the food industry bore some resemblance to traditional corporatism, which was still prevalent
in Sweden at that time. However, these alliances went beyond corporatism, and transformed into an organizational body that shared several similarities with what is known today as network governance. In its ideal form, network governance is usually described as an organizational structure that is characterized neither as hierarchy nor market. Instead, it is largely based on reciprocal relationships in which one party is dependent on resources that the other possesses, but in which both work together towards achieving shared goals. Hence, negotiation is a common form of interaction between the parties, resembling the situation in corporatism. Members of the network are interdependent, but also autonomous, and the network participants do not represent a unified organization. Exchanges occur frequently between the stakeholders, but rarely altogether as a group, and sequential exchanges over periods of time are also common. It makes network governance a dynamic organizational process of organizing, rather than a static entity. In contrast to administrative structure (hierarchy) and legal contracts (market), exchanges within network governance are built on open-ended contracts in order to adapt, coordinate, and safeguard against risks. Exchanges within these open-ended contracts are patterned, rather than uniform or randomly performed. The framework of the network is relatively institutionalized in terms of articulated norms and rules, and trust is a key factor for the compliance of the network.

FIGURE 6  A loaf of bread with the campaign slogan on the price tag.
Source: RA, NHU, F III hd vol. 2, Brödkampanjen.
and acquiescence with its decisions. This joint set of rules is, to a certain extent, also self-regulated by negotiation between the participating parties.\footnote{20}

As an applied concept, network governance can be fruitful to reveal the dynamics, working processes, and outcomes of a certain type of coordinated exchange.\footnote{21} It has often been used in public management studies, which tend to analyse contemporary contexts, often from the 1990s onwards. However, the conditions and settings for this type of organization are not bound to a specific period of time. Relating to the history of public health and social politics, the concept of network governance has been used, for example, in studies based on global as well as local levels.\footnote{22} Kristina Söderholm and Elin Wihlborg have, for example, written an article on sociotechnical transition in Sweden, particularly in the 1940s to the 1960s, and the role of the state in network governance settings.\footnote{23} In their article, the historical study is used as a basis from which to historicize, and thus increase the understanding of contemporary trends in network governance. One aim of this study, focusing on the Committee on Health Education, is to contribute to an understanding of how the state managed the design and dissemination of a certain type of message, health information, in network governance settings.

The rise of experimental state health information

Civil organizations as well as private enterprises joined the state in an ideological consensus. Furthermore, in the 1960s and 1970s, the state showed an increased tendency to use civil organizations as a platform for disseminating governmental information to its citizens.\footnote{24}

It was, however, not really until the 1960s that the National Board of Health and Welfare, and the National Board of Medicine, started to significantly reform and increase their engagement in health information. At this time, the concept of health
The organizational map of the Committee on Health Education from the 1970s shows the different areas in which the agency was involved. For example, and apart from diet and exercise (the focus of this article), the Committee worked on projects concerned with issues such as smoking and drug abuse, as well as gender roles (Figure 7). A symbolic manifestation of medicine and social welfare as interlinked was the merging of the National Board of Medicine into the National Board of Health and Welfare in 1968. With Bror Rexed as the new General Director, the administrative expansion of the Committee on Health Education began. This growth paralleled similar developments in other Western countries. The reason was often increased awareness of the damaging effects of smoking, which resulted in economic support for health campaigns.

At this time, health information in many European countries was a result of interactions between various social and medicinal fields. The Committee travelled abroad on several occasions to study and learn from countries such as the UK, Holland, Poland, and Czechoslovakia. According to the agency, Canada and East Germany were considered particularly good examples of modern health education. The willingness of the Committee to embrace international trends also speaks for its responsiveness to cooperation with domestic stakeholders.

Despite better living standards, the costs of healthcare in Sweden continued to expand. The board of the Committee on Health Education declared that, in order to obtain sufficient campaign funding, it was important to show how health information could reduce the costs of healthcare. Rexed and the official manager of the Committee, Nils Östby, thus encouraged new ideas on the matter. As good health was thought to be dependent on lifestyle choices, information was a legitimate tool for making people aware of – and voluntarily choose – healthy behaviour.

The first major campaign was Din hälsa (Your Health), launched in 1968 and centred around a poster that focused on various aspects of health. As was often the case with the health information from the 1930s and 1940s, this campaign targeted school children, a strategy commonly used in other countries as well. Also, similar to an anti-smoking campaign in the UK, Your Health was an example of how the Committee consciously collaborated with the industry to increase its success. In the Swedish case, the agency worked with a private advertising agency and various distributors (such as schools and civil organizations). The campaign was a triumph, with over 800,000 copies of the poster distributed by the end of 1969 (of 1 million printed). It became the starting point for an experimental era of health information, which lasted through the first half of the 1970s, partly influenced by lifestyle marketing. For example, and as another illustration of network governance practices, the agency initiated several collaborations with the cultural sector. These resulting information products often drew on emotive expressions instead of scientific facts as a way of trying to activate citizens, and make them behave in ways that would improve their health. Here, different media, such as art exhibitions, films, comic magazines, and theatre plays, were used to propagate and disseminate the information.
The *Diet and Exercise* project and the establishment of network collaborations

While the Committee on Health Education expanded, national health experts mobilized a crusade against the old public health enemies: fat and sugar. In 1969, a group of medical experts released a report concerning diet and exercise. It concluded that the Swedish people exercised too little and ate too much unhealthy food. The report became the basis for the ambitious 10-year campaign project *Kost och motion* (*Diet and Exercise*). Emphasizing both diet and exercise was in line with a broadened concept of health, as well as a continuation of the focus on the body as a whole. As in the early days of the public health project, the state authorities had a clear idea of what constituted good health and what was required in order to be healthy. The question was only: what communicative means should be employed?

In order to guarantee that the big campaign project and its high aspirations would have a desired impact, the agency deemed it necessary to involve the food industry in producing and disseminating the health information. Establishing network collaborations was a way for the agency to communicate with a larger audience than they could have done alone. However, there was a shared desire for collaboration. In 1970, before launching *Diet and Exercise*, representatives from the food industry had already expressed their wish to collaborate with the National Board on campaigns regarding dietary issues. For the companies and the business associations it was, on the one hand, a strategy to increase profits on certain products. On the other hand, it afforded an opportunity to build a relationship with the consumer, based on the association with public health. It could also be perceived as a strategy to counter an antagonistic opinion towards the industry in general, brought about a growing Leftist movement in Sweden.

Hence, the Committee on Health Education wrote a draft policy that clarified the terms for future collaborative campaigns. It was later discussed at a conference without any objections being raised. Around 30 companies were present at the conference, including ICA (Purchasing Centres’ Corporation), Cloetta, KF (Swedish Cooperative Union), Findus, and Margarinbolaget. All parties encouraged a flexible collaborative approach of gentlemen’s agreements in order to avoid too much bureaucracy. In fact, the conference concluded that collaborations could start on an ad hoc basis. It created a norm of open-ended contracts to minimize risk without long-term promises, which kept an open door for the private participants in order to maintain their interest. The discussion about the policy continued over the years, in smaller meetings as well as in larger conferences; however, it was never drawn up as a formal contract. On the contrary: exceptions were regularly made.

Initially, the Committee had very optimistic objectives when it came to involving the food industry. The agency assumed that the private participants (1) would voluntarily contribute campaign resources, (2) more-or-less share the same interests and agendas as the agency, and (3) willingly adjust to the terms formulated by the Committee. Conflicting interests were evident from the start, for example, embedded in the question of health versus profit. The private participants took a clear stand against conducting negative advertising about products that the agency considered to be less healthy. Instead, a shared objective was formulated at the conference aforementioned: the collaborations should only promote healthy
This discussion also highlights the balance between focusing on a holistic concept of health and the individual components of health.

As mentioned before, these collaborative initiatives were not historically isolated phenomena. Throughout the history of the political project of public health, there had been collaborations between the state, the industry, and civil society. However, in
the early 1970s, these alliances became increasingly entangled and transformed into network governance settings. Initially, the collaborations between the Committee on Health Education and the food industry shared several characteristics of this organizational form. For example, negotiation became a flexible way of communicating, resulting in various compromises along the way. Both the agency and the private stakeholders saw the potential in combining their different strengths and overlapping interests, partly as a way to increase the public interest in certain products. As in the partnership with the cultural sector, the private participants could offer the agency new arenas in which to disseminate health information. In turn, the food industry saw an advantage in being affiliated with the National Board of Health and Welfare as a way of associating themselves with the brand of public health. This is similar to the collaborations with the cultural sector. In the latter case, the agency tried to imbue the information with cultural and emotional values in order to reach an extended audience, and to make a stronger impact. The pragmatic and self-regulated approach to the collaboration policy allowed the agency to be more experimental but also to take more risks, as the strategy opened the way for information that was more difficult to fully control.

The **Start the Day Better** campaign

Initially, everything went as the Committee planned. The aim of *Start the Day Better*, its first major collaboration project, was to get Swedish citizens to eat a healthy breakfast and do morning exercise. The concept was perfectly suited for linking together the various aspects of a healthy body. Hence, the agency’s objective was to use the already-established network as a vehicle for a campaign that would have a large-scale impact on people’s behaviour. This was clearly inspired by the standard-setting right-hand traffic campaigns in the late 1960s. When *Start the Day Better* began as a pilot in the spring of 1973, the agency had, to its satisfaction, signed agreements with 18 marketing groups and 14 groups of food distributors. In their role as initiator, coordinator, and co-financier, the National Board of Health and Welfare became the centre of the network, and thus secured influence over the campaign. Controlling the message was important, as the health education built on voluntarism. Firstly, regarding the industry’s non-compulsory promotion of healthy products and, secondly, regarding the consumers, who were not forced to buy these products.

Especially pivotal was collaborations with supermarkets. The Committee produced brochures about healthy food that were distributed to the stores, in which personnel from the agency also performed demonstrations and gave consultation to the consumers (Figures 8–9). A collection of text material and slogans were produced by the agency, and provided to the supermarkets, addressing what the agency considered to be accurate health information. The use of supermarkets sheds light on interesting aspects of how the network collaboration was used by the agency. A food distributor such as ICA was a natural actor within the network. At the same time, an ICA supermarket was turned into an arena for the agency to display the campaign, and reach citizens in their everyday lives. A similar example was the use of commercial advertisement in the press, in which the logo of *Diet and Exercise* appeared side-by-side with advertisements from supermarkets (Figure 10). The campaign message also appeared on cartons of milk. These examples illustrate that the Swedish welfare
state tried to reach the citizens. Furthermore, these activities were accepted by the public, and the response of the campaign was exclusively positive.\textsuperscript{48}

The agency’s influence on mass media was limited. Hence, the examples above show how the Committee used products, advertisements, and supermarkets as substitute communicative platforms. The campaign can be seen as a transition period on the road to lifestyle-oriented health information, or rather health promotion. On the one hand, \textit{Start the Day Better} gave the people bureaucratic and scientific health information (e.g. in brochures). On the other hand, it targeted peoples’ way of living (e.g. in articles that captured the private lives and morning routines of families).\textsuperscript{49} Encountering people in their everyday lives would later be used as a method during the bread campaign, although eliciting a negative response. The examples from \textit{Start the Day Better} further reveal how the National Board of Health and Welfare and the private stakeholders merged together in unified communication. It was a consequence of several participators engaging in a mutual give-and-take collaboration, without abandoning each participant’s organizational identity. The result can be interpreted as another form of health convergence between state, medicine, capital, and information.

As a result of the legitimizing function of the agency, the campaign message had a strong appeal. Just as during the heydays of the paternalistic public health project in the 1930s and 1940s, stakeholders from all parts of society (such as sport organizations and schools) joined the health consensus in \textit{Diet and Exercise} and \textit{Start the Day Better}. The Committee on Health Education produced and distributed to interested parties still films, posters, and even an LP-record for gymnastic training.\textsuperscript{50} While the agency regarded the expansion of the campaign as something positive, it is nevertheless clear that they also abandoned some control over the message, and hoped for an adequate use and reception of the campaign material.

The campaign successively spread throughout Sweden, but closed down after a year because of lack of funding. The total campaign cost for the agency reached SEK
Media strategy, media reality

As the welfare state grew and developed, there were demands that the bureaucracy should be made more accountable to the citizens. Hence, healthcare services and public health policies must not only be known, but should be understandable, and seek voluntary compliance.\textsuperscript{52} Transmission of information thus became a major objective for the National Board of Health and Welfare.

One strategy that the Committee employed in order to get the health messages through the information noise was to collaborate with – and adapt to – private advertising agencies. In fact, the communication methods used by the public and the private sectors in the 1970s shared several similarities in Sweden, as well as in other Western countries.\textsuperscript{53} As mentioned earlier, the National Board did, for example, hire an advertising agency to produce the \textit{Your Health} poster, and a communication expert was consulted in the process of naming the later campaign \textit{Lev väl} (\textit{Live Well}).\textsuperscript{54} Comparable communication methods made it easier for both private and public parties to understand each other and to collaborate. The conflicting interest between advertising and governmental information, however, remained unchanged.

Another media strategy was the use of press conferences. This is a good example of how the Committee on Health Education tried to both get the attention of the press and control the effects of the information. All the major health campaigns associated with the agency began with a press meeting, sometimes in the form of organized PR stunts. For example, when the \textit{Start the Day Better} campaign expanded nationwide, a symbolic breakfast press conference was arranged at a hotel in Stockholm.\textsuperscript{55}

A media-related concern, raised by stakeholders from the food industry, was that campaigns would become boring, and this accentuated the need for illustrative advertisement. In 1975, the Committee arranged a mass media seminar with over 100 participants from news organizations, the food industry, and the National Board, aiming for a deeper collaboration, especially with the former. At the conference, however, attention was given to the \textit{void} between the parties. The agency had its own ideas of what should constitute accurate health information, which differed from how the press were accustomed to delivering news to their readers.\textsuperscript{56} In the end, the conference did not generate commitments from the press, television, or radio, and these organizations never became a part of the entangled network. Only on a few occasions did television, for example, meet the requests made by the Committee. The lack of interest on the part of television became a disappointment, which led – at least on one occasion – to a public dispute.\textsuperscript{57} As the examples from \textit{Start the Day Better} have shown, however, the agency turned to alternative methods of communication, such as collaborative advertisement in the papers, in lieu of waiting for journalists to write about the campaigns.

The lack of interest from radio and television must be regarded as a failure, as the management of state health education was strongly focused on media issues. A specific project group within \textit{Diet and Exercise} was dedicated to media-related activities and

640,000 (approximately SEK 4,000,000 in today’s money). Due to the nature of the collaboration, based as it was on open-ended contracts, it was easy for all involved parties to withdraw and reorganize the collaborative condition.\textsuperscript{51}
Furthermore, Claes Wirsén, a representative of Swedish Television, became a board member of the Committee on Health Education in 1973. As mass media organizations showed scant interest, the agency became more dependent on the remaining participants from the food industry. After the experiences gained from *Start the Day Better*, the agency declared that external funding was needed to carry out any large and meaningful campaign. Furthermore, as campaign resources were limited, it was important to coordinate as many interested parties as possible in order to increase the efficiency of the information. Thus, new collaborative initiatives were taken by the Committee to start a new large-scale campaign. In the autumn of 1974, the agency announced that the new theme would focus on the different parts of the so-called *food circle*. It was an attempt to maintain the holistic idea of a healthy citizen (*Figure 11*). Exercise was absent from the campaign, however; a compromise that the agency apparently had to make in order to retain the interest of the food industry.

![The food circle, with its different diet sections. ‘Look at the Food Circle’. Source: Antoni, *Råd att äta bra*, 10.](image)
During 1974 and 1975, new conferences were arranged to discuss terms with the food industry, similar to those held before Start the Day Better. The launch of Live Well had a structure patterned on the previous campaign, with food distributors and supermarkets as collaborative partners, contacts with news organizations, and a similar use of campaign material. However, the lack of resources made it difficult for the agency to coordinate a campaign as large as the previous one. Due to changed funding conditions, the balanced collaboration characterized by Start the Day Better had vanished. As a result, when Live Well began in the spring of 1976, the attention was diverted to another campaign, also associated with the Committee: the bread campaign.

The bread campaign
The national public health project in general, and the Committee on Health Education in particular, had a tradition of focusing on the human body. It is, therefore, worthy of comment that a campaign for bread should cause controversy, as – ironically – bread can be seen as a metaphor for the human body. At that time, bread had a well-established place in the food circle, promoted by the Committee in the Live Well campaign. Also, it had a history of being highlighted by the health authorities as both cheap and healthy food.

The background to the famous six to eight slices of bread is to be found in the 1960s, when the Swedish Public Health Institute assessed the consumption of bread as worryingly low. Based on a scientific report, the National Board of Health and Welfare produced the brochure Prisvärd mat (Affordable Food), which was later used as a source for the Live Well campaign. Among other things, it emphasized the importance of increased consumption of non-sweetened bread. In fact, the report defined the ideal consumption of bread at between 125 grams and 175 grams a day, which the Bread Institute then interpreted as six to eight slices of bread. Hence, in the spring of 1975, when the Bread Institute asked if the Committee on Health Education was interested in supporting their forthcoming campaign, it was perceived as a continuation of the agency’s own recommendation.

The collaboration between the Bread Institute and the Committee had already been established during the Your Health campaign in the late 1960s, and continued with Start the Day Better as well as other parallel activities. This time, however, the Bread Institute had greater ambitions: it intended to fund the whole campaign during 1976, at a total estimated cost of SEK 3.5 million (approximately SEK 16,500,000 in today’s money). Furthermore, while the Bread Institute discussed the terms of the collaboration with the National Board and the Committee, the campaign design was developed exclusively in dialogue between the Bread Institute and the advertising agency Landia. The Swedish Language Council was also consulted regarding the choice of words to make the campaign more eye-catching.

The concept of the bread campaign was approved during 1975. As the Bread Institute funded the whole campaign, the negotiating power of the Committee was naturally limited. It was basically reduced to a medical review, conducted by diet experts within the agency. After some minor changes, the management team of Diet
and Exercise approved the campaign, as did the board of the Committee of Health Education, and Bror Rexed personally. The Committee’s limited influence enabled the campaign to take a commercial turn, mainly aimed at increasing bread consumption rather than presenting an integrated health perspective. The interdependence and the control over the message, which had been established during Start the Day Better, were side-lined. The conflict of interest between governmental health information and pure commercial advertisement intensified and turned to the advantage of the latter.

The bread campaign was presented as a campaign made by the Bread Institute in consultation with Diet and Exercise and Live Well. The Bread Institute participated in several conferences arranged by the agency, as well as in activities connected with Live Well. For example, they co-financed the brochure Affordable Food and a short film for the campaign. As the Bread Institute was the only funder of the bread campaign, however, the Committee on Health Education found it difficult to claim a close partnership, and to fully integrate the collaboration into Diet and Exercise and Live Well. Since both parties wanted the bread campaign to merge into the greater network collaboration, although for different reasons, the economic pre-conditions generated a disproportionate autonomy for the Bread Institute. As a consequence, the bread campaign was publicly received as an advertisement for a single product, which was far from the original idea of a holistic health message.

With these pre-conditions in mind, it comes as no surprise that the campaign was so heavily criticized in the press, in contrast to the treatment of Start the Day Better. In fact, it was one of those rare cases in which governmental information, otherwise often invisible in everyday life, became a red rag for various ideological groups. Liberals dismissed the idea that the state should tell citizens what to do and what to eat. The Leftist movement did not approve of collaborations between private and public sectors, or that a centralized power should have the authority to propagate and control citizens through ‘capitalist propaganda’. Other types of criticism concerned the paradox that a large part of the global population was starving while a state agency, in a rich welfare country, proclaimed that the people ought to eat six to eight slices of bread, every day, or the quality differences in various loaves of bread.

Despite the attention and critical reception of the campaign – or perhaps because of it – the collaboration continued in the fall of 1976. In a way, the campaign proved to be successful. According to a survey carried out by Landia, bread consumption increased by an average of half a slice per person a day compared to before the campaign. This impact demonstrated how potentially successful the network collaboration could be, but also the risk of losing control over the message. At the press conference for the follow-up campaign, Bror Rexed underlined that nothing was possible without proper resources, and therefore the necessity of collaborations. This statement reveals how dependent the agency had become on external funding. Nevertheless, sceptical voices were increasingly raised in 1977, within the Committee as well as within the National Board. Concern about engaging in collaboration with a single party had already been voiced during the spring of 1975, which particularly pointed out the Bread Institute. Ultimately, the agency’s trust in the Bread Institute dwindled and the collaboration ended in 1977; however, the Institute continued the campaign alone until the 1980s.
Disestablishing the committee: towards some concluding remarks

By 1976, the collaborations with the food industry, within the Diet and Exercise project, were fully financed by private parties. Consequently, after Start the Day Better, campaigns came to be dominated by a few commercially oriented projects; a fact regretfully admitted by the agency in a report from 1977. The intended mix of governmental information and commercial advertisement during Start the Day Better had gradually changed to become exclusively the latter. During the attention of the bread campaign, Nils Östby complained that it took something like the bread campaign to create public awareness of health issues. This reveals a shift in the Committee’s attitude towards the collaborations. From an optimistic approach concerning the merging of private and public interests, to a struggle for the Committee to control the output of the collaborations, culminating in a controversial failure.

The rapid growth of the Committee on Health Education is indicative of the ambition and desire to achieve total coordination and control over the health information in Sweden. Ultimately, it generated more administrative burden than it produced results; however, the unwillingness to allocate larger campaign resources to the Committee, and instead favour in-house activities, could be seen as an attempt to retain control over the health information.

In an investigative report from 1977 regarding the National Board of Health and Welfare’s organization, the Committee was criticized for its lack of efficiency and weak campaign evaluations. The new General Director, Barbro Westerholm, followed the report’s suggestions and subsumed the Committee into a bureau within the National Board in 1981. The staff was reduced by 50%, and the already-established network collaborations were terminated. At that time, negative attention was directed to various discreditable affairs within the expanding state bureaucracy. The bread campaign was perceived as one such failure, and the de-bureaucratization of the Committee was thus in line with broader demands for decentralization of the public sector in Sweden.

To conclude, the collaborations with the food industry were both desired and – later – required. In fact, it seems paradoxical that the Committee developed such dependence in order to manage health campaigning at the pinnacle of the Swedish welfare state. An economic balance between the agency and the participating parties was considered to guarantee stability. When the economic situation started to change, however, the alliances became a burden rather than an asset for the Committee on Health Education. There were, in particular, four lines of conflict.

First, from the beginning, the Committee fought a battle between, on the one hand, high aspirations and the desire to expand the dissemination of the health information by using different channels, partners, and arenas, while, on the other hand, trying to control the messages. The agency tried to use the network collaboration as an intentional strategy to achieve both ends. Establishing network collaborations by involving various organizations and businesses in public affairs can further be interpreted as a way for the agency to reach further into the everyday lives of citizens. However, the organizational preconditions of the collaborations changed as a result of the agency’s diminishing campaign resources. The situation was not helped by the constantly growing administration of the Committee. Also, the difficulties of engaging
mass media led to increased dependence on resources from the food industry. While the reach of the bread campaign expanded, the Committee’s influence diminished.

Second, the nature of interest in engaging in campaign collaborations was dissimilar between the agency and the food industry (health vs profit). Nevertheless, there was a shared will to collaborate. The food industry could provide resources and communication arenas in which the agency was able to make its voice heard. In turn, the private participants saw potential in using the brand of the National Board of Health and Welfare as a quality mark for their products. The mutuality never jeopardized the autonomy of the participating parties, and the network collaborations remained open-ended, built on trust, shared rules and norms, and available resources. Collaborations were thus easy to establish as well as to close down. For the same reasons, however, they were vulnerable to conflicts, which required negotiating power in order to influence the campaigns.

Third, related to the conflict of health versus profit was the friction between highlighting particular products versus producing more complex campaigns that emphasized a comprehensive notion of human health. An inclusive health approach demanded resources from the Committee to persuade the food industry to engage in such campaigns. This was succeeded during Start the Day Better. It was a balanced and unified campaign that made the public less able to distinguish the participants as separated units. The campaign’s holistic focus on health generated a positive reception, and was considered an honest effort to improve citizens’ wellbeing. This contrasted with the bread campaign, which was perceived as one-sided commercial advertisement for a single product, supported by a state agency. Despite the economic imbalance that reduced the negotiating position of the Committee, it still wanted to maintain the network collaboration, allowing the Bread Institute to push the conditions of the collaboration towards commercial principles. As a result of putting the name of the agency on the campaign slogan, it created a paternalistic attitude that clearly did not go down well with citizens of the 1970s.

Finally, when the agency withdrew their support, the Bread Institute continued the campaign without the National Board (with only small changes in the campaign slogan). This proves that the Bread Institute was not dependent on the agency at all, and only used the agency as an opportunistic tool to increase bread consumption. But if the interdependence was imbalanced, in terms of economic resources, why did the Committee join with the Bread Institute in the first place? One reason was the agency’s ambitions for the Diet and Exercise project, and the strong belief in information as a tool to alter human behaviour. Over time, it created a paradox of a growing administration that yet lacked funding for large-scale campaign activities. To solve this problem, the Committee chose to hold on to its communication strategy, hoping to gain from the network collaboration, despite the growing dependence on the food industry. In the beginning, the agency expected organizations and companies to willingly join their campaigns, adjust to the terms of the Committee, and provide campaign funding. However, this did not happen and ultimately the agency had to accept what was offered to them in order to achieve any results at all. The Bread Institute came with an offer the agency could not refuse, even though it meant losing control over the information.
Disclosure statement
No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes
1 The National Archive, Stockholm, Arninge (RA), Socialstyrelsen Hälsovårdsbyråns (HVUD), A IV vol. 1, HVUD protocol 23 February 1968.
2 'The National Board of Health and Welfare Wants us to Eat 6-8 Slices of Bread a Day' ('Socialstyrelsen vill att vi äter 6-8 skivor börd om dagen').
3 Kvällsposten, 8 March 1976; Expressen, 11 March 1976; Göteborgsposten, 10 March 1976; Dagens Nyheter, 7 March 1976; Kristianstadsbladet, 5 March 1976.
5 Eriksson, 'Ett sundare liv', 139; The Bread Institute was an interest organization with economic funding from Sveriges bageriförbund, Svenska lantmännens riksförening, Svenska spannmålshandel, Svenska kvarnföreningen, Svenska jästfabriks AB, Margarinbolaget AB, Svenska mejeriernas riksförening, Kooperativa förbundet, and Wasabröd AB. Here, the Swedish word ‘samråd’ is translated to consultation.
10 Johannisson, Kropps tunna skal, 249; Palmblad and Eriksson, Kropp och politik, 37; Sundin, 'Folkhälsa och folkhälsopolitik', 408–16; Annerstedt, 'Kropp, idrott och hälsa. Dätid, nutid och framtid', 11.
12 Palmblad and Eriksson, Kropp och politik, 20–5, 36f.
13 Palmblad and Eriksson, Kropp och politik, 64–8; Berridge, 'Medicine, Public Health and the Media'; Lengwiler, 'Between War Propaganda and Advertising'; Berlivet, 'Uneasy Prevention.'
14 Premfors et al., Demokrati & byråkrati, 56f; Ahrne, Roman, and Franzén, Det sociala landskapet, 170; Östberg and Andersson, Sveriges historia, 213–21; Eriksson, 'Ett sundare liv', 141.
15 Kjellgren, 'Staten som informatör eller propagandist?', 136–9; Larsson, Upplysning och propaganda, 49–53.
16 SOU (Statens offentliga utredningar) 1969:48, Vidgad samhällsinformation, 8 ('Syftet måste ofta bli att genom kunskapsförmedling förändra eller förstärka medborgarnas egna värderingar och beteenden').
17 Norén, 'Information som lösning, information som problem'.


21 See, for example, Powell, ‘Neither Market nor Hierarchy’.


23 Söderholm and Wihlborg, ‘Policy for Sociotechnical Transition’.


28 Ra, NHU, F VII vol. 3, “Raport on a visit to Poland, England, Holland and Czechoslovakia in the autumn of 1971 as a WHO fellow in the field of Health Education” maj 1972; Ra, NHU, F VII vol. 3 “Hälsoupplysning i DDR”.


32 Berridge, ‘Medicine, Public Health and the Media’, 368.


39 RA, NHU, F III a vol. 1, ‘Särskilda anvisningar rörande samverkan mellan socialstyrelsen och näringslivet i informativa sammanhang’ 28 February 1972.

See, for example. RA, NHU, F III a vol. 1, LKM protocol 28 September 1971, 29 February 1972 and 27 March 1973. While the policy underlined the importance of campaigns to emphasize the whole concept of diet and exercise, an exception was made for a porridge campaign in 1971. The National Board of Health and Welfare was nevertheless pleased that they had gained an influence over the campaign process in return. RA, NHU, F III a vol. 1, LKM protocol 22 June 1971.

RA, NHU, F III a vol. 1, LKM protocol 16 December 1976.


Palmblad and Eriksson, Kropp och politik, 33–60.


E.g. RA, NHU, F III a vol 2, “Pressklipp”.


RA, NHU, F II vol. 1, ‘P.M. angående väggplansch om hälsan’ 22 October 1965. Tre tryckare was hired for the poster design; RA, NHU, F III a vol. 1, LKM protocol 11 September 1975.


RA, NHU, F III a vol. 1, LKM protocol 15 June 1970.


RA, NHU, F III a vol. 1, LKM protocol 9 October1974.


67 See, for example, correspondence in RA, NHU, E I, 1975:41–70 and 1976:1–23; Landia was the advertising agency of Lantmänn (an agriculture cooperative in Sweden). The campaign was developed by Britta Storm, Mats Alinder, Alar Pastarus, and Michael Giese from Landia, *Resumé* 1976:5–6.


71 The agency admitted that the contribution of the National Board of Health and Welfare strengthened the status of the bread campaign; *Nerkes allehanda*, 2 March 1976.

72 The campaign was also associated to the Swedish Consumer Agency. RA, NHU, A I a vol. 2, NHU protocol 30 October 1975; see different correspondences in RA, NHU, E I, 1975:41-70.


76 RA, NHU, A III vol. 1, Minnesanteckningar, 1 March 1977; RA, NHU, F III hd vol. 1, Rådgivande grupp för näringslivsfrågor inom kampanjenheten kost och motion (N-KoM) protocol 4 April 1977; RA, NHU, F III a, LKM protocol 17 March 1977; the Bread Institute changed advertisement agency in 1977 from Landia to Svea (Swedish Cooperative Union’s advertising agency); *Resumé* 1981:8.


80 Printed publications such as journals and brochures produced by the Committee did increase significantly from 1976 and onwards, [http://libris.kb.se/hitlist?q=nämnden+förméd+halsoupplysning&f=simp&t=v&s=rc&g=&m=10](http://libris.kb.se/hitlist?q=nämnden+förméd+halsoupplysning&f=simp&t=v&s=rc&g=&m=10) (2015-09-27).

81 *Socialstyrelsens framtida organisation och arbetsformer*, 1.


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Göteborgsposten 10 March 1976


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Vigör 1975:3.


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