



UMEÅ UNIVERSITET

**”Framtiden tillhör  
informatörerna”**  
Samhällsinformationens formering i  
Sverige 1965–1975

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“The Future Belongs to the Information Officers”: The Formation of Governmental Information in Sweden 1965–1975

**Abstract**

This dissertation is about the formation of governmental information in Sweden during the period 1965 to 1975. During this period information related issues were high up on the political agenda, in Sweden and internationally. I argue that the period is of particular interest in order to understand the impact and development of governmental information in Sweden, even for our time. One overarching research question has guided this study: What ideas and practices characterized how and why the state disseminated information to the public? The thesis uses four tensions to study the formation of governmental information in Sweden during the late 1960s and early 1970s: (1) information as a solution – information as a problem, (2) dissemination of information – control over information, (3) information through mass communication – information through interpersonal dialogue, and (4) governmental information – commercial information. These tensions draw theoretically from John Durham Peters’ notions of communication.

The thesis uses strands from three research fields: PR-history, cultural histories of media, and digital humanities. The four papers use different theoretical perspectives in order to shed new light on of the formation of governmental information in Sweden. Adding to that, and to theoretically tie the papers together, the thesis presents an overarching network perspective with a special focus on conceptual history as a means to better understand how governmental information was discussed as well as practiced. Different methods are used to study the formation of governmental information. The latter is partly because of the political issue’s porous boundaries and fragmented-oriented character, and partly due to the lack of previous research with a problematizing and historical approach to governmental information in Sweden. The thesis combines qualitative and quantitative methods to study different aspects how the state communicated with the public.

This dissertation presents new findings about the formation of governmental information during the period 1965 to 1975. One regards the different *intersections of governmental information*. It shows that the production and dissemination of information from agencies to citizens was far from “pure” governmental information, and rather entangled with various actors from industry, academy and civil society. A second finding concerns the *language of governmental information*. Here, the dissertation shows – through large-scale digital text methods – how the concept of “information” exploded in usages from the 1960s and onwards, and how “information” as a discursive element infiltrated a growing number of political topics from the same period and onwards. A third finding centers on the *media of governmental information*. One result shows how broadly academics and bureaucrats defined the concept of media in relation to the practice of governmental information. All kinds of media devices, and not only the traditional news media, were considered important for the purpose of disseminating information on large scale to the public. Lastly, this dissertation reveals *governmental information as without guaranties*. Overall it shows how information from state agencies to citizens was generated through various conflicting tensions that have to be addressed, but without any hope of finding a balance free from communication problems. These problems tend to reoccur in different settings through history, also visible today. This result should however not be regarded as a pessimistic standpoint, rather it calls for modesty in terms of communication in general, and governmental information in particular.

**Keywords**

public information, governmental information, public campaign, Sweden, digital humanities, digital text analysis, 1960s, 1970s, network, PR-history, cultural histories of media, conceptual history

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