

Projektbeskrivning

INTRODUCTION

The topic of this project is appraisal practises in Swedish archives 1980–2010. How have appraisal decisions been motivated? What was the importance of ideas on heritage and memory on the one hand, and legal and institutional frameworks on the other?

The investigation stands in the conjunction between archival science and the research on heritage and memory processes that is conducted in several disciplines within the humanities and social sciences. The latter has given a deepened understanding of a series of processes whereby individuals and/or institutions inscribe different meanings on the remnants from the past. However, some fields are far more analysed than others. While there are virtually innumerable studies on the role of museums, we know remarkably little about the archives, even though they are a central actor in the memory field. Archives and archivists have a tremendous role in shaping the source material for the future. They ultimately determine what records that are to be left for future generations, thanks to their everyday appraisal activities.

This project analyses the decisions on appraisal in a selected number of cases in Swedish state, municipal and non-public archives 1980–2010. That period has witnessed an increased public interest in history and heritage as well as a more rigorous archival legislation. The Archives Act (Arkivlagen) of 1990 formalised and strengthened the duties of public archives, especially at the municipal level. As will be further developed below, the legal frameworks heavily regulate appraisal in Swedish public archives. All records that are created by or submitted to a Swedish public authority, are defined as public records (*allmänna handlingar*) and thereby part of the archives from the very beginning – there is no distinction between records management and archives. Thus, Swedish archivists are also (sometimes mostly) records managers. The definition of public records is to be found in the Freedom of the Press Act (*Tryckfrihetsförordningen*), one of the fundamental laws that form the Swedish Constitution. It is also a cornerstone in the so-called Principle of Publicity (*Offentlighetsprincipen*).

The starting point of Swedish archival legislation is that all public records shall be retained, unless there are specific regulations and decisions that make destruction possible or mandatory. Such decisions are to be grounded on the formulations in the Archives Act that records from public agencies are part of the national heritage, and that the needs of the legal system and the organisations themselves, citizens' security, public transparency, and future researchers' interests should be safeguarded. However, probably the actual difference between Swedish public archives and the ones of other countries is smaller than in theory, concerning what is left for long-term retention. Even if retention is the main rule – in practise most records end up being destroyed. The main difference is the explicit direction of decision: “what can we destroy”, instead of “what should we keep”. Thus, Swedish public archivists too choose what is to kept, albeit indirectly.

In archival science, the appraisal activities stand at the forefront of the theoretical debate. However, the actual practises are so far given less attention. On the other

hand, the appraisal issues have not only been debated among archivists and archival theorists. Researchers have traditionally fought for preserving records that authorities and archival professionals want to destroy of different reasons – financial demands, stopping overflow of information, and protecting personal integrity. While there are many excellent exceptions, archivists and archival scientists tend to emphasise the specific archival elements of appraisal questions rather than those of memory and heritage construction, while many researchers overlook the demands of transparency in archives.

THEORY AND PREVIOUS RESEARCH

The project is situated in two research contexts simultaneously: an archival science discussion on appraisal as well as a broader debate in the humanities and social sciences on memory, heritage and uses of history.

Within the discipline of archival science, appraisal theory is often considered the most important area of studies (Craig 2004; Ridener 2009). There, the methods and ways of deciding what to retain and what to destroy, when, how, and on what grounds, is taken under consideration. The appraisal theories are of different kinds. Often they are normative models or doctrines on how to structure the appraisal process. In recent decades, a constructivist perspective that emphasises the power of the archivist when he or she appraises, and thereby creates the future archive, has become common (Schwartz & Cook 2002; Hedstrom 2002: 24, 34). Another trend is the critique of the traditional perspective that strictly follows the principle of provenance. That rather passive role of the archivist, who only evaluates records that a particular records creator has chosen to leave for the future, is under attack. Here, there is an ambition to fill in the gaps in the archival material, for example through systematic interviews and inclusion of material from many interrelated records creators (Booms 1987; Samuels 1991–92; Wallot & Fortier eds. 1998). The importance is rather the relations to society at large, and the place of a records collector in society. The perspective is top-down, starting with the context and the functions, rather than the bottom-up perspective starting with the records at hand (cf. Thomassen 2001; Kretzschmar 2005). In some countries, these approaches have been used for some time, such as Canada (macro-appraisal) and the Netherlands (PIVOT).

In the international discussion, appraisal is often linked to the notion of acquisition. The Swedish legal framework virtually blocks this point of view – since the public records form the archives, nothing is to be actively gathered to complement them. That would seem to make the Swedish public archives hypothetically more “passive”. However, there is a growing consciousness of alternative or complementary methods, which I will develop below.

Archival science is theoretically still under development. It is not at all obvious that an empirical study of archival appraisal primarily has to lean on “appraisal theory” as it is commonly understood. To a large extent, the appraisal theories are normative systems with the outspoken aim to make appraisal better. This project rather analyses the actual appraisal decisions from an “outside perspective”, how have the actors within archives and organisations actually done when they have appraised? That means that most of the traditional “appraisal theory” rather forms a part of the study itself: how can the actual archival practices be connected to the existing theories on appraisal? Therefore, theoretical tools from other disciplines, such as those concerning heritage and memory processes seem more central to the

project under consideration here.

The project should contribute to Swedish archival science, which is still in its birth face as a subject of research. Only at the Mid Sweden University there is a developed archival science environment. However, the main tendency there focuses on informational science aspects (Borglund 2008; Sundqvist 2009). One should also mention the research on digital preservation conducted at the Luleå University of Technology (e.g. Runardotter 2009). Since this project leans toward cultural theory and history, it is natural to locate it to the Department of ALM in Uppsala, with its already well-developed research environment on those issues, e.g. in its museology section.

In Sweden, appraisal practises studied with questions similar to mine have only been touched upon in a few short articles, which mainly deals with appraisal on state level in Sweden until the 1980s (Fredriksson 2003; Nyberg 2005; cf. also Gränström et al 2001; Sköld 2010). Fredriksson concludes that appraisal between the 1950s and 1980s was pragmatic, with financial considerations at the forefront. My study can be considered a continuation and widening from that starting point.

The project serves to analyse the practises in Swedish archives the last decades in relation to the contemporary theoretical discussions of cultural heritage and historical identity. In the vast international literature on the subject, there are some studies that also includes the archives and archival institutions (Blouin & Rosenberg eds. 2007; see also Nora et al eds. 1984–92; Lowenthal 1998) – but that perspective is, as I mentioned earlier, underdeveloped and almost absent in Swedish research on memory and heritage. There are also some discussions of appraisal within archival science that truly embraces questions of memory and heritage production (Cox 2002; Jimerson 2009; Bastian & Alexander eds. 2009; cf. also Brothman 2001). The proposed project will in a similar manner try to bridge the gap between heritage and memory studies and archival science. Appraisal of records is in itself fundamental in social memory processes since destruction of records is an irreversible step in forming the history of tomorrow, and appraisal decisions are to a great extent influenced by contemporary notions of heritage and history (Ridener 2009).

PROJECT DESIGN AND MAIN ISSUES

The project is carried out by one person (myself, Samuel Edquist), and will last for three years on half time on the average. It will consist of a synthesis of three related empirical studies, which analyse decisions, investigations and policy documents on appraisal in state, municipal and private/voluntary sectors in Sweden from 1980 to 2010. These are guided by a common bundle of questions presented in the following. They can be divided into two main groups. The first deals with appraisal as a heritage and memory construction process. The second strives to analyse the relative importance of institutional and legal frameworks in appraisal practises.

Among the first group of questions are the following: What records are chosen to be preserved for the future, and what is picked out to be destroyed – either immediately or after a certain time? How have these decisions been justified? I am mainly concerned with the motives for long-term preservation – both the explicit and implicit ones. In public appraisal investigations I have looked at in advance, most argumentation deals with the question on what is to be kept for a certain time, to then be destroyed thereafter (e.g. Riksarkivet 2007), normally when the main

reason is to secure the public transparency, economical and legal needs, and the benefits for the organisation itself. In the appraisal investigations, various arguments for preservation for a shorter or longer term are weighed against principal reasons for destruction. The long-term preservation seems generally to be justified in rather brief terms. Normally it leans on formulations in the Archives Act about preservation for “research purposes”, and/or that “the records of public authorities are part of the national heritage”.

Even so, I will systematically sift out the more or less expressed reasoning for long-term preservation. (If there is a lack of explicit motivations, it can still be possible to interpret the fact that certain kinds of records are destroyed or kept.) What is considered historically important, what is considered suiting for the future national heritage, and why? The overall purpose is to extract the overall view of cultural heritage and history among those who decide what to be kept and what to be destroyed. In order to analyse the empirical material concerning the motivations of preservation, I use a typological model proposed by German historian Jörn Rüsen (Rüsen 2004; see also Edquist 2009a). Rüsen’s model targets three ideal types of judging the value of history. The cognitive dimension deals with the ambition to know what actually happened, the past as something to be rationalised. The political dimension deals with the ways history writing is used as an ideological weapon. Finally, the aesthetic dimension considers the function of the past as a source of joy or beauty. An example is preservation arguments where “research needs” lean to the cognitive dimension, while “heritage” lean to the political and the aesthetic ones. An important benefit of the model is that these dimensions are not mutually contradictory. The arguments for the value of history never fully belongs to one dimension only, but the centre of gravity can vary.

Another central question is: For whom are the archival records kept – academic researchers, amateur local historians, genealogists, journalists, or “ordinary people”? An important factor is the general “democratisation” of history and heritage, in which individuals and subordinate groups are increasingly writing their own history, for example their own families and forefathers, their workplace or their home town (Edquist 2009a). This process has led to a sharp uprising in the number of local, non-academic and non-official museums, as well as archives (cf. Flinn et al. 2009). There was a clear influence from these discourses in the 1990 Archives Act. Generally, the target of preservation was strengthened thanks to the formulation that the archives of the public sphere belong to “the national heritage”. The formulation on safeguarding “research needs” was – according to the preparatory works – meant to have a broad meaning, including all people that wishes to take part of archival records (Gränström et al. 2001). It is though an open question to what extent this tendency was implemented in actual decisions.

A more contextualising question is: In what ways have appraisal activities been influenced by the contemporary debates on cultural heritage in society as a whole (Grundberg 2000)? Pierre Nora has meant that an “archival memory” is specific for the late modern age, obsessed with archiving and preservation of even more sectors of human life (Nora 1989; Cox 2002: 293f). A similar interpretation is that there is a heritagisation of history (Lowenthal 1998). Do appraisal investigations at all discuss what “heritage” means? Is there, for example, any implementation of the “nationalist” tendency in the contemporary heritage discourse, i.e. to promote identity projects of any sorts?

The second main pillar of the project is the analysis of the relative importance of institutional and legal frameworks in appraisal decisions. This is a major reason

why I use the comparative method in the project, studying state, municipal and private/voluntary sectors. A starting hypothesis can be formulated as such: the appraisal practises in the Swedish public sector are highly formalised and follow a number of laws and regulations, which has led to a technocratic approach, not promoting deeper discussions on appraisal (cf. Fredriksson 2003). What similarities and differences can be observed between public and non-public sectors, and what does that say on a more general level on the relationship between cultural-ideological structures and legal frameworks?

Among the three studied sectors, appraisal in the state sector is the most regulated. According to the Archives Act (and before 1990, to its predecessor “Allmänna arkivstadgan”) and associated ordinances, all appraisal decisions in state archives must ultimately be made by the Swedish National Archives – which is the so-called Archives authority for the state sector. The exception is for the records “of little or temporary value”, where the individual government agencies have the right to issue general appraisal decisions. There are also some laws that demand destruction of records from personal integrity reasons.

By contrast, the archives in the private and voluntary sectors only in exceptional cases have to comply with legal provisions on destruction or preservation (bookkeeping is the main exception). In that sector, there are also better opportunities to bridge the divisions between the archival sector and other actors in the heritage field such as museums. There have been several projects striving to fill in the archival gaps, through methods such as photo documentation and interviews, which to some extent have similarities with contemporary appraisal theories such as Samuels’s documentation strategy. In the state sector, such endeavours have only recently been discussed as options for the future. This applies foremost to the archival institutions such as the National Archives, which also deposit large numbers of private archives. There have e.g. been demands that the Archives act should also mention the non-public archives as being part of the national heritage (Riksarkivet 2009: 1, 15; Riksarkivet 2010: 4).

Last but not least, municipalities have – at least in theory – an intermediate position. Before 1990 the regulation of municipal archives was rather loose; the Municipal Law (Kommunallagen) stipulated that municipalities and county councils had to issue local archival regulations (“arkivreglementen”). However, with the Archives Act of 1990 the concept of Archives authorities was introduced into the municipal level (Gränström et al 2001: 51ff). Normally, the executive committees of the municipalities and county councils (kommunstyrelse, landstingsstyrelse) are assigned that function. In most cases they give the individual municipal committees and enterprises a larger freedom in appraisal decisions than what is the case in the state. Normally, the municipal committees or enterprises decide themselves – after consultation with the local Archives authority.

For a long time, the Swedish National Archives has been instructed to issue advice on archival care to the municipalities. Since the 1970s, the National Archives and the Swedish municipalities organisation (Svenska kommunförbundet) jointly issue advices on archival questions, including appraisal. For example, there are advice on municipal and county council archival regulations (RA-FS 1995:3; RA-FS 1995:5) and some other advice concerning appraisal of specific types of records. Since the 1980s, the county councils are also participating in the formalised cooperation between municipalities, county councils and the National Archives, called the Consultation Group for Municipal Archival Issues (Samrådsgruppen för kommunala arkivfrågor). Thus, the municipalities are influenced from “above” –

the state – through the advices that the state Archives authorities have issued, and through the policy texts from the Consultation Group for Municipal Archival Issues.

On the other hand, it is not unusual that municipal archival institutions interact with archives from the private and voluntary sectors. In many cases, there are joint organisations covering municipal and non-public archival institutions. For example, non-public archival institutions share the buildings with municipal ones in Västerås, Uppsala and Karlstad (in the two latter – also with the regional state archives).

There are some aspects of the over-all problematic of appraisal that must be discussed in my study, however they cannot be as thoroughly analysed as the above, due to necessary limitation reasons. One of these is about the strengthened emphasis on the individual's personal integrity around the turn of the millennium all over Europe. The European Union Data Protection Directive was implemented in Sweden through the Personal Data Act (Personuppgiftslagen) in 1998, complemented by a large number of specific laws limiting mass electronic records on personal data. Many of these include regulations that forces destruction of records. There is a vivid debate whether these laws should instead be replaced by strengthened secrecy regulations.

Another and more nationally specific issue starts with the fact that many events, especially in politics, are never documented at all in records. Because of the Swedish Principle of Publicity, important decisions are often made informally (Handlingsoffentlighet utan handlingar? 2004; Waldemarson 2007). And the legal definition of public records, that disqualifies working material and internal correspondence inside the authority, is also something that means that there is a form of appraisal already through the legal framework. (There is though, according to law, a possibility for ordinary officers to “transform” drafts and memos into public records, by archiving them after the end of a certain case.)

The development towards digitisation and electronic archives is yet another issue that has to be taken into account. It has led to a development where appraisal decisions have to be taken much earlier in the life cycle of records, not least through more organised records management planning.

Finally, the international dimension will be discussed primarily in terms of the ways that the international appraisal discussion can be found – or not – in the Swedish policies and practices. This project will be the first that systematically examines the actual ideas behind appraisal decisions in Swedish archives, and I hope that the international comparison can be developed even further in subsequent projects.

METHODS AND SOURCES

The source material for my study can generally be divided into three groups:

1. appraisal decisions – either specific (for certain records in certain archives) or general (covering many types of records in several organisations)
2. appraisal investigations (that normally precede the decisions)
3. appraisal policy documents

The source material for the study of the state sector consists of the National

Archives appraisal decisions; “gallringsbeslut” to 1991, and thereafter of the National Archives regulations series (the general ones in the series RA-FS and the specific ones in the series RA-MS; some of the former and most of the latter concern appraisal). Probably I will have to limit the study to a sample of the specific decisions, since there are ca. 50–100 RA-MS decisions issued each year. The preparatory work to these decisions will also be examined, foremost the appraisal investigations that are usually made by the government agencies themselves when applying to the National Archives for permission to destroy records. These types of material are generally preserved in the archives. Another important source is the existing policy documents on appraisal (Bevarandet av nutiden 1995), as well as the preparation for a revised policy instigated in 2008. There are obvious similarities between the policy of 1995 and the appraisal theory of Theodore Schellenberg (Schellenberg 1956), not least in the distinction between the analysis of evidential value and informational value in records. However, newer appraisal theory is virtually absent in the policy.

The appraisal policy of 1995 mentions a number of formal criteria (uniqueness, validity, continuity etc.) that should be used in the analysis before deciding what records should be kept for long-time preservation. In practise, they seem to be very summarily used in actual appraisal investigations, but the further investigation will hopefully bring light into question, how public policy is implemented in practise in this case.

At the moment, the National Archives is working on a new appraisal policy that according to preliminary work may strengthen the preservation rather than disposal arguments. The evidential value of records is also to be more accentuated relatively to the informational value. There is also a wish that the heritage aspect should be accentuated in motivating preservation, the strengthening of that discourse in Swedish and European official policy is cited as the reason. (Riksarkivet 2009: 1, 10f, 14ff; Riksarkivet 2010: 3)

A selection of Swedish municipalities will be analysed in a similar manner. I will study two large municipalities (Stockholm and Uppsala), and four smaller ones in the Uppsala and Stockholm regions (probable choices: Tierp, Heby, Enköping and Upplands Väsby). My discussions with archivists imply that in especially many small municipalities archival practises has for long been at best rudimentarily entertained. The appraisal has been conducted in a spontaneous way, with no formal investigations at all. Sometimes the archives seem to have been in such a disorder that no one has dared destroy anything. There are also many examples of “unintended destruction” of e.g. magnetic tapes or old floppy discs, because of neglected archival care. My study will therefore in at least some case be an investigation of the process where ordered appraisal practises are introduced from scratch during the period.

The municipal archival decisions are also general or specific. Nowadays, the general decisions are normally in the form of records management schedules (retention schedules). There, specific types of records are deemed to be destroyed or retained. I will especially seek for examples where different archival institutions make different choices concerning certain types of records.

The municipal archives of major cities such as Stockholm and Uppsala have had a long professional tradition, even before the Archives Act and its introduction of formal municipal Archives authorities. But I will also study some cases where there has not even been any trained archivist employed by the municipality. That is still

the case at some places, and almost the rule a couple of decades ago. That means, that there is a richer source material of previous appraisal investigations in the larger municipalities, for the entire time period. (They are normally preserved as appendixes to the decision protocols of the local Archives authorities.) In some other cases, the documentation of appraisal investigations can be predicted to be much scarcer. That is not a problem for the project. On the contrary, the lack of documentation of appraisal and destruction of records is interesting in itself. In those cases, interviews with local personnel can be necessary in order to help reconstructing the actual practises.

Concerning the municipal policy documents, I will study the ones made specifically for the municipalities themselves, as well as the more general ones produced by The National Archives and The Consultation Group for Municipal Archival Issues. The latter has produced a series of handbooks (“Gallringsråd” – Appraisal Advices) with 12 volumes since 1987, concerning specific activities such as leading processes or education. It is there claimed that municipalities or county councils can use those advices for their appraisal decisions – they can choose to generally apply them. A regular appraisal investigation is then only necessary, if it is doubtful that the general advice is applicable in certain cases. I will examine these policy documents for themselves, but it is also interesting to what extent they have influenced the actual appraisal practises.

Finally, the analysis of appraisal in the archives of the private and voluntary sectors can be expected to be the less streamlined, since the context is so different. It is difficult to study the archiving process among the records creators themselves, and I will limit myself to the process when they are handed over to archival institutions. I will study the appraisal practices at four archival institutions: The Labour Movement Archives and Library (Arbetarrörelsens arkiv och bibliotek, founded in 1902), The Centre for Business History (Centrum för Näringslivshistoria, 1974), TAM-arkiv (for officials and academics organisations, 1984), and Skåne’s Archives Association (Skånes arkivförbund, 1993). The three first mentioned institutions collect archives from all over the country, while the last one is regionally based. It is well known for its numerous broader documentation projects, which transcend the borders between archives and museums.

I will study the preserved documentation from the accessions when non-public archives were transferred to the archival institutions. For example, at The Labour Movement Archives and Library, these processes are documented and retained after accessions that are considered important. Otherwise, it is possible to compare the inventory of arriving archives and what is left afterwards in the ordered archives. Additional methods may nevertheless be necessary, such as interviews. Policy and advisory documents will also be analysed, that is general rules and tips for those who wish to deposit their archives at the institutions. Such texts include many discussions on appraisal; what should be kept and what should not be sent to the institutions. An optional step in my investigation is to include such policy texts also from other archival institutions than the four ones mentioned.

For the non-public archives, a further relevant question is this: what is qualified as a potential archival record? A shorter examination of some policy documents imply that it is not unusual to translate the concept of public records into the non-public sector, which means that e.g. drafts and memos are seen as generally disposable. They tend to use a similar distinction as in the public sector, with two different terms for destroying. “Gallra” (literally “cull”) is used for public records, while “rensa” (“clear”) is directed against drafts and superfluous copies, but also such

things as paperclips, staples and plastic folders. One has also sometimes borrowed particular appraisal strategies from the public archives, such as the concept of sampling, e.g. keeping every 10th year of invoices and receipts.

RESEARCHER QUALIFICATIONS AND SKILLS

As a historian I have for long studied heritage processes, with several publications as a result. Topics analysed by me in that field include popular education and the local heritage movement (Edquist 2009a), Swedish archaeologists (Edquist 2011b, in the publication list), and regional identity (Edquist 2004; Edquist 2009b). I am a trained archivist, and from 2010 I have been a teacher in archival science at Uppsala University and Södertörn University. At the latter, I organised a course on appraisal. At the moment, I am a fixed-term senior lecturer at Södertörn University and an hourly-paid teacher at Uppsala University.

COMMENT ON THE BUDGET

Funding for salaries is needed for my work in the project, which will be 35 % in 2012, 40 % in 2013, and 75 % in 2014. My salary in 2012 will be 37 000 SEK (full-time), which rises 3 % each year. I also apply for 10 000 SEK each year for research journeys, and for books, copying, and a small computer for archival work, I need 25 000 SEK in 2012 and 10 000 SEK in 2013 and 2014. At the Department of ALM, Uppsala University, the “LKP” (costs for social security, holiday payment etc.) is 50.0 % and the charge for indirect costs is 42.2 % (which includes the costs for premises).

DISTRIBUTION OF KNOWLEDGE

The main results of the project will be published in a monograph and a number of articles where specific angles can be developed. They will respectively be sent to 1) Historisk tidskrift or Scandinavian Journal of History, 2) Arkiv, Samhälle & Forskning, and 3) Archival Science. Thereby, the scientific communities of history and archival science are represented, as well as the main arena for archival discussions in Sweden. I also intend to interact with the archival community, presenting and discussing my results, which hopefully can be of interest for contemporary and future appraisal practises.

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