1.0 Purpose and aims

This project presents a new approach to the study of welfare cities in the Nordic countries, c. 1870–1920. During this period, local politicians abandoned the traditional ideal of financial austerity in order to tackle the social problems following rapid urbanisation. We want to investigate how discursive changes paved the way for a wave of investments in public services and social welfare. Our purpose is to analyse and compare political debates in Stockholm, Copenhagen, Kristiania/Oslo and Helsinki in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

Municipal politics followed a general trend: City boards assumed responsibility for services perceived to be vital for economic development and the citizens’ wellbeing. New social groups were gradually included in the urban community: workers, women, children and even future citizens (e.g. Deland 2001; Björk 2008). The aim of the project is to identify the discursive changes triggering this development by studying the arguments and concepts used in political language. We want to map the considerations that motivated changes in the management of public services, and compare how and why these may have differed between Nordic capital cities.

Previous research has demonstrated how cities learned from each other and adopted similar strategies to face the demands from the growing urban population. The trend towards public organisation of urban services was transnational in character, and leaders of Nordic capital cities closely followed the development in other parts of the world. Contemporaries dubbed this trend of communal takeovers ‘municipal socialism’, and its merits was widely debated by politicians from different quarters. Danish historian Søren Kolstrup has argued that the social reforms first carried out at the municipal level, pioneered the development of the modern welfare state (Kolstrup 1996). Scholars studying this process have demonstrated how networks of professionals promoted the spread of new technology and administrative know-how (e.g. Hietala 1987; Rodgers 1998; Björck 2008). We want to take this approach one step further, by investigating the political arenas, to demonstrate how political discourse was revitalised by concepts and arguments that was exchanged across borders and between cities.
Furthermore, the concept of welfare cities is today widely discussed; how cities and urban communities may lead the way in reforming social and environmental policy when national governments fail. This means addressing segregation and economic inequality, as well as promoting sustainable urban environment. There is a growing amount of scholarly literature discussing the necessary changes in public policy matters (e.g. Musterd & Ostendorf 1998; Etingoff 2015; Jeffrey 2017; Caldarice 2018). However, the historical perspective is often lacking. Our study on how Nordic cities around 1900 launched reform policies to meet the social and environmental issues of the time, will make an important contribution to this discussion.

2.0 Theory, methodology and project plan

2.1 Theoretical perspectives

The project investigates the discussions and the discursive struggle in political arenas between 1870 and 1920. Local politicians in many cases set out to expand the scope of public services, and we will analyse their motives and arguments. For this purpose, we will use Janet Newman and John Clarke’s concept of ‘publicness’ (Newman & Clarke 2009). Publicness is the combination of ideas, people and practices, etc., which have been made public, comprising a process in which matters of collective concern have been made visible for the public. Newman and Clarke have identified three discursive chains that constitutes the general notion of the public. The first of these defines the political community: citizens – people – nation. The second constructs the organisation providing public services: state – municipality – civil society. The third chain addresses the commonly shared notion of publicness: political rights – legal and democratic values – the public sphere. It stresses the agency of public bodies, promoting the community over various forms of self-interest (Newman & Clarke 2009).

Exploring these discursive chains, we can understand and explain what defines and constitutes publicness, why some services were regarded as vital to the public and who had a say in discussions concerning their organisation. The theory draws on the political conflicts of the late 1900s, but we have previously demonstrated how it may be applied to earlier periods as well (Linnarsson 2017; Hallenberg 2018). Newman & Clarke’s model will make it possible to analyse the discursive framing of social reform and municipal intervention. We will study the specific conflicts as policy controversies between agents who held competing frames as true: On the one hand, politicians who clung to the ideal that municipal spending should
always be kept at an absolute minimum. On the other hand, those who advocated an expansion of the public sector for the benefit of present and future citizens. This means identifying the ‘stories’ conveyed in the political debates, centring around the discursive chains related above (Schön & Rein 1994).

The focus on publicness relates to the contemporary debate on collective social rights versus individual freedom. There is a vibrant discussion on how to make modern society socially inclusive as well as environmentally sustainable (e.g. Bauman 2011; Flahault 2011 & 2013; Fattori 2012). This project suggests that the past may hold important information on how to promote notions of the public in the face of resistance from established interest groups. While there has been substantial research on the formation of the Nordic welfare states, we still lack a comprehensive study of how municipal politics in capital cities fuelled and inspired the development of welfare services on a national scale. We argue that the discursive changes in local politics had wide ramifications for the subsequent development of political language in the Nordic countries. The so-called Nordic model has been hotly debated, but there is still a widespread notion that the Nordic states were generally successful in developing a universally inclusive model for public welfare services in the decades after World War II (Esping Andersen 1990; Stephens 1996; Pierson et. al 2014).

This study is also inspired by the ongoing turn towards transnational history and histoire croisée (Torstendahl 2009; Neusinger 2010; Saunier 2013). The politics of Nordic capital cities were by the turn of the century 1900 closely interlinked. This calls for a comparative approach, investigating how local politicians exchanged and appropriated concepts and arguments in the political struggles of the day. Therefore, we will focus on similarities as well as differences when we compare the debates on urban public services. The question of timing is equally important. Political language could change very rapidly as national debates were informed by international discussions (Ihalainen 2017). It is therefore of great matter to identify how municipal politics in the Nordic countries became part of the ongoing European or Western debate.

2.2 Research questions
The empirical studies cover both infrastructure (e.g. water, electricity, transport) and social services (e.g. care for the elderly, childcare, housing). The final cases under investigation will be decided after an initial survey of the sources. This is possible due to the standardised
character of the material, making it well suitable for comparative studies (see 2.3 below). By examining both policy areas, the project covers the economic research on infrastructure as well as historical research on welfare services. In this way, our study will be less biased by the preoccupation with system analysis that has characterised much of the previous literature on public-private relationships (see Linnarsson 2017; Andersson-Skog & Ottosson 2018). We are interested in discourses, concepts and arguments, not in technical systems. Thus, we may provide a more comprehensive picture of how practical policies were linked to perceptions about community, social inclusion and publicness.

The research questions we want to answer are:

1. What arguments for an inclusive social policy were raised in the political arenas? How did notions of individual freedom and publicness influence the political discourse on public services?
2. Which groups were included in the urban community and on what terms; who was left outside?
3. How did the discussions on public services differ between Nordic capital cities and how did they influence each other? Who became the forerunners of municipal socialism and why?

2.3 Sources, methodology and operationalisation
The main source material will consist of documents from governing political bodies; e.g. minutes and reports from the municipal boards (see references). In addition, we will also study the inquiries from various experts that formed the basis for municipal decisions: preparatory investigations, made by the municipal administration, and thereafter discussed and debated. The minutes from the municipal boards form a coherent material that gives a detailed account of the debate and the arguments wielded by the participating politicians. All of these sources are available in print, and for Stockholm and Helsinki they may to some extent be downloaded from the web. The Finnish sources are written (or available) in Swedish, hence we do not foresee any major language obstacles as we both read written Danish and Norwegian.

The official political sources will be supplemented by samples from newspaper debates, to illustrate how public opinion influenced the debates in the city boards. At the turn of the
century 1900, the circulation of the press increased considerably, and party-political newspapers were established. This manifested the press as yet another political arena, and a channel for the dissemination of political knowledge to a broadened and democratised population. Politicians and other agents used the newspapers to promote their opinions and arguments. This was a European development, and clearly recognisably in the Nordic countries (e.g. Bruhn Jensen 1997; Lundström et. al 2001; Harvard 2006). Importantly, however, we do not aim for a systematic examination of the debates in the press, instead we will follow up explicit references, found in the political debates. We thus see the newspapers as another political arena where the debate about the management of public services was performed, utilising it to broaden and expand our analysis.

The sources follow a standardised form and are therefore well suited for comparative studies (see Ihalainen 2017). However, they must be examined thoroughly and systematically in order to identify multiple interconnections between debates in different cities. Methodologically, we focus on contested concepts such as ‘justice’, ‘democracy’, ‘freedom’, ‘equality’, etc. Previous research has shown that these concepts played an important role in political discourses throughout the twentieth century (Boréus 1994; Andersson 2003; Linnarsson 2017; Hallenberg 2018).

Altogether, these sources are the most appropriate for a study of political conflict and the changing facets of debates on public services. They provide a framework, allowing us to analyse the arguments used by local politicians, and to compare the interconnections between the cities. As shown below under ‘5.0 Previous and preliminary results’ the interconnections between the cities were widespread at the time. This transfer of political solutions, knowledge and practices is one of the important themes of the project.

The empirical research is organised in four case studies, each one comprising one of the capital cities. Magnus Linnarsson will be investigating Copenhagen and Kristiania/Oslo and Mats Hallenberg will be investigating Stockholm and Helsinki. After the initial phase of establishing case studies and empirical work, the comparative analysis of the four cases will be conducted together. The sources will be processed as follows:

1. Debates and arguments in the political arenas are examined and conflicts relating to public and welfare services are identified.
2. We compare the discourses in the capital cities with each other, identify similarities and differences, and how they influenced each other.

3. We analyse the key concepts that promoted political change; and whether the development may be explained by changing perceptions of publicness.

The project consists of an equivalent comparison between the four cities, where each case study contributes a quarter of the analysis. This is important as we believe that one of the greatest scholarly contributions is the transnational comparison, and a comparative inter Nordic study on the political level is hitherto missing. In this way, we want to expand the existing knowledge about this crucial development.

3.0 Contribution to international research

The main contribution of this project will be to explain how discursive changes triggered the development of welfare cities at the turn of the century 1900, and to demonstrate how politicians in Stockholm, Copenhagen, Kristiania/Oslo and Helsinki inspired and influenced each other. We will present a new, explicitly transnational, interpretation of the early history of the Nordic Welfare model, stressing the importance of capital cities 1870–1920. The Nordic capital cities were melting pots for the ideological changes that promoted public management of public services. Knowledge about this process is important, not only for the historical understanding of the late 1800s and early 1900s, but also for the contemporary discussions on welfare cities, and how to create more sustainable and socially inclusive urban communities. More than a hundred years ago, politicians in capital cities succeeded in realising an expansive social policy in spite of severe financial constraints. We argue that the discursive mechanisms fuelling this process may hold important clues to how to reformulate public interest in the twenty-first century.

Pasi Ihalainen has recently studied the transnational character of parliamentary politics in the early years of democratisation (Ihalainen 2017). Inspired by his approach, our project will focus on the discursive interconnections between political debates in Nordic capital cities. The city boards were well aware of what happened in other cities and often discussed the management of public services from examples set by other cities. While the diffusion of knowledge through networks of specialists has been thoroughly investigated, the conceptual and discursive foundations for this process has not yet been the object for a comparative study (c.f. Hietala 1987; Björck 2008). The project ‘Alternative Paths to the Welfare City’,
therefore, breaks new ground by i.) focusing on municipal political discourses and practices; ii.) analysing capital cities in a period predating the construction of national welfare systems; iii.) stressing the example of city boards promoting public and welfare services.

We argue that politics matter and that political practice should be analysed as a transnational phenomenon. In order to understand changing politics, it is of vital importance to study the dynamics of local politicians following or rejecting the example of other capital cities (c.f. Lundberg n.d.).

4.0 Survey of the field

In the nineteenth century, Europe experienced a renaissance for the idea of the city as a politically autonomous community. During this period, the Nordic countries gradually reformed municipal self-government, a development that coincided with a rapid population growth and liberalisation of trade and commerce. In the capital cities, municipal boards gained control over local affairs (e.g. Nilsson & Forsell 2013; Dørum 2016). International research has emphasised the municipalities’ crucial role in creating a stronger public sector. Triggered by the social problems created by rapid urbanisation, local politicians had to engage in improving the conditions for the working poor. Martin Daunton and other British historians have demonstrated how political leaders started regulating prices on utility goods as gas, coal and energy. Such politics often paved the way for communal takeovers of private businesses (Millward & Ward 1993; Daunton 2001; Marquand 2004; Clifton, Lanthier, & Schröter, 2011).

The industrial revolution sparked further demands for new infrastructure and extended public services (Castells 1983; Offer 2003). By the turn of the century 1900, German cities led the way in creating publicly managed municipal services for all citizens. German specialists dominated international networks for city planning, and their cities came to serve as role models for municipal intervention (Krabbe 1979; Albers 1997).

The trend that city boards decided to invest in the welfare of its less-fortunate citizens was the same throughout Western Europe. International congresses, study tours and professional journals helped spreading the knowledge of ‘municipal socialism’, the movement where local governments promoted social reform and public municipal services (Hietala 1987; Kühl 2001; Hård & Stippak 2008). In the United States, this development created severe tensions between
those advocating publicly organised municipal services and those who maintained that such operations were better performed by private entrepreneurs (Rodgers 1998; Heim 2015).

Importantly, municipal boards and local politicians propelled a movement soon to be followed by central governments. In the Nordic countries, ‘the social question’ had gained a prominent position in local politics by 1900, which prompted politicians to abandon traditional austerity in favour of investing in public services. Municipal socialism thus helped breaking new ground for the welfare states to follow (Kolstrup 1996; Deland 2001; Sheiban 2002).

Previous research has demonstrated how the period around 1900 marked a shift in the relation between political bodies and private enterprise, escalating extensive investments in infrastructure systems such as sanitation, public transport and electrification (e.g. Millward 2005; Högselius, Kaijser & van der Vleuten 2016). In general terms, this has been described as the end of classic laissez-faire capitalism and the dawn of an era where state and communal intervention into private business operations became the order of the day, to protect the common interest of the citizens; what Lars Magnusson has called ‘the visible hand’ of the state (Magnusson 2009). Historians have used the concept of ‘path dependency’ to explain this development, and although the development in the Nordic countries followed different paths, the overall development showed similar traits. This demonstrates that different institutional settings can provide similar results.

Municipal socialism came to the fore in Northern Europe during the 1890s and blossomed in the period leading up to World War I (Sheldrake 1989; Waldemarson & Östberg 2002). We are interested in the discursive roots of this process, and will therefore study the early debates on public services in Nordic capital cities and compare them to each other. By studying this development in detail, and making a transnational comparison, we may be able to identify the discursive changes that led to this decisive shift in local politics.

The fact that the character of municipal politics changed profoundly due to the introduction of universal suffrage and proportional voting is important for this study. By the turn of the century 1900, traditional elites still dominated local politics although new groups of urban professionals were gaining influence. In the following decades, liberals and social democrats gradually gained a foothold in the city boards, and this led to political conflicts with the
conservative members. In the cases of Oslo and Stockholm this resulted in temporary standstills which hampered organisational reforms (Langholm & Kjeldstadli 1990; Waldemarson & Östberg 2002). However, much of the expansion of public services in Stockholm started in the late nineteenth century when conservative elites still held sway over municipal politics (Hallenberg 2018). The discursive mechanisms promoting the development of urban public services obviously had an impact on democratisation and social inclusion. On the other hand, we must also consider the role of public opinion on the framing of municipal politics. The political press had a vital part to play in pressuring political leaders to act on behalf of various interest groups (Harvard 2006; Edoff 2016).

The historic trajectory demonstrates similarities as well as differences between Nordic capital cities (e.g. Jensen 1982; Smidt & Jensen 1982; Langholm & Myhre 1990; Nilsson 2000; Bell & Hietala 2002). By 1900, many local politicians were arguing for municipal control over public services. Modernisation thus promoted greater public responsibility for the wellbeing of the individual (Langholm & Kjeldstadli 1990; Kolstrup 1996; Forsell 2003; Toftgaard 2008; Niemi 2016). However, this fundamental development of modern society is still an under-researched field by historians. Rolf Torstendahl has coined the term ‘organised capitalism’ to describe how political leaders engaged in regulating and circumscribing the power of large business companies (Torstendahl 1984; Torstendahl & Nybom 1989). While Torstendahl sees this as a distinct phase in economic development, we instead want to focus on the discursive mechanisms making this process possible.

In comparative research there has been a strong focus on the Nordic welfare states of the twentieth century (e.g. Esping-Andersen 1990; Åmark & Palme 1999; Christiansen et al 2006; Edling 2019). This research, however, has often focused on national institutions, and seldom address welfare reforms on the municipal level (see Lehto 2000). The temporal focus has also been on the post-war period, thus overlooking the important changes in conjunction to the second industrialisation (Magnusson 2009). We want to highlight the importance of the early formative period, and on the interconnections between capital cities as an alternative path to the modern welfare society.

Drawing on the discussion above, this project will contribute to a fuller understanding and analysis of the development of welfare cities in the Nordic countries, and present an explanation on how discursive changes fuelled new investments in public services and social
welfare. We will do this by focusing on local political arenas – city boards and municipal committees. We seek to explain how and why transnational interconnections and discursive movements triggered the development of welfare cities. During the research period (1870–1920) Nordic capital cities successively acquired the instruments and the techniques to implement their own policies. This included for example reformed tax systems in both Denmark and Sweden, making it possible for city boards to expand their political ambitions on welfare and public services.

5.0 Previous and preliminary results

Both Magnus Linnarsson and Mats Hallenberg have previously studied political conflicts and the organisation of public services in Sweden (Linnarsson 2017; Hallenberg 2018). In our previous work we have demonstrated how a consensus was formed in the Swedish Parliament and the Stockholm City Council in the late nineteenth century, according to which an expanded public organisation would guarantee equal access to public services (Hallenberg & Linnarsson 2017). However, it is unclear how this ideological shift took shape when it comes to practical politics. It was the large cities that first faced the demands for expanded public services, thus, the decision-making of the city boards must be studied in more detail than has hitherto been done. Below we present some preliminary results that may further demonstrate the potential of the proposed project, and strengthen the feasibility of its method.

The arrival of electricity, the second industrial revolution, brought the problem of private enterprise versus public organisation to the fore. Electricity was introduced in Nordic capital cities by private initiative, but the problem of coordinating different networks sparked the demands for municipal intervention. In Stockholm, engineer John Luth took inspiration from his travels in the United States and Great Britain. He argued that the city ought to follow the American example and invest in a central power plant, rather than allowing for several privately financed power stations (Stockholms Stadsfullmäktiges tryckta handlingar, Stockholm 1886, Bihang 68). The argument was picked up by the municipal Gas board, who insisted that a central power plant was necessary to secure sufficient electric power for the communal street lightning. The Gas board claimed that German cities such as Berlin, Hamburg and Leipzig had suffered negative consequences when trying to secure the electric supply from a number of small private stations (Stockholms Stadsfullmäktiges tryckta handlingar, Stockholm 1889, Utlåtande 60). The Stockholm city council eventually decided to
establish a public central power station in the middle of the city, ‘Brunkebergsverket’, who started operating in 1892.

In contrast, The Oslo city council maintained a cautious, conservative approach towards public investment in electric power. When the council in 1903 received an offer of taking over the operation of a private power plant in Glomma, proponents of the deal argued that communal investment was necessary in order to secure the city’s future need for electric power. However, the city council decided to decline the offer for fear of burdening the taxpayers with unnecessary costs. Instead, the city of Oslo continued to buy electricity from the Glomma company until finally taking over of the power plant in 1929 (Langholm & Kjeldstadli 1990).

In 1904, the city council of Helsinki debated the supply of electricity to the city. The question was discussed since the street lightning was to be modernised; transferred from old kerosene powered lights, to new electrified ones. The introduction of electricity made possible the modernisation and extension of the lights in the city, and the city council discussed how to best organise this extended public service. The main question was about the electric power plant. In 1904, it was owned and driven by a private company and the city leadership debated whether the city should continue to buy electricity from the private company, or if the city itself should build and administer a power plant. In this discussion, the comparisons with other Nordic cities was important and the committee that prepared the question made several comparisons (Helsingfors Stadsfullmäktiges tryckta handlingar, Helsinki, 1904, No. 7).

Hence, it is possible to follow the political debates on electricity through the documents of the governing political bodies. In these examples, the comparisons with other Nordic cities is extremely illuminating. Inspired by examples from other capital cities, the city board of both Stockholm and Helsinki engaged directly in providing modern municipal services to a wider group of citizens, thus promoting social inclusion as well as the common good. The examples emphasise two important points made by this project: that politics matter and that policy decisions must be analysed as components in a transnational process.

6.0 Project organisation, time plan and research output
The project plan covers research for three years and the work will be shared equally by the two project members, Magnus Linnarsson will serve as project leader (see the comments on
the budget). Mats Hallenberg is professor of History at Stockholm University and Linnarsson is associate professor at the same department. Together we have vast experience working on political history and our previous track record proves our ability to cooperate. Hallenberg’s recently published book on political conflicts over public-private issues in Stockholm also demonstrates the potential of focusing on capital cities (see attached lists of publications).

The results of the project will be published in one co-authored monograph. The research has obvious international relevance, and the results will appeal to international scholars of history and social science. The decision to write a joint monograph is determined by the design of the project. The analysis of the four cities are linked to each other, and to fully interpret and understand the development, the analysis has to be presented together. Apart from the joint monograph, we plan to publish two refereed journal articles, both in OA. Furthermore, the results will be presented at one international and one national conference. The preliminary planning also includes the organising of a workshop, together with invited experts on the field of research (see below 7.0).

The results will also be communicated outside the scientific community. We strive to spread our research to society at large and at present, two collaborations are established. In Sweden, we will present the project at the Stockholm City Archives where dr. Mats Hayen is our contact. Together with Hayen, the Department of History in Stockholm has a long-term collaboration on the dissemination of research results in more popular form. Both Hallenberg and Linnarsson have previously held popular science lectures at the archive. In Denmark we work together with dr. Andreas Marklund, head of research at Enigma, Museum of Communication in Copenhagen. The plan is to present the project and the results at the museum. It is our goal that similar arrangements can be made in Norway and in Finland.

7.0 International and national collaboration

The project ‘Alternative Paths to the Welfare City’ will be hosted by the Department of History at Stockholm University. This is a particularly well-chosen milieu, considering that the Institute of Urban History is situated at the department. The director of the institute, professor Heiko Droste, will be an important partner for the project, as well as the scholarly networks associated to the institute.
Furthermore, we have put together an international group of historians and scholars that will serve as international references, together with whom we will cooperate and continually discuss the project, organise seminars and at least one workshop with invited scholars. This group consist of: dr. Mikkel Thelle, director for the Danish Institute of Urban History in Aarhus, dr. Hanne Thomsen, director for the National Gas Museum in Denmark, dr. Andreas Marklund, head of research at Enigma, Museum of Communication in Copenhagen, Knut Dørum, professor of history at the University of Agder in Norway, Marko Lamberg, professor of history at the University of Tampere and Petri Karonen, professor of history at the University of Jyväskylä.

Lastly, we have presented parts of this application at the conference of the European Association for Urban History in Rome in the summer of 2018, connecting to other scholars of social and urban history. We will also arrange a session at the conference in Antwerp in 2020, titled: ‘Welfare cities in motion: Urban community, public services and the common good, c. 1800–2000’.
8.0 References

8.1 Sources from governing political bodies
As described in the project plan, the main source material for the project will be the
documents from governing political bodies in the Nordic capital cities; e.g. minutes from the
municipal boards. All sources are available in print, and for Stockholm and Helsinki some of
them may be downloaded from the web.

Copenhagen
*Københavns Borgerrepræsentanters forhandlinger*, printed documents, including minutes
from the city board, from 1840. Index available at the city archive in Copenhagen, see

Helsinki
*Helsingfors Stad fullmäktiges tryckta handlingar*, printed documents, including minutes
from the city board, from 1875. The political sources for Helsinki are mostly printed in Swedish.
Some of the sources are digitised and available online, see
https://www.hel.fi/static/tieke/digitoidut_asiakirjat/index.html Unpublished material are
stored at the city archive in Helsinki, see https://www.hel.fi/helsinki/fi/kaupunki-ja-
hallinto/tietoa-helsingista/kaupunginarkiston-palvelut/.

Oslo (Kristiania –1924)
*Aktstykker for Oslo kommune og Aker herred*: printed documents, including minutes from the
city board, from 1870. Digitised index for the period 1837–1980: *Generalregister for Bystyret
og Herredstyret*. See https://www.oslo.kommune.no/OBA/faktaark/f_aktstykkene.asp

Stockholm
*Stockholms stadsfullmäktige: protokoll jämte yttranden*, printed documents, including minutes
from the cityboard, from 1863. The sources for Stockholm are available online at
http://digitalastadsarkivet.stockholm.se/Kommuntryck/Kommuntryck.aspx

8.2 Newspapers
Newspapers from the period 1870–1920 are generally well preserved in all of the four
countries. To a large extent, the material is digitised and, in some cases, accessible via the
Internet. This provides excellent opportunities for carrying out the specific analyses of the
press that have been discussed in the project plan. The collections of newspapers are held by
the national libraries and listed in special databases.

The Royal Danish Library:
http://www2.statsbiblioteket.dk/mediestream/

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https://tidningar.kb.se

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