

Monday meeting | Department of Geological Sciences

Monday IGV notes by Magnus Mörrth, March 25, 2024

1. The section board last week

One thing that was interesting was the report of natural science educations in Sweden in general. The drawback of the report is that contains very little about geology and earth science educations. The thing that draw attention from me was education in marine sciences and comparing GU and SU. Marine research is strong at SU, and it can even be argued that SU is stronger than GU if you look at the number of marine active researchers and the number of publications. Despite that, the general opinion is that GU is the "marine university" and the university you should choose if you want a marine education.

A comparison shows that if you are a student interested in the marine sciences, who wishes for a future outside the academy where he works with marine issues, then GU's educational offer is probably perceived as more useful. SU probably has an equal amount of competence about society's management processes, directives, and policy, but it is not clearly sorted into specific courses. Even if a potential student wants to study in the marine area without thoughts about future professional life, it can be difficult to know what to choose. It requires more of a potential student to sort a general ocean interest into a specific bachelor's program at SU than at GU.

Whether there is an interest within the faculty to work towards more/some integrated coherent bachelor's programs needs to be determined in broad dialogue with several participating departments.

Another interesting fact is that most students in geosciences are at Stockholm University, both at first level and advanced level. The number of students has however fluctuated relatively much at Stockholm University in the period 2007–2022.

2. On March 22, 2024, it was **50 years since the first Helsinki Convention was signed**, which led to the formation of the Helsinki Commission, HELCOM.

In 2007, the parties in HELCOM adopted the Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) – a strategic program of measures and efforts to achieve a good environmental status in the sea, initially until the year 2021. At the time of the preparation of the BSAP, the Swedish project MARE, which was led by Fredrik Wulff at Stockholm University, gave the tools required to support a sophisticated evaluation of the maximum input of nutrients that could be allowed to the Baltic Sea to meet the eutrophication targets. This was truly ground-breaking to quantify on a scientific basis how much nutrient supply needed to be reduced and how much each country should contribute with reductions.

3. There was a **debate article in Dagens Nyheter** some days ago which is very interesting. It is written by Bo Rothstein who is a political scientist and is addressing academic freedom. I have below given you a summary of the article (in Swedish and English), you can find the whole article on this link (in Swedish), <https://www.dn.se/debatt/universitet-ska-inte-styras-som-lokala-kennelklubben/>

Debatten om den akademiska friheten i Sverige har blivit intensiv och tar upp ämnen som tystnadskultur och bristen på utrymme för kritiska röster. Trots detta har det grundläggande syftet med universitetet hamnat i skuggan: Varför finns universitet överhuvudtaget? Seniorprofessorn Bo Rothstein ifrågasätter varför vi har universitet när företag och organisationer också kan bedriva forskning. Han påpekar att universitet har en unik roll när det gäller att skapa kunskap och välstånd. Problemet verkar vara att många inom akademien har glömt vad som skiljer universitetet från andra organisationer. För att adressera detta föreslår Rothstein en ökad medvetenhet om universitetets idé och principer, inklusive en särskild utbildning om den akademiska friheten för unga forskare. Han betonar vikten av att återupprätta och förstärka dessa principer för att säkerställa att universitetet kan fortsätta att vara en plats för fri och oberoende forskning. Han ifrågasätter också varför universitetet inte längre verkar fokusera på detta grundläggande syfte och

istället blandar samman sin roll med andra typer av organisationer. Rothstein betonar att universitetet har en unik funktion i samhället genom att vara en plats för vetenskaplig autonomi och att detta bör upprätthållas och förstärkas för att säkerställa dess fortsatta relevans och bidrag till samhället.

Skräckexempel enligt Rothstein på hur forskningen inte är fri:

1. Vid Umeå universitet förefaller det ha etablerats en princip att bara personer med samisk bakgrund får forska och undervisa om den samiska kulturen. Detta kan ses som en begränsning av den akademiska friheten genom att det begränsar vilka som har tillgång till att utforska och undervisa om ett specifikt ämne baserat på deras etniska bakgrund.
2. Vid Linnéuniversitetet hävdar ledningen att det är helt i sin ordning att föreskriva vilka teorier som ska gälla i forskningen när man ledigförklarar professorstjänster. Detta kan ses som en form av politisk eller ideologisk inblandning som begränsar den akademiska friheten genom att styra forskningsagendan och begränsa forskarnas intellektuella frihet.

The debate about academic freedom in Sweden has become intense and addresses topics such as the culture of silence and the lack of space for critical voices. Despite this, the fundamental purpose of the university has fallen into the shadows: Why do universities exist at all? Senior professor Bo Rothstein questions why we have universities when companies and organizations can also conduct research. He points out that universities have a unique role when it comes to creating knowledge and wealth. The problem seems to be that many in academia have forgotten what differentiates the university from other organizations. To address this, Rothstein suggests an increased awareness of the idea and principles of the university, including a special training on academic freedom for young researchers. He emphasizes the importance of re-establishing and reinforcing these principles to ensure that the university can continue to be a place of free and independent research. He questions why the university no longer seems to focus on this fundamental purpose and instead conflates its role with other types of organizations. Rothstein emphasizes that the university has a unique function in society by being a place of scholarly autonomy and that this should be maintained and strengthened to ensure its continued relevance and contribution to society.

Horror examples according to Rothstein of how research is not free:

1. At Umeå University, it seems that a principle has been established that only people with a Sami background may research and teach about the Sami culture. This can be seen as a limitation of academic freedom in that it limits who has access to research and teach a specific subject based on their ethnic background.
2. At the Linnaeus University, the management claims that it is completely fine prescribe which theories should apply in research when declaring vacant professorships. This can be seen as a form of political or ideological interference that limits academic freedom by directing the research agenda and restricting the intellectual freedom of researchers.

4. Tarfala board

The faculty board approves the proposal from the vice-chancellor to propose to the rector to appoint professors Carl Gotthard, Department of Zoology, and Catarina Rydin, Department of Ecology, Environment and Botany, as representatives of the Biology section, as well as professor Jerker Jarsjö, Department of Natural Geography, and university lecturer Malin Kylander, Department for geological sciences, as representatives of the Section for Earth and Environmental Sciences. Researcher Karin Norén, Department of Zoology, is proposed as group deputy.

The chairman of the board is the vice-chairman of the Section for Earth and Environmental Sciences, which follows TRS's statutes (appendix 13).

5. During **the head of university's meetings** this spring, the theme has been responsible internationalization. The concept is coming from a joint report that LU, KI, KTH and STINT did in 2018. The report considered both ethical and safety perspectives but now the safety perspectives are in focus. The problem I have with it that it is aimed at three countries and that we cannot get safety clearances done for anyone which is the case for the moment. I do not think is our job to take the safety into account as this may lead to self-censorship and to exclude candidates because they come from some designated countries. This is not our work duty. If this is going to happen it must be through the channels of the security policy and safety clearances.
6. Remember to do a **risk assessment of all laboratory and field work**. If you are taking any chemicals in the field this must be risk assessed, contact SEKA miljöteknik to get the help needed to complete such an assessment.

The board decided recently that IGV will give full cost coverage for train journeys to destinations further than 700 km, including the extra hotel nights it may entail and that a ceiling amount of SEK 100,000 be set for the entire department in 2024.

7. Now it is a new year, and you have to **report secondary employment**, go to, <https://hr.su.se/primula/> and report your status. Today six people have reported this including me.