



Study of cultureproject in Stockholm 2002-09-30 – 2002-09-04  
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# **Barnängens Världsbibliotek**

## **Two-way communication**



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## 1. Background/opening

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This report is about Barnängens Världsbibliotek in Stockholm where I have done my internship. In the Kulturverstan<sup>1</sup> four periods of on-the-job experience are included. The aim with LIA III is to study the management of culture projects with emphasis on an international perspective. I have chosen as my field of study to focus on communication and dialogue. In the society of today there is an enormous flow of information that moves over time and space. However, the flow of information is still to often just one-way. Therefore the activity of Barnängens världsbiobliotek is unique and stands for a new approach in the global society. The library is based on the idea to gather translated books and materials from Latin America, Africa and Asia. Communication and dialogue is also fundamental in projects. Barnängens världsbibliotek is situated in Stockholm, in the Solidaritetsrörelsens Hus. The library is both a library for the neighborhood and a library specializing in third world issues. The focus is set on international questions specifically concerning the areas of foreign aid-, solidarity-, peace-, and environment areas. Information, communication and dialogue are required in the democratic process, in the way of public rooms for opinions and giving opportunity for critical thinking.

Libraries are important tools in the democratic process by in the way that they create space for public rooms for opinions. Libraries can help encourage critical thinking by letting those not in power air their opinions, aln also give people the opportunity to take part of information about the society and the world around them. Therefore I find libraries very interesting, and believe they are an important part of society.

## 2. Main question

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I have concentrated on communication, which is fundamental for all projects to succeed. How does the information and communication in the Barnängens världsbibliotek differ from that of other libraries?

## 3. Method

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I have during one week in September taken part of the activity of Barnängens Världsbibliotek. I have done a small pilot study of developing a better internal communication system for the solidaritetsrörelsen Hus. I have interviewed persons from the associations in the building and from the library. I have written a report for the Barnängens världsbibliotek. I have also taken part in the ordinary activities of the library.

## 4. Conceptions

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Dialogue: conversation between two persons.

Information: (*informatio*, *informo*: educate) enlight or notice.

Communication: (*communicatio*, mutual interchange). Transfer of information between humans, animals, plants or apparatus.

## 5. Solidaritetrörelsens Hus

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Solidaritetsrörelsens Hus is situated in Stockholm in the area of Sofia/Katarina. Today the building is used as locals for politically neutral, non -religious and non -commercial associations within the areas of foreign aid, peace, environment and solidarity. The associations, that today number around 35, are organized in an economical association, Solidaritetsrörelsens Hus Ekonomiska Förening (SHEF). The building was rented from the City of Stockholm between the years 1982 and 1996, but since 1997 its proper owner is SHEF. Solidaritetsrörelsens Hus, like the other buildings in the area, is a historical monument. Solidarietsrörelsens Hus is a vivid and important centre for solidarity work and molding of public opinion in questions about the world around.

## 6. Barnängens världsbibliotek

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In the middle of 1980 some of the associations gathered books and materials to a common collection. The idea was to have this embryo for a library at their disposal and also for the public. The library was opened in 1987. Over the years the library has grown and today there are two employees working there. The library is a common resource for the Solidaritetsrörelsens Hus and is used by the associations as a reference library, for exposure of information materials, for outgoing programs and as a contact surface between the visitors in the house and the associations. Barnängens Världsbibliotek is also a library for the public, students, classes and individuals. The library has, since 1999, with economic aid from Katarina-Sofia civic administration, been able to work as a local-library. Which has been of major importance since the public library of Stockholm does not have a branch on Östra Södermalm<sup>2</sup>.

The library is specialized on the third world focusing on north/south questions and contains materials about solidarity, foreign aid and development questions, globalization, peace- and environmental politics, non-governmental organizations, human rights, alternative solutions, cultural meetings and so on. One of the ambitions for the library is to have a complete collection of fiction from the so-called third world. The library is focused on materials from or about Latin America, Asia or Africa. Since 2000 the Swedish organization Sida has granted economical funds for an information united action project, *globalt infocenter*, lasting three years. The aim for this project was to contribute to that information about foreign aid, development, environment, cultural meetings, peace and equality reaches out more efficiently. The aim is to function as an information- and cultural centre around questions for development and developing countries.

## 7. Analysis

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In the society of today there is an enormous flow of information that moves over time and space. The processes of transnationalization and informalization raise fundamental questions for all societies. The questions relate to a number of basic issues: cultural domination and subordination, the control of communications and cultural production. The information is still to often one-way communicated. Mauricio Rojas says in his book "I ensamhetens labyrint" that we are marked by the social reformism of the post-war period. He says that our attitude to the world, especially to the poor part, is marked by a strong morality<sup>3</sup>. Since the colonization the western part of the world has seen themselves as the selected ones to inform the unenlightened. This is still going on and most of the literature is written from a western or Eurocentric perspective. Therefore the activity of Barnängens världsbibliotek is unique and stands for a new approach in the global society. One of the ambitions for the library is to have a complete collection for translated into Swedish fictions from the so-called third world: Asia, Latin America and Africa. This is more than a centre for just information. Out of this, an attempt for a cross-cultural communication and dialogue arise. A good dialogue provides honesty, mutuality and respect between the parties concerned, this is the essence of the dialogue.<sup>4</sup> In the globalization a two-way communication must be favored. The globalization and the increasing international dependancy creates its own counter-force and political frustrations and longing for a unity, connection and local identity.<sup>5</sup> Libraries are important centers for information. But in the cross-cultural societies of today there are many different needs. The public library of Stockholm has an international department with books on the original languages. What the Barnängens världsbibliotek does is to gather materials from the third world and try to reach out with this information. From this a two-way communication arise and a start for a dialogue between the different parts. The library differs from other libraries by its effort to reach out with the information and the effort to the non-Eurocentric literature. This library is based on an idea, a conception about the world and the need of change. Information, communication and dialogue are fundamental in the democratization process. Democratization requires public rooms for opinions and information to be spread and for people to acquire knowledge. This is a strategy for aid organizations like Sida and Plan who supply reading materials in other countries. Books, not only schoolbooks, are important for children as inspiration and help them to develop a language. Often it is said that countries like in Africa have an oral tradition that

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<sup>2</sup> Ett bibliotek vänt mot syd, en utvärdering av projektet "globalt infocenter" I Solidaritetshuset, Stockholm by Jan Ristard 2002

<sup>3</sup> citation from Dialog-biståndets nav, Folke Albinson s 29

<sup>4</sup> Dialog-biståndets nav, Folke Albinson s 15

replace the literal reading, but the urbanization leads to that the old structure is broken down and the only thing that replace the oral tradition is soap operas on the television.<sup>6</sup> To be able to take part of what is happening in the society and the world around information is fundamental. Information is necessary for a communication and a dialogue to exist.

**Projects.** In all projects communication is very important. A project runs from one point in time, when an initiative has been taken and accepted, to another, when the achievement is completed. A successful project is one that has led to something which is of joy and profit for the involved and continues to be. For this, four phases are required: first of all create a climate then preparation, realization and last but not least follow-up. In all these phase communication between the involved is important in order to succeed. Folke Albinson mentions in his book five criterion of methodology in dialogue for assistance. These criteria can also be said about project management. Flexibility, Composed participation, Anchoring, Change competence and development with a human face<sup>7</sup>. A project must be well anchored in the organization, the information and communication here must be clear. But before good communication can be established, there has to be a proper base for it. For the project leader, much is about a well functioning communication between the persons involved. In projects functioning communication is fundamental both for the people who are involved to be able to work together, and for the project leader to be able to manage and organize the project. Often projects do not continue when the project leader leaves the project. It is therefore important for the initiator to inform all the involved. Also here a two-way communication is required, a dialogue between the persons involved.

## **8. Conclusions**

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In the globalized society and world, information still often moves one way. The ambition for the library is to gather books from the third world. This is more than a centre for just information. Out of this, an attempt for a cross-cultural communication and dialogue arise. A good dialouge promotes honesty, mutuality and respect between the parties concerned, this is the essence of the dialogue. In the globalization a two-way communication, a dialogue, must be favored in order to move away from the old structures. Also in projects, where communication is fundamental for success, there must be two-way communication, as a dialogue between the persons involved.

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<sup>6</sup> Barnens framtid, Plan, nummer 3:02

<sup>7</sup> Dialog-biståndes nav, Folke Albinson s 70

## 9. Contacts

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### Books:

Folke Albinson – Dialog – biståndets nav  
Lennart Wohlgemuth – Bistånd på utvecklingens villkor  
Arbetsmarknadsdepartementet – att främja goda etniska relationer  
Geoffery Reeves – communications and the third world