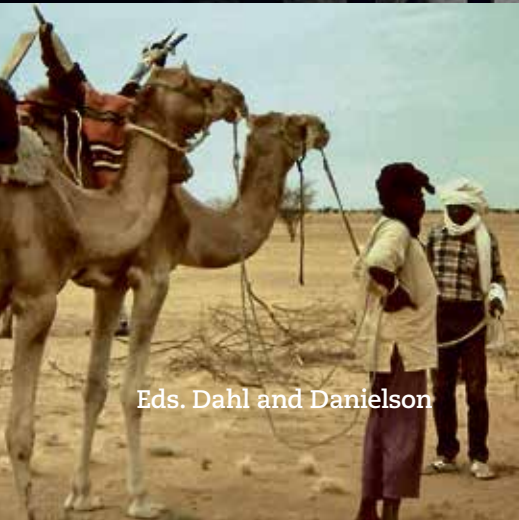




Faculty of Social Sciences Stockholm University 1964 – 2014



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Centre for Social Research on Alcohol and Drugs

Jenny Cisneros Örnberg, Börje Olsson and Robin Room

SWEDEN HAS A long history of active alcohol policy actions, and the alcohol question has often been on top of the political agenda. Already in the 1800s, a strong and influential temperance movement was formed. The first half of the 20th century was first and foremost characterized by the so-called Bratt system. This was a cohesive system of alcohol policy, devised by the physician Ivan Bratt with the aim of reducing alcohol consumption and harms. In many respects, the approach to alcohol during this time rested on a clear moral basis. The Bratt system can be viewed as an alternative to alcohol prohibition, which at that time had been introduced in many other countries. Thus, when the Swedish people considered a total ban on alcohol in an advisory referendum in 1922, with the Bratt system already in place, the idea of a prohibition was dismissed, although only by a small majority.

After the end of World War II, there was a rapid modernization of Swedish society, which made alcohol rationing (the ration book) seem to

be an odd and remarkable policy feature. Along with the temperance movement's criticism of the fact that the rationing system had legalized alcohol consumption, this contributed to the abolition of the rationing system (Bruun & Fränberg 1985).

In order to combat alcohol problems, it became necessary to find other measures. Alcohol prices rose relatively sharply through regular increases in alcohol taxes. Information about the harmful effects of alcohol was another policy measure that was initially thought to be effective. During the 1960s, alcohol research started to play a major role in alcohol policy. Several researchers were involved, for example, in the alcohol policy committee that published its reports in 1974. One important conclusion in its final report was that a successful alcohol policy must be based on a constantly updated knowledge base of a high scientific standard. The committee stated that the long-term task of alcohol research is to obtain results that



Payment day. Classic political poster supporting a YES! in the Swedish alcohol prohibition referendum in 1922. (from Wikipedia)

show how alcohol problems can be reduced (SOU 1974:93). Furthermore, already 40 years ago the committee noted that alcohol research was dominated by the medical disciplines. The medical knowledge base was considered to be relatively good. It was further concluded that medical alcohol research conducted internationally was also applicable in Sweden. In contrast, social conditions were often judged to

be specific to Sweden, and it was therefore very important to strengthen Swedish social alcohol research (ibid.). Even so, no comprehensive measures were taken to strengthen social alcohol research. Some specific but fragmented reinforcements were made, including a new chair as professor of sociological alcohol research at Stockholm University's Department of Sociology with the Finnish alcohol researcher Kettil Bruun as first holder.

20 years later it was once again time for a governmental alcohol policy committee to consider the role of alcohol research (SOU 1994:24). The main reason to re-examine alcohol research at that time was the impending entry into the EU. The alcohol policy model that had been designed during the 1970s and 1980s rested largely on social science and on epidemiological research that led to the formulation of the so-called "total consumption model," which argued that, in the absence of measures like the individual ration-book, heavy drinking would only be controlled by keeping down the volume of drinking in the whole population. This in turn motivated a universal and generally restrictive preventive alcohol policy, mainly based on limiting availability through state monopolies, high prices, and disallowing any private profit motive (the 'disinterest principle'). The impending EU accession worried Swedish politicians, not least because several key parts of the alcohol policy

that rested on the total consumption model were threatened. Alcohol research was highlighted as an important instrument, both to show that the Swedish restrictive alcohol policy was effective, but also in order to find what were called compensatory alcohol policy measures. It was envisioned that some important elements of the Swedish alcohol policy model could not be defended in the context of the EU single market (such as the monopolies of production, export, import and wholesale), and that it was therefore necessary to formulate new measures compatible with EU requirements.

The future of alcohol research was considered so important that, in addition to the alcohol policy committee, a special alcohol research investigation was conducted and its proposal submitted in 1995, the same year that Sweden joined the European Union (Alkoholforskningsutredningen 1995). On the basis of the investigation's proposals, The Centre for Social Research on Alcohol and Drugs (SoRAD) was formally established in 1997 as an interdisciplinary research centre within the Faculty of Social Sciences at Stockholm University. SoRAD became active in the spring of 1999, when professor Robin Room took up his position as its first director.

The Centre was thus set up following the recommendation of the alcohol research investigation. Already prior to this, Sweden



“Crayfish demand such beverages!” Poster supporting a forceful NO! in the 1922 referendum. (Albert Engström, from Wikipedia)

had conducted a substantial amount of social research on alcohol, but it was decentralized and sporadic with no career possibilities and increasingly in the shadow of biomedical research. The 1995 report pointed out the need to strengthen and coordinate efforts in social research related to alcohol with a national institute for social research, similar to those in Norway and Finland. The establishment of

SoRAD as a national centre not only marked the political administration's emphasis on scientific, evidence-based policies, but demonstrated simultaneously the view that credible research is best performed by independent scientific bodies. The different committees and investigations did not consider research on illicit drugs; however, when SoRAD was established they were included as a part of its tasks.

Apart from Robin Room, the first staff of SoRAD emanated from the Department of Sociology, with Professor Eckart Köhlhorn, and from the Department of Criminology, with Dr Börje Olsson, later a professor, and after Room's retirement, SoRAD's director. The Department was able to benefit from the large networks of these three people in the recruitment of researchers. SoRAD started out with only two professors, two researchers, two research assistants and two visiting researchers, but it soon grew. In 2005, there were four full-time professors (Köhlhorn, Olsson, Room and Romelsjö), one part-time visiting professor (Segraeus), eight researchers and 20 research assistants, of whom nine were PhD students. During these first years, SoRAD built up its capacities and gained a reputation in Sweden as a national research centre. It became involved in several comparative projects and established international collaborations.

The aims of the Centre, as formulated during the very first years, were: to stimulate and con-

duct social science research on alcohol and illicit drugs, including improving methods, increasing theoretical understanding and enhancing links to policy; to provide a nexus for interdisciplinary research training, research networks and collaborative studies in Sweden; and to serve as an interdisciplinary focal point in Sweden for collaboration on comparative and international projects.

While SoRAD's initial emphasis was on alcohol, reflecting the political background of its founding in the wake of the Alcohol Research Investigation and the fact that alcohol is a much bigger question, drugs have periodically taken a substantial share of research interests. The ups and downs have not only been caused by the interest of the researchers; in 2002, the Swedish Government set up its own drug coordinator office, and with this also came funding for drug-related research projects. The office was dissolved in 2008. From 2001 to 2005, the Centre also carried out studies on gambling, starting with an evaluation of the first Swedish state-owned casinos. From the beginning, the Centre was engaged in both qualitative and quantitative research that focused upon diverse topics, such as, 'Alcohol and drug use in youth cultures and subcultures,' 'Adult population use patterns and trends,' 'The social response to alcohol and drug problems,' 'Prevention and policy impact research' and 'Gambling problem studies.' Several of these projects were international and comparative.

Financially, SoRAD initially had two main pillars of funding support. The Swedish Council for Working Life and Social Research (FAS) gave core funding to last for 8 years, but did not play a major role in the development of the research programme. Secondly, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health funded several long-term projects covering: alcohol and drug use patterns; perceptions of drinking and intoxication and prevention of problems among youth and young adults; surveys on drinking and drinking problems in the general population; and a study of the social ecology of the treatment system as a whole. This was accomplished by examining who came to treatment under what circumstances, in addition to treatment outcomes and their determinants, in a large sample of clients from both health and social treatment services. The initial projects were put forward by SoRAD at the invitation of the Ministry, identified by the senior researchers as core issues for a national centre. The only demand from the ministry was to integrate a gender aspect into the treatment system study. Thirdly, the Swedish National Institute of Public Health gave support for project planning, guest researchers and research conferences.

In 2000, SoRAD also took on a major monitoring function, the ‘Alcohol purchase and consumption monitoring project.’ There was an active internal discussion in SoRAD of the pros and cons of taking on such a task before

the Ministry started to fund the project. This funding provided a platform for SoRAD, both in terms of funding and data, proving fruitful in stimulating additional research projects. Nevertheless, it also absorbed resources with expectations from the funding agency for regular delivery of reports. In 2012, however, the monitoring project was redefined as not being a research project. It was moved outside of the university and the responsibility transferred to CAN (*Centralförbundet för alkohol- och narkotikaupplysning*).

In 2006, Robin Room left the post as head of the Centre, due to his approaching retirement age, and was replaced by Professor Börje Olsson. The change of directors coincided in time with the gradual withdrawal of FAS’s core funding. Additionally, the projects funded by the Ministry, apart from the monitoring project, had come to an end, with the Ministry of Education insisting that it should be responsible for all government funding in a university environment. The role of the Swedish National Public Health Institute was redefined slightly to include less research funding, and university funding in the country was undergoing changes. The first financially secure years were followed by the less-predictable situation of a research unit substantially dependent on competitive short-term grants. SoRAD experienced what threatened to become a vicious circle: a shrinking core budget, the disappearance



The building is decorated with various works of art in line with its functionalist origin.
(Photo: Mats Danielson)

of some senior researchers for economic or career reasons, fresh PhD students having to look for other jobs, fewer senior researchers to apply for new funding, and thus less funding and fewer staff.

Current frame and programme of work – 2006–2014

After a couple of difficult years, the economic situation substantially improved again. Hard work with applications was rewarded. This

also involved Robin Room, who maintained his contacts in the position of guest professor, and the two new professors, Jukka Törrönen and Jan Blomqvist, who replaced Köhlhorn and Room. Since the beginning of 2008, the Centre has been funded through two main sources. An annual core grant, renewable on a regular basis, is paid through the budget of the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University, amounting to approximately 25% of the Centre's budget. The remaining 75% is covered by

external grants, mainly from national research councils, but also from the EU's research programmes and national authorities. International funding has played and still plays some role: for instance, the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) has provided funding for a study on the effects of alcohol taxes and for research on alcohol-related mortality. A crucial element in the new era was the receipt of a 10-year Centre of Excellence grant and the research programme attached to it, 'Exclusion and inclusion in the late welfare state: the case of alcohol and drugs', which provided the resources to consolidate and develop the research even further. The Centre of Excellence grant has been funded by FAS (now Forte).

In mid-2012, Börje Olsson was succeeded by Jenny Cisneros Örnberg as director. After a period of down-sizing, staff numbers have been growing again and consist of three regular professors (Olsson, Blomqvist and Törrönen), two part-time visiting professors (Robin Room and Kerstin Stenius), nine senior researchers, eight PhD students, four research assistants and one administrator. After Blomqvist's retirement, Tomas Hemmingsson has been hired as professor of sociological alcohol and drug research.

SoRAD's basic research follows the broad mission statement of the first years. The researchers represent sociology, psychology, social work, criminology, economics, political science and history; the multi-disciplinarity

found at SoRAD is a key strength. The Centre cooperates with departments within Stockholm University and elsewhere in Sweden. SoRAD has encouraged scientific exchange. Over the years, several of SoRAD's own researchers have spent time at foreign research institutions, and many national and international researchers have spent shorter or longer periods as visiting researchers at SoRAD. Cooperation around problem-oriented research is also established with several public organizations, such as the above-mentioned Swedish National Institute of Public Health, the Board of Health and Social Welfare and the National Board of Institutional Care. Internationally, SoRAD is active in several ongoing projects.

SoRAD's research has been organized under three thematic umbrellas, all relevant from a general perspective on alcohol and drugs as instruments and markers of marginalization and normalization: (i) consumption, problems and norms; (ii) alcohol and drug policy and its implications; and (iii) addiction and dependence—societal reactions, treatment and recovery processes. The themes are built up by a range of integrated subprojects, which in several cases concern more than one theme. The first theme, with its classical epidemiological focus, uses mainly internationally established public health measures and reasoning to study the links between population consumption and harms. The second theme reflects the fact that

SoRAD has an arms-length relation to the policy process; rather than developing or modeling implementation of policy measures, it analyses policy and looks at policy measures from a post-facto perspective. The third theme has predominantly taken the perspective of the individual citizens or vulnerable groups who are the targets of societal measures.

Research conducted within theme (i) studies levels and patterns of alcohol and drug use and their association with various related problems. Topics included are, for example, methodological analyses of various measures of drinking and harms, analyses of the links between alcohol-related problems and changes in consumption level and drinking patterns, and qualitative studies of the role of alcohol and drugs in people's lives. Another important area is population-level time-series analyses of the association between per capita consumption and alcohol-related harm in different countries and drinking cultures.

Under theme (ii), SoRAD studies the marginalization and normalization processes of the late welfare state from three perspectives: (a) how substance use is perceived and defined in the policy field, in the media and among the general population; (b) what kinds of system-level implications (including side effects, stigmatizing features) alcohol and drug policies, programmes and institutions have had and have; and (c) what kinds of concrete and

specific effects particular alcohol and drug policies have. Another important aspect is how women's and men's alcohol and drug use is defined, regulated and targeted in all of these research areas. Ongoing studies focus both upon the discursive level and upon performance in alcohol and drug policies. On the discursive level, tensions between public health and free-market policies in international, national and local alcohol policies are studied; the governing images of alcohol, drugs, tobacco and gambling in the media are investigated; the framing of alcohol policy programmes targeted to pregnant women is studied; and media discourse on (illegal) alcohol and drugs is analysed.

Theme (iii) focuses on: an analysis of the societal definitions of, and reactions to, problematic substance use, and how these have changed with changing societal conditions; historical and social-ecological studies of the help-system, with a special focus on processes of marginalization and integration; and studies of assisted and unassisted recovery processes from addiction problems, and of individual and contextual prerequisites for such processes. A strong ambition is to apply a comparative perspective and combine quantitative and qualitative methods. In the long term, the aim is to: develop models for the analysis of addiction and recovery and of the helping system and its functions; to contribute to debate about, and the development of, working societal interven-

tions; and to throw light upon basic processes, for instance of inclusion and exclusion, in late modern society.

A SoRAD culture

SoRAD has developed a specific working culture during the 15 years of its existence. A key feature is the ambition to promote a cross-disciplinary approach to social alcohol and drug research, including a strong ambition to mix methodological approaches. Although the research is organized into different themes, priority is given to cooperation across themes; thus, bringing researchers with different perspectives and methods together is regarded as important.

Several means are used to support cross-disciplinary work. It is possible to raise a wide range of topics during SoRAD's seminars, from general theoretical work to an open discussion on concrete research issues, e.g. how to proceed with a work in progress. In addition to the internal seminar series, there is also a tradition of inviting external researchers, often people who are visiting SoRAD, to give seminars. Contacts with researchers from outside the addiction field are regarded as important for the theoretical and methodological development of the Centre. As one example, in spring 2009 a seminar around inclusion and exclusion in the Swedish society was arranged, with invited researchers on welfare state economics and the

role of the third sector in the Swedish welfare system. More recent examples of seminars are: Professor Geoffrey Hunt from Aarhus University and the Institute for Scientific Analysis, San Francisco, talking on "Conceptualizing Ethnicity in Alcohol and Drug Research" as well as Professors Suzanne Frazer and David Moore from the National Drug Research Institute, Curtin University, Australia presenting their thoughts on "Remaking addiction".

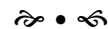
SoRAD also has a tradition of stimulating attendance at national or international scientific meetings and collaborative projects. Since 2005, SoRAD has arranged a yearly national research meeting within a network called the Swedish Social Science Network for Alcohol and Drug Research (SONAD). SONAD aims at forging and strengthening relationships between social science researchers in the field from all over Sweden by arranging yearly two-day conferences in different Swedish research settings. The conferences include research presentations and workshop meetings on various topics, e.g. epidemiology, youth, policy, gender and treatment. In a parallel initiative, SoRAD was in 2012 granted funding by Forte (formerly FAS) to arrange network meetings for Swedish researchers within the gambling field. The purpose with the Gambling Research Network (GARN) is to develop a national base and meeting place where both young and more experienced researchers within the gambling field

can meet. The network organizes two meetings a year.

The SoRAD staff is also represented in the yearly research meetings arranged by the Swedish Association for alcohol and drug research (SAD), as well as in most meetings for Nordic researchers arranged by the Nordic Welfare Centre (formerly the Nordic Council for Alcohol and Drug Research [NAD]). Many SoRAD researchers attend the annual meetings of the Kettil Bruun Society for Social and Epidemiological Research on Alcohol (KBS), the most important international scientific meeting in the area of social alcohol research.

Swedish social research in the alcohol and drugs field has its roots in the Nordic critical traditions established in the 1950s and 1960s by sociologists, criminologists, statisticians and psychologists. The multi-disciplinary approach was supplemented with comparisons, first within the Nordic countries, and later more broadly. The work conducted at SoRAD has no clear political or bureaucratic constraints and is best described as led by science and scholarship more than by direct political usefulness. The intellectual independence of research from government is emphasized and well-respected by decision-makers. SoRAD clearly has a different role from, for instance, that of the Swedish National Institute of Public Health. As noted, the direct financial role of the government in funding the Centre has also decreased since the early years.

With the establishment of SoRAD, the bio-medicalization of Swedish alcohol research was at least temporarily balanced (Midanik 2006); but the challenge remains for SoRAD, as for other social science and humanities institutes and departments, to compete effectively in the increased competition for research funding with basic and biomedical research. The prevailing research policy proposes a system where university grants will be dependent upon external funding and upon publication in journals with high impact factors, which alcohol and drug research journals generally do not have. For a research field which lies within applied social science, and which has a role as a national research centre, this is a considerable threat – even in a country where concern over alcohol and drug problems is high.

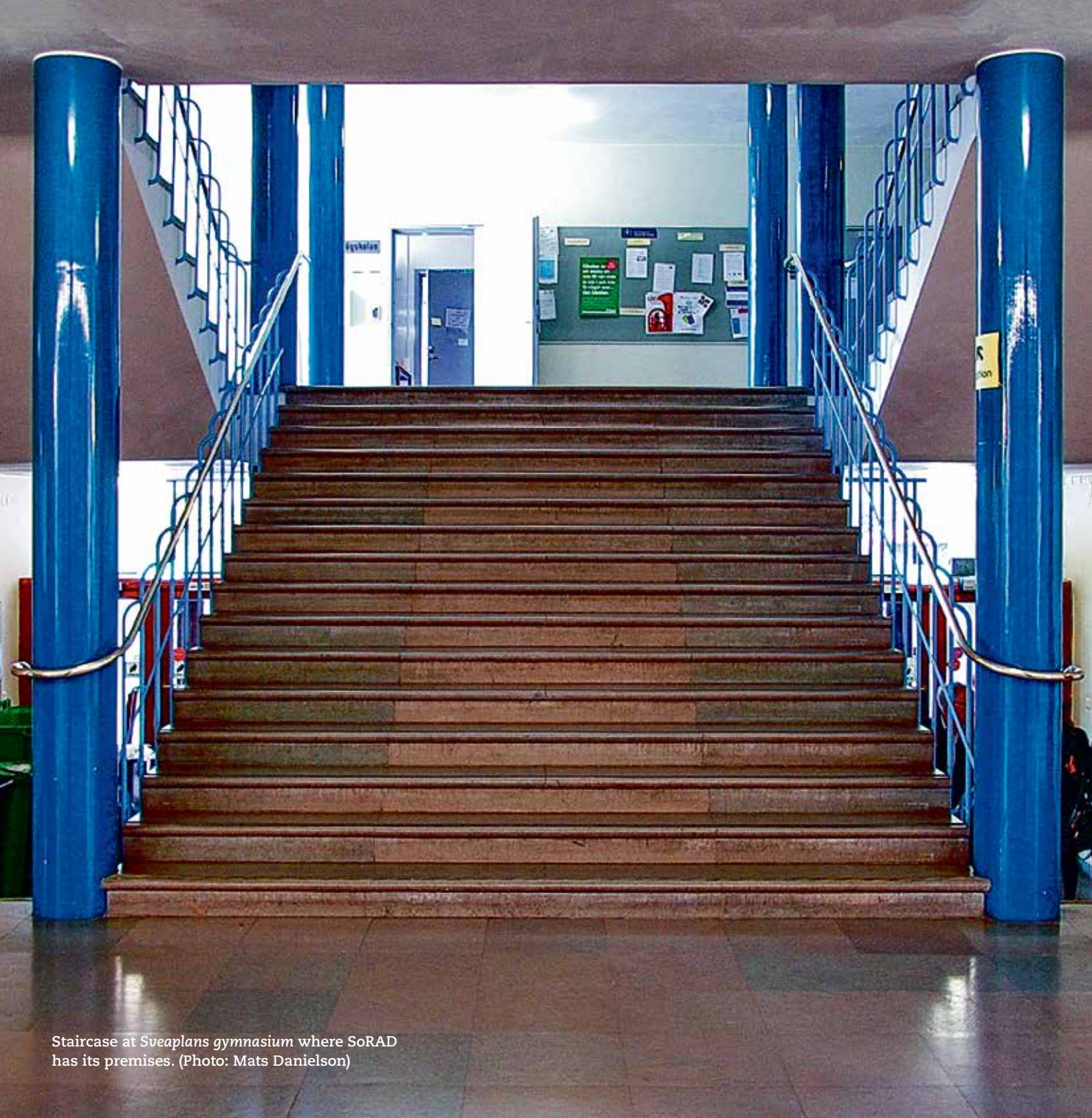


This chapter on SoRAD builds i.a. on (Stenius et al. 2010).

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Staircase at Sueaplans gymnasium where SoRAD has its premises. (Photo: Mats Danielson)



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