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Printing School Democracy from Below: Student Press Activities as Collective Action in Mid-Post-War Sweden

Daniel Lövheim

Abstract • This article deals with the growth of a national school student press in Sweden during the 1950s and first half of the 1960s. It outlays the role of student magazines in furthering school democracy by investigating the nationwide periodical SECO-aktuellt and the press organisation SVEP (Svensk Elevpress). The article departs from an understanding of press activity among school youth as a form of collective action during the mid-post-war period. This activity became part of a pupil movement that demanded increased influence and participation in decision making, as well as expanded forms of self-government. Drawing from earlier historical research, the article portrays this press activity as taking place "from below" since youth often was marginalised in the past and not always seen as legitimate historical actors. The article also deploys perspectives from research on social movements, and analyses school student press activities in Sweden as "repertoires of contention."

Keywords • school magazines, school democracy, collective action, social movements, repertoires of contention

In the spring of 1957, the Swedish nationwide pupil magazine *SECO-aktuellt* featured an article titled "School democracy, the American model." It was written by Gabriel Romanus, a seventeen-year-old student who was serving as the editor of the journal, but also as the chairman of SECO, Sweden's national pupil association.[1] At the time, SECO was a Stockholm-dominated organisation that consisted mostly of secondary school students with middle-class backgrounds, but had started to include more schools from other parts of the country and other school forms within the Swedish educational system.[2] In the article, Romanus claimed that the process of democratisation had advanced further in the schools of the United States than in Sweden. Just back from a visiting year in California, he informed his readers that "the American model" meant pupils were given both time and funds by school authorities to develop self-government and responsibility. This process was mainly orchestrated via student councils, whose representatives were chosen in organised elections, but also through a wide variety of different clubs. According to the author, pupils were able to – following this modus operandi – exert a certain amount of influence over school life, including rules of conduct and teaching. He concluded by stating that many of the American concepts, if not all, were worth applying to the Swedish school system.[3]

The article by Romanus is one of many examples during the first decades of the post-war era where pupils within secondary education played important roles in circulating

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[1] *Sveriges Elevers Centralorganisation*. The word "pupil" generally refers to younger learners while "student" is often used to describe persons within secondary and tertiary education. In this text however, I will use "pupil" and "student" interchangeably and as synonyms.

[2] Erik Söderberg and Bertil Östberg, *Skolan och elevrörelsen: Skoldanser och elevinflytande* (Stockholm: LT, 1981), 9–27.

[3] Gabriel Romanus, "Skoldemokrati modell USA," *SECO-aktuellt*, no. 2 (1957), 3–4.

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ideas related to school democracy. It also displayed that they did so by using media forms of their own making. New types of pupil magazines expanded rapidly in the 1950s. They became instrumental to the growth of the school student press and cultures of youth journalism in many countries in Western Europe and Northern America. As such, they played an important part in the formation of pupils as collective actors during the decade and throughout the 1960s. Together with other kinds of unified action – associations, parliaments and campaigns – they carried claims from a burgeoning school student movement to authorities within educational systems around the world.

Departing from a historical and sociological understanding of education and youth that recognises pupils' collective action and participation in politics in the post-war era, this article aims to outline and analyse the expansion of nationwide school press activities in Sweden during the 1950s and the first half of the 1960s. More specifically, it focuses on the magazine *SECO-aktuellt* and the organisation SVEP (*Svensk Elevpress*) – that launched in 1957 and 1958 respectively – and their roles in the ongoing growth of a national pupil movement and its efforts to strengthen processes of democratisation within the educational system.

In pursuing these aims, the article is divided into four sections. Firstly, I will describe my object of study in relation to a number of research fields in order to clarify its points of departure. Theoretically, the investigation is inspired by work within social movement studies and, more specifically, the concept "repertoires of contention" (elaborated further below). The term will be used to portray the press activities of school students as parts of a wider movement. Secondly, I will situate the Swedish development in a broader transnational context where the consequences of the Cold War created new networks and activities for young people in post-war Europe. How did such border-crossing connections among school students contribute to shaping national discourses related to the printing and publishing of magazines and the question of democracy in education? Thirdly, I will portray the expansion of a national school student press into an enterprise that included not only magazines, but also an organisation, a publishing house, a code of ethics, networks (national and international) and courses in journalism. What role did this system play in the mobilisation of pupils into collective actions towards educational institutions and authorities? Finally, I will claim that collective action in the form of expanded school press activities in Sweden during the period contributed to developed forms of democracy and equality in education. However, I will further argue that they were cultural practices performed first and foremost by traditional elites, and therefore also can be understood as something that sustained inequalities.

In this article, the focus is placed on students within the Swedish upper secondary school (*gymnasium*), encompassing ages 15 to 19. I am conducting a text-based content analysis of sources that mostly consist of national school magazines, predominantly issues of *SECO-aktuellt* published between 1957 and 1965. To some extent, I have also examined international school journals. Besides periodicals, I have used the archive of SECO to find sources that relate to the print and publishing activities of the school student movement. Additional types of material for the study that contain information on both SECO and SVEP as well as the individuals that dominated the organisations have been found in different forms of memorabilia. These sources have been used mainly for the last part of the article.

School students' collective action in historical and sociological research

My investigation seeks to align itself with a number of studies in history of education and youth during the last few decades that depart from perspectives where school students are understood as historical actors in their own right and as a result of their own efforts rather than being spoken on behalf of by the adult world. Many of these studies have shown that different groups of school youth within secondary education in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries involved in activities of a social, educational or political kind; they organised club meetings, student councils, school dances, study groups, charity work, international aid campaigns and political protests, among other engagements. These examples all showcase pupils as active in various forms of collective efforts that have stretched from displaying obedience and conformity to resistance and the development of countercultures.[4]

One of the benefits of such scholarly work is that it helps to recognise a historical agency of children and youth, who, as a social group, were marginalised in the past and therefore can be said to represent one of the voices "from below."[5] Furthermore, this type of research engages with kinds of student-produced sources that have often been overlooked or given scarce attention in traditional writing on educational history. Such sources consist of, for instance, records and protocols belonging to associations and clubs; letters between schools, organisations, or individual pupils; drawings or photographs, speeches or lectures by students; campaign notes or autobiographies and memories. Not only can this kind of material contribute to a deepened understanding of how everyday life looks inside a time-specific educational context and how it has changed during the course of time. Through it, we also become aware of processes of collective action, and how school students together negotiated the conditions that constituted them as both pedagogical subjects and developing citizens.[6]

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[4] See for instance Anna Larsson and Björn Norlin, "Introduction: Taking Pupils into Account in Educational History Research," in *Beyond the Classroom: Studies on Pupils and Informal Schooling Processes in Modern Europe*, ed. Anna Larsson and Björn Norlin (New York: Peter Lang, 2014), 20; Andrew Donson, "The Teenagers' Revolution: Schülerräte in the Democratization and Right–Wing Radicalization of Germany, 1918–1923," *Central European History*, no. 44 (2011), 420–46; Kelechi Ajunwa, "It's Our School Too: Youth Activism as Educational Reform, 1951–1979," (PhD diss. Philadelphia: Temple University, 2011), passim; Gael Graham, *Young Activists: American High School Students in the Age of Protest* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2006), 4–10. For the Nordic countries, different examples can be found in Björn Norlin, "The Nordic Secondary School Youth Movement: Pupil Exchange in the Era of Educational Modernization, 1870–1914," in Larsson and Norlin (2014), 83–102; Joakim Landahl, "Simulating Society: The Norra Latin Summer Residence in Stockholm, 1938–65," in Larsson and Norlin (2014), 139–57; Björn Lundberg, "Youth Activism and Global Awareness: The Emergence of the *Operation Dagsverke* Campaign in 1960s Sweden," *Contemporary European History* (2022), 1–15; Daniel Lövheim, "En alternativ skolhögtid: Invigningen av Göteborgs Experimentgymnasium 1969," in *Skolans högtider: Årsböcker i Svensk Undervisningshistoria,* 224 (2020), ed. Sara Backman Prytz, Joakim Landahl and Stig Nordström (Uppsala: Föreningen för svensk undervisningshistoria, 2020), 11–26; Victor F. Johansson, "De organiserade eleverna: Elevförbunden och skolungdomens politiska aktörskap 1938–2005," in *Ny utbildningshistorisk forskning II: Nio bidrag från forskarskolan i tillämpad utbildningshistoria*, ed. Johannes Westberg and Germund Larsson (Uppsala: Föreningen för svensk undervisningshistoria, 2023); 33–52; Essi Joukhi, "'Then We Were Ready to Be Radicals!': School Student Activism in Finnish Upper Secondary Schools in 1960–1967," *Scandinavian Journal of History* 46, no. 3 (2021), 383–407; Aapo Roselius, *Skolungdom: Finlands Svenska Skolungdomsförbund: FSS 1921–2021* (Helsingfors: Svenskt stöd rf. 2021), passim; Ulla Johansson, *Normalitet, kön och klass: Liv och lärande i svenska läroverk 1927–1960* (Stockholm: Nykopia print, 2000), 203–18.

[5] Steven Mintz, "The True History from Below: The Significance of Children's History," *Historically Speaking* 7, no. 1 (2005), 2–5; Lundberg (2022), 6.

[6] Larsson and Norlin (2014), 20–21.

Historical forms of collective action have also been studied within research on social movements. Sociologists Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow have identified the rise of such movements in the late eighteenth century when conditions for mobilising groups of people with a shared interest became more favourable than before. What characterised these groups was their increased ability to – following the development of print and association – make sustained claims against authorities in order to pursue public politics.[7] A concept that is often used in the study of social movements is "repertoires of contention" which means the different forms of (or tools for) collective action that are available at a certain moment in history, such as "special-purpose associations," "rallies" or "pamphleteering."[8] During the period between 1850 and 1945, school students' unified actions show relatively few signs of resembling a social movement since their initiatives were seldom taken to create support in matters that questioned authorities or traditional institutions. Research from England, Germany and Sweden suggest that they can instead be described as rather "apolitical" and conformant with society's values and ideologies.[9] During the early post-war decades, however, new repertoires – petitions, parliaments, campaigns, demonstrations and media appearances – gradually became more accessible to school youth. As a result, claims that were being put forward often had the aim of furthering democratic processes within the educational system and school life through participation in decision-making, increased self-government and independence.[10]

The historic role of contentious school youth in demanding participatory models of education still needs more research and case studies. Investigations of protests within learning environments have hitherto been largely dominated by a focus on university students. In their introductory chapter of the volume *When Students Protest*, Judith Bessant, Analicia Mejia Mesinas and Sarah Pickard underscores that scholars often tend to overlook school students' activism:

> This may in part be due to the popular assumption that only university students are politically active, a view that stems partly from the sensationalist media treatment of student politics. It is also an assumption that has much to do with the popular age-based prejudice that young people cannot and should not be political.[11]

In its portrayal of contentious youth, this study seeks to blur the discursive boundaries between environments and practices at secondary and tertiary levels of education by showing that the former was also a part of the cultures of protest against authorities.

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[7] Charles Tilly and Sidney G. Tarrow, *Contentious Politics*, 2nd edition (New York: NY Press, 2015), 11; Charles Tilly and Lesley J. Wood, *Social Movements, 1768–2004*, 2nd edition (Boulder: Paradigm publishers, 2004), 4–5.

[8] Tilly and Tarrow (2015), 15.

[9] John R. Gillis, *Youth and History: Tradition and Change in European Age Relations, 1770–Present* (New York: Academic Press, 1981), 108, 163–65; Björn Norlin, *Bildning i skuggan av läroverket: Bildningsaktivitet och kollektivt identitetsskapande i svenska gymnasistföreningar 1850–1914* (Umeå: Umeå universitet, 2010), 141; Walter Laqueur, *Young Germany: A History of the German Youth Movement* (London: Transaction Books, 1984), 231–35.

[10] Graham (2006); Johansson, (2023); Joakim Landahl, "Between Obedience and Resistance: Transforming the Role of Pupil Councils and Pupil Organisations in Sweden (1928–1989)," *History of Education Review* (2023), https://doi.org/10.1108/HER-09-2022-0030; Lundberg (2022); Joukhi (2021); Roselius (2021).

[11] Judith Bessant, Analicia Mejia Mesinas and Sarah Pickard, "Why is it Important When Secondary and High School Students Protest: Introductory Essay," in *When Students Protest: Secondary and High Schools*, ed. Judith Bessant, Analicia Mejia Mesinas and Sarah Pickard (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2021), 6.

Magazines and other forms of press activities are certainly interesting objects of historical study within the area of collective action among school youth. As sources, they can be used not only to uncover the daily life and meaning-making practices at schools but also to map early forms of grassroot activism and resistance at local, regional and national levels. As Tarrow emphasises in his book *Power in Movement*, the historic role of newspapers in the late eighteenth century was crucial for social movements and their ability to establish novel collective identities.[12] This does not, however, seem to have been the case with most school periodicals for a long time. Once rooted in the traditions of the nineteenth century secondary education, they mainly became hosts to a large number of local clubs and associations. They seemed to have played a role first and foremost as peer spaces for socialisation into cultures of liberal education (*bildung*) and political traditionalism.[13]

After 1945, school periodicals went through a number of changes that can be said to have gradually modified them into tools of protest. These changes were brought about through technical improvements with new printing methods but were also a result of the flourishing youth cultures and the new political landscape in post-war Europe. As far as different national contexts are concerned, this development has been mapped unevenly, with the examples of the United States and West-Germany covered in most detail. Regarding the former, studies have set out the important role that school magazines played for student activism during the 1960s and their capacities to act as education reformers.[14] Concerning the latter, historians such as Sonja Levsen and Brian Puaca have shown that the expansion of school magazines (*Schülerzeitungen*) in the first post-war decades can be linked to a large extent to the efforts of the Allied occupational forces to introduce participatory structures in West-Germany. Together with the start-up of student parliaments, textbook revisions and a reformed school structure, periodicals were seen as instruments to create a more democratic society.[15] My study seeks to add a Swedish case to this growing understanding of school magazines in the post-war era. Its contribution to ongoing research, therefore, lies not only in its theoretical departure from a social movements perspective but also in its specific contextual setting.

Students' press activities during the twentieth century, however, have not only been described as an enterprise practised within national borders. Studies on the Nordic region and other parts of Western Europe have stressed the transnational character of school magazines and their possibilities to stimulate exchanges of people and ideas across countries.[16] In these cases, the forming of student communities was done within a wider cultural framework. Such perspectives are important since they help to underscore the agency of youth in practising foreign relations and in creating global identities. In contrast to more formal meetings between state actors, the cultural practices performed by pupils illustrate that those exchanges were also initiated "from below" and through young people's day-to-day activities.[17] In this study, transnational perspectives are instrumental since they remind us of that developments in single countries often need to be understood in light of what went on at other contextual levels.

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[12] Sidney G. Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*, 3rd edition (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 90.

[13] Marcel Kabaum, *Jugendkulturen und Mitgestaltung in westdeutschen Schulen der 1950er und 1960er Jahre. Schülerzeitungen als historische Quellen der Schul- und Jugendforschung* (Berlin: Humboldt-Universität, 2017), 21; Norlin (2014) 86–87.

[14] Graham (2006), 96–104; Ajunwa, (2011), 35–36; John E. Vacha, "The Student Newspaper as a Historical Source," *Social Education* 43, no. 1 (1979), 35–36.

[15] Brian M. Puaca, *Learning Democracy: Education Reform in West Germany, 1945–1965* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009), 124–25; Sonja Levsen, "Authority and Democracy in Postwar France and West Germany, 1945–1968," *The Jsournal of Modern History* 89, no. 4 (2017), 823; 831–32.

[16] Norlin (2014), 87; Kabaum (2017), 164–65.

Pupils are certainly not the only social group that, in historical times, used periodicals to seek greater influence or that tried to inspire a larger movement. From a perspective of press and print culture history, their effort in these matters can be placed alongside other marginalised groups – immigrants, women and racial minorities – during different parts of the twentieth century. Together they form an important alternative to dominant "print-from above" perspectives as they display forms of political agency linked to calls for citizenship recognition.[18] In comparison with these other groups however, pupil periodicals are unique in their position within formal education. As print culture historian James Danky writes: "Such materials, studied historically, allow us to see the creative reception of the experiences of print in education through a form of reproduction by the student."[19] This understanding of youth print culture as a (re)productive and creative endeavour is something that is also demonstrated in Marcel Kabaum's historical research on West-German school magazines in the 1950s and 1960s. Through his investigation we get an understanding of periodicals as peer-produced artefacts with a high level of independence. They enabled interaction or conversations among young people in a forum that to a large degree was controlled by themselves. As a result, they became materialisations of youth cultural practices in a way that differed from other published periodicals during the same period that sought to convey youth culture but were produced by adults.[20]

To acknowledge, in this way, the existence of a specific youth print culture also facilitates the distinction between print *by* youth and *for* youth. The former phenomenon enables us to highlight how school students' press activities went beyond printing and publishing newspapers to also including other practices that were part of a larger infrastructure. Within this structure there was room to develop independent versions of ethics, networks and training – systemic components that, during the first decades of the post-war period, aided attempts to increase democracy in education.

School magazines as a transnational activity

In October 1958, the European School Magazine Association (ESA) arranged a conference in Oslo with representatives from four different countries. Besides the Norwegian hosts from NORSAR (*Norsk Skoleavisråd*), editors from Denmark (*Dansk Skolebladsråd*) and West-Germany (*Junge Presse*) participated in the meeting. In attendance was also a Swedish delegation that, during the three-day event, constituted themselves into SSCO (*Sveriges Skoltidningars Centralorganisation*). Apart from social activities such as excursions to the Town Hall and going to the theatre, the conference included lectures on journalism at the Journalist Academy of Oslo as well as discussions on "politics and school magazines" and "censorship and moral."[21]

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[17] Sara Fieldston, "The 'Junior Marshall Plan': Children, World Friendship, and Internationalism after World War II," in *Growing Up America: Youth and Politics since 1945*, ed. Susan Eckelmann Berghel, Sara Fieldston and Paul M. Renfro (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2019), 20–21; Lundberg (2022), 4.

[18] James P. Danky, "Introduction," in *Print Culture in a Diverse America*, ed. James P. Danky and Wayne A. Wiegand (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 8–9; James P. Danky, "Conclusion: Education, Work and the Culture of Print," in *Education and the Culture of Print in Modern America*, ed. Adam R. Nelson and John L. Rudolph (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2010), 220.

[19] Danky (2010), 220–21.

[20] Kabaum (2017), 69, 181.

With its European setting, the gathering in Oslo can be said to have displayed the transnational character of an expanding school student press in the latter half of the 1950s. This activity, in turn, played an important role in prosperous pupil movements that demanded greater recognition and influence in most areas of school life. Even if these claims were almost always directed at different national school systems, the ESA-conference revealed an infrastructure that transgressed national borders and resulted in a wider sense of community among secondary school students. Kabaum has described the ESA – established in 1956 – as the most pregnant expression of a transnational exchange among the youth press.[22] The organisation arranged conferences several times per year and published the bulletin *esa-press* during the late 1950s and early 1960s. Besides West-Germany and the Scandinavian countries, Finland, Holland, Belgium, Italy and France were affiliated in different ways.[23]

One of the stated purposes of ESA was to exchange experiences of producing and publishing school magazines between European countries. This included mutual assistance on new technical and editorial developments such as printing methods and layouts. Apart from concepts and ideas, the network also tried to facilitate the circulation of artefacts and people across borders. As a consequence, copies of school magazines were distributed among the different member nations. There was also a transportable international exhibition of periodicals that were moved between places to inform peers in other countries.[24] Exchanges involving individuals were arranged in the form of study visits between editors from ESA-affiliated magazines so that they could learn journalistic skills from each other.[25]

A more overarching aim of the organisation, however, was to advocate freedom of the press and to solve common problems related to censorship of published periodicals.[26] In 1958, a resolution was passed at a meeting in Luxembourg with the European Coal and Steel Community. In the message, ESA demanded "full freedom to the High School Students' Press." The resolution also stated:

> We want to call to attention the fact that in our countries there exists, in many different ways, directly or indirectly, a censorship of our publications. […] In such a situation it is impossible to develop that sense of civic and democratic responsibility which so often is called for in the youth by the governments, the school authorities as well as in the public.[27]

The fact that words such as "we" and "our" were used demonstrates an identity construction that was not restricted to single nations. It signifies what Charles Tilly has described as a familiar feature of social movements during the twentieth century, namely a development where "an international construction of 'we' grew."[28] This identification of belonging to a European school student press community was also expressed in more material forms. One such feature was the printing of international press cards that were given to all editors of member magazines. The cards, which were in six languages and featured individual photographs, can be said to exemplify what is described as "WUNC displays" within research on social movements – "representations of worthiness, unity, numbers and commitment on the part of themselves and/or their constituencies."[29] Press cards were also printed and distributed in Swedish and Nordic versions. As such, they affirm that what happened on global stages led to similar developments among national and regional pupil communities.[30]

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[21] "The Congress of NORSAR and SSCO," *esa-press*, no. 4 (1958), 8–9.

[22] Kabaum (2017), 211.

[23] In 1958, three conferences were arranged. Countries were represented either through a nationwide organization or individual school magazines.

[24] "The Purposes of ESA," *esa-press*, no. 1 (1957), 3.

[25] "Exchange of Editors within ESA," *esa-press*, no. 1 (1957), 6.

[26] "The Purposes of ESA," *esa-press*, no. 1 (1957), 3.

[27] "Resolution," *esa-press* no. 3 (1958), 9.

As mentioned above, school magazines per se were not a product of the post-war period. In most parts of Western Europe and Northern America, both local and national periodicals had been produced by different school associations since at least the middle of the nineteenth century. Earlier forms of transnational cooperation and networks had also existed from time to time. One example was the affinity that was built up among secondary school students in the Nordic countries around the first decades of the twentieth century. Inspired by the cultural movement *Nordism* they sought, partly by the usage of magazines, to (re)institute a stronger Nordic identity and community.[31]

However, the frames for cultural activities across national borders changed in many ways after the Second World War. Historian Akira Iriye and others have demonstrated that being transnational after 1945 almost by necessity meant to be embedded in a Cold War logic.[32] The American involvement in German educational matters had already started before the end of the Second World War as a means to de-nazify the country and prepare for a re-education of society. When East-West tensions increased at the end of the 1940s, communism crystallised into an equally important threat to defeat. In the wake of such developments, youth organisations became part of the cultural Cold War.[33] The activity of ESA during the 1950s – in which representatives of the Swedish school student movement participated – meant no exception. Its bulletin *esa-press* was financed and supported by the European Youth Campaign (EYC) which was launched in 1951 as a way of protecting youth from communist influence. It had the aim of fostering a European consciousness among young people and was developed in close connection with the European Movement and the Treaty of Paris. Financially, however, it was sponsored by the American Committee on United Europe, a US Intelligence-affiliated lobby organisation.[34] As a result, *esa-press* circulated not only ideas on school magazines but also the messages of the EYC and topics such as European integration.[35]

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[28] Tilly and Wood (2009), 112.

[29] "Press Cards of ESA," *esa-press* no. 4 (1958), 2. The languages were English, German, French, Italian, Dutch and Danish.

[30] "SVEPs presskort populära," box F3:2, SECO's Archive (SA), Swedish National Archives (SNA); "Nordiskt Elevforum," box. F3:2, SA, SNA.

[31] Norlin (2014), 89; Roselius (2021), 46–50.

[32] Akira Iriye, *Cultural Internationalism and World Order* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 156–58.

[33] Christina Norwig, "A First European Generation? The Myth of Youth and European Integration in the Fifties," *Diplomatic History* 38, no. 2 (2014), 251.

[34] "Imprint," *esa-press*, no. 4 (1958), 12; Norwig (2014), 254.

Thus, it is hard to separate the development of an independent school student movement in Western Europe from the US influence that was taking place at both political and cultural levels during the 1950s. Regarding single nations, the West-German case stands out with its nearly full-scale change of the educational landscape following the Allied occupation. Their reformed school system, imposed student parliaments and re-stimulated school newspaper activity are some of the most obvious indications of an American impact. Among other Western European countries, similar trends of US influence were notable. In Sweden, ideas of American progressivism had circulated during the interwar years and, in the 1940s, found their way into major school reforms.[36] A highly influential committee report published in 1948, stated that the "most important role of the school is to foster democratic individuals."[37]

However, concepts of school democracy were not transferred only in a top-down manner from adults to school children. Different actions taken by pupils during this period, such as passing resolutions, writing petitions and making appeals show that ideas also travelled in the other direction, with students influencing authorities. Equally important was the circulation of concepts performed by school students among their own peers. In the case of Sweden, the editorial by Gabriel Romanus on American school democracy demonstrated that pupils also introduced new ideas to each other.[38] The article in *SECO-aktuellt* was not a unique case. In 1959, for instance, during the first Swedish student parliament, movie sessions were arranged to show American films on democratic school projects.[39] In their curiosity and receptiveness towards the United States during these years, SECO reflected a wider trend among Swedish youth. This was a development that was not restricted to school life or to an educational discourse – those who were not drawn to pedagogical and political ideas were often attracted to American popular culture through movies and music. It was a trend that did not change until the second half of the 1960s and the growing protests against the Vietnam War.[40]

The United States, though, was not the only source of inspiration for the Swedish pupil movement. Other exchanges took place with peers from West-Germany and the Nordic countries. Regarding the former, articles in *SECO-aktuellt* reported on study visits among German and Swedish pupil organisations in 1959, which included presence at each other's student parliaments.[41] As touched on above, the Nordic countries had a long tradition of transnational meetings on pupil-related issues. In the post-war period, new networks, such as "Nordiskt Elevforum," were built up which included visits and cooperations also in the area of press matters.[42]

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[35] "Interesting," *esa-press*, no. 1 (1957), 16–20; "The Congress from NORSAR," 7–8.

[36] Gunnar Richardson, *Svensk skolpolitik 1940–1945: Idéer och realiteter i pedagogisk debatt och politiskt handlande* (Stockholm: LiberFörlag, 1978), 86; Ulf P. Lundgren, "Noteringar kring grunderna för den framtida pedagogikhistorien," *Studies in Educational Policy and Educational Philosophy*, no. 1 (2005), 11–12.

[37] SOU 1948:27, *1946 års skolkommissions betänkande med förslag till riktlinjer för det svenska skolväsendets utveckling* (Stockholm, 1948), 3.

[38] The idea of pupil councils was not new to Swedish school life. Since the 1930s, there had been attempts to introduce them at individual schools. Before 1945, however, they had mainly been assigned disciplinary duties. During the 1950s, they gradually developed into an environment for students' protests, see Landahl (2023).

[39] Ingmar, "Demokratisera skolorna," *Dagens Nyheter*, August 25, 1959.

[40] Martin Alm, "Bilden av Amerika," in *Signums svenska kulturhistoria. 1900-talet*, ed. Jakob Christensson (Stockholm: Signum, 2009), 188–93; Johan Fornäs, "Ungdomskulturen och musiken," in *Signums svenska kulturhistoria*, 489–94.

[41] DT. "Svenska elevråd och tyska," *SECO-aktuellt* no. 4 (1959), 3.

A national school student press

In the beginning of the 1960s, pupil press activities in Sweden were flourishing. At a time when the country's regular newspapers were showing a decline in some areas, the production and consumption of school student media reached a level not seen before. As a consequence, more individuals than ever were involved in writing, editing, distributing or reading peer-related periodicals.[43] Another way of framing it would be to say that magazines became a crucial part of the school student movement and incorporated into its overall repertoire of contention. They had the ability to reach members of the movement with calls for action and at the same time address its imagined opponents with criticism and protests.[44]

On the national stage, *SECO-aktuellt* had gone through a steady increase in print circulation from a couple of hundred copies in 1957 to 5000 in 1962 – a development that corresponded with the fact that more and more schools within general secondary education (*gymnasium, realskola, flickskola*) were now members of SECO. During the same period the magazine underwent an upgrade in terms of quality. In its first years, only stencilled copies had been produced, but gradually changes were made to work with offset printing methods. This resulted in issues that looked more professional and gave a less homemade impression. From 1961, the front page was colourised and a couple of years later it started to use covers that featured figures, pictures or photographs.[45]

The existence and start-up of other school student magazines contributed to this situation. Since 1952 a nationwide journal had been produced for students within technical secondary schools (*tekniskt läroverk*), named *TLE-nytt,* that had a print circulation of 5000-10000 copies during the 1950s.[46] In 1961, a Stockholm-based periodical called *Vi i Plugget* was launched that soon reached more than 100 000 copies.[47] As the decade progressed, this situation intensified even more with the emergence of two additional nationwide magazines, *Elev* (1966) and *Elevfront* (1968).[48] Together with the over 200 existing journals representing individual schools, it is fair to say that pupil press activities during the 1960s were developing into a multi-layered enterprise at local, regional and national levels.[49]

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[42] One of these was *Nordisk Elevpress* (1964), which was an offspring of *Nordiskt Elevforum*. "Nordisk Elevforum – Målsetning og retningslinjer," box F3:2, SA, SNA, 1.

[43] Olle Wästberg, "Skoltidningar," box F3:1, SA, SNA; Sverker Jonsson, "Tv förändrar världen," in *Den svenska pressens historia: Bland andra massmedier (efter 1945),* vol. 4, ed. Karl Erik Gustafsson and Per Rydén (Stockholm: Ekerlid, 2002), 137–38.

[44] Sebastian Svenberg, "Rörelsetidskrifter – en genrebeteckning," *Arr: Idéhistorisk tidskrift* no. 4 (2019), 61–67.

[45] "En pigg tio-åring," *SECO-aktuellt* no. 5–6 (1962), 2; Gabriel Romanus, "Till Elevrådet," box B1:1, SA, SNA.

[46] For a short while, there also existed a Stockholm-based periodical named *Hugget om Plugget* (1952–1954).

[47] "Vi i Plugget," *SECO-aktuellt*, no. 4 (1962), 5. From 1963, the magazine was run by SECO.

[48] These two periodicals lie outside the scope of this article. *Elev* was also directed at younger school students.

[49] Hans-Olof Johansson, "Elevtidningskampanjen," F 3:2, SA, SNA, 2.

Besides the improvement in quality and appearance, many school magazines were also able to develop a wider scope during the decade. The change was accompanied by a growing self-esteem among the editorial staff and their co-workers.[50] In this aspect, Swedish school magazines resembled similar periodicals in the US, West-Germany and the other Scandinavian countries. As a consequence, their manifestations of youth cultural practices gradually started to assume other forms. This was conveyed through more independent expressions of taste concerning music and art, but they also started to break earlier taboos when discussing controversial issues related to politics, sex and discrimination in ways that were openly anti-authoritarian.[51]

As a specific form of print, school magazines contrasted with other periodicals that also targeted youth during the period. In Sweden, there was a growing interest in the regular press to feature youth culture content in the 1950s and early 1960s. Large newspapers such as *Dagens Nyheter*, *Göteborgs-Tidningen* and *Norrköpings Tidningar* even produced supplements for youth (*Junior-bilagor*). A major difference, however, was that while these publications contained contributions from young readers, they were by and large planned, produced and written by adults. Since they were often dominated by stories of ideal youth and visions of technical optimism and promising futures, these supplements created a contrast to the tone of voice in school magazines.[52] One exception was a supplement called *Presens* that was featured by the newspaper *Svenska Dagbladet* between the years of 1960 and 1965. It was presented as a magazine "written by youth for youth" and ran critical articles on school-related matters, but also movie reviews and travel reports from other countries. All the contributors were either in or just graduated from secondary school. Many of them were active or had a background in SECO.[53]

SECO-aktuellt

From its inception, the aim of *SECO-aktuellt* had been to act as a communicating vessel for all individual member schools in order to intensify the activities of the local student councils. When the magazine grew and refined its activity, it was able to become one of the more powerful instruments of the school student movement and an important part of an infrastructure for the pupil press. As the official voice of SECO, it claimed to represent all students at affiliated schools in Sweden, a number that surpassed 200 000 in the first years of the 1960s.[54]

Many of the most frequently recurring topics in the magazine during the years up to 1965 were related to school democratic issues and became articulated as demands for change. These demands were directed at authorities such as the National Board of Education (*Kungliga Skolöverstyrelsen*), the Ministry of Education (*Ecklesiastikdepartementet*) and teacher unions (*Läroverkslärarnas Riksförbund*). Many of the appeals included matters of self-governance and independence, often voiced through calls for participation in decision-making regarding "the inner life" of schools.[55] Other demands that were frequently seen in the journal concerned the abandonment of certain rules of conduct. By tradition, regulations had existed in secondary grammar schools that targeted students' leisure time and prohibited them from smoking or visiting restaurants and going to public dances without parental supervision.[56] Even though most of these rules were discarded during the first half of the twentieth century, some schools still upheld them. In 1963, *SECO-aktuellt* was part of a campaign called "Operation rules of conduct" that tried to summon and unite pupils in a protest against these schools. An editorial wrote:

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[50] Staffan Thorsell, "Skoltidningarna," in *Skolans elevvård*, ed. Geo Hammar, Margareta Holmstedt and Lennart Rydberg (Stockholm: Liber, 1965), 233–36.

[51] Kabaum (2017), 181; Vacha (1979), 36.

[52] Ebba Sundin, "'En ungdomens egen tidning': Om 1950-talets juniorsatsningar i svenska dagstidningar," in *Presshistorisk årsbok 2011* (Stockholm: Svensk presshistorisk förening, 2011), 160–61.

[53] Claes Cassel, "Presens, en radikal tidning i SvD," in *Presshistorisk årsbok 1990* (Stockholm: Föreningen Pressarkivets vänner, 1990), 101–2.

[54] "En pigg tioåring," (1962).

> One of the main tasks of the school is to foster the students to become independent and democratic citizens. This is not accomplished by passing special rules for youth, rules that only apply to a certain kind of youth. Nor is it accomplished by passing rules that are impossible to enforce and, in this way, gives the students a wrong image of a society based on the rule of law.[57]

Another area where the journal can be seen as a tool for contention was in curricular matters. Claims were voiced repeatedly, for instance, to reduce Christianity as a school subject and to abandon morning prayers in favour of more secular gatherings.[58] This push for a modern curriculum was also expressed through calls for an expanded citizenship education based on civics with stronger international focus than before.[59] Included in these demands for change was also a request for renewed sex education and more specifically a reformed guidance that was less conservative in its advice.[60]

SECO-aktuellt also communicated with its subscribers and tried to encourage them to take action on many of the above-mentioned issues. Editorials and other articles highlighted the democratic role of the student council by reminding the schools about how to elect new representatives each year. In other calls for action, the readers were reminded to attend national student parliaments, but also to engage in international aid campaigns.[61] One article stated with reference to an ongoing humanitarian crisis in Morocco: "The question is if it isn't our duty and responsibility to reach out to these children. […] Do not turn your back on them. They are calling for our help – for your help."[62]

A pattern that crystallised in the journal was that of a gradually more progressive and objecting school student movement with a fairly radical programme. This programme can also be described as liberal since it was driven by individuals that followed a liberal political agenda, mainly directed at confronting conservative counterparts within the school world represented by teacher organisations, principals and school politicians. Many of the chairmen of SECO and editors of *SECO-aktuellt* belonged to this agenda and later continued to pursue careers within the Youth League of the People's Party (*Folkpartiets Ungdomsförbund*).[63] In this aspect, they embodied what Swedish historian Kjell Östberg has described as a first "liberal" stage of "the Swedish 1968 and the radicalisation of the *zeitgeist*." Östberg defines this stage as starting in the late 1950s when many of the questions that dominated societal debate had their origins in liberalism as a political movement. During the second and "red" half of the decade, this trend was taken over by young socialists.[64]

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[55] "Program för Sveriges Elevers Centralorganisation," *SECO-aktuellt*, no. 6 (1958), 7–9; JP., "Elevdemokrati," *SECO-aktuellt*, no. 3 (1962), 4.

[56] Landahl (2023), 9–10; Germund Larsson, "Rökningens revolution: Från förbud till rökruta," in *Utbildningens revolutioner: Till studiet av utbildningshistorisk förändring*, ed. Anne Berg et al. (Uppsala: Uppsala Studies of History and Education, 2017), 119–37.

[57] "Operation ordningsregler," *SECO-aktuellt*, no. 3 (1963), 5.

[58] Bertil Rolf, "Kristendomskunskap eller Religionskunskap med filosofi?" *SECO-aktuellt*, no. 6 (1959), 5–6.

[59] JP., "Samhällsläran självständig – räcker det?" *SECO-aktuellt*, no. 1 (1961), 4–5.

[60] "SECO-brev till SÖ," *SECO-aktuellt*, no. 4 (1962), 7.

[61] "Välj ett nytt elevråd," *SECO-aktuellt*, no. 1 (1963), 16–17; "Elevriksdag," *SECO-aktuellt*, no. 1 (1959), 7.

[62] "Mat idag?" *SECO-aktuellt*, no. 1 (1962), 15.

SVEP – Svensk Elevpress

A development that ran parallel to the growth of nationwide magazines, such as *SECO-aktuellt*, was the build-up of a pupil press association. In 1958, as mentioned above, SSCO was inaugurated at an ESA-conference in Oslo. It soon renamed itself Svensk Elevpress (SVEP). During the years leading up to the middle of the 1960s, the organisation developed into an enterprise that focused on improving conditions for local school magazines. As such it dealt with issues surrounding publishing and producing periodicals including its juridical, ethical and educational aspects.[65] In 1960, a set of "Ethical rules for the school student press" (*Elevpressens Publiceringsregler*) was presented in a way that closely resembled similar codes for the Swedish Publicist Association (*Svenska Publicistklubben*).[66] At the same time, a "Pupils' Press Council" (*Elevpressens Opinionsnämnd*) was formed with representatives from teachers' and parents' associations (*Målsmännens Riksförbund*), the National Board of Education and the Swedish Publicist Association.[67] The actions were taken primarily in order to highlight the burning issue of press freedom and to acquire legal support for local magazines against the censorship by principals. Editorials and articles in *SECO-aktuellt* highlighted these matters and SVEP sought to stay in contact with local editors to assist them if they were subject to suppression. In 1962 SVEP made a plea to the Swedish government together with SECO arguing that both printed and stencilled magazines should be protected by press freedom.[68] The following year an extended debate took place in the teachers' press which involved educators, SECO and the Parliamentary Ombudsman (*Justitieombudsmannen*), something that also drew attention to the issue of pupils' rights in regular newspapers.[69]

Another part of SVEP's activity that contributed to the youth press infrastructure was the educative environment that it was able to create for journalism and editorship. This type of training took place in both informal and formal ways. Regarding the former, being part of the editorial staff at a school magazine was for most pupils – regardless of quality and pretentions – their first encounter with newspaper production.

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[63] Ola Ullsten, *Så blev det* (Stockholm: Ekerlid, 2013), 79–81; Söderberg and Östberg (1981), 21, 155.

[64] Kjell Östberg, *1968 – när allting var i rörelse: Sextiotalsradikaliseringen och de sociala rörelserna*, (Stockholm: Samtidshistoriska institutet vid Södertörns högsk. 2002), 26.

[65] "'SSCO' blir SVEP," *SECO-aktuellt*, no. 1 (1960), 6.

[66] "Elevpressens publiceringsregler," *SECO-aktuellt*, no. 1 (1960), 7.

[67] "SSCO blir SVEP," 6.

[68] "Till Konungen," April 10 1962, F1:1, SA, SNA.

[69] This debate included more than 15 articles during 1963. "Innehållsförteckning," F3: 1, SA, SNA.

The education they got gave them an insight into matters of writing and editing texts for readers or into questions concerning finance and distribution.[70]

However, SVEP was also able to provide a learning environment that was more than informal. Journalistic and editorial skills were acquired through various types of initiatives such as study groups, courses and handbooks.[71] One example of the latter was the production of The Student Magazine Handbook (*Elevtidningshandboken*) in 1964, which dealt with detailed questions such as how to be a reporter, conduct an interview, write a headline or do a layout.[72] The arrangement of conferences made it possible to gather editors from different local school magazines for regional and national encounters that lasted up to three days. In this way, they resembled the ESA-arranged conferences that took place on a transnational level. From 1962 to 1965, SVEP hosted courses that included both theoretical and practical parts in the form of lectures on press freedom and journalism but also more hands-on related workshops on production matters.[73] The gatherings were often arranged in collaboration with representatives from the largest newspapers in Sweden. During a conference in 1964, a visit to *Dagens Nyheter* was included to give the participants an opportunity to observe the production of a regular newspaper for a few hours. In 1965, a course was arranged with *Svenska Dagbladet* with the aim of producing a number of *Presens*.[74]

These types of practices underscore the educational activity of SVEP and its position as an independent actor within a national press landscape during the mid-post-war decades. At a time when journalism was still lacking a formal educational path in Sweden, the school student press was able to function as a form of seedbed for the profession. Many names from the editorial staff of *SECO-aktuellt* and SVEP during the period later became journalists and editors.[75]

School student press, democracy and elite reproduction

In 1965, the first issue of *SECO-aktuellt* contained an article that declared the campaign "Operation rules of conduct" to be "a total victory."[76] The author Olle Wästberg, vice-chairman of SECO, cited a final comment from the Parliamentary Ombudsman that dismissed the right of individual schools to impose rules regulating pupils' leisure-time. Thus, Wästberg concluded, a nearly 10-year-long struggle could finally be put to rest.

Even if the author was right in his estimation of the campaign as "SECO's perhaps most successful school political action ever," it was certainly not the only moment of triumph for the Swedish pupil movement in the period 1955 to 1965. On the contrary, it is possible to identify a number of developments during these years that could be understood as "victories" and where SECO to a lesser or greater extent had their claims met. The struggle for press freedom, for instance, can easily be identified as such an example. In this case, the Parliamentary Ombudsman also interfered numerous times and declared it against constitutional law to censor printed school magazines.[77]

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[70] Olle Wästberg, *I tidens skugga: Verksamhetsberättelse från 1945* (Stockholm: Ekerlids förlag, 2022), 54; Thorsell (1965), 233–34.

[71] Monica Göransson, "Studiecirkel för elevtidningar," F3:2, SA, SNA.

[72] *Elevtidningshandboken* (Stockholm: TBV, 1965). Other material was printed and published through SVEP's own publishing company, *Elevtidningsförlaget.*

[73] Staffan Hildebrand, "SVEP igår idag imorgon," 1965 F3:2, SA, SNA.

[74] "Från Gösta Ollén roade på SVEP-kurs," *SECO-aktuellt*, no. 3 (1964), 6; "Hejsan på er," August 4 1965, F3:2, SA, SNA.

[75] Elin Gardeström, *Att fostra journalister: Journalistutbildningens formering i Sverige 1944–1970* (Göteborg: Daidalos, 2011), 202–3, 275–77; Claes Cassel, "Presens, en radikal tidning i SvD," in *Presshistorisk årsbok 1990* (Stockholm: Föreningen Pressarkivets vänner, 1990), 101–2; Wästberg (2022), 37–71.

[76] Olle Wästberg, "Operation Ordningsregler en fullständig seger," *SECO-aktuellt* no. 1–2 (1965), 15.

Both cases mentioned above are examples of successfully performed collective actions by the school student movement using the argument that pupils had the same rights as other citizens. Together with other developments during the early post-war decades, they illustrate how democratic processes within the educational system were able to be initiated "from below." Pupil councils and parliaments, for instance, were new institutional forms where school youth could exert influence as collective actors. The former grew by tenfold between 1952 and 1965 and now numbered a little more than 400. Student parliaments took the form of national assemblies that lasted for days and were arranged in ways that resembled the Swedish Parliament. Decisions within these institutions were taken through the form of representative democracy and in this way the pupils were able to communicate claims towards local and national school authorities.[78]

There were also other examples of "victories" for the school student movement. In its efforts to modernise the curriculum, SECO was successful on more than one occasion. Christianity was eventually reduced in the new gymnasium syllabus and morning prayers were replaced by more secular ceremonies.[79] The construction of civics as an independent school subject during the decade along with its subsequent international parts was another sign of how calls for a more modern profile were acknowledged by authorities.[80] It is worth noting that, on many of these occasions, the pupil movement was not alone in their efforts to revise subject matter, but instead a part of a larger current seeking change. One such case was the strive towards a reformed sex education where SECO's demands together with a number of other actors led to a revised guidance in the second half of the 1960s.[81]

In historical research on the Swedish educational system and its democratisation, the parts played by pupils and their organisations are still in need of greater acknowledgement. In order to understand the different ways in which processes of participation, influence and citizenship recognition were furthered, the school students' contribution needs to be placed alongside other actions taken within the political and public spheres of society and seen as parts of the same development.[82]

In all the above-mentioned cases, the involvement of the national pupil press was significant. *SECO-aktuellt* published a large number of editorials and articles on the specific topics. The magazine also participated in campaigns by spreading information to its readers and trying to rally them into action. This included giving advice and helpful hints in the more nitty-gritty matters of school democracy. There were, for instance, articles on topics such as "how to start a school magazine" or what to do in a student council struck by idleness.[83] Thus, despite its meagre resources and unstable conditions, the pupil press was able to function as an important instrument of contention. Similar to other marginalised groups using periodicals to seek recognition, the school student movement exemplified a practice of "printing-from-below," seeking acknowledgement of claims of rights and influence.

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[77] "LR-och tryckfriheten," *SECO-aktuellt* no. 5–6 (1963), 4–5.

[78] Söderberg and Östberg (1981), 36.

[79] Skolöverstyrelsen, *Morgonsamling i grundskolan: Anvisningar och råd för planläggningen* (Stockholm: SÖ-förlaget, 1967), 7–9; Niclas Lindström and Daniel Lindmark, "Religionskunskap," in *Utbildningshistoria: En introduktion*, 3rd edition, ed. Esbjörn Larsson and Johannes Westberg (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2019), 270–71.

[80] Anna Larsson, "Samhällskunskap," in Larsson and Westberg (2019), 360–61.

[81] Daniel Lövheim, *Att inteckna framtiden: Läroplansdebatter gällande naturvetenskap, matematik och teknik i svenska allmänna läroverk 1900–1965* (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 2006), 170–82.

[82] Åke Isling, *Vägen till en demokratisk skola: Skolpolitik och skolreformer i Sverige från 1880-till 1970-talet* (Stockholm: Prisma, 1974), 94–135; Richardson (1978), 27–33.

But if the advancement of a national school student press during the period of investigation can be understood as something that furthered school democracy and participatory structures, it can at the same time be portrayed as a cultural practice that sustained inequality and upheld elite reproduction. As is shown in the works of Sonja Levsen, the development of West-German school periodicals contributed to open "new spaces for discussion, for an exchange of opinions among students, for dialogue, and for criticism."[84] Yet she continues by stating that the activity was dominated by traditional educational elites, namely upper-class and upper-middle class boys.[85]

The Swedish example follows a similar pattern when it comes to leading positions within the pupil press. At the same time, as the editors-in-chief of *SECO-aktuellt* between 1957 to 1965 claimed to speak for the majority of secondary students in Sweden, they represented a select part of them in terms of social class, gender and geography. Almost all of the staff were upper-middle class males from Stockholm.[86] In SVEP, the pattern was somewhat different as the gender balance was more equal and more women had places on the board.[87] In a time period when secondary education in Sweden was expected to become more accessible to other social groups, SECO and the pupil press were still made up by a privileged minority that possessed considerable amounts of inherited cultural capital.[88] This advantage was furthered through their collective activities during school time. Research on Swedish secondary education from the late nineteenth to the middle of the twentieth century has shown that students (predominately males) who were engaged in associations and clubs developed specific administrative skills such as organising meetings, writing protocols, preparing debates or making appeals.[89] In the case of the pupil press, specific skills were acquired through printing and publishing periodicals.[90] These types of competencies were added to their already privileged positions and were acknowledged as valuable when they entered careers in media or politics. Equally important to this development were also the peer networks that school magazine editors and their co-staff were able to establish. For many in the leading positions of SECO and the pupil press, these connections were later refined as a strong form of social capital.[91]

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[83] "Vad skall vi göra nu? Tips för elevråden," *SECO-aktuellt* no. 1 (1960), 12; Helen von Hertzen, "Starta en skoltidning," *SECO-aktuellt* no. 1 (1959), 10.

[84] Levsen (2017), 832.

[85] Levsen (2017), 832.

[86] The inner circle of SECO and its social background during the period of investigation are described in Söderberg and Östberg (1981), 9–22; Wästberg (2022), 57–71; Ullsten (2013), 79–81.

[87] "Kvinnlig dominans i SVEP," *SECO-aktuellt*, no. 1 (1963), 4.

[88] Olle Norell, "De nya överklassarna! Den intellektuella eliten på elevriksdagen," *Idun*, no. 37 (1959), 12–14, 29.

[89] Johansson (2000), 219–20; Norlin (2010), 190.

[90] Thorsell (1965), 233–36.

These facts are important since they show how participation in a movement that wanted to further equality and democracy was also done from a position that – at the same time – sustained privilege and prepared for elite career trajectories. Thus, the individuals that constituted the front layers of *SECO-aktuellt* and SVEP were not acting from a position of below *in relation to their lesser privileged peers*, but rather to the grown-up world from which they sought greater recognition. Hence, they acted within a dual position of both privilege and subordination – a position that in some ways was comparable to newspaper activities within other marginalised social groups during the twentieth century.[92] Thus, from a perspective of print culture history, the example of the school student press is an important one, both through its unique and shared experiences.

Conclusion

School magazines with their roots in nineteenth century secondary education expanded rapidly in the Western world during the first decades of the post-war era. They were produced and published not only as local periodicals at individual schools but also existed on regional, national and even transnational levels. The latter stage became important for how European student networks were able to disseminate ideas and structures across borders to stimulate school press activities in Sweden. The nationwide magazine *SECO-aktuellt* and the press association SVEP were launched in the late 1950s. During the first half of the 1960s, they were important in the collective mobilisation within a burgeoning pupil movement that made claims on increased forms of democracy within educational systems. More specifically, these claims included recognised citizenship for school students and the abandonment of rules of conduct, but also increased participation and influence in decision making in matters of school life. The magazines also took part in furthering students' demands for a revision of the Swedish secondary school curriculum.

The results of this study confirm a development in other parts of the Western world at the same time. In West-Germany, USA and the Nordic countries, increased engagement took place among school students within matters of educational policy and democracy. This brings the study of the Swedish case into alignment with other academic work that have described secondary school students as important historical actors within education. From a perspective of social movements, this investigation also contributes to ongoing research by portraying magazines as important parts of "repertoires of contention" within the school student movement through their capacity to carry the voice of Swedish pupils in pursuing increased recognition.

As many of the claims during the period were met with success and became acknowledged by the authorities, it is possible to describe the pupil movement as successful in many ways in its efforts to further democracy in Swedish schools. The school student press, thus, can be said to have contributed to the process of the democratisation of learning environments – a feature that needs to be researched more in the history of education and youth. I describe this contribution by the pupil movement as taking place "from below," since it was initiated and driven by youth – a group that in many ways was subordinate to adult society.

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[91] Söderberg and Östberg (1981), 9–22; Wästberg (2022), 57–71; Ullsten (2013), 79–81.

[92] One such example is African-American periodicals in the USA, see Michael Fultz, "The Morning Cometh," in Danky and Wiegand (2010), 135; Elisabeth McHenry, "Forgotten Readers: African-American Literary Societies and the American Scene," in Danky and Wiegand (2010), 158–63.

From a perspective of print culture history during the twentieth century, the collective action of school students was not unique. It can be placed alongside other historic research on social groups that also used press activities to seek greater recognition of citizenship. However, the process of furthering school democracy through press activities also meant, to many of the leading SECO-representatives, accumulating career advantages. In this way, engagement for equality also became – on a personal level – a way to invest for a place among the elites.

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About the author

Daniel Lövheim is Senior Lecturer in History of Education at the Department of Education, Stockholm University, Sweden. Email: daniel.lovheim@edu.su.se

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