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The Politics of Literacy in Sweden 1949–2013

A Governmentality Studies Perspective

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Abstract
The aim of this master's thesis is to trace examples of political rationality and governmental technologies in a selection of final reports of Swedish Public State Inquiries (SOU) where literacy and related concepts are featured. I make use of the governmentality studies perspective developed by Nikolas Rose and colleagues. This can be described as a theoretical and methodological approach based on Michel Foucault's concepts of governmentality, subjectivity, truth and knowledge, whose focus is on the ways in which social phenomena are represented politically as problematic and how governmental technologies, in the shape of evaluative techniques, institutional practices, tools and programmes of reform and intervention, are developed for the remedy of such 'social problems'.

I pose questions, stemming from my primary aim, which relate to the observation of political rationality in my material, the kinds of governmental technologies which are suggested as useful or necessary, the aspirations of government discernible, as well as how literacy might be seen. I demonstrate that literacy can certainly be viewed as a governmental technology, employed in the realisation of political aspirations, on the basis of ideals of participation, influence, lifelong learning, and access, and through a political rationality, common in advanced liberal societies, which promotes notions of self-empowerment, autonomy and freedom. The ideal citizen is, I conclude, conceptualised principally as a Swedish-born, able-bodied, adult reader. This is achieved through a process of othering, or 'dividing practices', which places children, young people, immigrants, and to some extent, people with reading difficulties and disabilities outside of the picture of literate normality.

This is a two year master's thesis in Archive, Library and Museum Studies.

Abstract på svenska
Syftet med den här masteruppsatsen är att urskilja exempel på *political rationality* och *governmental technologies* i ett urval huvudbetänkande av Statliga offentliga utredningar, där litteracitet och närliggande begrepp framhävs. För att uppnå detta syfte, tillämpar jag ett *governmentality studies*-perspektiv såsom det har utvecklats av Nikolas Rose med kollegor. Perspektivet kan beskrivas som ett kombinerat teoretiskt och metodologiskt angreppssätt med utgångspunkt i Michel Foucaults begrepp på *governmentality*, subjektivitet, sanning och kunskap, och som lägger fokus på hur sociala fenomen representeras och problematiseras politiskt, och hur *governmental technologies*, i form av bedömningstekniker, institutionella praktiker, reformeringsverktyg och -program för avhjälpande av sociala problem, utvecklas.

Följande är exempel på frågor jag ställer i relation till uppsatsens syfte: är det möjligt att skönja en *political rationality* i mitt empiriska material? Vilka *governmental technologies* rekommenderas som användbara eller nödvändiga? Hur ser politiska förhoppningar ut? Jag påvisar att litteracitet tydligt kan ses som en *governmental technology*, använd för att förverkliga politiska förhoppningar, på basis av ideal såsom deltagande, inflytande, det livslånga lärandet och tillgång, genom en *political rationality* som präglar senliberala samhällen, och som främjar föreställningar om *empowerment*, autonomi och frihet. Jag drar en slutsats som visar att den idealiska medborgaren konceptualiseras främst som den flergenerationssvenske, vuxna läsaren utan funktionshinder. Detta åstadkoms genom en process av *othering*, eller 'skiljande praktiker', som placerar barn, ungdomar, invandrare och, till viss del, människor med lässvårigheter och läshinder utanför bilden av den litterata normaliteten.

Detta arbete utgör en två-årig masteruppsats inom ABM.

Ämnesord
Läs- och skrivkunnighet, kunskapsteori, styrning, medborgarskap

Key words
Literacy, Expertise, Knowledge, Government regulation, Citizenship

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PART I

Introduction

On 3 December 2013, the results of the OECD's international PISA report on school performance were released to the public. Sweden fared comparatively poorly, with a noticeable deterioration in pupils' results in literacy, numeracy and factual scientific knowledge relative to the previous PISA study (Skolverket 2013). On 14 January 2014, and on the back of concerns regarding Sweden's plummeting PISA results, the Swedish Minister for Education, Jan Björklund, announced government plans to launch an independent inquiry, with the support of the OECD and the participation of international researchers, into the Swedish school system (Svenska dagbladet 2014). Whether or not one agrees with the methodology or usefulness of the PISA study, it is undeniable that the Swedish education system is under ever-increasing scrutiny and, with it, the reading capacity and comprehension skills of young people and children. Television news sections, radio programmes, political press releases, newspaper articles, blog entries, school circulars, tweets and other social media posts, have been (and are today) dedicated to the debate on PISA and on pupils' success and failure, along with possible underlying reasons for this. Literacy is, as ever, firmly on Sweden's political map. As such, the national political treatment of literacy offers itself as a pertinent topic of investigation for a master's thesis in Library and Information Science. It is for precisely this reason that I have chosen to pursue this topic.

This thesis is composed according to a rather traditional three-part model – an introduction, containing sections on aims, theory, method, empirical material, selection processes, limitations and previous research; an analytical part, whereby empirical material and an analysis are presented; and finally a concluding part, in which I discuss the results of my analysis and reflect briefly upon the process of writing and analysis.

Aims, theory and method

I have chosen to use a governmentality studies perspective, based largely on the interdisciplinary works of Nikolas Rose and Peter Miller, in order to analyse the final reports (*slutbetänkande*) of Swedish Public State Inquiries (*Statliga offentli-*

ga utredningar, often abbreviated as SOU). As I explain later in further detail, this theoretical and methodological perspective has been selected due to its provision of adequate tools for tracing expressions of political thinking on social phenomena (oftentimes represented as problems to be tackled for the good of the population). Governmentality studies, as I outline in the following sections, also offers useful tools for the exploration of techniques of reform or improvement of these politically-determined 'problems'. It is well-suited, considering its starting point in political ways of seeing (and constituting) social 'problems', to the study of documents of inquiry into social issues, which have been generated in a clearly political sphere.

The aim of the thesis is thus to delineate examples of political thought (political rationality), and techniques of governance (governmental technologies), in texts where literacy and closely-related concepts are in focus. I describe governmentality studies in greater detail in the following sections. I also address the question of 'expert culture' and the 'expert' which are of central importance to studies of this type (see Rose 1999a).

Governmentality studies as theory *and* method

> Governments and parties of all political complexions have formulated policies, set up machinery, established bureaucracies and promoted initiatives to regulate the conduct of citizens by acting upon their mental capacities and propensities (Rose 1999a, p.2).

The version of governmentality studies with which I work in this thesis has been developed (primarily, but not solely) by Nikolas Rose and Peter Miller. It is built upon the theories and concepts of Michel Foucault, in particular Foucault's concept of governmentality (see Rose & Miller 2010; Rose & Miller 2008; Rose et al. 2006; Rose 1999a; Rose 1999b).

A central aspect of governmentality studies is the notion of 'governance', which Rose suggests can be defined in different ways. In a general sense, Rose claims that governance is used as a "catch-all to refer to any strategy, tactic, process, procedure or programme for controlling, regulating, shaping, mastering or exercising authority over others in a nation, organisation or locality" (1999b, p.15). However, in Rose's version of governmentality studies, he argues that governance can be seen in normative terms, whereby it is characterised as 'good' or 'bad', and descriptively, as the sum of the outcomes of certain political activity, i.e. the self-organising networks which result from the "interactions and interdependencies" of political actors, one of whom is the state. According to Rose, this conceptualisation of governance allows for a critique of the analytical usefulness of political sociology's concepts, such as "state and market, public and private, and so forth" (1999b, p.17). In order to explore political reasoning, along with

concepts of control and power in modern societies, a new theoretical approach, and an awareness of new modes of government were necessary.

How might such an exploration be carried out? Rose defines what governmentality studies (also referred to as "the analytics of government") are, and what they are not:

> [They] are not studies of the actual organisation and operation of systems of rule, of the relations that obtain amongst political and other actors and organisations at local levels and their connection into actor networks and the like… [They] are not sociologies of rule. They are studies of a particular 'stratum' of knowing and acting. Of the emergence of particular 'regimes of truth' concerning the conduct of conduct, ways of speaking truth, persons authorized to speak truths, ways of enacting truths and the costs of so doing. Of the invention and assemblage of particular apparatuses and devices for exercising power and intervening upon particular problems. They are concerned, that is to say, with the conditions of possibility and intelligibility for certain ways of seeking to act upon the conduct of others, or oneself, to achieve certain ends (1999b, p.19).

The use of a governmentality studies perspective in this thesis has a two-fold purpose. Firstly, it provides me with a specific theoretical point of view on the apparatus of the state and the relationship between political reasoning, mechanisms for the shaping of an ideal populace, and a culture of reliance upon experts and their statements. This theoretical point of view, or framework, guides the kind of questions I can ask based on the stated aim of the thesis. It provides necessary limits not only in terms of the questions I can ask of my material, but also in terms of the selection of empirical material. Secondly, this version of governmentality studies gives me a conceptual basis, that is, a language, with which to describe, and ultimately, 'read' (or analyse) my empirical material. I treat it, therefore, as both a theoretical *and* methodological perspective. Its concepts inform my reading, without the need for any complementary methods of analysis. In fact, Rose prefers not to offer a "formal methodology" for the study of governmentality, and denies that his books contain guidelines for such a study, although he does outline a number of 'dimensions' of governmentality and its study which he has found useful: problematisations, explanations, technologies, authorities, subjectivities and strategies (see below).

The dimensions of governmentality (studies)

Before launching into a review of Rose's dimensions, it is worth briefly noting the suggestions of another governmentality studies proponent. Founding his arguments upon Foucauldian theory, as does Rose, Mitchell Dean suggests that governmentality studies involve analysing social practices by which we govern and are governed. These practices, or regimes of government, are intertwined with knowledge and truth production practices. They are particularly focused in modern times upon the population as an object for surveillance and management, and as a target for techniques of self-regulation (Dean 2010, p.28). The self-regulatory

aspect of governmentality is of great interest to me and will prove to be a useful concept for analysis. Likewise, I take careful note of Rose's point that governmentality studies presuppose an "attention to language", due to the contiguous and mutually-constitutive nature of the relationship between politics and language (Rose & Miller 2008, pp.29–30).

Rose's chosen dimensions are described here in turn, despite these *not* constituting a recipe for a 'formal methodology' in his work. Furthermore, it is important to note that Rose does not define these parameters of governmentality studies, although he does offer several examples of each. Certainly it can be said that these dimensions are analytical guidelines for approaching empirical material, although they may not *all* be useful in one and the same study. I paraphrase Rose's *Governing the Soul* (1999a, pp.xi–xiii) heavily in the following paragraphs.

The first of Rose's six dimensions (or analytical devices) is 'problematisations'. By this, Rose means that it may be useful to explore those social or institutional phenomena which have come to be labelled as 'problems' in society. It is equally interesting to explore which authorities have defined said problems; which criteria, regulations and requirements are employed to denote problematic situations and practices; and which "dividing practices" are involved in defining, and polarising, deviance and normality.

The second dimension is 'explanations'. Here Rose is referring to concepts used for explanatory purposes, and the results of connections between these; the languages and grammars used to build systems for 'explaining' phenomena (e.g. "rhetorics, metaphors, analogies, logics"); the practice of defining fields of evidence, and the regulation of accompanying forms of 'proof'. He includes "forms of visibility, remarkability and calculability conferred" upon evidence/explanations in this dimension.

The third dimension Rose notes is 'technologies'. By this is meant collections of various techniques of judgement (e.g. normative tests, assessments), 'reformation' and 'cure' (from pedagogy to therapy to outright punishment), as well as the equipment, physical locations, institutions, and institutional practices of intervention.

The fourth dimension given is 'authorities'. This is one of the most interesting dimensions, in my view, and refers to practices of constructing (or conferring) authority in the form of 'personages' and attributes; to the growing prominence of expertise "as a mode of authority" and to experts themselves as authorities (e.g. social workers, psychologists, development experts); to the manners in which authority is gained and sustained; to the relationships between 'claims to authority', whether conflicting or collaborative; to the various forms of authority currently in operation, and to the contexts of these forms of authority, intersubjective and otherwise.

The fifth of Rose's dimensions is 'subjectivities'. He describes four main forms of subjectivity – ontological, epistemological, ethical and technical. He exemplifies the ontological subject "as spirit, as soul, as consciousness", made individual, made collective, but also as a creature of habit, desire and will. The epistemological subject is the knowable subject – it can be known through observation, testing and confession, according to Rose. The ethical subject is the ideal self, the one a person should strive to perfect. Rose describes the technical subject as the self which 'chooses' (in a loose sense) techniques and practices for self-improvement "in order to become autonomous, free and fulfilled." In other words, the *ethical* subject is the self-regulating individual, that ideal citizen, required by neoliberal government for the shaping of the ideal population. The *technical* subject is the self during its many projects of transformation and improvement.

Rose's sixth, and final, dimension is 'strategies'. By this, he means the hopes, plans and aims of a government for its subject population (e.g. "prevention of degeneration", securing physical and mental health). He also refers here to important connections between political reform, (scientific) expertise and ideology – early philanthropists' and so-called "health visitors'" programmes for providing poor women with contraception, while simultaneously submitting to bourgeois ideals of proper and acceptable forms of motherhood, spring to mind (cf. Donzelot & Hurley 1997; Rose & Miller 2008, pp.146–147; Rose 1999a, pp.207–208 for more on ideal motherhood; and Rose 1999b, pp.129–133 on "the family as a key site for social government"). Finally, Rose refers to the roles that experts seek for themselves within this matrix of political interests in (re)forming a population, expert knowledge and dominant beliefs, in particular those affiliated with the 'psy' sciences – i.e. psychology, psychiatry, psychotherapy, and related areas (1999a, pp.xi–xii). As you will see in the section *The expert and expert culture in governmentality studies* in this thesis, Rose is hugely concerned with the 'psy' sciences as a collective area of expertise and, equally, with their involvement in politics.

Concepts: analytical or empirical?

It is worth noting that I refrain from fully defining 'literacy' as a concept at this point. The term, along with related terms, is in part an empirically-derived concept in this thesis – in other words, I seek definitions of the term(s) *in* my empirical material, as it is within that very particular political and epistemological context the concepts are reasoned upon and developed. By this, I mean that the content of the term literacy may be defined differently from text to text, and thus the 'political rationality' which defines it and determines why and for what it is nec-

essary, may shift over time and/or between texts[1]. On the other hand, I see literacy in analytical terms as a set of techniques and practices, otherwise known as 'governmental technologies', which are intended to shape and reform the activities, thoughts and beliefs of human individuals. I explain further in the following paragraphs.

To clarify the concepts of 'political rationality' and 'governmental technologies', both of which are central concepts in governmentality studies, and consequently, in this thesis, I take Rose's lead on the matter. In *Governing the Present*, he and Miller describe political rationalities as a way of translating 'reality' into the "domain of thought" – they are methods, perhaps most discernible in language (I suggest), of reasoning about, representing, and making sense of society. This is what Rose refers to as the 'discursive' aspect of governmentality. Governmental technologies are, then, designed to do the opposite – to translate the outcomes of political rationality, the reasoning and thought processes, the representation of social problems, into social reality in the form of interventions. They seek to normalise and shape the behaviour, and even the thoughts and personal aims, of individuals in order to create desirable subjects – and by extension a desirable population (2008, p.32). Rose and Miller provide examples of some of the more "humble and mundane mechanisms which appear to make it possible to govern" (i.e. governmental technologies) further along on the same page:

> [T]echniques of notation, computation, and calculation; procedures of examination and assessment; the invention of devices such as surveys and presentational forms such as tables; the standardization of systems for training and the inculcation of habits; the inauguration of professional specialisms and vocabularies; building design and architectural forms – the list is heterogeneous and is, in principle, unlimited (2008:32).

This list of indirect methods of governance, of the shaping of the conduct of individuals, with an ever-vigilant eye on the desired outcome for the population at large, is indeed potentially endless. At the risk of being repetitive, it is just such technologies, and the political reasoning upon which they are contingent, which I aim to explore in this thesis. I do not seek to prove or disprove the existence of attempts to shape the behaviours, activities and desires of a population. Based on a governmentality studies perspective, I *assume* that in (neo)liberal democratic

[1] This reluctance to define literacy prior to analysing my empirical material may seem paradoxical – if I (seemingly) have no thoughts as to what 'literacy' might involve, how then do I search for, and select, my empirical material? I am not suggesting a 'carte blanche' approach to the term literacy. I used search terms such as "läsfrämjande", "läsförståelse", "läskunnig*", "läsande", and "läsning" during my initial searches. I allowed myself to take as my starting point the popular notion that literacy is in some way connected to the concept of reading or an ability to read. However, as shall be seen in Part II and Part III of this thesis, literacy is defined, at times implicitly, at others explicitly, in different ways in the different SOU reports. All of them relate in some way or other to the act of reading, which, I argue, justifies my decision not to define literacy *as an empirical concept* in advance of exploring the material with Rose's governmentality studies perspective in mind.

societies such attempts are already at play. It is, rather, the expressions which such formative and normalising efforts take, and the technologies suggested or, in fact, employed to realise such efforts, which are of interest in this thesis.

It is worth noting my more limited use of Edward Said's concept of othering, and references to Homi Bhabha's description of marginalisation in Part II and Part III of this thesis. For more, see sections *SOU 1974:5* and *The problematic? Children, youth and other Others* and how I relate these to Rose's concept of problematisation and dividing practices.

The concept of governmentality

As I have mentioned, Rose and colleagues' governmentality studies perspective is based upon Michel Foucault's concept of 'governmentality' – also termed in the latter's work as the 'conduct of conduct' and as a particular 'mentality' of 'government' in certain societies – more specifically the European and American societies with which Foucault, as a French academic, was most familiar (Rose & Miller 2008, p.27). In other words, in these societies, a particular way of thinking has developed about what the business, the responsibility and the practical reach of government should be; how involved the state, and other political actors and networks, should become in the private lives of citizens, whether by direct or indirect means; what the aims of government might be, and what techniques, strategies, mechanisms, and policies might be used in implementing these aims. It refers equally to the characterization and representation of 'problems', and to techniques for intervention (Rose & Miller 2008, p.32).

Briefly, the concept of governmentality stemmed from Foucault's observations of what he perceived to be a new form of power at work in certain modern societies; a form of power which he believed differed from those forms identified as sovereign and disciplinary power. It was closely bound to his concepts of truth, knowledge and subjectivity (see section 'The expert and expert culture in governmentality studies' below). It can be said that Foucault conceptualises governmentality as a collective ethic of (self-)government, and as such, "a very specific albeit complex form of power" (Foucault 1991). Rose, Valverde et al. cite Foucault (1997a, p.82) in the following:

> [G]overnmentality 'was understood in the broad sense of techniques and procedures for directing human behavior. Government of children, government of souls and consciences, government of a household, of a state, or of oneself.' (Rose et al. 2006, p.83)

Foucault suggests, through such a conceptualization, that *all* members of a society are, collectively, subject to, and participate in, the exercise of power. This is termed 'capillary' power, in that it flows, similarly to blood seeping through every part of the human body, through all institutions and structures in society and is by

no means limited to a top-down structure whereby the state apparatus dictates directly to a passive populace.

It is also worth noting here that while Rose and Miller are heavily indebted to Foucauldian theory when it comes to their operationalisation of the concept of governmentality, they also make use of Bruno Latour's notion of 'action at a distance'. This refers to the various techniques and processes that shape the conduct of individuals "without shattering their formally autonomous character" – again a concept which challenges previous theorisations of power and governance as direct, top-down mechanisms of rule (2008, p.39).

The expert and expert knowledge in governmentality studies

The concept of governmentality is, as mentioned previously, closely linked to claims to truth and knowledge in Foucault's theoretical work, as is the concept of subjectivity – *what* we become when we govern and/or are governed – see Dean (2010) for more on this politically-wrought 'becoming', and Rose for more on the increasingly central role that subjectivity plays in "the calculations of political forces" (1999a, p.1; Rose 1999b). One form of subjectivity is that of the expert – a concept, twinned with that of 'expertise' or 'expert knowledge', which are central to governmentality studies perspectives, and which are of analytical importance to this thesis.

At the end of the section entitled *The dimensions of governmentality (studies)*, I briefly mentioned Rose's critical engagement with the concepts of the expert and expert culture, and with said expert's role in political attempts at (re)forming the individual with the aim of producing particular outcomes at the level of the population. He is especially concerned with what he refers to as the 'psy' sciences, or 'psy' knowledges. He associates these forms of knowledge with "a cluster of technologies for the government of the autonomous self" (1999b, p.89) and "the means whereby human subjectivity and intersubjectivity could enter the calculations of the authorities" (1999a, p.7). Prior to the emergence of this professionalised 'expert knowledge' of the human psyche, reformation and control of human individual activity was restricted to the shaping of other, less intensely personal subjectivities. Rose argues that the specialised vocabularies of the 'psy' sciences allowed for political aims "to be articulated in terms of the knowledgeable management of the depths of the human soul" (1999a, p.7).

> The significance of psychology within advanced liberal modes of government lies in the elaboration of a know-how of the autonomous individual striving for self-realization. In the nineteenth century, psychological expertise produced a know-how of the normal individual; in the first half of [the twentieth] century it produced a know-how of the social person. Today, psychologists elaborate complex emotional, interpersonal and organizational techniques by which the practices of everyday life can be organized according to the ethic of autonomous selfhood (Rose 1999b, p.90).

Rose continues on the same page to elaborate upon the two main ways in which these 'psy' knowledges, about the human individual are dispersed in society:

> The first route works through reshaping the practices of those who exercise authority over others – social workers, managers, teachers, nurses – such that they exercise their powers in order to nurture and direct these individual strivings in the most appropriate and productive fashions. Here one sees the elaboration, in a plethora of self-instruction manuals, training courses and consultancy exercises, of a new set of relational technologies that appear to give professional authority an almost therapeutic character. The second route operates by what one can term the psychotherapies of normality, which promulgate new ways of planning life and approaching predicaments, and disseminate new procedures for understanding oneself, and acting upon oneself to overcome dissatisfactions, realize one's potential, gain happiness and achieve autonomy (Rose 1999b, p.90).

To summarise, Rose sees the dissemination of know-how about the individual in the shaping of the professional practices of those in positions of authority over, for example, individual patients, pupils, and employees, and in the prescription of therapeutically-informed practices intended for implementation by the individual herself. Viewing these forms of knowledge as precursors to 'clusters of technologies' (or 'therapeutics') designed to shape the ideal citizen, that self-regulating individual, it can be said that Rose deems the phenomena represented, problematised, and considered worthy of intervention as "fraught with pathological possibilities and yet full of therapeutic potentials" (1999b, p.91).

The notion that certain phenomena pertaining to the population, by way of the individual, might initially be represented as problematic and deviating from some established norm, and subsequently judged as requiring intervention and normalisation, is most useful to my reading of my selected empirical material. The relevance of Roses's dimensions of governmentality, as described previously, for my upcoming analysis is made apparent in his discussion of the 'psy' sciences and related forms of expertise, know-how, knowledge. As Rose points out, expert knowledge, its dissemination, and practice-based implementation rely not upon a 'top-down', authoritative relationship between experts and individuals, which infers the expert's monopolization of his/her profession, associated knowledge and controlled language, but upon generosity, (seeming) freedom of information, and the building of alliances between experts and individuals. The following quotations exemplify the relationship between experts and individuals, expertise and practices of (eventual) self-regulation.

> Expertise has been deployed in the service of diverse strategies of control, but it also enters into the passions of individuals and populations and shapes the values and demands of countless contestations 'from below'. There is thus a certain reversibility of relations of expertise. What begins as a norm implanted 'from above', such as the universal obligations of literacy or numeracy, or the adoption of the appropriate patterns of conduct in child rearing, can be 'repossessed' as a demand that citizens, consumers, survivors make of authorities in the name of their rights, their autonomy, their freedom (Rose 1999b, p.92).

On the following page, further examples of note are given:

> [T]he norm of autonomy produces an intense and continuous self-scrutiny, self-dissatisfaction and self-evaluation in terms of the vocabularies and explanations of expertise. In striving to live our autonomous lives, to discover who we really are, to realize our potentials and shape our lifestyles, we become tied to the project of our own identity and bound in new ways into the pedagogies of expertise (Rose 1999b, p.93).

It is fascinating to explore my material according to these latter points: is there evidence of a top-down, more authoritative demand for universal literacy made upon the Swedish population in the earliest SOUs, or not? Is there a shift in emphasis over time from political requirements for universal literacy, based on a political rationality that represents illiteracy as problematic, to a more rights-based focus on the 'needs' and concerns of the individual? How are all of these many points and concepts discussed in the material? For further questions based on my thesis aim and chosen theoretical perspective, see the section imaginatively entitled *Questions*.

As a final reflection on the expert and expertise, it is worth pointing out Rose's argument that there has been a shift in the autonomy of expert authority over time – something worth bearing in mind during analysis. In his and Peter Miller's book *Governing the Present* (2008), we are reminded that the emergence and consolidation of the welfare state allowed equally for the emergence and consolidation of professional, expert authority, whereby such authority could not be challenged. However, in societies where the welfare state has been weakened and neoliberal ideology has begun to permeate politics at the level of the state, expert authority is itself subject to technologies designed to assess the *financial* feasibility of technologies borne of expertise. Rose and Miller argue that such techniques as budgeting, accountancy and auditing of professional groups and practices limit the powers of the 'psy' knowledges and their accompanying technologies. Of course, auditing techniques are themselves reliant upon a particular "claim to truth", as Rose and Miller quite rightly point out. Nevertheless:

> these know-hows of enumeration, calculation, monitoring, evaluation, manage to be simultaneously modest and omniscient, limited yet apparently limitless in their application to problems as diverse as the appropriateness of a medical procedure and the viability of a university department (2008, p.212).

I mention this observation made by Rose and Miller as a reminder that power relations between the state, appointed experts and individuals are, as stated earlier, never straightforwardly 'top-down', and are both fluid and 'capillary' in the sense meant by Foucault.

Questions

In what ways – through what language – are literacy and closely-related concepts discussed in my empirical material? What political reasoning is discernible there and through what kinds of problematisations, dividing practices and explanatory techniques are phenomena, such as reading, or literature, defined and techniques of intervention argued for? What aspirations, hopes and plans of government form part of the political rationality in my selected material? Which governmental technologies are suggested as useful? In what way does the SOU report function as a governmental technology, assuming that it does? Who assumes, or is assigned, the role of 'expert' in the production of SOU reports? Is literacy essentially a concept related to reading, reading comprehension, and writing in my empirical material? Can it instead be viewed as a set of practices, and thus a set of techniques of intervention or formation, i.e. as governmental technologies, and if so, in what ways is that expressed? These are just a small number of the questions which are prompted by my aim in combination with my chosen theoretical and methodological perspective.

A note on empirical material, selection, and limitations[2]

As mentioned previously, I have selected to analyse the final reports of Swedish Public State Inquiries, otherwise termed SOU reports in this thesis. When an official inquiry is launched, into any area covered by the state's remit, a great deal of documentation is produced, both at the state level – directives, circulars, preliminary reports, press statements, final reports – and oftentimes at the level of mass, and social, media. Selecting empirical material relevant to one's research aim is a complex, yet critical, task. There are constraints of time and scope to consider in any study. Is breadth of analysis preferable to depth? Are documents produced at a state level more relevant to one's research questions than those produced by everyday citizens through their use of social media? Are media debates, and their authors, of greater interest for a given study than politicians' public statements? Equally, when a set of documents (in a broad sense) is selected, what importance does the context in which these are produced, and by whom, have for a study? There are many questions to be considered before, during, and after the selection process.

It is possible in governmentality studies to examine and explore texts ranging from the most personal and informal of texts to those of a public and highly for-

[2] Please see section entitled "An overview of the empirical material" in Part II of this thesis for a description of the selected material itself.

mal variety[3]. Even in the most unassuming of texts – the "minor texts" and "little techniques of government" as they are sometimes called – there are examples of governmental technologies (Rose et al. 2006). However, in the case of this thesis, and in order to limit the quantity of empirical material, I have chosen to analyse one of the more formal and official forms of text: final reports (*slutbetänkande*) arising from SOUs into issues related to literacy. These are the principal reports of official, state investigations which focus upon, for example, reading practices, reading comprehension, plain language/easy-to-read (i.e. *lättläst*), literacy practices in education, the role of schools and/or libraries in literacy promotion, and the status of the book in Swedish society.

Why SOU reports? I could have selected other political and/or legal materials – the Swedish library statute, public libraries' policies and working plans, the school statute, school curricula. The list of documents, all expressing governmentality in one form or another, all concerned with literacy in Sweden, and thus all perfectly acceptable objects of inquiry, is potentially very long. Likewise, I could have selected to continue my search for examples of political rationality and/or governmental technologies beyond the SOU reports themselves, and into any resulting bills (*propositioner*), laws or statutes. Or I could have selected whatever materials lead to the initial commissioning of the SOUs. For several reasons, some of which are related to resources of time, but also of scope and genre, I have set myself the goal of exploring *only* these final reports of Public State Inquiries.

SOU reports, as the final, and main, reports based on the experiences and results of months – if not years – of multiple persons' investigation into a particular subject, are most likely to include an element of reflexivity, and certainly, a number of important conclusions as to the effectiveness and the results of the study. There is an analytical depth suggested in such reports, which one is unlikely to find in, for example, partial reports or stand-alone survey results. This potential for reflexivity and a (more) conclusive discussion of the methods and results of an investigation is, I believe, likely to give greater insight, through more expansive examples, into political rationality and governmental technologies. Furthermore, the SOU reports I have chosen to analyse with the help of a governmentality studies perspective focus closely on literacy. They were commissioned by Swedish governments over the years in order to specifically examine literacy and related issues: not, as in the case of school or library laws, to regulate given *institutions* in society. They are intended as reports of investigations into the *phenomenon* of literacy. Their remit is, in most cases, limited to *expert* understandings of this phenomenon (and other closely-related ones), for, and under the auspices of, a

[3] The term 'text' refers to a broad spectrum of materials – including, for example, documents and articles across genres, images, tables, diagrams, graphs, spreadsheets, charts. These are all examples of texts which can contain elements of political rationality or can in themselves be considered clear examples of governmental technologies.

political audience. This prompts me to designate them as not only bearers of political rationality, but also as examples of governmental technologies. They often contain suggestions for political action in their concluding chapters and, as such, may be viewed as tools and techniques for governance. Likewise, the final reports of such public inquiries include not only the results of all studies and surveys undertaken during the course of investigation, but also the 'expert' groups' opinions on these results, as pointed out by, for example, Kaj Björk in an interim report (SOU 1973:1) of the 1968 *Litteraturutredning* (inquiry into literature in Sweden). These are the primary reasons for my selection and, I suggest, this is what makes SOU reports ideal objects of investigation from a governmentality studies perspective.

The earliest SOU report of relevance for this thesis was published in 1949 and the most recent in 2013. Thus, it is my intention, as stated earlier, to trace expressions of political rationality and, to some degree, of governmental technologies over a 64 year period of Swedish history. As I mention above, in relation to SOU reports, it is worth repeating that while documents contain *suggestions* for the development of governmental technologies, i.e. techniques and tools for regulating the population, through the shaping of the behavior of the individual, they may also function *as* governmental technologies in and of themselves. Take for example school curricula. Not only do they include clear evidence of political rationality – political reasoning on aspects pertaining to the education of children and young people – they also contain tools and techniques for the implementation of this reasoning in schools' local policies, the education of teachers, and in classroom practices. Interested actors, amongst these the state, attempt through the proposed regulation of children's and young people's attitudes and behaviours, to shape ideal future citizens, and consequently, an ideal future populace (Smith 2012; Rose 1999a). For this reason, it is critical to analyse both the contents of such documents, and the documents as artefacts in their own right, produced by particular actors, in particular contexts, bound by time and place.

Why look to material from the 1940s onwards, when what is most concerning is the recent downward trend in child and youth literacy in Sweden? This is not an historical study, *per se*. However, as Rose points out in *Governing the Soul*, "Foucault's own work shows that we can question our present certainties – about what we know, who we are, and how we should act – by confronting them with their histories" (1999a, p.x). Foucault was vitally concerned with what he called "histories of the present" (see Roth 1981).

All studies are subject to limitations. Resources of time and space are usually considered unmentionable limitations, as they suggest rather an 'excuse' for why a study is not as 'good' or thorough as it could (and should) have been. Nevertheless, such limitations exist – if they did not, the master's thesis might easily become a doctoral thesis, a doctoral thesis a life's work, and so on. A great deal of

material has been produced in relation to the SOU reports which I have chosen – e.g. interim reports, newspaper articles, television debates – which would undoubtedly have made for fascinating empirical material, and would, naturally, have lent another dimension to my analysis and conclusions, possibly (or even most likely) producing different results than those I present here.

Previous research

Governmentality studies as an approach may not be as prevalent in 'literacy studies' as in other areas, but its popularity has been increasing in recent times. Bronwyn Davies in her work on gender and literacy has made use of a number of Foucauldian concepts, amongst these, governmentality, in order to problematise issues in education and gender. A representative example of her work is to be found in her article "Gender economies: literacy and the gendered production of neoliberal subjectivities" (2007). In this article she addresses the subject of boys' apparent disadvantage in the school system and their alleged need for male role-models in order to make them feel comfortable in Britain's now largely 'feminised' education system. She challenges the homogenization of the categories 'boys' and 'girls', and points to how great the differences *within* these groups are. In fact, a great deal of what she discusses early on in this article refutes much of Johan Unenge's (2014b) recent, popularly-written article on fathers and sons, reading practices, and school results, where the necessity for a male role-model is emphasised, as is the notion that boys can no longer compete with girls at school, largely as a result of unsatisfactory reading practices amongst their male role-models[4] – can a trend determining the 'feminisation' of reading be detected in popular thought? Davies' work is of interest to this thesis, primarily due to her broad, critical standpoint – she looks insistently at the basic categories used in debates, and picks these apart before introducing Rose's conceptualisation of governmentality as "ruling through freedom" (i.e. the Foucauldian notion of the self-disciplining individual).

In a recent doctoral thesis on literacy and the use of literacy testing for employability and the statistical definition of literacy 'levels' and capable, autonomous, literate subjects in a Canadian context, Tannis Atkinson (2013) makes use of a governmentality studies perspective. Here literacy is considered a 'form of

[4] Although my comments here refer to a popular article and not to research per se, it is useful to point out that Johan Unenge, a well-known author of children's books, was also chosen by the Swedish Arts Council (*Kulturrådet*) as Sweden's first Reading Ambassador, or Children's Laureate (*läsambassadör*) for the period 2011–2013. He also holds a chair in the Swedish Academy of Children's Literature (*barnboksakademien*) (Unenge 2014a). In that sense, he can be considered a government-appointed 'expert' on reading in a Swedish public context, embodying precisely the form of subjectivity – as expert – that Rose refers to as a key element of an authoritative expert culture.

conduct' and its analysis is thought to lend insight into what various 'problematisations' might produce in terms of subjects and forms of power (see *The dimensions of governmentality* above). Political rationality at the level of government is, therefore, of interest. In some respects, the use of governmentality studies in Atkinson's thesis is not dissimilar to mine, although the aims and focus of the thesis are unrelated. I am, however, unconvinced that literacy (as an analytical concept) should be viewed as a form of conduct, despite its presupposition of subjective agency. Rather, I would argue that it is more fruitful to view it as a set of governing techniques produced by political rationality, whose purpose is to *shape* desirable conduct.[5]

It is also worth looking at the widespread use of governmentality studies perspectives in educational research. The relationship between learning, the physical and institutional aspects of the school, and a disciplinary form of power is particularly well-covered, as is, in more recent years, governmentality. As a result, such studies speak to the pedagogic, the institutional, and the power relations discernible in, for example, practices of literacy promotion, and are of interest to this thesis. See, for the purpose of comparison, Michael A. Peters et al. (2009) handbook on childhood and adult education, power and governmentality, and Stephen J. Ball's earlier offering on power, knowledge and education from a Foucauldian theoretical perspective (1990). Ball's text, although over twenty years old, is still considered a key text in critical education studies today, with Ball himself amongst the most prominent scholars of education and Foucauldian conceptualisations of (often, but not only) disciplinary power. Other prominent scholars, such as historical sociologist Bruce Curtis, offer interesting insights into the politics of population, educational history and governmentality (2012; 2002). Perhaps one of the most relevant aspects of Curtis' work, in terms of this thesis, is his thinking on the centrality of statistics as a technique for 'control' and governance at the level of the population. See, in particular, Curtis' chapter "The 'Reality of the Representation'" (2002, pp.197–234) on the population census. This chapter inspires ways of thinking about the purpose and use of the compilation of statistics, and upon what basis the perceived need for such a compilation might rely. I find this interesting primarily as an example of the development of governmental technologies (techniques, tools, strategies), on the basis of a particular political rationality – that is, a politics of representation, whereby a population is decided upon and comes into being through political definition, and is then administered through various techniques, as a "knowable community", as Curtis puts it (2002, p.306ff.).

Important work has been (and is being) done at the intersection between cultural studies and Foucauldian theory, some of which proves relevant for this the-

[5] Compare Atkinson's understanding of literacy as a form of conduct with, for example, Alloway and Gilbert's article on boys' literacy, where literacy is thought to become "a domain of knowledge and a *set of technologies*" (1997 my emphasis).

sis. Jack Z. Bratich et al.'s anthology (2003), in particular Tony Bennett's chapter "Culture and Governmentality", provides insight into the role of governmentality studies in the cultural studies arena (a rather contested one, according to Bennett). However, a reading of this chapter also usefully makes an important distinction between cultural studies as a field in its own right, and the 'study of culture' using supposedly 'outside' perspectives.

Equally interesting for a thesis concerned with *Swedish* political thinking and government strategies with regard to literacy are studies in reading, literacy promotion, and cultural politics set in a Swedish context. Anders Frenander et al. (2013; 2012; 2011) are amongst Sweden's most prominent critics and analysts of cultural politics and provide, amongst other things, useful historical perspectives on the concept of culture in Swedish politics and society at large. Similarly, Barbro Westlund's doctoral thesis (2013) is of interest. She describes discursive aspects of reading comprehension assessment in Swedish and Canadian schools – as Rose points out in his work, there are clearly discursive aspects of governmentality, although what have been called 'discursive practices' in early Foucauldian theory (see Foucault 1977), are expanded upon, and termed 'governmental technologies' through the lens of governmentality studies. Another recent doctoral thesis (Klockar Linder 2014) on cultural politics and its formation – politically and conceptually – is of relevance, particularly due to the author's focus upon the evolving definition of the term 'culture' and political relations surrounding it over time.

Finally, in relation to all the studies presented above, one can pose the question: is a governmentality study of SOUs centred upon the concept of literacy, a cultural study, a study of culture, a study of cultural politics, a study of education and/or institutions of learning, something else, all of these, or none of the above? I would venture the answer: none of the above. As mentioned earlier, I explore the concept of literacy, its definition(s) and representation in the context of Public State Inquiries, with the intention of outlining examples of political rationality and, to the extent possible, governmental technologies, according to a Nikolas Rose-inspired governmentality studies perspective. No more, no less. This does not make previous research into culture, cultural politics, literacy, learning, schools, and so on, any less valuable to the writing of this thesis. In fact, it makes elements of these all the more relevant, if only to exemplify Rose's descriptions of dimensions of governmentality.

PART II

An overview of the empirical material

The following documents were selected for analysis. They are final reports (in Swedish, *slutbetänkande* or *huvudbetänkande*) of significant Public State Inquiries into reading, books, culture, literature, libraries and education, all of which contain important points and reflections on literacy, some of which are explicit and others implicit.

SOU 1949:28 Folk- och skolbibliotek: Betänkande och förslag avgivet av folkbibliotekssakkunniga – 181 pages.

SOU 1952:23 Bokutredningen: Betänkande avgivet av särskilda sakkunniga inom ecklesiastikdepartementet – 315 pages.

SOU 1974:5 Boken: Litteraturutredningens huvudbetänkande. 1968 års litteraturutredningen (L 68) – 498 pages.

SOU 1984:23 Folkbibliotek i Sverige: Betänkande av folkbiblioteksutredningen – 244 pages.

LÄS! Rapport från 1982 års bokutredning – 272 pages.

SOU 1984:30 Läs mera! Slutbetänkande av 1982 års bokutredning – 169 pages.

SOU 1997:108 Att lämna skolan med rak rygg: om rätten till skriftspråket och om förskolans och skolans möjligheter att förebygga och möta läs- och skrivsvårigheter – 517 pages.

SOU 1998:134 Läsarna och demokratin: ett brev till det läsande Sverige – 62 pages.

SOU 2012:65 Läsandets kultur: Slutbetänkande av litteraturutredningen – 627 pages.

SOU 2013:58 Lättläst: Betänkande av lättlästutredningen – 145 pages.

The list of empirical material I began with was far longer and could doubtlessly have been even more extensive. I could shorten it only when I had surveyed the material and as I honed my selection criteria according to scope and aim of the thesis, along with my chosen theoretical perspective. Please see section *A note on*

empirical material, selection and limitations in Part I of this thesis for a description of the original selection criteria. Several of the interim reports produced as part of these Public State Inquiries were especially interesting, among these *LÄS! Rapport från 1982 års bokutredning* (Petri 1983). Another short report from the Inquiry on democracy (i.e. *Demokratiutredningen*) also seemed relevant to my study: *SOU 1998:134 Läsarna och demokratin – ett brev till det läsande Sverige: Demokratiutredningens skrift nr 8*. These are the only two exceptions to my initial selection criteria. Reasons for including these are given under the relevant sections below.

The act of 'reading'

In her doctoral thesis, sociologist Catrin Lundström (2007) discusses a multiple method approach to analysing her interview material. One of her methods involve a reading of her interview transcripts both 'lengthways' and across their 'breadth' – in other words, she analyses each interview from start to finish, considering it, in and of itself, as an empirical whole. She also analyses her interviews collectively, as a unit, picking out and exploring recurring themes, differences and similarities across interview transcripts. Her approach to analysing her empirical material inspires the two-fold analytical approach I take in this thesis, although the material itself has been generated and collected in a completely different manner, and according to other criteria, than Lundström's.

To borrow a pair of useful terms from linguistics, I read my material both *synchronically* and *diachronically*. By 'synchronically', I mean that I read each of my selected SOU reports as an empirical unit unto itself – I explore it as a singular object, albeit a product of its time and place, seeking traces of political rationality and suggestions of governmental technologies, according to one, or more, of Rose's 'dimensions of governmentality' where appropriate. This offers insight into tensions and points of interest in the material at a *static* point in time. By 'diachronically', I mean that I read the SOU reports from 1949 to 2013 as a collective body of empirical material, seeking the same elements mentioned above, but across time, from the earliest to the most recent SOU report of relevance. I argue that a diachronic reading of the material offers the opportunity to outline the *evolution* of political thought on literacy and closely-related concepts, thus tracing its history of the present – to borrow Foucault's famous turn of phrase (see Roth 1981). In turn, the diachronic reading is usefully intertwined with a broader concluding discussion on the political treatment of literacy (and related terms where applicable) and is therefore placed in Part III of this thesis.

This describes the act of 'reading' as I have chosen to carry it out. It does not, however, describe how I organise and write up my analytical results: rather, this is done thematically, according to Rose's 'dimensions'[6] and other crucial aspects of Rose's elaboration of a governmentality studies perspective, where appropriate (as discussed in Part I).

Synchronic reading: focussing on each document in turn

SOU 1949:28

The primary focus of the SOU report *Folk- och skolbibliotek: betänkande och förslag avgivet av Folkbibliotekssakkunniga* (1949) is on state funding of the Swedish public and school library system. In the first few lines of the SOU, one encounters two Swedish terms, both corresponding to the English word 'expert': *sakkunnig* and *expert*[7], which, in turn relate to Rose's fourth dimension of governmentality: 'authorities' – who are these special advisors and experts? What do we know about them based on a reading of the SOU report? Very little, it would appear, apart from their occupations and involvement in various boards or councils. Nonetheless, their occupations are stated in the SOU report, presumably to lend them some authority through their assumed specialised and professional knowledge.

Using Rose's first dimension of governmentality, 'problematisations' as a starting point, I explore which phenomena are represented as problematic in this report, and what are the assumed consequences of such problems (to the extent that these consequences are described)? All the while, I keep in mind the issue of literacy, and how it is related to the constructed 'problems' in this text, if at all, directly and/or indirectly. The first problem I encounter is formulated early on in the text and relates to the unsatisfactory reach of the state-funded public and school library system. The problem was formulated as part of an earlier directive, from 6 December 1946, and is cited in the SOU report in order to provide the reader background information on the special advisors' assignment.

> Som en brist hos folbiblioteksväsandet har ansetts vara att biblioteksverksamheten icke når ut till landets alla delar. Många kommuner sakna ännu statsunderstödd biblioteksverksamhet,

[6] Rose's six 'dimensions of governmentality' are: "problematisations, explanations, technologies, authorities, subjectivities and strategies". For a description of each of these, please see *The dimensions of governmentality (studies)* in Part I of this thesis.

[7] In order to distinguish between these in my reading, I translate the term *sakkunnig* as 'special advisor' and *expert* as 'expert'. The translation should, hopefully, highlight the distinction between the two types of expert role described in the SOU. The special advisors are few; their role is, as the name suggests, to advise on the matter at hand. Experts are more numerous and are chosen from a wide variety of occupations and disciplines to support the work of the special advisors.

> och i åtskilliga kommuner där folkbibliotek äro upprättade är biblioteksverksamheten av obetydlig omfattning. Den beslutade nya kommunindelningen kan i detta avseende komma att medföra ett förbättrat utgångsläge. De sakkunniga synas emellertid böra undersöka, huruvida några ytterligare åtgärder kunna vidtagas för att skapa en biblioteksorganisation av omfattning att landets samtliga medborgare beredas så vitt möjligt lika möjligheter till lån av litteratur får såväl studier som förströelse (1949, p.6).

Unsurprisingly, where a 'problem' is formulated, a request related to another dimension of governmentality makes itself apparent – that is, 'technologies', Rose's third dimension, here in the shape of evaluation and intervention. We shall see later in this section on SOU 1949:28 what shape these 'technologies' take in the report. That state-funded public libraries are not yet present in every Swedish municipality, and that libraries funded in other ways in some of these municipalities are barely active, is considered a problem in need of the special advisors' attention, and they are requested to examine this situation and suggest improvements, in order to make it possible to provide citizens with *equal access*, as far as practicable, to literature for both leisure and study. In other words, indirectly stated, it is also considered problematic that there are Swedish citizens who do not have the opportunity to borrow literature for personal or study use. Why this *access* to literature is considered important, and the lack of it problematic, is initially explained as part of an historical overview (see further along this section for more on 'explanations'). An example is given in reference to the establishment of Church of Sweden parish libraries (*sockenbibliotek*), which (we are informed in the SOU report) were thought to be so important for maintaining knowledge acquired in school, and for the promotion of educational formation (*bildning*) according to a Christian perspective – "en sann kristelig bildning" – that they were mentioned in the public school statute (*folkskolestadga*) of 1842. The political view that the activity and availability of libraries and access to collections of serviceable books significantly impact popular education (*folkbildning*) efforts was thus consolidated in law, although state funding of such efforts would not be approved until 1905 (1949, pp.9–10).

An important insight into political rationality – its representation of libraries and their purposes – is made when the special advisors rather critically accuse the state, in its failure to sufficiently fund libraries, of passivity, while simultaneously repeating a number of the ideals quoted from the 1946 directive cited earlier in this section. The view that libraries are important, but that state funding is not prioritised in the area is, however, most interesting, as are the special advisors' thoughts on the purpose of libraries:

> Man kan se saken från låntagarens sida och göra gällande, att folkbiblioteksväsandet har till uppgift att göra det möjligt för en låntagare att utan dröjsmål och utan alltför betungande formaliteter som lån erhålla den litteratur, han kan behöva för sin enskilda utbildning, sitt arbete och sin förströelse. Man kan se saken från samhällets sida och säga, att folkbiblioteksväsandets uppgift är att medverka till skapandet av kunniga och dugliga medborgare. Det är en angelägenhet för demokratien, att den enskilde medborgaren fritt kan bilda sig en mening angående de olika förhållanden, som han möter. Det är en angelägenhet

> för de statsmakter som uppdragit riktlinjerna för skolans fostrande arbete, att medborgaren även efter skoltidens slut kan på egen hand fullfölja sitt kunskapsinhämtande och sin yrkesutbildning med hjälp av bibliotekets böcker. Det är en angelägenhet för samma statsmakter, att den vetenskapliga forskningens resultat skall nå fram till var och en, som har möjlighet att nyttiggöra dem i ena eller andra avseendet. Det kan slutligen med skäl betraktas som ett statligt intresse, att medborgarna erhåller tillgång till god och sund förströelseläsning, som kan ge fritiden ett värdefullt innehåll (1949, p.42).

Although the purpose of libraries (and for that matter, indirectly, of the act of reading) is said here to support lifelong learning and leisure, professional training, and the promotion of democratic ideals – no small feat – there is no *direct* reference to a relationship between literacy, in the sense of an ability to read, or to understand what one is reading, and the role of libraries. The relationship here is more clearly between *access* to libraries and 'appropriate' ("god och sund") literature and the ideals just mentioned. Literacy remains unaddressed in any explicit way in relation to adults in this SOU report. There is an underlying assumption that (adult) citizens read, study and work, and there is a noticeable political desire (or 'aspiration' of government, as Rose calls it in relation to his dimension 'strategies') that citizens inform themselves on political matters, continue to educate themselves, spend their leisure time 'well', ensuring that they are knowledgeable enough to participate in a democratic society – all of which is assumed possible through the support of the public library system. However, what is considered 'time well spent' in terms of leisure, or what is contained in ideals of democratic participation, are undefined. Equally, and perhaps more significantly, the ability to read remains unaddressed and unproblematised as far as the adult population is concerned. In fact, a basic *desire* to read (*läsintresse*) is also assumed to exist amongst the adult population, as is seen in a reference to study circle libraries – these libraries, apart from their function in supporting the activity of study circles, "har nått ut i vidare kretsar och verksamt bidragit till att tillfredsställa också ett mera allmänt läsintresse. Inte minst har detta varit fallet på landsbygden..." (1949, p.59) It is clear that, according to expert appraisal, the role of public and study circle libraries is to support popular education (*bildningsarbete*) in a *willing* and *able* population of adult readers (1949, p.61).

The question of literacy and a desire to read arises far more directly, however, in relation to children, or more specifically, children who attend school or other institutions. An earlier public state inquiry into schooling (*skolutredningen* which was commissioned in 1940 and resulted in SOU 1946:15) is cited: "Ett villkor för lärjungarnas självverksamhet i skolarbetet är att de lära sig rätt använda böcker och att deras intresse för läsning på egen hand väckes och utvecklas", with an emphasis placed on finding what is termed good-quality, age-appropriate literature, as well as factual literature which supports the teaching of school subjects (1949, p.98). This reference to rousing a desire to read (and to read independently at that) is the first direct mention to reading promotion in this report, and it is placed in the context of state funding of school libraries. In other words, it is assumed that

children are not as willing or able to read as their adult counterparts are thought to be. In fact, the authors of the SOU report (the special advisors, experts on libraries and funding) go on to make the point that children's reading should not only be encouraged, but also *supervised* and *lead* by authorised, professional adults (i.e. not parents in the home), hinting at something unsatisfactory about the current state of children's reading: "Om lärjungarnas fria läsning anföres att den på lämpligt sätt bör övervakas och ledas av klasslärare och bibliotekarie i samarbete" (1949, p.99).

At this point, it is interesting to reflect upon Rose's fifth dimension of governmentality, 'subjectivities'. When an SOU, or other official document, is used as a governmental technology – see below for more on 'technologies' – by suggesting supervision and inculcation of particular, desirable behaviours in the population, it relies upon the willing compliance of certain key actors, and upon one or more forms of subjectivity. In the case of the supervising librarian, there is an assumption that the librarian is an expert – an expert on reading, or on reading promotion – in relation to children. There might also be an assumption that the child is a 'technical subject', as Rose describes it – a subject willing to submit herself to various forms of evaluation and improvement, particularly to projects of self-evaluation and self-improvement. The SOU report from 1946 is referenced again in relation to children and young people at school (this time actually *as* future self-regulating citizens):

> I förslag till undervisningsplaner för fortsättningsskolan förutsätter skolutredningen väl utrustade bibliotek som hjälpmedel vid undervisningen, och värdet av att eleverna lär sig använda biblioteket och senare deltaga i frivilligt bildningsarbete betonas (1949, p.99).

Again, there is an assumption made that reading in the adult population is unproblematic, as long as children's (indirectly problematic) reading habits are supervised now, in order to shape them correctly for future use in popular education, and in consequence, to ensure a population of independent readers and lifelong learners. Here we are provided with clues to a particular line of political rationality linked to reading and libraries: these have a clear role in consolidating an educated and actively self-regulating population. Another excellent example of this political rationality is found on the following page:

> Skolbiblioteket har en viss andel i ansvaret för barnens läsförmåga. Det bör tillhandahålla bilderböcker, som stimulerar småbarnens lust att lära sig läsa, och böcker av lämplig svårighetsgrad, med vilkas hjälp barnen i lågklasserna kan öva upp sin läsfärdighet.
>
> Den mest givande av alla personliga vanor är vanan att läsa goda böcker. Denna vana bör väckas och grundläggas i skolbiblioteket liksom i det kommunala bibliotekets ungdomsavdelning. Bibliotekarien bör genom olika former av bokreklam, genom samtal med barnen och på andra sätt leda deras håg till den goda boken bort från de mindervärdiga litteraturalster, barn med förkärlek läser spontant. För vårt folks läsvanor torde goda skolbibliotek och intresserade, väl utbildade skolbibliotekarier få den största betydelsen (1949, p.100).

There is a clearer reference in this quote to children's problematic reading habits. The special advisors, in their role as experts, characterise the reading of certain 'less than desirable' material as something which children seem naturally attracted to – a habit which the librarian should use a variety of strategies to reform. Rose discusses governmental 'strategies' (his sixth, and final, dimension of governmentality) in terms of a confluence of political aims, current ideology, expertise and reforms. I would argue that the encouragement of the librarian to employ various techniques for promoting 'suitable' books, is a good example of this dimension of governmentality – it demonstrates political views on reading and on popular education, as well as suggestions for reforming undesirable reading behaviour, all of which are underpinned by the special advisors' authority, itself consolidated by their (assumed) expert knowledge.

In relation to this 1949 SOU report and Rose's third dimension, 'technologies', one might say that governmental technologies take many shapes and are oftentimes multi-layered. Technologies are also closely related to another of Rose's dimensions of governmentality, 'explanations', which prompts me to consider what the role of an historical overview in an SOU report might be. In the case of tracing political rationality *beyond* this report, I can ascertain that the public school statute mentioned here gives clues to a particular political rationality – i.e. the view that popular education and access to libraries and their collections are intimately connected. On another level, *within* the SOU report itself, reference to the public school statute is made as part of a collection of techniques for governance, as is the special advisors' entire presentation of the history of Swedish public and school libraries (see chapter 2). The historical overview, and all statutes or other official state documents mentioned here, along with every table and chart contained in the SOU report, can certainly be viewed as tools for strengthening the special advisors' arguments on access to libraries, school-based learning and popular education which permeate the report. Equally, reference to what other experts, in other circumstances, have had to say about the purpose of libraries, is a good example of authority in the form of expertise and its relationship with governmental technologies (e.g. see how the special advisors in the SOU at hand refer in chapter 2 to the comments of the special advisors in SOU 1924:5 on popular education and the role of the library). A third level where techniques for governance are visible is in the form, or genre, of the SOU report itself – it can be wielded, due in part to its problematising, explanatory and evaluative assignment, and in part to the authority lent to it by the status of its expert authors and its state sanction, as a tool for (further) intervention. Writing SOU reports might be thought of as a 'practice of intervention' to borrow Rose's terminology. Chapter 7 of the SOU report, for example, offers a summary of the special advisors' suggestions, as developed, underpinned and argued for throughout the entire report (1949, pp.150–168).

To summarise a number of representations of literacy in this SOU, it is clear that there is an assumption that all adult citizens can, and are willing to, read, and that the reading of books is unquestionably related to activities surrounding life-long learning and popular education. Reading ability, or comprehension, in the adult population is thus neither questioned nor problematised here. When it comes to children and reading, however, clear problems are formulated: children's reading ought to be both encouraged by active strategies and supervised by a well-qualified school librarian in collaboration with a teacher. It is also thought beneficial that children be steered away from the more unsuitable literature which they are deemed almost 'naturally' drawn to. It is particularly interesting that adults' ability to read is not questioned, but that ideals about 'suitable' or 'appropriate' literature are hinted at – this is even more markedly so where children's reading habits are concerned.

SOU 1952:23

This report, entitled *Bokutredningen: betänkande avgivet av särskilda sakkunniga inom ecklesiastikdepartementet* (1952) was chosen despite its explicit focus on literature rather than on literacy *per se*.

> Genom beslut den 26 juni 1948 bemyndigade Kungl. Maj:t chefen för ecklesiastikdepartementet att tillkalla högst åtta sakkunniga för att inom departementet biträda med utredning och avgiva förslag rörande åtgärder för att ge större spridning åt god litteratur samt rörande författarnas ställning och villkor (1952, p.7).

In this SOU report, the special advisors are assigned the task of investigating, and providing suggestions for improvements to, both the distribution of good literature and authors' current situation and (working) conditions. I am struck by the use of the qualifier 'good' in relation to literature. What counts as good literature? What does good mean in the context of this report? The promotion of "önskvärda böcker" and "litterär kvalité" is mentioned just a few pages later, and is linked quite directly to an earlier questioning[8] of the state's interest in both society and popular education (1952, p.10). The purpose of the investigation is also a point of interest – for what reason does the Swedish state want an improvement in the distribution of literature? Another noteworthy point is publisher Kaj Bonnier's involvement as a special advisor – an expert amongst experts – in this public state inquiry into the status and condition of books and their authors. Bonnier, one rather safely assumes, represents the interests of book publishers, just as author C.E. Englund is present as a special advisor, representing the interests of Sweden's authors. Nevertheless, there is potentially a significant set of power relations at play in this (as

[8] It is probable that the special advisors are referring to the inquiry which resulted in SOU 1947:51, *Betänkande om granskning och antagning av läroböcker* (1947), although I cannot be sure.

with any) constellation of special advisors – the representation of financial and/or corporate interests in political discussions about the social and educational impact of book distribution and cultural mediation is, I would argue, a challenge to the *authority* of a kind of expert knowledge which has been established in a delimited professional field. At the very least, it expands the definition of an expert. Although I cannot claim, based on a reading of my empirical material, that a neoliberal ideology had established itself in 1950's Swedish political thinking, it is worth asking whether or not the act of conferring 'expert status' upon publishers and authors reveals traces of an early seeping of corporate influence into political affairs. I begin my reading with these issues and questions, which I hypothetically relate to literacy, and Rose's dimensions of governmentality, in mind.

A directive issued 26 June 1948 to the special advisors involved in this public state inquiry is cited in the report and states the following:

> En kulturell upprustning, som syftar till att höja vårt folks bildningsstandard och ge de andliga värdena en framskjuten plats, kan icke förbigå litteraturens centrala roll i kulturlivet. Boken är fortfarande den främsta kulturspridaren men når tyvärr endast begränsade skikt av vårt folk. Man har bland annat ansett sig kunna påvisa, att var tredje svensk står helt utanför böckernas värld, detta trots att den svenska bokproduktionen, i förhållande till folkmängd och språkområde, är större än de flesta andra länders. Detta tillstånd har givetvis många orsaker, däribland bristande läslust och outvecklade kulturella intressen över huvud taget (1952, p.11).

Cultural regeneration, with a wider distribution of literature as its linchpin, would appear to be an 'aspiration' of government and part of what Rose defines as a strategic element of governmentality – again, a linking of governmental aims, reforms, expert knowledge and ideology. The book is clearly considered a primary mediator of culture, and thus a reference to the number of Swedish people (adults?) who are considered strangers to the 'world of books', despite the fact that Sweden publishes more books per head of population than most other countries, is of interest. The situation whereby a desire to read is low, or non-existent, amongst a third of the population is formulated and represented here as problematic, and is attributed to a lack of interest in reading and in culture. Access to literature is also considered problematic in this SOU – books were being published, but the chain of distribution was flawed somewhere along the line. *Ability* to read is not problematised, but a *willingness* to do so is, as is the question of *access* to books. Further along in this first chapter, the high cost of purchasing books is problematised (how are Swedish people of more modest means to afford 'worthwhile' literature for their own homes?) and the special advisors in this Public State Inquiry have their assignment clarified as follows:

> De sakkunnigas huvuduppgift blir således att utreda, vilka åtgärder som från det allmännas sida böra vidtagas för att såsom ett led i den eftersträvade kulturella upprustningen göra värdefull litteratur tillgänglig för alla svenska hem (1952, p.12).

What constitutes "värdefull litteratur" is not specified explicitly here, nor what makes for "den goda litteraturen." It is merely stated that a cultural political view of reading as a key element of cultural regeneration is inevitable where there is a desire to promote such literature and its distribution. Magazines, also called 'weeklies' are, however, discussed in 'strict literary terms' as "enkla produkter" in comparision to books (1952, p.16). In other words, (certain) books are categorised as 'good literature', while magazines are not.

There is a more explicit discussion of the reading habits of children and young people in this SOU report, possibly due to the fact that there is a belief, mentioned in several places throughout the report that "det [är] ett allmänt intresse att goda bokvanor utbildades bland medborgarna redan i ungdomsåren." (1952, p.13) Additionally, the question of children, or youth in school-to-work transition, as future citizens, or citizens in formation, is broached later in the report, and then in relation to an ideal of lifelong learning and access to 'culture' through the book (1952, p.171). Rose discusses childhood as the most intensely governed stage of life, and the understanding of children as *future* citizens, in *Governing the Soul* (1999a, p.123). Karen Smith, inspired by Rose's perspective, describes the governing of children (or, in fact, anyone in a liberal democracy) as "predicated upon the willingness and capacity of autonomous individuals to choose to exercise responsible self-government" (2012, p.25). These notions tie in well with Alan Prout's critical questioning of the late modern static dualism which positions adults as active, participatory 'beings' and children as passive 'becomings' (2004; see also Prout 2000). In this 1952 SOU report, children and young adults are conceived of as 'becomings', citizens of the future, and as such are found at the receiving end of particularly intensive attempts at governance. The school as public (i.e. non-domestic) institution has, through established pedagogic and other administrative practices, enormous potential for direct influence over children and youth. School can certainly be viewed as a powerful governmental technology, both as an institution and, with that, as bearer of a set of evaluative and reformative practices. It is, through (and alongside) the corresponding governmental technologies of the SOU report itself, and its suggested reforms, strongly implicated in this state effort at promoting reading of *books* specifically (1952, p.169). In fact, the school with the aid of the library, book reading, and the success of popular education are inextricably linked in this SOU – offering a clear example of a conflation of governmental aspirations and plans, reforms, expertise on culture, books, and citizenship, and liberal democratic ideology (1952, p.172).

An interesting point is made on adults who prefer to read youth literature. The preference is considered problematic and is taken as an indication of underdeveloped literary taste and less desirable reading habits (1952, p.266). This reflects an earlier argumentation in the report suggesting the important role the school, in combination with library visits, plays in aiding young people to familiarise them-

selves with adult books and thus progress beyond a more 'primitive' stage of reading development (1952, p.169). It is difficult to say whether this problematising of adult preferences for youth literature is a devaluation of youth literature in itself, or more about establishing an ordered progression into adulthood and, in consequence, the differentiation of adult and childhood cultural preferences. Again, there is a sense of that static child-adult dualism discussed in Prout (2004).

It is not only (certain) adults' preferred reading material which is problematised in this report. As mentioned previously, children and young people's literary choices are also framed as problematic.

> Läsningen av böcker har – liksom fallet är med de vuxnas bokläsning – en konkurrent i annan läsning, främst av tidningar, tidskrifter, magasin och liknande. För vuxna läsare kan sådan läsning betraktas som en huvudsakligen harmlös fritidssysselsättning, lätt verklighetsflyende, om man så vill, men för barnens och ungdomens del är förhållandet måhända annorlunda. Somliga uppfattar denna slags läsning som direkt skadlig – mentaliteten bakom de tecknade serierna är understundom direkt sadistisk eller brutal, novellmagasinen står ibland på ett halvpornografiskt plan, och man har sökt härleda vissa yttringar av ungdomsbrottslighet ur den förtäckta glorifiering av förbrytare och andra illgärningsmän, som ofta träder en okritisk läsekrets till mötes. [...] Det är svårt att utan mera ingående undersökningar på detta område få en uppfattning om det mer eller mindre skadliga ur mentalhygienisk synpunkt på detta slags läsning, men man torde utan vidare kunna konstatera, att seriemagasin och detektivhistorier av det slag det här är fråga om knappast bidrar till att utveckla den litterära smaken och urskillningsförmågan hos sin läsekrets. Ur denna synpunkt måste litteratur av denna art betraktas som en föga önsklig konkurrent till den mera värdefulla litteraturen (1952, p.267).

Children and young people are positioned as 'different' from adults – and less discerning consumers of culture. Some even consider the reading of weeklies, newspapers or other magazines as damaging, or dangerous, for younger readers. I would put forward the argument that a problematisation of this kind (i.e. based on an essentialist differentiation) allows for a justification of more explicit techniques for shaping behaviour than would be the case for those accepted as fully-fledged adult citizens. Furthermore, the quotes above clearly indicate an understanding of 'worthwhile' and 'good' literature and that which is undesirable. At no point, however, is literacy in the sense of an ability to read, an ability to understand what one is reading, or similar, discussed. It is a *will* to read, and *access* to the 'right' kind of reading material, which are focused upon throughout the report. The book as principal mediator of culture is central. Nevertheless, the political rationality which contributes to the production of the technologies of this report is apparent: books mediate a desirable form of culture, a culture which implies a process of *lifelong learning*[9] and the *democratic participation* of informed adult citizens. Similarly, a strategic linking of these ideological positions and governmental

[9] It has been claimed that the term 'lifelong learning', in Swedish, 'det livslånga lärandet' was coined as recently as the 1960s (Hansson 2012, p.55). However, a *political rationality* which idealises, and promotes, such ongoing processes of learning through popular education and individual efforts is observable long before that time – the earliest SOUs on popular education, and those that I analyse here, are examples of this.

aims, with the parallel technologies of the SOU report, the school, the library, and an aspiration to mass popular education, is visible here: all of which lays the ground for a growing political interest in literacy itself, as we shall see in subsequent SOU reports.

As a final point, Rose's technologies, that is those 'collections of techniques of judgement' used for evaluation and appraisal, and as a basis for the suggestion of reform, or aspects of reform, transformation, pedagogic efforts, are evident in this SOU, as one might expect. One of these is a study of the commercial distribution of books in Sweden at that time. Another is an enumeration of annual library loans. A third is an economic evaluation of the annual turnover of weekly publications. Patterns of consumption of newspapers, magazines and books are discussed and households are categorised according to social class. The purpose of presenting the results of these varied techniques of judgement is in itself an 'explanatory' one (see Rose's second dimension of governmentality). By this, I mean that the special advisors use such findings to strengthen both their position as experts and their authority to provide the reader with evidence of problematic phenomena, in this case, the seemingly limited interest in reading (books) amongst the Swedish (adult) population. Ultimately, it allows the special advisors to venture suggestions for transforming this undesirable situation[10] - which they do. One suggestion, in agreement with the special advisors of the 1949 SOU discussed in this thesis, is to better fund and organise the public library system, particularly their children and youth departments. There are multiple dimensions of governmentality involved here: firstly, by publicly agreeing with special advisors, or other 'experts', the special advisors writing this 1953 SOU report confer some kind of mutual authority upon their colleagues, and by extension, they use this authority to validate their own suggestions. The suggestions for change or reform are a form of governmental technology – fund the libraries! – and at the risk of repetition, the SOU, by its potential use in future policy making, is in itself such a technology. Its suggestions may well have political and social effects, as may the SOU as an evaluative document, with the intention to suggest reform, in its own right.

[10] This is not to suggest, in any way, that the special advisors as individual human beings do this knowingly or willingly. Nothing I have read in Rose's or Foucault's work suggests that expert subjectivity relies upon a conscious operationalisation of political rationality in the form of such technologies. Most likely, each special advisor believes himself to be of great service to the people of Sweden – and perhaps he is. Governmentality studies, as a close relative of Foucault's genealogy, involve an act of description, which can be perceived as a critical (questioning) one, without necessarily being a *criticism* (although it can also function as such). Foucault states, for example, that "critique is the movement by which the subject gives himself the right to question truth on its effects of power and question power on its discourses of truth" (1997b, p.47; see Rose & Miller 2008, p.19 for more on their view of governmentality studies as a "genealogical observation").

SOU 1974:5

This SOU, *Boken: Litteraturutredningens huvudbetänkande* (1974), is the result of a significant inquiry undertaken in 1968 into the position and status of literature (specifically, 'the book') in Swedish society. Its aim is formulated as follows:

> …att allsidigt prova vad mån "existerande villkor för framställning och spridning av böcker motsvarar behoven av kvalificerad information och litterärt utbyte." En västentlig uppgift är därvid att föreslå initiativ i syfte att vinna nya grupper för läsning av god litteratur (1974, p.93)

Summarised, this aim becomes "att skapa bättre möjligheter för fler människor att läsa god litteratur" (1974, p.94) – in other words, to offer more people better *access* to good literature. While the special advisors involved in the production of this SOU report state that they prefer not to offer universal criteria for defining 'good' literature, they nevertheless provide some definition in the form of a 'good'/'bad' dichotomy.

> Vi delar den grundsyn som kommer till uttryck i utredningsdirektiven, nämligen att det finns en god, eller som det heter, "kvalificerad och kulturellt värdefull" litteratur och en dålig "spekulativ och torftig." Självfallet bör ett statligt litteraturstöd utformas så, att det ej kommer litteratur av det senare slaget till del (1974, p.93).

An example of this latter type of literature is given on the following page: the cheap, mass-produced "trivialliterattur" which is made available through Pressbyrån's newsagents and other places. The special advisors in this SOU problematise this question of what they deem to be poor, or undesirable, reading material in relation to adult readers, as seen here, but also in relation to children at preschool ("skräplitteratur", see p.251), and adults with reading disabilities. Too few easy-to-read (*lättlästa*) books of good quality are produced, according to the special advisors, a problem which is represented as constituting an obstacle for *including* adults with reading disabilities in the activity of reading (good) books (1974, p.95).

Children, especially those of preschool age, are said to require access to a good selection of books at their own playgroups and schools, in order to guard them from 'rubbish literature'. One particular governmental technology suggested in this latter case is that of systematic, institutional collaboration between playgroups and libraries – it is thought that this might counteract the risks of children's exposure to less than desirable literature. Books available to children in their own places of play and learning should be "många, varierade och kvalitativt fullgoda" (1974, p.251). As far as older children are concerned, another technology is suggested, based on professional (and thus expert) authority: the school librarian (often a practicing teacher) and class teachers must cooperate with one another in order to motivate pupils to read, as well as to stimulate and arouse pupils' interest in reading. It is suggested that only class teachers have, or can have,

an insight into pupils' interests, maturity levels, and reading ability and needs. (S)he may not have sufficient knowledge of suitable books for leisure-time reading, however, and the (preferably full-time employed) librarian should fulfil that role (1974, pp.254–256). Again, *access* to appropriate literature is seen as central to good reading choices and, in this case, it is suggested that it be achieved through a strategy of professional collaboration.

Primarily, the special advisors in this SOU report see increased production of high quality books, and wider distribution of these, as necessary in achieving the SOU's aim of involving new groups of people in the activity of reading. There is thus a clear political ideal of *inclusion* discernible in this SOU, in line with its directive and aim, but this ideal (or 'aspirational' element of political rationality) is also a dual-sided one: in other words, it is formulated hand-in-hand with an ideal of 'good' literature, a literature which is 'culturally valuable'. A consequence of this is the appearance of a strong desire to strictly limit the population's taste in what is considered 'rubbish' literature of poor quality and to encourage the reading of what experts define as good literature.

There are many other suggestions made in this SOU for increased *access* to good literature, and thus increased inclusion of all social groups in reading, e.g. longer library opening hours, lower book prices, better distribution strategies. Apart from adults who are considered unaccustomed readers, or who read 'undesirable' or less culturally valuable (or valid) materials, there is great emphasis on three specific groups in this SOU report, two of which have already been mentioned here and which tend to be viewed as homogenous: children, adults with reading disabilities, and those with a minority language background (*språkliga minoriteter*)[11]. In the case of people with reading disabilities and those with a non-Swedish linguistic background, an aspiration beyond, but linked to, inclusion is discernible: *diversity*. That is, diversity in 'good quality' reading material in Swedish (easy-to-read material should be more widely available – see p.95) and in other languages (in order to ensure non-Swedish speakers' *active participation* in Swedish cultural life – see p.261). The special advisors wish to be very clear that physical access to books alone does not guarantee a person's ability to assimilate the meaning of its contents, hence the SOU report's argument for a diversity of publications. It is assumed that these 'categories' of people most likely cannot read 'standard', 'good quality' Swedish literature – described as the opposite of Pressbyråns "triviallitteratur" earlier – and there is a clear formulation and prob-

[11] The term 'linguistic minority' is something of a misnomer in terms of the SOU report's discussion in chapter 8. 'Linguistic minority' is meant there as an equivalent to the term 'immigrant', which is not strictly correct, given the fact that non-immigrant linguistic minorities, such as the Sami people, are also present in Sweden. Sami people and their languages are certainly mentioned in the SOU, but the overwhelming perception of a linguistic minority is framed in terms of immigration, identity, cultural and linguistic assimilation, and active participation in the cultural life of the 'majority population' of Sweden (*majoritetsbefolkningen*) – see chapter 8 of SOU 1974:5 for more).

lematisation of literacy in this. As such, it points to a perception that reading and reading comprehension are contingent upon linguistic and other social, educational and/or intellectual conditions. School, as an institution, is assigned a great deal of responsibility in dealing with the problem of young 'non-readers' (1974, p.251 ff.). However, in terms of adults the much more diffuse 'society' is charged with improving the worst aspects of this situation (1974, p.261).

> [U]tredningen [vill] för tydlighetens skull betona att den är medveten om skillnaden mellan ett verks fysiska tillgänglighet och individens möjligheter att tillgodogöra sig det. Det förstnämnda kan åstadkommas genom litteraturpolitiska åtgärder av olika slag, det sistnämnda är en följd av individuella förutsättningar och samhälleliga åtgärder av delvis helt annan och mera långsiktig natur (1974, p.97).

The elements of political rationality outlined above (access, inclusion, participation and diversity) are repeated in greater clarity in chapter 10 of this SOU report, as are a number of the governmental technologies shaped by this rationality – specifically those related to reading promotion (*läsfrämjande*) and reading support (*specialstöd*). Chapter 10 is, as are SOUs and their subsequent reports in general, an excellent example of Rose's third dimension of governmentality – 'technologies'. According to Rose's theoretical perspective, the chapter can be viewed as a tool of judgement (in the form of a summary of the special advisory group's findings) and reform (in the shape of suggestions for improvements to the problematic situation that contemporary conditions for producing and distributing books did not meet the population's information or literary needs). The chapter can thus be viewed as a tool, a governmental technology, which is a *practical expression* of a political rationality bearing ideals and aspirations of access, inclusion, diversity and active participation, as previously demonstrated[12].

Briefly, and in order to illustrate the preceding findings, in terms of improving practices of reading promotion and reading support, chapter 10 offers the following suggestions:

> Vill man vinna *nya grupper* i samhället för läsning av god litteratur måste ytterligare krav ställas på stödets inriktning. För att tillgodose detta syfte bör stödet:
> -ge den uppsökande, externa biblioteksverksamheten väsentligt bättre resurser,
> -möjliggöra utgivning och spridning av goda och samtidigt någorlunda lättlästa böcker till låga priser,
> -ge skolan bättre möjligheter att fostra eleverna till läsning av god litteratur,
> -stimulera folkrörelsens medverkan i läsfrämjande aktiviteter av olika slag,
> -främja utgivning av s k LL-litteratur i vidaste mening (1974, p.289 emphasis in original).

[12] Although 'freedom of speech' (*yttrandefrihet*) is mentioned explicitly as an 'ideal' of this special advisory group, it is couched (equally explicitly) in terms of improved conditions for publishing less commercially-viable literature. As such, I do not see freedom of speech *in itself* as a political aspiration in this SOU report (see for example 1974, p.288). I see it rather as an expression of another aspect of political rationality: the 'diversity' (of publications) ideal discussed in the main thesis text above.

Children's current reading habits and literary taste, as well as what I term their reading futures, are problematised by the special advisory group in the following:

> ”Intresset för läsning och förmågan att läsa med urskillning och behållning grundläggs i barndomen. Bokbrist i barndomsmiljöerna och försummelser i den tidiga lästräningen kan för all framtid blockera tillträdet till litteraturen.” Så inleder en av utredningen tillsatt expertgrupp sitt förord till en studie av litteraturens roll i skolan [*Litteraturen i skolan, SOU 1973:1*]. Gruppen framhåller bl a *en* svårighet som lärarna under senare år ställts inför, nämligen det starkt ökade utbudet av trivialliteratur för barn och ungdom genom Pressbyråns kiosker och andra lättillgängliga försäljningsställen. Undermåliga och schablonartade bilderböcker och fabrikmässigt producerade serier av barn- och ungdomsböcker riskerar att ensidigt påverka barnens läsning och hämma deras smakutveckling (1974, pp.315–316 emphasis in original).

It is important to note the informal definition of less than desirable literature provided here. There is an inherent critique of mass-produced literature throughout this SOU report. This is considered especially damning when it comes to children's reading, however. Viewed in light of Prout's critical perspective on childhood, this particular concern about children's reading habits and literary taste relates to their future adulthood, and from Rose's point of view, their future citizenship (Prout 2004; Rose 1999a). What better way to shape ideal future citizens, and through them an ideal population, than to focus efforts of governance on children, through the apparatus of public institutions such as the school and the medical service, but also – and perhaps most significantly – through the apparatus of the family? (Rose 1999a, pp.123–134) Schools are advised, for example, to 'bring poetry to life' for children and young people with the help of actors, in addition to the authors' visits they already arrange. The special advisory group recommends extra funding from the Board of Education to make such activities possible. Due to such activities, the group suggests, the publishing of poetry may just increase. *Svenska barnboksinstitutet* (the Swedish Institute for Children's Books) is also an object for the inquiry's recommendations – certainly, as far as the *publication* and *distribution* of children and youth literature is concerned (1974, pp.348–360).

As a final point, it is interesting to note that many of the inquiry's recommendations are, apparently, more closely related to increasing the production and distribution of 'good quality' literature than determining the extent of literacy problems in Swedish society. Although the ability to read (*läsförmåga*), presumably including reading comprehension, is mentioned briefly in disparate sections of the SOU report, especially in relation to children, those with reading disabilities, and those with non-Swedish linguistic backgrounds, there is generally an implicit assumption that most people *can* read, but that their taste in literature has somehow been compromised by the abundance of cheap, accessible, mass-produced literature in society. This question of literary taste, expressed in terms of access, inclusion, active participation (the emphasis is on cultural, not political, life here) and diversity (in publications) is not an unusual one, given the stated aims of the SOU. Nevertheless, one can question whether or not aspirations of government are more

about shaping and, in effect, homogenising the public's literary taste than about genuinely seeking cultural participation, in the sense of a cultural *exchange*, from members of *all* sectors of society. It would certainly appear that the two-fold ideal involves 1) inviting 'minorities' to partake of some form of idealised 'majority' cultural experience, and 2) providing support for the maintenance of immigrants' mother tongues and 'home' cultures, rather than encouraging support for a broadening of imagined cultural, or in this case, literary interests. Friis Møller discusses the rhetoric of the 'democratization of culture', and what he views as the dissemination of the cultural preferences of the "few informed" to the population at large, in his doctoral thesis (2012, pp.104–105). Likewise, Magnus Persson makes the claim that despite cultural political aims to promote 'immigrant' cultures, a singular 'Swedish' cultural heritage is what ultimately counts in reality (2008) – see Part III of this thesis for further discussion on these, as well as on Rose's 'dividing practices' (elements of 'problematisations'), and potential processes of 'othering' and marginalisation in SOU reports (Said 2004; Bhabha 1990).

SOU 1984:23

This SOU, *Folkbibliotek i Sverige: betänkande av folkbiblioteksutredningen* (1984), is the final report of an Public State Inquiry, undertaken in 1980, into the Swedish public library system. A definition of the public library and its societal reach is made as follows:

> [F]olkbiblioteket är en unik resurs i kultur- och bildningsarbetet, för läsandet, för den fria tillgången till information, för utbildningen och för det lokala kulturlivet. Denna resurs är utan avgifter tillgänglig för alla och envar (1984, p.11).

The special advisors in this inquiry formulate a number of challenges to the work and future goals of the public library, some of which are viewed as more problematic than others. At any rate, the aims of the public library must, as with any public institution, eventually adapt to the exigencies of its time. The role and functions of the public library are summarised in the introduction to the SOU report, as are potential challenges to its aims and the work. I consider it useful background information to present that summary here.

Developments in media in the late 1970s – advances in computer and communications technology, the increasing use of databases rather than printed material, visual and audio media competing for patrons' attention, an ever-increasing flow of information – are claimed to make for a particular set of challenges for the public library. The dictates of increasing civic participation in the running of society, for example in the form of trustees' influence on decision-making, are thought to place demands on the public library to act as a local centre for information and the formation of opinion on societal matters. Further demands are placed on the public libraries due, it is argued, to improved educational standards

in the general population, as well as to the restructuring of working life. Substantial (*omfattande*) immigration and an increasingly multicultural (*mångkulturellt*) society are also presented as factors impacting the public library, due to the fact that Swedish immigration policy is based upon an aspiration towards supporting 'immigrant culture' (*invandrarkultur*). The public library is conceived of as an important tool in facilitating the preservation of immigrants' original languages and cultures. The public library is also considered a central figure in the promotion of local cultural life and a key technology in the realisation of cultural political aims. Its role in making knowledge and culture accessible to as many groups and individuals as possible is noted, as is its function in increasing public consciousness and *participation* in the 'democratic process' and processes of lifelong learning and popular education. Mention is made of the problematic economic situation of the times, which was thought to be a direct obstacle to the development of municipal projects (1984, pp.11–12). Against this background, a number of aims for the work of the public library are listed by the special advisory group as follows:

> Folkbiblioteket skall föra en kamp för boken och läsandet.
> Folkbiblioteket skall arbeta för en fri och jämlik tillgång till information.
> Folkbiblioteket skall bygga ut den uppsökande verksamheten.
> Folkbiblioteket skall särskilt uppmärksamma barns behov av böcker och läsning.
> (1984, p.12)

Perhaps of greatest relevance to the aims of this thesis, is the first of the aims mentioned in the quote above – the public library's combined 'struggle' for reading and 'the book'[13].

As is customary in a public inquiry, various governmental technologies are employed. In the case of reading, 'techniques of judgement' in the shape of reading habit studies (*läsvanestudier*) and those which examine habits of library use (*biblioteksvanor*), are implemented, their results briefly presented in the SOU report as a basis for both problematising certain behaviours, and for suggesting appropriate methods for transforming these into ideal ones. We are provided with a description of the results of these types of studies, and we learn that a quarter of the adult population in Sweden do not read books. Although it is stated that poor reading habits may be related to social, economic and geographical obstacles to public library use, the habit of not reading *any* books is attributed to individual, emotional, and psychological factors:

> Av utredningsresultaten att döma läser inemot en fjärdedel av den vuxna befolkningen inte böcker. För många är läsandet mödosamt och ovant. Ibland kan det också vara förknippat

[13] Having said this, political rationality related to literacy may be observed in seemingly disparate discussions, as has clearly been the case with the earliest SOU reports here.

> med olustiga minnen från en besvärlig skoltid. I det moderna samhället, med dess stora utbud av tryckt information, är dessa människor handikappade (1984, p.36).

The supremacy of the book over other forms of literature is a prominent feature of this argument – its position in society is thought to have been weakened in both school and in popular education (1984, p.39). Furthermore, it is interesting to note that the reading of books is linked to an individual's capacity to function well in 'modern society' and to develop language skills. To not read books is, in effect, to be disabled. This 'problematisation' made through equating the reading of books, specifically, with ability/disability is a very strong statement about the purpose, or effects, of literacy in the life of the individual, and by extension, in society.

What remedies for this social disability are presented? Increased contact with the public library is thought to be helpful – this should be achieved through attempts to:

> påverka och förändra människors attityder och värderingar men också att ge biblioteksarbetet en mer varierande inriktning. Aktuella undersökningar, t.ex. av arbetsplatspolitik, tyder på att nya verksamhetsformer och nya metoder faktiskt kan förändra läs- och biblioteksvanor, även bland vuxna. Sådan kunskap måste vara vägledande när folkbiblioteken väljer strategi inför framtiden (SOU 1984:23 1984, p.37).

It is worth noting that a transformation of people's reading and library use habits are equated here with their *attitudes* and *values*, the latter being far more difficult to define and, consequently, more challenging to impact through policy – but this is exactly what Rose means by 'governing the soul', and 'the governing of the private self'. Modern techniques of governance find ways, whether through the apparatus of the family or public institutions, via the subjectivity of the expert, the librarian, the parent, to – little by little – find routes to transform the most intimate aspects of human existence (Rose 1999a). To see this expressed so explicitly in a state-sanctioned report is somewhat unexpected, but no less fascinating than tracing more subtle expressions of this type of 'aspiration of government' through such documents. Similarly, the dual reference to governmental technologies in the form of 'undersökningar', and authority grounded in expert 'kunskap', are so clearly and openly expressed here, it is remarkable. Thus, a strand of political rationality is expressly stated as follows: people who do not read books represent a problem in modern society; their values, attitudes, and habits must be changed; and strategies for doing so must be developed according to the results of current studies and, by extension, expert knowledge. The role of the public library in reading promotion practices, and making books (and information generally) *accessible*, is presented as central to achieving this transformation in values and habits – "folkbiblioteket är vårt viktigaste instrument för att göra böcker tillgängliga och stimulera intresset för läsning" (1984, p.39).

Equality and *freedom* of access to information are also presented in this same section as particularly desirable in an increasingly 'computerised' society, where

the flow of information is greater by the day, and where not all members of society are equally comfortable or experienced with new information seeking practices – a question of *information literacy*. Access to literature is thus qualified by the terms 'equality' and 'freedom'. Paradoxically, it is noted in this SOU, that the public library has maintained collections of 'quality' literature in accordance with its ambitions to limit undesirable books, such as 'thrillers' (*spänning*) and those intended for 'entertainment' purposes (*underhållningslitteratur*). It is with seeming pride that the special advisors here report that the demand for such undesirable literature is greater than its supply in public libraries. They see this as a successful strategy on the public library's part to protect Swedish "skönlitteratur av hög kvalitet och inte slentrianmässigt låter sig styras av utbud och efterfrågan" (1984, p.53). The expert authority of the librarian is thus asserted with regard to 'good' literature. It is the tastes of the public, rather than the collection management practices of the librarian (or library as institution) which are deemed to require reform. The preceding quote demonstrates a public demand for literature and thus a *desire* to read, albeit the wrong literature, as far as the librarian, and other cultural gatekeepers (such as the special advisors of this SOU, the cultural politicians, etc.) are concerned. This allows for reflections upon acceptable and unacceptable *practices of literacy*, where choice of literature is a crucial factor.

Children's reading is treated separately from adults', a practice which is motivated by the argument that children's cultural needs are often forgotten or underfunded. There are not enough books in the public library's children and youth sections to meet demand or the needs of reading promotion (1984, p.70). Nevertheless, the public library is considered to have a major role in intervening in children's early reading practices through collaboration with schools and preschools.

> Det är viktigt att barnen tidigt kommer i kontakt med böcker […] I dagens samhälle utsätts barn mycket tidigt för ett massmedieutbud som innehåller många undermåliga produkter. Den bästa motvikten mot skräpkultur är en bra barnkultur, t.ex. rika läsupplevelser i tidig ålder (1984, p.40).

I would argue that children's reading may well be treated separately due to the common supposition (in late modernity) that children are different from adults, and that they, as more or less *carte blanche* 'becomings', require (adult) guidance in order to develop desirable reading habits and literary taste for the future (cf. Prout 2000). It is interesting to note that the greatest efforts at shaping literary taste are focused most strongly upon the youngest children. The collaborative ideal mentioned above is treated in greater depth in section 6.3 of the SOU report – 'Samverkan i praktiken' (1984, pp.91–105) – and is borne of a political and organisational will to increase the reach of the public library service and expand

possibilities of *equal access to information* for all citizens[14]. Collaboration between public libraries, preschools and schools is considered extremely important, as described above. In the case of children's literacy, collaboration with parents is framed as decisive in the formation of future reading habits – along with well-developed language skills – in children.

> Hemmets läs- och kulturvanor har den största betydelsen för barns kulturella uppväxtmiljö. Föräldrarna är därför ytterst den viktigaste målgruppen för folkbibliotekens insatser inom barnomsorgen. För att nå föräldrarna kan folkbiblioteket arbeta direkt med dem via t.ex. bok- och biblioteksinformation på föräldramöten, men framför allt försöka inspirera förskolepersonalen att uppmuntra föräldrarna att läsa för sina barn. Inte minst är det viktigt att göra förskolepersonal uppmärksam på invandrarbarnens behov av böcker på sitt modersmål (1984, p.93).

Rose's fourth dimension of governmentality, 'authorities', is worth considering for a moment. One aspect of this dimension of governmentality consists of 'practices of conferring authority'. A will to promote such a practice is discernible here: library staff should work together with preschool staff, inspiring the latter group of professionals to encourage parents to read for their children. In this sense, collaboration between professional groups involves a further dimension of governmentality – a technology in the form of a 'practice of intervention', which is based upon a particular political vision. This SOU report demonstrates an aspiration of government which stretches far beyond a desire to shape a literate population with the right cultural and literary taste.

> Av olika forskningsresultat framgår dessutom att förskoleåldern är avgörande för barns utveckling. Att kultur når barn så tidigt som möjligt är således väsentligt. Böcker har särskild betydelse för utveckling av barns språkliga förmåga, av deras fantasi och känsloliv liksom av deras förstånd och intellekt (1984, p.92).

Science, the special advisors argue, tells us that preschool age is a decisive one in a child's development. Attributing the development of children's emotional lives to books and claiming that scientific studies might be able to demonstrate this could certainly be conceptualised as evidence of the increasing influence of the 'psy' sciences, and therapeutics, in Swedish society (see Part I for discussion on Rose's perspective on this and Part III for my concluding discussion).

Two further categories of people are allotted special (albeit rather brief) attention in this SOU report with regard to public library media: immigrants and those with reading disabilities. It is noted in the report that the one million immigrants living in Sweden cannot be seen as one homogenous group, but that according to guidelines for immigrant and minority policies established by the Swedish parliament in 1975, ethnic and linguistic minorities deserve a public library service

[14] Similar working arrangements with children's health clinics and homes for the elderly are also covered in this chapter of the SOU under the banner of *inclusion* and *accessibility*.

equal to that of the majority population (*majoriteten*) and access to books and other media in their original languages (*modersmål*). Again, this reflects ideals of equality of access and freedom of information despite any existing language barriers. What is considered problematic for the public library service in this report is the fact that books in English, German and French have been purchased over time with Swedish school language requirements in mind, rather than the fact that these languages are also 'immigrant languages' (*invandrarspråk*) and are thus important in the preservation of immigrants' original or 'home' culture. This is considered especially important for the children of immigrant parents: "Att möta modersmålet inte bara som talspråk utan även i skriftlig form är angeläget för dem" (1984, p.67). Another aspect of immigrants' needs is problematised in terms of those who are outright illiterate (*analfabeter*) and those who have poor reading and writing skills (*bristfälliga läs- och skrivkunskaper*). A solution to this might be to promote recorded material (*bandinspelningar*) and other audiovisual materials. It is also suggested that public libraries purchase literature on immigrants' home countries and cultures intended for the 'Swedish population', in order to foster mutual understanding between immigrants and Swedes (*svenskar*) (1984, pp.66–67). A political rationality underlying practices of literacy promotion is observable in this section on immigrants, particularly in this last suggestion: *inclusion*. However, it can be argued that such political ideals of inclusion result in a process of *othering* – a process which positions 'immigrants' as fundamentally different from 'Swedes' and facilitates representations of immigrants based on this (see Said 2004 for more on the process of othering). This is exemplified in the suggestion that material on immigrants' home cultures and homelands be made available at public libraries, in effect to allow Swedes to better understand where immigrants are coming from (both literally and figuratively).

While I mentioned earlier that a particularly strong statement is made in relation to the reading of books and (social) disability, people with forms of more or less permanent reading disability are actually addressed in this SOU report (see section 4.11). Two forms of easy-to-read material are mentioned – "LL-böcker" which at that time were said to have been developed with "psykiskt utvecklingsstörda, ordblinda och barndomsdöva läsare" in mind, and "lättlästa böcker i vidare mening" (1984, p.67). The special advisors mention that difficulties with reading comprehension take many forms – the problem may lie in a book's use of language, layout, typography or the medium itself. However, in relation to people with reading disabilities and difficulties, it is hard to see evidence in this report of a political rationality of inclusion, as I would have expected. On the other hand, there is a very clear ideal of *access* – and access to 'pleasurable literature' (*njutbara litteraturen*), which is not seen elsewhere in the report. An ideal of *equality of service*, which permeates this SOU report, is also discernible and is exemplified in the attention paid to non-commercial audiobooks (*talböcker*) (1984, p.68).

In summary, a political rationality (in the sense of a vision and aspiration, as well as a reasoned consideration based on ideological underpinnings and consolidated by a reliance on the technologies of various studies, scientific or otherwise) in relation to literacy practices is expressed through ideals of free and equal access to library services and information for all, a view of the library as a unique resource in cultural and popular educational progress, in reading promotion practices, in ensuring the participation of informed citizens in the (undefined) 'democratic process', and of the book itself as supreme mediator of culture and knowledge, along with multiple ideals of access – increased and equal access to 'quality' literature, and limited access to substandard literature. Literacy, in the sense of an *ability* to read, and to *comprehend* what one is reading, is problematised more fully in this SOU, particularly in relation to immigrants and people with reading disabilities and difficulties, but also with regard to a sizeable sector of the population more generally.

LÄS! Rapport från 1982 års bokutredning

The secretariat of the 1982 Public State Inquiry into the status of 'the book' in Swedish society published this rather complete interim report as part of its aim to facilitate an open discussion on the book market and any necessary measures of reform. It is made clear that the special advisors who contribute to the inquiry have not given their opinions on the outcome of this report, but that those are presented in SOU 1984:30 instead (see below). Nevertheless, I deem this interim report to be of sufficient relevance for this thesis and have therefore decided to include it in my analysis of political rationality, and any accompanying governmental technologies, as they relate to literacy.

The report makes use of the explanatory technique of an historical overview, first of the book and book publishing in Sweden, and then of cultural politics as it has referred to 'the book' over time. As far as cultural politics and the book are concerned, a number of previous SOU reports on the subject are mentioned – two of which have been presented and analysed here (SOU 1952:23 and SOU 1974:5). New aims for Swedish state cultural policy were unanimously adopted in the parliament in the spring of 1974 (see the following section *SOU 1984:30* for more) and it is against the backdrop of such aims that the 1982 public state inquiry into the book was undertaken (Petri 1983, p.25).

SOU reports, which deal specifically with the status of the book in Swedish society, link events in the domain of book publishing and distribution with access to, and reading of, books.

> Situation på bokmarknaden har naturligtvis också ett samband med människors *läsning* av böcker. En stor del av befolkningen läser böcker regelbundet och mycket tyder på att bokläsandet också ökar. Men även om vi har en stor andel bokläsare i Sverige, mätt med internationella mått, är det i högsta grad önskvärt att ytterligare kunna höja detta antal.

> Som bokutredningen visar råder det en febril aktivitet inom olika områden för att stimulera till läsning av kvalitetslitteratur. En fortsatt positiv utveckling för läsfrämjande verksamheter i full skala kan få avgörande betydelse för bokmarknadens situation. Särskilt löftesrik är den läspedagogiska verksamhet som bedrivs för barn- och ungdomsgrupperna i samverkan mellan folkbibliotek och skola (Petri 1983, p.87).

As mentioned in the section *The dimensions of governmentality (studies)* in Part I of this thesis, Rose's third dimension of governmentality 'technologies' – referred to frequently in this analytical section – comprises collections of techniques of judgement and practices of intervention, but also the locations and institutions designed for such reformation, cure, pedagogic and therapeutic efforts. In the quote above there are clear examples of state-sanctioned reports functioning as a governmental technology – it provides us with a special advisor's assessment of current practices of intervention (i.e. *läsfrämjande verksamheter*, *läspedagogiska verksamheter*, *samverkan* between professions) and the most appropriate institutions for carrying out these practices of reform (i.e. *folkbibliotek*, *skola*). It also demonstrates a political interest in increasing the number of book readers, which is to be achieved through the implementation of the practices noted here. A political ideal – and thus part of political rationality on literacy and the population – is to encourage the widespread reading of books, specifically. There are references made in this report to previous SOU reports' representation of the book as primary mediator of culture and cultural heritage – a political ideal which is not refuted in this 1983 report. It is, rather, reinforced through such techniques as the use of Jan Gehlin's "Sju teser om boken" which extolls the virtues of the book as medium (Petri 1983, pp.11–13), and the quoting of a Lennart Hellsing rhyme about the wonder of books:

> Böcker ska blänka som solar / och gnistra som tomtebloss / Medan vi laser böckerna / laser böckerna oss. / Kan böckerna läsa människor? / Det kan de förstås! / Hur skulle de annars veta / allting om oss? (1983, p.22)

Used in this way, these might be considered examples of "little techniques of government"– and thus expressions of political rationality which form part of a larger governmental technological whole (see Rose, O'Malley, Valverde 2006).

Chapter 7 of this 1983 report is dedicated to the theme of reading. It begins with an Astrid Lindgren poem (which I interpret as the same type of technique as those mentioned in the preceding paragraph):

> [G]e / mitt barn läshunger, det ber jag med / brinnande hjärta. Jag ville så gärna / att mitt barn skall få i sin hand / nyckeln till det förtrollade landet, / där man kan hämta den sällsammaste av all glädje... (1983, p.165)

The political ideal of widespread (book) reading in the population is evident throughout this report, quite in line with state cultural political aims. It is enforced time and again by small devices such as these extracts from poems, where the

reading of *books* is not only presented as a positive activity, but is possibly even glorified.

As a result of such a strong political desire to promote not only reading, but the reading of books specifically, a clear 'problematisation' is made in this report. It is reported that, although a good percentage of the Swedish population read books to some extent, there is a significant group of 'non-readers'. This group is said to be an important target group for literacy promotion efforts. It is also said, however, to present a number of challenges to the methods needed for the teaching of reading, in contrast to those who already have some form of reading habit. "För att minska gruppen icke-läsare krävs långsiktigt verkande åtgärder, i synnerhet förbättrad lästräning och litteraturundervisning i skolan" (1983, p.174). Long-term measures of intervention (governmental technologies) are required. There is an acknowledgement that a great deal of literacy promotion work is underway at this time in Swedish society, but that perhaps the area literacy promotion is so broad, its methods so varied, and its agents so many, that it is difficult to get a good overview of the results of these efforts (1983, p.175).

The public library system (*folkbibliotek*) is potrayed as a centre for literacy promotion, and its collaboration with preschool and school, touted as a significant element in the practice of promoting reading for children and young people. Similarly, primary schools, including after-school care and youth clubs (*fritidsgårdar*) are charged with a responsibility for promoting reading and literature among children and young people. The school curriculum for primary school (Läroplanen för grundskolan – Lgr 80) is an essential governmental technology in the practical implementation of political ideals surrounding reading and the book as principal bearer of culture in Swedish society.

> Det framgår särskilt av kursplanen för ämnet Svenska att undervisningen skall läggas upp så att man skapar ett större intresse bland eleverna för läsning av kvalitetslitteratur. Det betonas också i läroplanen hur viktigt det är att eleverna i alla ämnen får utveckla sin förmåga att förstå, analysera och ifrågasätta vad de läser, skriver, lyssnar till eller talar om (1983, p.183).

There is, however, an additional political ideal to consider. As has been evident in the majority (if not all) of my empirical material, the reading of books alone is not considered completely sufficient. The ideal of 'quality' literature is promoted both in the adult population and amongst children and youth – in fact, it is promoted even more strenuously amongst this (homogenised) latter group.

> Det är en känslig och svår uppgift att kritiskt granska den litteratur som säljs till barn och ungdomar. Den är ofta konstnärligt undermålig och präglad av värderingar som skolan har till uppgift att avslöja och motarbeta (1983, p.184).

That books for children and young people (specifically) are defined as 'artistically substandard' is one aspect of this description of poor quality literature. Another, mentioned in the quote above, relates to the *values* that such literature is said to

contain – values which are, by implication, not compatible with political aims for education. What some of these values might be is not defined explicitly, but through the use of Kerstin Rimsten-Nilsson's description of good quality books, some insight into a political stance on these values may be assumed:

> God kvalitet kan böckerna ha t.ex. […] i forsök att förmedla attityder som i allmänhet anses önskvärda, t.ex. tolerans mot och förståelse för andra människor, särskilt invandrare, handikappade och andra minoriteter, positiv inställning till hjälpsamhet, självständighet, förmåga att ta ansvar (Rimsten-Nilsson 1981, p.136 in Petri 1983, 185).

Rose discusses the governance implied in the pedagogic efforts and institutional organisation of nineteenth-century schools in a way which is highly relevant for an understanding of what is happening in terms of the shaping of future – and self-evaluating, self-regulating – citizens in the quote above.

> The school was to act as a moral technology, not merely inculcating obedience, but also seeking to shape personality through the child's emulation of the teacher, through the use of pastoral techniques to encourage self-knowledge, and enhance the feelings of sympathetic identification, through establishing links between virtue, honesty, and self-denial and a purified pleasure (Rose 1999a, p.227).

While it is safe to say that a number of the expected behaviours of children and young people have changed dramatically since this time, the state's use of the school as an institutional technology for the implementation of political ideals – even at the level of personal *values* – would appear to have remained unchanged. It can still be viewed according to this perspective as an institution charged with the *moral* education of children and young people. To recap: (explicit) political ideals on the reading of good literature as desirable are implemented through the governmental technologies of reading promotion practices, pedagogic practices and the school (and library) as institution. If practices of (mastering) reading and writing might also be seen as a set of reformative (shaping) techniques, then they can equally be employed in the implementation of more implicit political ideals with regard to the values, the morality of children and young people and thus of a population of ideal, future citizens. This report, although not a final report of a public inquiry, contains a highly relevant – not to mention somewhat revelatory – line of political reasoning. This reasoning is expressed in both explicit and implicit political ideals. It employs multiple sets of governmental technologies for several purposes – the report in itself being one of the greatest governmental technologies – as well as acting as a bearer of others.

SOU 1984:30

Läs mera! Slutbetänkande av 1982 års bokutredning (1984) takes as its starting point aims anchored in the politics of literature, stating the following goal: "Det väsentligaste är att hela tiden få nya generationer att läsa kvalitetslitteratur och få

dem att uppskatta bokläsandets värden" (1984, p.9). The promotion of good quality literature and the reading of books are central concerns of this final SOU report, as we shall see in more detail below.

The aims of the politics of literature, as represented in this report, are in themselves grounded in broader cultural political goals which were set by the Swedish parliament in 1974. According to the special advisors to this inquiry, the most relevant of these cultural political aims are those which revolve around Swedish, Nordic and minority and/or immigrant cultural heritage (*kulturarv*), freedom of expression (*yttrandefrihet*), and the protection and promotion of these (1984, pp.41–42). A political will to fulfil these aims, as well as a desire to guard against unwarranted state and market-based influence over the production of literature, form the basis for this SOU report's recommendations, as does the special advisory group's view of 'the book'. The status of the book as *uniquely valuable* as a cultural medium in 1) the mediation of human experience, knowledge and emotions from person to person, across generations, and 2) in the independent opinion-formation and intellectual development of humankind is strenuously asserted in this report (1984, p.43). This argumentation is repeated in condensed form in the following citation, in which I also include the first, and (for this thesis on the politics of literacy) most relevant, of the special advisors' recommendations to the state authorities:

> Bokutredningen anser mot denna bakgrund att boken skall betraktas som det prioriterade kulturmediet. God och informativ litteratur bör skapas, spridas och läsas. Den bör vara tillgänglig för läsare i olika miljöer, geografiskt och socialt. För att stärka bokens ställning måste de statliga insatser syfta till att förstärka det läsfrämjande arbetet och förskjuta gränsen mellan läsare och icke-läsare, bryta ned läsbarriärer och klasskillnader i bokläsandet, skapa ett tidigt intresse för böcker och läsning hos barn, i hemmen och inom barnomsorgen, stärka skönlitteraturens ställning i skolan, upprätta ett varaktigt samarbete mellan folkbibliotek och skola för att väcka läslust hos barn och ungdomar [och] främja läsning bland vuxna, bl.a. genom bibliotek på arbetsplatser och institutioner (1984, p.43).

The ideals of both 'good' literature, and of *access* to this, for *all* (i.e. *equality of access*) are evident here. In the recommendations made here, it is also possible to begin outlining a number of 'problematisations' – those things which the special advisors consider problematic in society at the time of composing the final report of this inquiry. There are suggestions that the distance between readers and non-readers in Swedish society is a problem, that there are certain obstacles to reading books, some of which are linked to reading difficulties, others to issues of class, and that there is a need to promote reading amongst adults, children and young people – all through different means.

This SOU report uses studies of reading habits (a governmental technology, which is part of a 'collection of techniques of judgement') to assess the situation of reading, and in line with its aims, the status of the book in Swedish society. It uses this technology, along with other forms of argumentation, in order to estab-

lish the medium of the book as central to linguistic and rational development, the protection of cultural heritage and with it (undefined) identity. It is worth noting this political linking of identity, cultural heritage, language, human reason and the book. This line of argument allows the following statement about *literacy* itself to be made: "Boken och förmågan att tillägna sig en text är därmed ett av de betydelsefulla instrumenten för vår verklighetsuppfattning" (1984, p.45). Note that it is suggested that the ability to comprehend a text (book) is a significant factor in an individual's ability to not only interpret 'reality' in a lucid and rational manner, but that the reading of books fosters clear expression of such interpretations through improved linguistic competence. Thus, cognitive ability and reading ability are connected here – an argument which proves highly reminiscent of Rose's assertions as to the growth of the 'psy' sciences, and the increasing professionalisation and reach of psychological and psychiatric authority through its "know-how of the social person" in the second half of the twentieth century (Rose 1999b, p.90).

To recap: a *practice of literacy* in the form of reading (the right) books is deemed one of the most important elements for a rational interpretation of the surrounding world, and its subsequent expression in language. This is a strong statement in favour of literacy, both in the sense of reading and reading comprehension and it provides the basis for an equally strong argument in favour of literacy promotion practices later in this SOU report.

> Kvar står det faktum att alltför många människor inte läser böcker. Åtgärder för att öka bokläsarnas antal måste vara ett centralt inslag i en offensiv politik för litteratur och läsning (1984, p.48).

As stated previously, it is considered problematic that not enough people read. In this SOU report, however, it does not seem to be so much a question of, for example, too many people reading the rather undesirable popular paperbacks (*populärpocketböcker*) as the fact that "en betydligt större grupp är de många människor som inte laser alls" (1984, p.47). Since every other statement, before and after the one cited here, is related specifically to book reading, it can be safely assumed that it is the fact that there is a large group of people (about two million) in Sweden who do not read *books*, which is considered problematic for the reasons mentioned above.

What recommendations – what governmental technologies and strategies – then are suggested, on the basis of an apparently multifaceted, 'psy' science-influenced political rationality on the book, reading, cultural heritage, identity, language, access and reason? Starting with a line of argument (an 'explanation', in terms of Rose's second dimension of governmentality) related to the centrality of language for the individual's ability to think rationally, the special advisors include assertions regarding the teaching of one's mother tongue as a human right,

and the fact that the Swedish language itself is threatened by new media, such as the image (*bilden*). Through the building of such an argument, eventually linking the ability to read to skills in using one's spoken language, the special advisors venture the conclusion that the ability to read (*läsförmåga*) has been decreasing in Swedish society, while schools encourage oral presentation skills (1984, pp.77–78).

> [M]ed sjunkande läsförmåga tycks automatiskt följa även försvagad skrivförmåga. Läsning är i själva verket helt grundläggande för hela modersmåls- och språkundervisningen. Numera har behovet av läskunnighet rönt större uppmärksamhet. I läroplanen för grundskolan (Lgr 80) har skönlitteraturen kommit i förgrunden i kursplanen för ämnet svenska. Litteraturläsningen ses som en fundamental del i träningen av de språkliga färdigheterna. Undervisningen i svenska och förtrogenheten med skönlitteraturen anses ha mycket stor betydelse för personlighetsutvecklingen (1984, p.78)

This final statement – that the teaching of, and a familiarity with, fictional literature is thought to have great significance for the development of one's personality – is a clear repetition of the potential influence of the 'psy' disciplines discussed above. The act of reading is not, in this SOU report, argued to impact one's capacity for lifelong learning, or the conditions for an individual's political and cultural participation in society, but to *shape his/her very personality*. This is an interesting observation, and can certainly be viewed as a reflection of the type of 'psy' influenced political thinking noted by Rose (1999b) in *Powers of Freedom*, as mentioned earlier. At the same time, attention is paid to the problems associated with an inability to read, or with reading difficulties, and children are targeted as an ideal sector of the population upon which to focus reading promotion efforts:

> I det läsfrämjande arbetet är det rimligt att insatserna främst riktar sig till barn och ungdom. Få människor är så negativa till läsning som de som inte som barn fått erfara att böcker kan ge meningsfulla upplevelser (1984, p.79).

Parents and teachers are charged with the undertaking of such reading (and literacy) promotion activities. It is suggested in the report that efforts to arouse a desire to read in the population, and a 'positive attitude' to books and reading, must take children and youth as their starting point. The special advisors claim that "[e]n målmedveten satsning på barnens läsning kommer att leda till att den stora gruppen vuxna icke-läsare krymper" while simultaneously stating that the cultural environment children grow up in has a great impact on reading habits – their 'reading futures', as I term it. For this reason, the special advisors recommend that information on libraries and books should be distributed to parents, and is particularly important in homes where 'reading activity' is low (1984, p.80).

As far as primary school (*grundskolan*) efforts are concerned, it is stated in the SOU report that an addition to the state's cultural political aims, made in 1979, includes all official activities for children – amongst these, school-based activities. The special advisors use both state cultural policies, and an excerpt from a book,

which represents school as a sanctuary and a 'window on the world' for children, as 'explanatory' techniques for strengthening their argument and a number of clear recommendations: teachers should read aloud to children, discuss what has been read, and encourage children to talk about their own experiences of reading, in order to create a sense of reading community (*läsgemenskap*) in the class group. A collaboration with trained librarians as a source of support and encouragement for teachers should be elaborated and continued professional development programmes for teachers are recommended in the SOU report (1984, p.87). Clearly, the responsibility for promoting reading skills and a familiarity with books is placed firmly at the feet of primary school teachers and Swedish language teaching. The special advisors recognise that reading promotion efforts have been enthusiastic over the ten years prior to this inquiry, but that there are difficulties in sourcing good quality books for children and young people. This is considered problematic, as is the "lättillgängliga triviallitteraturen" which regularly dominates the book market. However, it is also stated that "med goda alternativ till skräplitteraturen går det att påverka barnens läsvanor" (1984, p.84). A political will to influence children's reading habits is stated explicitly throughout this SOU report.

A number of governmental technologies (beyond the SOU report, which is a technology in and of itself) are suggested in order to promote literacy and the reading of 'good' books: the distribution of information on books and libraries (relying upon the governmental technology of the family) and through the explanatory measures of reference to state cultural policy, images of the school as a centre of learning for *all* children, collaboration with the public library and with specialised child and youth librarians are recommended to teachers (through the technology of the school as institution). *Access* to books is addressed in this SOU report in relation to the publishing and sale of books. However, the clearest aspiration of government to be observed in this SOU report is related to the shaping of a rational, expressive and articulate population. This is seemingly based on a political rationality steeped in a 'psy' science perception of the individual, and with it, a view of reading and reading comprehension as central to linguistic development.

SOU 1997:108

Att lämna skolan med rak rygg (1997) is the final report of the inquiry made by the 1997 Committee on Reading and Writing (*Läs- och skrivkommittén*). It is the first report where an explicit definition of literacy is provided. In this case, one of the special advisors to the inquiry, Roger Säljö, offers the following in his capacity as special advisor, as part of a discussion on literacy as more than just an ability to read and to comprehend what one is reading. He stresses a broader understanding of literacy. He does so, presumably, under the authority of his expertise as a

professor at Tema Kommunikation, Linköping University, and Pedagogiska institutionen, Gothenburg University:

> Den engelska termen literacy har just en sådan vidare betydelse och syftar på sätt att använda och förhålla sig till texter i mer generell mening. I svenskan finns inget motsvarande uttryck och vår term litterat har en delvis annorlunda och mer begränsad innebörd av att vara bildad. Motsatsen, att vara illiterat, används som ett skällsord. Men med utgångspunkt i engelskans literacy kan man säga att i det komplexa och kunskapsintensiva samhället regleras många förlopp i såväl den privata som yrkesmässiga sfären av skriftspråkliga praktiker, dvs. förlopp där skriften utgör en del i en kommunikativ process (1997, p.350)

Säljö's broad definition of literacy is (understandably) reflected throughout this SOU report. The inquiry examined the institutional role of preschool and school in aiding the development of children and young people's written and oral communication skills, in which concepts, and practices, of literacy play a crucial part.

> Språkutveckling, kunskapsutveckling och identitetsutveckling går hand i hand och är livslånga processer. Läs-och skrivförmåga är inte något man tillägnar sig under den första tiden i skolan och sedan behåller livet ut. Den språkliga liksom den intellektuella utvecklingen börjar långt innan barn blir skolelever och för att upprätthålla och vidareutveckla den krävs kontinuerlig, riklig och meningsfull språkanvändning genom skolåren och vidare genom utbildning, samhälls- och yrkesliv (1997, p.8).

Literacy and language development are intimately linked in this report – equated with one another, in fact. They are deemed essential parts of a *lifelong process* of knowledge and identity formation. In tandem with this, access to a written language is considered a right (*rättighet*), an element of both equity and democracy, and preschool and school's greatest responsibility is said to involve aiding children and young to develop a view of themselves as literate in terms of written language (*skriftspråkliga*) (1997, p.15). Another aspect of preschool and school education which is considered a human right (*en mänsklig rättighet*) is the opportunity for parents and pupils to *influence* the operations of the school, and for children and young people to experience a sense of *participation* in these: after all, "skolans uppgift är att fostra demokratiska medborgare" (1997, p.16). In these first pages, there are several strands of political rationality in relation to school and literacy – what literacy might be defined as, what the purpose of an ability to read and write is, what the role of the school is, and ultimately, what kind of *future citizens* the school as institution, and thus as mediator of a constellation of techniques of judgement, pedagogy and reform, is designed to shape.

Literacy is, as mentioned previously, defined broadly and in terms of constitutive elements of communication in this report: "Lärande och kunskapsarbete förutsätter kommunikation: samtal, läsande och skrivande" (1997, p.16). Its purposes, as demonstrated in the preceding paragraph, are multiple. This offers the first hints (in this particular SOU report) that, in political terms, literacy is about far more than an ability to read and write – it is a basic condition for the shaping of ideal citizens, and as such, may be viewed as a *set of practices* conducive to the

practical implementation of a political rationality which expresses ideals of *participation*, *equity* and the opportunity for *influence* (in school, in lifelong learning, in society). This is an analytical conclusion which I base upon a reading of my empirical material, through the lens of a Nikolas Rose-inspired version of governmentality studies, but which also corresponds with Alloway and Gilbert's view of literacy as fundamentally 'technical', i.e. it is a collection of techniques which constitute a governmental technology (1997).

Although the expressions of political rationality described above are clearly observable early on in the report, it is important to explore how they are discussed in more depth. It is equally interesting (and relevant) to look at how those elements said to constitute literacy, are treated and how the purpose(s) and possibilities of literacy are addressed. There is a sense (unmistakably noticeable in the analysis of several other SOU reports here) that literacy as a set of techniques for achieving a particular political desire is itself the object of a collection of techniques of judgement and reform.

One 'problematisation' observable in this SOU report surrounds the inability to read, write and speak well in relation to an inability to *take control* over one's own life and learning and to *interpret* the world, and perhaps by extension, to suffer an increased risk of *alienation* (*utanförskap*) from the rest of society.

> Den som inte kan läsa, skriva och tala så att tillvaron blir mer begriplig och därmed också möjlig att påverka är på många avgörande sätt utestängd från samhällsgemenskapen.
>
> Därför är det ett av förskolans och skolans viktigaste ansvar att alla barn och unga oavsett sociala, kulturella eller andra förutsättningar under sina år i förskola och skola får utveckla en bild av sig själva som skriftspråkliga och utveckal en så god språklig tillit att språket blir en kraft både i läroprocesserna i skola och utbildning och i deras liv. Detta är en grundläggande rättvise- och demokratifråga (1997, p.15).

Another section, later in the report, problematises an inability to read and write well as follows:

> Att bli en läsande och skrivande människor – att erövra skriftspråket – är i skriftspråkliga kulturer en viktig milstolpe under uppväxtåren. Det handlar om att lära sig läsa så att man förstår vad man läser och skriva så att andra förstår vad man skriver, men det är inte allt. Inträdet i den skriftspråkliga världen innebär något mer. Att bli skriftspråklig förändrar på avgörande sätt livet för en människa. Läsandet och skrivandet öppnar för nya möjligheter att se på och påverka sitt eget liv och andras (1997, p.111).

The risks (formulated as problematic) of not being in control of one's own life and learning, of not being able to interpret and make sense of the world or of becoming alienated are thus linked to concepts of equity and democracy. *Equal participation* and *influence* are clearly political ideals in this SOU report, as exemplified in the quotes above, and as such can be viewed as expressions of political rationality on literacy itself, albeit as a part of the broader term 'communication' – to be an able and informed participant, and thus exercise one's influence, in the democratic process one must be able to read, write and speak *well*. This is an excellent

example of how the formulation of certain phenomena as problems ('problematisations' in Rose's dimensions of governmentality) denotes political ideals regarding the population at large through the governance of the individual.

It is interesting to witness the extent to which early negative experiences with reading and writing are attributed to a poor self-image later in life (1997, p.19). This type of argument may be viewed according to Rose's points on the increasing influence of the 'psy' disciplines on political discussion. While various governmental technologies, such as the OECD report "Literacy, Economy and Society", are used as 'explanations' (see Rose's dimensions of governmentality) here to build an argument as to the effect of every fourth Swede failing to live up to primary school requirements in reading, writing and numeracy, the use of what I call 'psychologising' terms such as 'self-image' or 'trust' or 'self-esteem', and how individuals may be affected at the level of the psyche by negative learning experiences in the long term, is perhaps an even more important characteristic of later SOU reports and of more recent modes of governance (for more on an increasing political interest in the "know-how of the social person" see Rose 1999b, p.90 ff).

Another 'problematisation' evident in this SOU report, and related to literacy, is one of children's perceptions of reading (*läsuppfattning*) in school, which fall short of school literacy promotion aims. The special advisors refer to a doctoral study carried out in the 1980s by Gösta Dahlgren and Lars-Erik Olsson (1985) in the following:

> Det verkar alltså som om läsning i skolan får barnet att se läsning som en färdighet, en prestation – inte som en möjlighet att göra nya erfarenheter, möta nya människor eller få höra om sådant de annars inte skulle få vara med om. Forskarna pekar på risken att barn omedvetet får uppfattningen att man lär sig för skolans och inte för sin egen skull (1997, p.116).

And, just a few sentences later:

> Barn som tidigt stöter på problem med skriftspråket upplever lätt misslyckandena som personliga och utvecklar en bild av sig själva som sådana som inte platsar i läslaget. De elever som klarar det första mötet med skriften med bibehållet självförtroende har däremot en relativt god prognos för sitt fortsatta läsande och skrivande (1997, p.116).

Reports of such perceptions (i.e. explanatory techniques) are used in tandem with psychologising terms to demonstrate the potential effects, not only on future readings habits, but on the psyche of the individual him/herself, caused in part by negative experiences of reading in childhood.

What recommendations (governmental technologies) are suggested in order to remedy the problems formulated in this SOU report and thought to be, at least in part, caused by flawed pedagogic practices and the negative personal experiences of reading these may give rise to? There are a great many to choose from and I do not have the space here to discuss each and every one, but to take one good example, I look to chapter 5 of this SOU report, which is dedicated to suggestions for

invention. The chapter begins, however, with an important point as to the scope of the inquiry and what can be expected of it.

> Läsning och skrivning är komplicerade processer. Många faktorer är sammanvävda och samverkar. Detsamma gäller läs- och skrivsvårigheter. Det kan finnas neurobiologiska, språkliga, sociala, psykologiska, kulturella, pedagogiska, emotionella, ekonomiska, ja, en rad orsakar – ofta samverkande – till att barn och unga får stora läs- och skrivsvårigheter.
>
> Läs- och skrivkommitténs uppdrag har inte handlat om att diskutera bakomliggande orsaker. Vårt uppdrag har varit att redovisa viktiga utgångspunkter för de pedagogiska utmaningar som det innebär att ”stödja elever med stora läs- och skrivsvårigheter” samt att föreslå ”åtgärder i förebyggande och avhjälpande syfte” (1997, pp.263–264).

This statement is noteworthy in the context of arguments about the impact of negative childhood reading and writing experiences on the individual's self-image and reading/writing confidence – is that not an underlying reason for certain youth and adult literacy difficulties? It is also challenging to imagine how measures to prevent reading, writing and communicative difficulties in the school-going population can be formulated without some knowledge of what causes these in the first place. Nevertheless, a sizeable portion of this SOU report is dedicated to suggestions for reform in the context of school and preschool, the first of which are grounded in precisely this argument.

> Negativa erfarenheter av den tidiga läs- och skrivundervisningen i skolan, tillkortakommanden i det som under de första åren i skolan på många sätt framstår som själva huvudpoängen med att vara elev, påverkar hela självbilden. Många vuxna med läs- och skrivsvårigheter talar om att tidiga upplevelser av misslyckanden levt kvar hela livet (1997, p.265).

The argument is not only linked to self-image, but to the formation of one's identity and sense of belonging in the community. “Att bli språkligt eller kulturellt avvisad innebär att bli avvisad som människa” (ibid.). The political ideals of *influence* and *participation* are exemplified here again, with literacy posited as a necessary set of practices to ensure their fulfillment. A number of suggestions for promoting literacy in school and preschool are made. One example is a suggestion about the creation by teachers of ‘dialogiska rum’, or learning environments where children and young people, no matter what their reading experiences, are offered abundant opportunities (*rika tillfällen*) to discuss various questions, both in written form and orally, with their peers and adults. In other words, children and young people should be given the chance to develop their literacy and communicative skills in a positive, and non-judgemental, environment, together with others. This can be seen as a technique (a governmental technology) for inviting young people and children to become members “i de läsandes och skrivandes förening”, which is said to have “en tydlig koppling till hela lärandet” – not only this, but *participation* in this kind of reading group is also a training opportunity for (future) participation in the democratic process, and for learning to *influence* one's own life and learning, ideals much mentioned throughout this SOU report –

an ideal of government (and as such an element of political rationality on literacy) as stated earlier. The political ideal of *influence* (over one's own life and learning) is highly pertinent to my theoretical and methodological perspective in this thesis. It is reminiscent of the self-regulating subject to which Foucault and Rose and Miller refer. Rose and Miller state, with regard to their approach to governmentality studies:

> It was not our aim to critique a sham freedom in the name of a truer freedom, but to point to ways in which contemporary forms of power were built upon a promise of freedom, a type of regulated freedom that encouraged or required individuals to compare what they did, what they achieved, and what they were with what they could or should be (2008, p.9).

A 'dialogic space', suggested as a measure of intervention here, is exactly the kind of technology meant by Rose as a pedagogic technique for reform, and by extension, for the shaping of self-regulating, 'technical' subjects and, according to relatively recent governmental aspirations, ideal citizens (Rose 1999a).

SOU 1998:134

Läsarna och demokratin – ett brev till det läsande Sverige (1998) is a publication of the 1997 Public State Inquiry into democracy (*Demokratiutredningen*). It is a short and, judging by other material here, unusual SOU report[15]. It contains a strand of political rationality, in the form of a reflection upon literacy and democracy, which makes the report (*skrift*) sufficiently relevant for inclusion here. It is worth noting, however, that secretary of the inquiry into democracy, Erik Amnå, is careful to point out that the special advisors to the inquiry have not made their position on the content of the report known, and that the author of the report, Anders Johnson, is solely responsible for its content. Nevertheless, it is a report published under the banner of the inquiry and, consequently, of the Swedish state. In its capacity as an official state document, related to such an inquiry, its argument can be seen to contain expressions of political rationality – whether these have been legitimised by the authority of the rest of the special advisors or not.

By way of an introduction to Johnson's text, Erik Amnå points to the correlation between illiterate people (*analfabeter*), poverty and related problems (crime, prostitution, imprisonment). He briefly cites Manuel Castells' arguments as to the requirements of a rapidly globalising, information society. Finally, he notes the contingency of democracy upon citizens' reading. "Goda läsvanor gör meborgaren bättre på att omvandla information till kunskap. Utan läsande urartar demokratin" (1998, p.4). Literacy, the act of reading, knowledge and democracy are thus framed as interwoven.

[15] Anmå denotes this SOU report as a 'debattbok' – more of a contribution to a debate, than an observation of the kind suited to a traditional public state inquiry.

Through an historical overview of the written word, the act of reading, religious and popular social movements in Sweden, and the challenge posed by a reading public to established hierarchies, a number of points on reading as a political practice and as a condition for democracy are introduced.

> Läsning representerade samma skötsamhetsideal som kraven på nykterhet, renlighet och ansvarstagande för sig själv och omgivningen (1998, p.10).

> De klassiska folkrörelserna tillsammans formade en kultur där nykterhet, bildning och något man kan kalla inriktning på idéer och idédebatt utgjorde hörnstenar (1998, p.10).

These quotes refer to the values underlying, as well as the outcomes of, a more or less 'disciplinary' technique for the promotion of widespread reading – the door-to-door interrogation of community members' knowledge of their Catechism or Bible knowledge. The ideals of taking responsibility for oneself and one's surrounding community, and of pursuing educational formation (*bildning*) resonated in popular movement ideology long after the 1600s and were part of a 'democratising' movement which demonstrated "möjligheterna till organisering utanför de traditionella hierarkierna" (1998, p.6). The report discusses practices of literacy in relation to creating, despite some official opposition, a counter public sphere (*en mot-offentlighet*), beyond the established and officially-legitimised one (1998, p.11). The practice of *reading* is thus attributed with many important tasks and outcomes, essential to the development of democracy, according to this SOU report.

If political freedoms, such as freedom of the press, freedom of speech, freedom of expression, and the right to vote, could be considered cornerstones of democracy in Sweden, this SOU report states that *participation* is its third pillar (1998, p.21). While the report states that, unlike other political freedoms, the right to participation could not be regulated through legislation, I would have to partially disagree – although it is correct that participation as an ideal (and a practice) is not *directly* regulated through legislation in Sweden (to the best of my knowledge) there are a great many examples of official state policies (e.g. on culture, the school, the public library system) which aim to propagate an ideal of participation through the promotion of, for example, widespread literacy. While I view the promotion of literacy from the perspective of a (more or less) top-down state-sanctioned effort – albeit an effort implicating many actors on all levels of society in its actual implementation – this SOU report works to demonstrate the history of democracy as a grassroots movement, occurring hand in hand with "historien om erövringen av språket och språkets instrument" (1998, p.20). These instruments of language might be defined as 'literacy' and in what is termed information society in this SOU report, a high degree of literacy (in several senses) is necessary for developing skills for the critical appraisal (*källkritik*) and interpretation (*tolkning*) of information (1998, p.37). The differences in our analytical points of view may

well be related to the demands of a straightforward historical perspective on the consolidating of a literate, and democratically participant, population. My view of literacy as a set of practices both promoted by, and used by, the state in its governmental efforts requires another theoretical standpoint – hence the resulting conflict. Regardless of this, *participation* is portrayed, even here, as a clear political ideal, and literacy a necessary condition for its realisation.

Literacy is defined as something far broader than the generally-applied definition of the Swedish term 'läskunnighet' (an ability to read). I quote the following at length:

> I det moderna kunskapssamhället räcker det inte med att vara läskunnig i bemärkelsen att kunna läsa mekaniskt, att kunna ljuda utan att förstå annat än enklare texter. Framgång i kunskapssamhället förutsätter att man är litterat. Det handlar inte bara om avkodning utan även om förståelse och tänkande på högre nivåer. Att vara litterat innebär att man har tillägnat sig det sätt att tänka, lära sig (och därmed att tala) som följer av verklig läskunnighet och som bl.a. innebär en förmåga att föra abstrakta och hypotetiska resonemang.
>
> Att vara litterat innebär att man har grundlagt goda läsvanor och ser det som ett livslångt projekt att upprätthålla och utveckla sin läsförmåga. En politik för ett litteratare Sverige rör läsningens roll i förskola och skola eftersom tidig lästräning är en bra grund för läsvanorna senare i livet. De som har inte får [sic] denna grund i skolan hamnar ofta i en negativ lässpiral senare. Men en politik för ett litteratare Sverige kan inte begränsas till ungdomsåren utan måste beröra hela samhällets läs- och skrivkultur (1998, p.38).

This quote is a central expression of the political rationality borne by this SOU report. It describes the role of literacy in successfully navigating the modern information/knowledge society. It presents an expansion of the concept of literacy as a mere ability to read and write, including in it an ability to formulate abstract thoughts and arguments and to speak well. It expresses the idea of a 'more literate Sweden' as desirable, as well as an individual's own desire to continuously maintain and further develop his/her ability to read. Furthermore, it reinforces common political reasoning on the ideal life phase (childhood) at which to implement the most intensive efforts of literacy promotion, while simultaneously expanding this reasoning to include 'society's entire reading and writing culture'.

Finally, there is a point to be made with regard to how the SOU report works as a governmental technology in its own right. Unlike most traditionally-produced SOU reports, this one does not provide a list of suggestions for intervention, accompanied by an evidence-based justification for these. That was not the purpose of the report, as far as I can gather. Nevertheless, by presenting the reader (and the government) with a section entitled "Önskedrömmen" (a 'flight of fancy' or utopic vision) the SOU report fulfils its potential as a governmental technology. Decrying anti-intellectual tendencies, and cultural skepticism, in the political elite and its link to an impoverishment of democracy, the report states:

> En starkare läs- och skrivkultur i det svenska samhället skapas inte genom lagar eller statsbidrag. Det kan bara skapas genom att fler människor utvecklar sin egen läs- och skrivförmåga. Ledande politiker tillhör den grupp som genom sitt eget förhållande till språket

> påverkar andras inställning till språket. Därmed har de ett personligt ansvar för hur de använder språket. Et ansvar som man inte kan friköpa sig från genom avlatsbrev i form av pengar eller paragrafer (1998, p.58).

The responsibility for developing an ability to read and write is firmly taken out of the hands of the state and placed in those of the people, a view only possible in this SOU report due to its understanding (as seen earlier) of power as disciplinary, rather than capillary. The irony is, of course, that by suggesting that people take control of their own reading and writing skills, the SOU report demonstrates a political rationality which assumes the individual's willingness to evaluate and improve him/herself, and to voluntarily participate in various efforts to achieve this. The report itself simultaneously acts as a form of governmental technology, designed to realise this political reasoning.

SOU 2012:65

Läsandets kultur: Slutbetänkande av litteraturutredningen (2012) is the final report of the 2011 Public State Inquiry into literature (*Litteraturutredningen*). An extensive report, its purpose is broadly to formulate suggestions for strengthening the position of literature in society, and to evaluate and make recommendations as to which efforts should be made by the Swedish state in order to rise to the challenges brought about by recent technological developments (2012, p.30). One of the more concrete purposes of making such recommendations is to ensure that these, and any resulting measures of intervention, lead to an increase in reading (*ett ökat läsande*) and a good supply of high quality literature (2012, p.11).

An overview of the aims of the inquiry provides an insight into a number of 'problematisations' made in this report (see Rose's first dimension of governmentality – the political formulation of certain phenomena as problematic). Despite an acknowledgement that the position of literature in Swedish society is good in many respects, with relatively stable, high-level reading habits in the population (2012, p.41), the special advisors to this inquiry see a number of problems. These are formulated partly in relation to the seemingly dwindling publication and distribution of higher quality books, but primarily with regard to children and young people's literacy and reading habits.

> Det finns fortsatt stora skillnader i läsvanor mellan olika socioekonomiska grupper i befolkningen. Läsfärdigheten ar även minskat påtagligt hos unga, särskilt de senaste tio åren. Försämrad läsförmåga gör att för en allt större andel av dagens unga är möjligheten att förstå och tillgodogöra sig texter begränsad och därmed även möjligheten till egna läsupplevelser. Problemen är störst bland pojkar (2012, p.12).

It is worth noting here that the report states that there have been no significant studies of adult literacy, in the sense of an ability to read (*läsfärdighet*), undertaken in Sweden. In contrast, the reading ability of primary school pupils is measured on a regular basis, e.g. PIRLS, PISA (2012, p.49). There are a number of ways of

relating critically to these facts – the first involves a reflection on the long history of a Swedish political rationality which frames children and young people's reading practices and abilities *specifically* as problematic; the second is a recognition of the view that young people's practices *in general* have been considered a source of 'moral panic' in society, thus requiring political attention (see for example Thompson 2013; Donzelot & Hurley 1997; Cohen 1987); the third involves exploring the critical perspective on children and young people as *future citizens*, particularly suited to formation via governmental technologies in the shape of, for example, the family or the school and accompanying practices, which Rose (1999a) discusses in some depth.

That adult literacy is (apparently) not evaluated in Sweden, but children and young people's literacy is, and then on a regular basis, is an interesting expression of the aforementioned perspectives. It is also an important element of Rose's first dimension of governmentality. It is possible to view this essentialist differentiation between adults and children/youth as a 'dividing practice', part of the dimension of 'problematisations', which not only allows for the political representation of certain phenomena as problematic, but it also allows for that representation to be underpinned by ideas of difference, normality and deviance. Assessing children's ability to read, and not adults', is an example of such a dividing practice, which positions adults as inhabiting a realm of (literate) normality, which children, only through the right kind of shaping techniques, can obtain. Perhaps this is why intervention in reading habits, particularly, in *the early years* of primary school education is thought to be most effective (2012, p.13).

As mentioned, it is not only children and young people's *ability* to read which is examined, and deemed problematic, in this SOU report, but also their *desire* to read and their reading *habits*. Using a reference to a Danish researcher, Elisabeth Arnbak, as both an explanatory technique ('explanations') and an appeal to authority through expert knowledge ('authorities'), the special advisors mention the "tydliga sambandet mellan basal läsfärdighet och läslust och läsvanor" and that "det krävs grundläggande läsfärdigheter för att tycka om att läsa och läslust innebär sedan i sin tur att eleven läser mer vilket i sin tur kommer att skapa en god läsare" (2012, p.63). These three aspects of reading – ability, desire and habits – can be seen as a broad, political constitution of *practices of literacy* in this SOU report.

Although one of the principal aims of the inquiry is to evaluate, and suggest improvements to, the publishing industry and the distribution of 'quality' literature, there are two somewhat contradictory views as to *what* makes for suitable reading material for children and young people, one of which marks an important departure from earlier SOU reports. Reading is important in and of itself, regardless of *what is read*, according to the report (2012, p.30). It is also stated that, due to communication via the internet and social media, more reading and writing are

occurring than ever before. This is an unusual statement in the context of SOU reports on literacy and literature promotion. Nevertheless, in the paragraph following this statement, the point is immediately challenged:

> Samtidigt som läsande i sig har ett egenvärde är det inte desto mindre sant att *vad som läses också är av stor betydelse*. Det är av stor betydelse att läsförståelse sträcker sig längre än till vissa grundläggande kunskaper och en förmåga att ta del av korta budskap i snabba informationskanaler. För att utveckla en mer avancerad läsförståelse krävs även ett läsande av texter som är mer komplicerade än kort inlägg i forum på nätet (2012, p.30 emphasis in original).

An interesting point is that, in the case of this SOU report, it is not the *book* that is touted as the primary mediator of culture, or as superior to other textual media. What is considered important is that children and young people are exposed regularly to "*längre sammanhängande texter*", or texts of some complexity, which demand an ability to both comprehend and reflect upon them – and in turn to develop more 'advanced' reading comprehension skills (2012, p.31 emphasis in original). The reflexive reader is an interesting *subject* in this context (see Rose's dimension of governmentality, 'subjectivities').

> Texter av detta slag kan förekomma i många olika former, i skönlitterära böcker, tidningsartiklar, bloggar på nätet eller i specialiserad sakprosa. Inte minst är denna bredd viktig att beakta då läsförståelse kommer ur läsande som bygger på läslust och intresse för litteratur. Med andra ord är det troligtvis mycket bättre att barn och unga som läser sådant de känner intresse för om alternativet annars är att de inte läser alls (2012, p.31).

A political aspiration towards increased reading amongst the population, and improved reading ability amongst children and young people, is evident. That this ideal rests upon a view that reading should be encouraged, and material chosen according to interest and a desire to read, is interesting, as is the inquiry's reluctance to define literature in terms of 'good' or 'bad'. The report uses terms such as "*kvalificerade texter*" and their contrast, "mindre komplexa texter" instead (2012, p.32 emphasis in original). I interpret this as a demonstration of a political rationality on literacy which conflates reading ability with a basic desire to read and good reading habits, and a notion that advanced and reflexive reading of any type of complex, cohesive text is desirable regardless of format or genre. This type of political representation of literacy as relatively broad also allows for the inclusion of other expressions of literacy, for example, information literacy (*informationslitteracitet*). The term is related to digital reading (differentiated from 'traditional' reading), the seeking and handling of digital information, and the ability to 'navigate' digital sources of information ("dvs. att hitta material i en digital miljö genom att klicka sig fram") (2012, pp.56–57). It would appear from this that the concept of literacy, defined variously as, for example, an ability to read, to understand what one is reading, to reflect upon or relay its meaning, is expanding in tandem with the increasing reach of digital media.

Another significant problematisation in this SOU report is a representation of teacher competence and teaching practices as unsatisfactory with regard to the teaching of reading and of reading promotion. The report points to preschool teachers' tendency to work with children's literature without reflecting on the teaching (and learning) potential involved in such work. Possibly due to a culture of care (*omsorgskultur*) that has developed over time and is based on preschool's earliest role in society, the educational potential of certain practices is overlooked, according to this argument. This use of literature purely as a leisure activity, to pass the time, and not as a learning opportunity is considered highly problematic (2012, pp.81–82).

> [N]är förskolepersonalen inte arbetar för att väcka barns intresse för läsning går de miste om möjligheter att utveckla barnens ordförråd och begrepp samt att ge dem chansen att reflektera och ge uttryck för egna uppfattningar (2012, p.82).

The report also states that according to Skolverket's studies into the matter at primary school level, teachers are often unfamiliar with current children and youth literature, as well as adult fiction; that methods for teaching reading are, due to the curriculum's lack of directions, left up to the discretion of the individual teacher or teaching team; that discussions about the content of books, pupils' interpretations and experiences of reading are infrequent; that a great deal of the responsibility for acquiring reading schools is left up to the parents (in the case of younger children) and the pupil him/herself (in the case of older students); that outside of the Swedish language subject in school, pupils rarely come into contact with a variety of texts (2012, pp.87–90). The representation of pupils' acquisition of reading skills with the help of either *parents*, or *alone*, as problematic is of particular interest. It requires an explanatory technique in the form of an argument about the impact of 'sociocultural' background as one of the most central deciding factors in children's reading progress. The following statement exemplifies this line of argument well: "Barn från olika uppväxtförhållanden får olika möjligheter att utveckla de förmågor som behövs för att senare kunna lära sig läsa (2012, p.74). Coupled with this statement, is another argument, used to authorise preschool's institutional position (and therefore its role as a governmental technology):

> Särskilt viktigt är förskolans arbete för de barn som växer upp i hem där böcker inte läses, eftersom en förskola som arbetar aktivt med litteratur och högläsning kan ge dessa barn mer likvärda förutsättningar jämfört med barn som växer upp i en miljö där böcker och läsning är vanligt (2012, p.74).

Preschool is expected to function as an institutional channel for the implementation of further governmental technologies, pedagogic and otherwise, which relate to political ideals of *equality* and *access* (to reading and literature) for *all*, and also to *lifelong learning* (ibid.). The reality, as represented in this SOU report, howev-

er, is that despite such clear political rationality on reading in terms of equality and access and (as seen earlier) participation in social, cultural and democratic spheres for all members of society, preschools and schools are failing to live up to these ideals. A possible reason for this is given in the following statements, the first in relation to the current preschool curriculum: "Läroplanen anger inte hur förskolan ska arbeta för att uppfylla de mål som sätts upp, utan det är upp till förskolorna att bestämma vilka pedagogiska metoder som ska användas" (2012, p.75); the second in relation to the primary school curriculum as it stood in 2011:

> I Sverige är det upp till den enskilde läraren att välja metodik för undervisning i läsning och skrivning enligt principen om den pedagogiska friheten. Det är även läraren som väljer vilka litterära verk eleverna får ta del av och vilka läromedel som används i undervisningen. Detta är en följd av att läroplanen inte anger *hur* eleverna ska nå de uppsatta kunskapskraven [...] Undervisningen kan skilja sig åt från en lärare till en annan, mellan olika lärarlag samt mellan olika skolor och pedagogiska inriktningar (2012, pp.82–83).

Although it is not explicitly stated that this 'teaching freedom' is problematic, the fact that differences in teaching practices, in the selection of teaching materials, and of literary material, are mentioned, is sufficient as a basis to view these statements as explanatory techniques, which work side by side with explanatory techniques such as the graphs and tables which populate this report. These are then used to build an argument to justify the inquiry's recommendations. It is also possible to discern a political rationality on *standardisation* in teaching practices through the regulatory technique of the school curriculum, as well as an implicit criticism of 'teaching freedom' – this latter point might well hold up when one looks at it in relation to previously mentioned problematisation, such as teachers' relative unfamiliarity with contemporary children and youth literature.

Acting as a governmental technology, both as a technique of judgement and intervention, and as the bearer of recommendations for reform, this SOU report suggests strengthening the position of the preschool, the school staff and library, the public library (in collaboration with other institutions/organisations) and popular educational organisations to aid in improving efforts to promote reading and literature in society, and thus attain the political ideals mentioned above. These recommendations are gathered under the banner of what the inquiry calls *Ett läslyft för Sverige* (a boost to reading in Sweden). To take a number of relevant examples: preschools should, initially on a trial basis, have a reading deputy (*läsombud*)[16], somebody who has responsibility for reading promotion in that edu-

[16] It has been near enough to impossible to find/invent a good translation for 'läsombud'. The term is used both in this SOU report and in the final report of the Inquiry into Easy-to-read (*lättläst*) to indicate a person – a member of staff of a preschool, in the case of very young children, or of, for example, a hospital, care home or group home, in the case of people with certain physical, menxtal or intellectual disabilities – who is assigned a role in literacy promotion and information mediation practices, such as reading aloud, and otherwise encouraging reading with measures of *accessibility* in mind (see 2013, pp.53, 61). However, it would appear at times that a 'läsombud' is the principal, or only, mediator of literature for certain individuals or groups, in

cational domain. Teachers should be offered professional formation related to both methodology for the teaching of reading and literature for children and young people. All pupils should have access to a school library manned with qualified staff. The library and the competent librarian should be considered crucial sources of support to both students and teachers in literacy promotion work and in teaching efforts. The promotion of reading (skills) outside of schools should be reinforced, through collaborative models within the cultural sector, improved opportunities for public libraries to work with electronic literature, support for popular educational organisations' work in the area of literature.

The list of suggested techniques for reform or improvement responds to the aims of the inquiry: to provide suggestions for how literature's position in society may be strengthened, with the intention of increasing reading and ensuring a good selection of 'quality' literature. The political rationality underlying this includes a view of children and youth literacy (broadly) as problematic, of practices of teaching reading in preschools and schools as unsatisfactory, of the lack of dedicated school libraries, staffed with competent librarians, as directly contributing to falling literacy rates amongst older Swedish pupils. It also includes aspirations and ideals related to democratic, social and cultural participation, equality of participation for all, access to quality literature and resources for support in literacy development. Implicitly, it includes a political aspiration to standardisation of teaching methodology – which could partly be realised through the governmental technique of professional formation for teachers. The most significant features of this report, analytically speaking, are its clear focus 1) on *institutional* factors in explaining why literacy, especially amongst young boys, is on the decline, and in suggesting measures for improving literacy and 2) on *institutions* as channels for practically implementing such measures. Problematisations are only fleetingly made in terms of the individual's personal failings, uncultivated tastes, or lack of socioeconomic opportunities. Rather, they are centred upon potential *institutional* and other related 'technological' flaws (e.g. the school curriculum, *skollagen*) and possibilities.

SOU 2013:58

Lättläst: betänkande av Lättlästutredningen (2013) is the final report of a Public State Inquiry into state efforts in the area of easy-to-read (*lättläst*) literature and practices. The purpose of the inquiry is to provide a basis for parliamentary deci-

which case it may be considered that (s)he is a 'deputy' – a reader in place of the individual, acting as the individual's reading self. In another sense, (s)he is a deputy of the state – whose aspirations involve an informed, literate population – implementing this ideal or aspiration through his/her reading and mediation practices. For this reason, I have chosen the term deputy, although I am not convinced that it is the best possible translation. As of yet, I have not found an official suggestion for translation through, for example, Centrum för lättläst – the Swedish agency for easy-to-read.

sions with regard to possible reforms and priorities in the area and to make recommendations on how such state efforts should be organised (2013, p.21).

The easy-to-read area is an unusual one in some respects, in the sense that it is infused with political ideals from multiple (rather than one or two) political domains. The aims of cultural politics, disability politics, democracy politics and the politics of education are all portrayed as significant contributors to future state policies on the organisation of easy-to-read efforts and its practices. The goals of cultural politics are said to include ideals of culture as a dynamic and unfettered force based upon *freedom of expression*, that *participation* in cultural life and creativity be a possibility for *all*, and that creativity, diversity, and an art defined by quality *influence* the development of society. The concept of *participation* in cultural life for *all* is said to mean that people with disabilities should be adequately addressed in all parliamentary initiatives in the area of culture. The report further states that one other ambition of cultural politics is children and young people's increased participation in both the consumption of cultural life, and the production of art through creative and expressive activities (2013, p.25). *Access* to cultural life – whether in terms of consumption or production or both – is a central ideal of cultural politics. Included in the concept of 'cultural life', in this particular SOU report on easy-to-read, are literature and language, with *access* to both, and consequently, a concept of literacy at their root.

Ideals of disability politics, which have relevance for easy-to-read, are found in its national aims: a society characterised by *diversity* (*mångfald*), full *participation* in society, and *equal* living conditions, for all people with disabilities, *regardless* of *age* or *gender*. Independence and self-determination are also central political ideals here. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is referred to, noting the rights of persons with disabilities to have *access* to transport, to information and communication technologies, to communication systems, and to all forms of social and community services which are offered to the public in cities and rural areas (2013, pp.27–28). Closely linked with this ideal of access to communication in all its many forms, an ideal with regard to the *informed* and *participatory* citizen is also included under the banner of disability politics and its aims, as the quote below demonstrates.

> Kommunikation omfattar språk, text, punktskrift, taktil kommunikation, storstil, tillgängliga multimedier, textstöd, uppläst text, lättläst språk och mänskligt tal samt tillgänglig IKT. Att personer med funktionsnedsättning får tillfälle att bidra med sina erfarenheter och sin kompetens i frågor som berör dem är av stor betydelse bl.a. för att insatser som vidtas för att avhjälpa hinder blir effektiva och verkningsfulla. I konventionen betonas vikten av samråd med personer med funktionsnedsättning (2013, p.28).

Access to language and literacy is closely related to access to information in this SOU report, but also to the rights of *contribution* and *participation* in decision-making processes, such as those mentioned above. Another political area – the

domain of democratic politics – also demonstrates these ideals of access, which can be related to easy-to-read: the individual's opportunity to *influence* political discourse and decision-making, the enactment of human rights, self-empowerment. "Demokratin stärks av att människor har makt över sitt eget liv och sina möjligheter att påverka. Möjligheten att påverka kräver tillgång till information" (2013, p.29). Access to information is considered key.

The last political domain which is thought to be important in organizing state efforts in and, I would argue, in providing a set of explanatory techniques for developing further political rationality on, the easy-to-read area is the politics of education. Two of the pillars of the Swedish school statute (*skollagen*) are *equality of access* to education and the right to a *comparable* (*likvärdig*) education for *all*. The school statute thus demonstrates political ideals of inclusion, equality and access.

> Utbildningen inom grundskolan, gymnasieskolan, grundsärskolan och gymnasiesärskolan ska syfta till att inhämta och utveckla kunskaper och grundläggande demokratiska värderingar. Den ska främja alla barns och elevers utveckling och lärande samt en livslång lust att lära. I utbildningen ska hänsyn tas till barns och elevers olika behov. Barn och elever ska ges stöd och stimulans så att de utvecklas så långt som möjligt. En strävan ska vara att uppväga skillnader i barnens och elevernas förutsättningar att tillgodogöra sig utbildningen.
>
> Målet för den kommunala vuxenutbildningen och sfi-utbildningen är att vuxna och vuxna invandrare ska stödjas och stimuleras i sitt lärande. De ska ges möjlighet att utveckla sina kunskaper och sin kompetens för att stärka sin ställning i arbets- och samhällslivet samt att främja sin personliga utveckling (2013, p.30).

The formation of both new (*vuxna invandrare*) and future (*barn och elever*) citizens according to specific political ideals and aspirations of government (e.g. related to mass education, mass participation in the workforce) is made possible through the institution of the school and programmes of adult education, i.e. governmental technologies which, in turn, are channels for implementing political rationality – a political rationality which encompasses all of the many ideals mentioned in the preceding pages and which provides a picture of the ideal citizen: one which willingly works to become informed about, and participant in, social, cultural and political life. Opening up social, cultural and political life, making this available to *all* on the basis of political ideals of access and equal rights is part of this rationality, which refers as much as to role of the state as to the citizen. Literacy may be defined as many things. In this SOU report, the work of Mats Myrberg, a retired professor of pedagogy, is referred to (see Rose's 'authorities' dimension). He distinguishes between literacy as an ability to read and write simple sentences, and automatically 'decode' the kind of written language needed to navigate daily life (*läs- och skrivkunnighet*) and literacy as a practice of reading and writing, which continues to evolve throughout life, and involves an ability to both decode and comprehend the written word (*läs- och skrivförmåga*). Practicing to read, and to experience reading and writing for oneself is considered crucial to developing this latter, broader form of literacy. Additionally, early measures of

intervention (i.e. the implementation of suitable governmental technologies) in reading and writing are thought to be of utmost importance for ensuring the long-term development and maintenance of literacy in a broad sense, and the prevention of reading and writing difficulties (2013, p.31).

While the public library is argued to have an important role in making literature accessible to all, it is the school as institution which is given the most critical role in encouraging and providing children and young people with disabilities and/or learning difficulties opportunities for personal experiences of reading and writing (2013, p.51). However, a clear problematisation in this report is made in relation to teaching praxis, where teachers' competence in the area of the teaching of reading, and of literacy promotion, is also questioned. "Skolinspektionen har kritiserat grundsärskolan för att de försummar aktiv läsundervisning för grundsärskolans äldre elever." In addition to this, "visade t.ex. PIRLS-studien att svenska lärare inte ägnade så mycket tid åt att lära eleverna generalisera och dra slutsatser, att förutse händelseförlopp och att beskriva texters stil och struktur" (2013, p.32). Institutional factors are thus claimed to impact literacy and ideals as to the usefulness of reading (what it might be used to achieve) are clearly demonstrated.

However literacy might be defined – and this differs over time, as we shall see in Part III – it can be seen from an analytical point of view, and particularly from a governmentality studies perspective, as a set of techniques and practices for shaping desired behaviour in a population, and in turn, for creating these ideally informed and participatory citizens, an ideal which is discussed further in the next section.

> [N]ågra barn kommer även med bästa möjliga pedagogik att ha svårt att nå tillfredsställande läsförmåga. För de är kompensatoriska insatser nödvändiga i form av exempelvis ljudböcker eller tillrättalagd text, datorstöd med multimediapresentation och aktivt lärarstöd (2013, p.31).

Easy-to-read as a concept, and as an object for political deliberation, might equally be considered a set of such techniques of reform, partly in the shape of the "compensatory measures" suggested, but also in institutional form through, for example, such organisational actors in the easy-to-read arena as CFLL (*Centrum för lättläst*) and MTM (*Myndighet för tillgängliga medier*). In chapter 5 of this SOU report, "Vilka behov finns av offentligt stöd för lättläst?" there is a reiteration of the political ideals which were mentioned at the beginning of this section – e.g. access, participation, equality, influence, self-determination, independence, self-empowerment. Connected with this is an argument about a society where rapidly developing technologies, a heterogeneity of texts, and new media, as well as new platforms for accessing information, demand the reader's active involvement (see 2013, p.93 for example). Easy-to-read is patently motivated by such ideals and observations, and is argued for more fully in this fifth chapter.

> God läs- och skrivförmåga leder till framgång inom utbidlning och ger möjlighet till makt over den egna situationen och ett mer aktivt medborgarskap. Här har lättläst en viktig funktion för de personer som har specifika svårigheter med att läsa. De som inte har uppnått en god läsförmåga eller upprätthåller sin läsförmåga får svårigheter i det vardagliga livet (2013, p.93).

A further example of this is seen on the following page:

> Lättläst kan ses som en väg att ge alla medborgare möjlighet att kunna utnyttja sina demokratiska och samhälleliga rättigheter. Inflytandet och demokratin stärks av att människor har makt över den egna vardagen och sina möjligheter att påverka. För att kunna påverka sina möjligheter till inflytande krävs kunskaper och information. Samhällsinformation på lättläst är avgörande för att alla ska kunna delta och utnyttja sin rätt till inflytande (2013, p.94).

It can be argued that easy-to-read, as a set of governmental technologies in its own right, shares a political rationality, in the form of 'strategies' (see Rose's final dimension of governmentality on combined aspirations of government, political aims, ideology and expertise) with practices of literacy more generally. They are both implicated in the shaping of ideal citizens in a late modern, (neo)liberal democratic society – those who ensure that they become informed, those who participate in and contribute to social, political and cultural life, practices which themselves are predicated upon the implementation of political ideals of access and equality, and the legitimation of authority conferred by expertise. In fact, although treated as an area of political concern unto itself, it is even possible to see easy-to-read as a set of practices *within* practices of literacy, rather than as an entirely autonomous collection of technologies.

PART III

Discussion (and the results of a diachronic reading)

This section of the thesis is intended as a discussion of common threads and significant differences in my empirical material. More importantly, it is an exploration of the development of political treatments of literacy *over time*. This is achieved by addressing the SOU reports as a collective body of empirical material. I have chosen to develop this section thematically, reflecting first upon the concept of literacy, its usefulness as a set of governmental technologies, and the political rationalities which underpin its conceptual representation. I also offer reflections upon a number of other significant themes which have arisen during analysis: the political representation of (il)literate Others in my empirical material, and the question of 'special advisors' and 'experts' according to the governmental dimension of 'authorities' and against the backdrop of a 'democratisation' of (literary) culture.

Literacy: concept and technology

SOU reports, like any documents, are produced in different temporal, and thus, sociopolitical contexts. Their aims and purposes may differ, as may their institutional focuses; they may be produced in the context of investigations into different areas, e.g. state funding of public and school libraries, the public library as an institution, the status of literature and of 'the book' itself. The strands of political rationality discernible in an SOU report most likely mirror a political rationality and an entire set of governmental technologies, in the shape of institutional practices, the training of professionals, or the carrying out of the daily practices of parenting, which exist beyond the report itself, and which, with great certainty, impact the ways in which the aims and goals of Public State Inquiries are formulated. Their desired outcomes, their explanatory techniques, the forms of expert knowledge which are legitimised in their contents, are all products of a particular moment in time. What the reports analysed here have in common is clear governmental technological potential and a role in the expression of political rationality on *literacy* – rationality, or perhaps rationalit*ies*, which have developed over time.

Literacy as a *concept* is not discussed in the earliest SOU reports, although a political rationality on literacy as a set of techniques for the 'conduct of conduct'

(as Foucault terms governmentality) is observable. It is likely that it is not discussed in these first texts as there is a clear assumption that adult citizens are *able* to, and should, read. It is a basic *desire* to read, as well as satisfactory *access* to appropriate, good quality literature, which is problematised. However, the value of reading, as a practice, is closely linked to popular education (*folkbildning*) in these first SOU reports. In fact, practices of literacy are tightly intertwined with popular education, and processes of democratic participation and lifelong learning, throughout my empirical material. That being said, the prominence of a popular educational ideal does tend to diminish over time in favour of other ideals in the most recent reports, where ideals related to self-image, identity-formation, (human and citizen) rights, and independence/autonomy appear to take higher priority. This is an important conclusion. Earlier in this thesis (see *The expert and expert knowledge in governmentality studies*) I posed the following questions: Is there evidence of a top-down, more authoritative demand for universal literacy made upon the Swedish population in the earliest SOUs, or not? Is there a shift in emphasis over time from political requirements for universal literacy, based on a political rationality that represents illiteracy as problematic, to a more rights-based focus on the 'needs' and concerns of the individual? I asked these questions in advance of analysing my empirical material, based on Rose's claim that expertise is employed to bolster "diverse strategies of control", but also to shape desires, values and wills "from below". Rose claims in this argument that what sometimes starts off as a demand from 'above', universal literacy being an example of this, may well be re-appropriated by the population, and transformed into something which citizens begin to demand of the state (or other relevant authorities) using the rhetoric of human or civil rights (Rose 1999b, p.92).

The concept of literacy, where it is discussed in my material, is defined along an ever-broadening spectrum from the most basic 'ability to read and write', to a concept including an ability to navigate the world of digital information, to reflect critically upon what one is reading, to draw one's own conclusions. Literacy eventually becomes conceptualised as not only an ability to read, to comprehend what one is reading, but as an element of a broad range of communicative techniques, where mastery of the written language is crucial (see SOU 2013:58). Literacy is linked in the earliest SOU reports to access to good quality literature and the avoidance of less desirable 'skräplitteratur' or mass-produced and mass-distributed 'triviallitteratur' (especially in the case of children and young people – see below). *What* is read is considered absolutely crucial to the development of reading habits beyond the more 'primitive' ones of childhood (see SOU 1952:23) until one comes to the final report of the 2011 Inquiry into literature, and SOU 2012:65. At this point, children's and young people's reading comprehension, their desire to read, and their reading habits are considered so deeply intertwined, and so *at risk*, that it is deemed more important to encourage the reading of mate-

rial that responds to a young person's interests, than to focus too strenuously upon whether a book (or magazine, or website) fits the requirements set for 'quality' literature. This may also give insight into a shifting view of children and young people as subjects, although given the empirical material at hand, I can only speculate on this.

In all SOU reports the concept (in fact, the assumed *practices*) of literacy are deemed central to an ability to participate fully and equally, and in a well-informed manner, in the Swedish democratic process. However, there is an observable shift in my material from the earliest political rationality on the act of reading as necessary to participation in public political processes, voluntary education and working life (where the ability to read in the adult population is assumed), to strands of political rationality which place practices of literacy, and its promotion, at the centre of positive developments in human identity, self-image and self-esteem (e.g. SOU 1997:108). While the ideals of participation in political, social, and cultural life, and an aspiration towards the shaping of a self-regulating population, are at least as prevalent – and in some cases even more pronounced – in later SOU reports, one significant difference lies in the increasing ideal of identity-formation through literacy (in the shape of access to literature and a sufficient language). Political, democratic participation becomes, through practices of literacy, a project linked to self-image, self-esteem and the free, autonomous self over time. This might be seen in terms of Rose's argument (quoted earlier, but worth repeating) on the advance of the psychological sciences in society:

> The significance of psychology within advanced liberal modes of government lies in the elaboration of a know-how of the autonomous individual striving for self-realization. In the nineteenth century, psychological expertise produced a know-how of the normal individual; in the first half of [the twentieth] century it produced a know-how of the social person. Today, psychologists elaborate complex emotional, interpersonal and organizational techniques by which the practices of everyday life can be organized according to the ethic of autonomous selfhood (Rose 1999b, p.90).

If the first SOU reports (from the 1940s and 1950s) can be seen in these terms – as expressions of an expert knowledge of the 'social person' – then it is possible to see why the ideals of participation in political life, popular educational efforts, and work culture, were considered of primary importance in the life of a human being. They quite possibly reflect an expert psychological knowledge of the 'social person' – and thus, what is required for a person to function well in society (that is, the collective). In the most recent SOU reports (particularly those from the 1990s and beyond), the ideas of self-realisation and the autonomous self certainly become far more prominent. The individual comes much more clearly into focus. The rhetoric of human and civil rights is first observed in SOU 1984:30 – where access to one's own language (at that time, Swedish) in written and spoken form, is deemed a basic human right. It is, as might be expected, and based on increasing immigration, later extended to the right to access to first languages and

literature for members of national minorities and immigrant 'groups', and later still (most prominently in SOU 2013:58) for people with disabilities, reading difficulties, and adult immigrants.

While the ideals of access, participation and inclusion are still prominent in these later reports, there is an additional strand of political rationality linked to the "rise of therapeutics", as noted by Rose and Miller (2008, p.170). Again, in SOU 1984:30, the first inkling of an advancing psychological expert knowledge in political rationality is observable, when literacy in the form of a familiarity with fictional literature is claimed to have "mycket stor betydelse för personlighetsutveckling" (p.78). The development of one's very *personality* is related to the frequent consumption of (good) literature. Self-esteem and self-image are related to practices of literacy. Likewise, the reflexive (technical) subject becomes prominent in SOU reports from the 1990s onwards – literacy, reflexivity and the freedom to influence one's own life are linked – see 1997:108 for example. Autonomy and empowerment are attributed to literacy (and access to literature) in several inquiries – see the Inquiry into easy-to-read (SOU 2013:58) for one of the clearest examples of political rationality on this relationship. It is possible to conclude that literacy as a set of practices, based on shifting political aspirations and rationality, is one set of techniques "by which the practices of everyday life can be organized according to the ethic of autonomous selfhood" (Rose 1999b, p.90). In other words, as a set of techniques of intervention, a governmental technology, for the formation of ideal citizens, willing to submit themselves to, and themselves perform, the evaluative and reformative techniques necessary for their 'betterment'.

The problematic? Children, youth and other Others

Children and young people are largely homogenised in the SOU reports analysed. They are positioned as different from adults, as 'becomings' and as future citizens, whose habits, tastes and activities require intense political efforts at as early an age as possible – this is why we see arguments for the implementation of techniques of intervention in children's reading development as early as preschool age, both at preschool itself, and through the apparatus of the family. Where intervention is required, evidence of a prior problematisation exists. There is an element of political rationality in the most recent SOU reports which suggests that children arrive at preschool, and later at school, with different abilities, due to a variety of factors – e.g. socioeconomic background, biological, intellectual. This might at first glance appear to be an important political heterogenisation of the category 'children' but in fact there is nothing in the analysis I have presented here to demonstrate that the political treatment of literacy intends anything other than a homogensiation of children and young people in terms of the need for, or directing of, reformative strategies. Children are not considered particularly different from one another; rather, it is their preconditions for learning to read which

are thought to vary. Another aspect of this is the problematisation of boys' reading. That boys' reading is not addressed in any depth, despite being represented (very briefly) as problematic might be viewed as a missed opportunity in the national political treatment of literacy (in SOU report form). It might also be viewed as the result of simultaneously differentiating (or, in Said's terms, othering) *and* homogenising tendencies. Concepts of 'the Other' and the process of othering are central to Edward Said's arguments with regard to the application of ideas of essential difference to, and an homogenisation of, entire populations and societies of the East. This practice not only facilitated a Western representation and construction of the East as the 'Orient', but which was simultaneously rooted in a sense of Western (racial, moral, intellectual) superiority over the populations of the East, and a set of deeply imbalanced power relations between East and West (Said 2004). Although, 'othering' is generally applied in the context of postcolonial theory these days, I find it useful to consider children and young people in these terms. I do not, however, compare the breadth or the depth of the consequences of such processes with those set in motion in imperial or postcolonial circumstances. Gill Valentine has written an excellent article on the drawing of boundaries between 'adults' and 'children' and processes of othering in that context (1996).

That children are conceptualised as essentially different from adults can, according to Rose's governmentality studies perspective, be viewed as a 'dividing practice' and thus as part of a process of rendering a phenomenon as problematic – in this case, children and young people's reading behaviour. One of the ways in which this 'dividing practice' is exemplified is in the frequent evaluation of children and young people's literacy, through such technologies as official assessment (e.g. PISA), supervised and guided reading (by authorised professionals, especially teachers and school librarians) and other pedagogic efforts (e.g. 'dialogic rooms', *bokprat*). Swedish-born[17] adults' *ability* to read has not been evaluated to any significant extent in Sweden, although their reading habits, particularly the frequency with which they read, and what they read, regularly undergo evaluation (see SOU 2012:65) Despite claims that there has been little to no *Swedish* evaluation of adults' reading ability, there is at least one OECD report which has attempted to assess adult literacy internationally, and in which Swedish adults are included (see SOU 1997:108).

Rose remarks upon the many technologies designed to shape children and young people: "Along this maze of pathways, the child – as an idea and as a target

[17] It has been difficult to find a term in English which corresponds to what is sometimes called "flergenerationssvensk" in Swedish – a term which refers to persons who have several generations of Swedish-born ancestors in their background. The English term Swedish-born does not seem adequate, when one considers that it may also refer to persons of 'immigrant' background who are born in Sweden. Despite this, and for want of a better term, I use 'Swedish-born' here to indicate persons whose ancestry has been 'ethnically' Swedish over many generations, while acknowledging the problematic uses of all of these terms.

– has become inextricably connected to the aspirations of authorities". Similarly, Rose states the following:

> Universal and compulsory schooling catches up the lives of all young citizens into a pedagogic machine that operates not only to impart knowledge but to instruct in conduct and to supervise, evaluate, and rectify childhood pathologies (1999a, pp.123–124).

Although Rose uses the term citizens here, what he is referring to is subsequently clarified as pertaining to children's claims to social rights, a 'rightful' membership of the community. He uses the term "citizens *in potentia*" to describe children's claims on the social collective (1999a, p.124). As demonstrated in the analysis offered in Part II of this thesis, the political rendering of children and even young people as *future* citizens corresponds with this theoretical statement. Practices of literacy, including the evaluation and assessment of these in youth, are intended to function as one of the many sets of techniques by which the youngest members of society are shaped according to political aspirations. A projected literate, thus well-informed, participatory – and self-regulating – adult population forms a significant part of such aspirations, according to my analysis.

Access to literature and to a sufficient spoken and written *language* are argued to be necessary for the harnessing of power over oneself – that autonomy of self which Rose suggests characterises the modern, self-regulating subject – and for full *participation* in a democratic society, and *influence* over one's own living conditions, in cultural, political and social terms. Against this background, immigrants are subject to similar 'dividing practices' and homogenising techniques as children and young people in these SOU reports, despite a rhetoric of heterogenisation (especially in later reports). Similarly to how children and young people are othered, immigrants are also represented as 'different' through processes of problematisation which position Swedish-born adults (without disabilities) as inhabitants of a form of Swedish, literate *normality*. Their *ability* to read is not questioned, nor is their facility with the Swedish language. This is not the case for immigrants, despite cultural political aims to protect and promote Swedish, Nordic, national minority and immigrant cultural heritages (in plural). As mentioned earlier in the thesis, Magnus Persson makes the following point with regard to representations of cultural heritage in other official documents (and therefore, governmental technologies):

> Läser man läroplanen och kursplanerna noggrant framträder en motsägelsefull men ändå tydlig bild. Det talas ohämmat om kultur och kulturarv i dessa styrdokument. Det talas om ”andra kulturarv” (i pluralis), ”det egna kulturarvet” och ”det gemensamma kulturarvet”. Men till syvende och sist är kulturarvet i första hand det svenska, som sedan kan utvidgas till det västerländska. Men där tycks det gå en gräns (Persson 2012, p.168; cf. Persson 2008).

In my analysis of SOU 1974:5, I venture a similar point of view. Discussing the political ideal of cultural participation, I highlight the likelihood that participation

does not relate to cultural *exchange*, but to an invitation for immigrants (or any members of society who find themselves outside of majority cultural expressions) to "partake of some form of idealised 'majority' cultural experience" and, to some extent, ghettoizing immigrant mother-tongues and 'home' cultures, rather than including these in the so-called majority culture in any meaningful way. Homi Bhabha, in his essay on writing from the 'margins of the nation', describes the peculiar loneliness of the immigrant in a 'foreign' culture:

> I have lived that moment of the scattering of the people that in other times and other places, in the nations of others, becomes a time of gathering. Gatherings of exiles and emigrés and refugees, gathering on the edge of 'foreign' cultures; gathering at the frontiers; gathering in the ghettoes or cafés of city centres; gathering in the half-life, half-light of foreign tongues, or in the uncanny fluency of another's language; gathering the signs of approval and acceptance, degrees, discourses, disciplines; gathering the memories of underdevelopment, of other worlds lived retroactively; gathering the past in a ritual of revival; gathering the present. Also the gathering of the people in the diaspora: indentured, migrant, interned; the gathering of incriminatory statistics, educational performance, legal statutes, immigration status – the genealogy of that lonely figure that John Berger named the seventh man (Bhabha 1990, p.291).

His argument, from the position of the evaluated, assessed, statistically-rendered immigrant, reinforces my conclusion that the political rationality of *inclusion*, common to many of the SOU reports analysed in this thesis, involves no exchange, no reciprocity, but rather a set of dividing practices, or in Said's terms, 'othering' based upon an essentialist notion of 'difference'. The political ideal of participation of all members of society in a presumed 'majority' culture, and facilitated through practices of literacy, seemingly involves an equally prevalent ideal of cultural assimilation. At the very least it reveals an underlying political rationality, in the context of the material studied here, which demonstrates that immigrants' 'home' cultures are to be maintained, studied and enjoyed separately from their participation in 'Swedish' culture more generally. Magnus Persson corroborates this assimilatory ideal, wrapped up in the project of nation-building, in his study of reading, literature and Swedish as a school subject (2008). Practices of literacy and projects of national identity – via ideals of participation in, and the promotion of, the (singular) Swedish *kulturarv* – might well be seen to go hand in hand in the SOU reports studied here.

A final group which can be viewed as markedly othered, or represented as different from the majority, Swedish-born, adult population, in these SOU reports, are people with various disabilities and learning difficulties. However, unlike in the case of children, young people, and immigrants, the last report I analysed here, SOU 2013:58 on the area of easy-to-read, has made a better attempt at representing people with disabilities and reading difficulties as heterogeneous. The most prevalent strand of political rationality observable in this 2013 report, is one related to autonomy (in the sense of independence, self-empowerment). This strand of political rationality is underpinned by a rhetoric of human rights, but also by an ideal which frames the *autonomous* self as the ultimate democratically-participant,

fully-fledged citizen. Rose discusses the "norm of autonomy" as central to processes of willing self-evaluation and self-regulation, in which we "become tied to the project of our own identity and bound in new ways into the pedagogies of expertise" (Rose 1999b, p.93).[18]

Authorities, experts, advisors: a brief note

As mentioned in my analysis of SOU 1974:5, Friis Møller states the following in relation to what he views as a rhetoric of the 'democratization of culture':

> [R]egardless of what philosophical, artistic or political provisions are made, artistic and cultural choices remain a personal matter. Democratization of culture in this perspective is but a *poorly hidden attempt to generalize artistic and cultural choices of the few well informed to the rest of society* – and one might ask if democratization can be stretched to also include such a process, which in other contexts might appear under remarkably differently headlines. What the chapter also suggests is that if 'the implicit standard' (Sampson 2008, p.6) in the cultural sector in practice is but variations on personal taste, not anybody's taste but the taste of the few informed, there is potentially much to gain from dissolving that standard. Not for those privileged by the current standard, but for the many whose personal tastes, preferences, identities, backgrounds etc. at the present are not reflected, nor encouraged by the implicit standard (Friis Møller 2012, pp.104–105 my emphasis).

Friis Møller discusses the dissemination of culture as part of an idealised 'democratisation' of culture, and cultural choices as governed by the 'taste of the few informed'. I take another perspective on what might constitute, or underlie, 'personal choices', which allows me to see 'personal choices' as the results of governmentality (that is, political rationality as implemented through selected technologies), and the generalisation of these choices as authority based on expertise. Neverthless, Friis Møller's argument encapsulates significant aspects of what I have described in my analysis and discussion up to this point. The majority of the SOU reports analysed in this thesis bear a political rationality which frames the book as the primary mediator of culture, and 'good' or 'quality' literature the most appropriate form of reading material for both adults and children. This political rationality is, of course, formulated on the basis of the results of Public State Inquiries undertaken by, and/or on behalf of, certain key actors – namely, special advisors (*sakkunniga*) and experts (*experter*). Certainly, it is present in the previ-

[18] A brief note on other Others: No attempt has been made to relate the political ideals of access to literature, cultural participation, and inclusion in social, political and cultural life (through practices of literacy) to queer literature and culture, or to any perceived needs of LGBTQ-identifying people – and this despite other political processes, such as LGBTQ certification programmes (read: governmental technologies) which have been carried out in at least some cultural institutions, e.g. Hallonbergen's public library in the Stockholm suburbs – processes which certainly reveal a political assumption that queer consumers of literature have specific needs and an aspiration towards meeting these. There is, rather, a complete absence of such a discussion in the 627-page SOU report *Läsandets kultur* (2012:65), one of the most recent of the SOU reports, which I find peculiar. In *Läsarnas marknad, marknadens läsare*, the research anthology which has been used as a basis for some of the conclusions in the former report, the only mention of anything remotely related to queer culture, is queer theory's role in studies of literature, where it (amongst other theoretical approaches) is used to relativise, and thus, challenge the superior status of literature in the sense of a singular literary canon (2012, p.172).

ous reports, the contemporary legal statutes, and official documents, which such special advisors use as explanatory techniques to underpin the summing up and evaluation of the results of their inquiries. This section of the final discussion makes a number of conclusions about such actors and their role in processes of government.

It is difficult to determine a trend in the constitution of committees and special advisory groups from reading the SOU reports. Often, a person's title is given (e.g. *direktören, professor, bokhandlare*), but nothing more about the special advisor or expert is said. A possible shift in the constitution of such groups might be witnessed in the increasing number of academics who are involved as special advisors over time – at first, persons with bachelor degrees, and later, persons with professional academic titles (*högskoleadjunkt, docent, professor*). In the earliest SOU reports, relatively few politicians or academics were involved, if one compares the combination of actors in those special advisory groups to those contributing to the most recent inquiries and reports. One noticeable aspect of the constitution of special advisory and expert groups over time has been an increase in women members, at first as experts, and later as special advisors also. This is perhaps not a surprising observation, given the increasing numbers of women entering into paid labour over the course of time in question (1949–2013). At any rate, the most interesting aspect of these special advisory and expert groups in relation to my analysis of these SOU reports is not exactly *who* these experts were (or are) as individuals, but what *becoming* an expert subject (and inhabiting the role of an authority) means in relation to political rationality on literacy, and the design and implementation of techniques of governance. Rose conceptualises subjectivity, or the making of 'human kinds' to paraphrase Ian Hacking, as Rose does, as "assembling subjects" – this form of assembly is a process by which "human being is constituted through devices, gazes, techniques which extend beyond the limits of the flesh. These are not capacities of an isolated and self-contained individual but are localized in particular spaces…" (Rose 1999a, p.xx). This argumentation is also true of the 'assembly' or 'making up' of experts and the channeling of their capacities in the technology of the Public State Inquiry. For this reason, I claim that the expert as individual is less interesting for this thesis than the expert as subject and as authority.

I want to return to Friis Møller's claim that what is presented as a democratisation of culture is more likely the imposition of an elite minority's cultural tastes upon the masses. This may be the case, to some extent, in the SOU reports analysed in this thesis. In terms of special advisors (and other experts) as authorities, and whose expertise might just be seen as a 'mode of authority', as Rose puts it in *Governing the Soul* (1999a), one can pose the question of how small groups of special advisors can attempt to shape a literate population and impress upon it the ideal that the (good) book is primary mediator of culture and the height of literary

quality, and therefore the most worthy and appropriate reading material for child and adult alike. I have already discussed political rationality on literacy, which is, fundamentally, a political rationality on the ideal citizen – the well-read, well-informed, democratically-participant member of society, the formation of which requires the implementation of practices to govern the practices of literacy (i.e. achieving 'the conduct of conduct' as Foucault put it). But how are individuals convinced by the "few informed", the experts and authorities, that being literate, and familiar with the 'world of books', is worthwhile? In Part I of the thesis, I presented Rose's perspective on the expert and expert knowledge – the links between the latter, subjectivity and truth, as borrowed from the theories of Foucault. Rose sees two principal ways in which a small number of 'authorities' can govern the population – the first way, as mentioned in the section *The expert and expert knowledge in governmentality studies*, involves the development of techniques and programmes for shaping the behaviour of other authorities (e.g. the school curriculum is in itself a governmental technology for the formation of teachers' practices, but also their attitudes and values). The second way in which expert authority is exercised, and individuals governed, is in the recommendation of practices, based on expert 'therapeutic' (or reformative) knowledge, which the individual can apply to him/herself. Rose judges that in order for this to occur, a phenomenon must first be represented as problematic, and then considered to require some measures of intervention – this is precisely the type of governmental process which allows literacy as a *phenomenon* – conceptualised as differently as it is over time – to be politically rendered, framed as problematic, linked to various practices and political ideals, and ultimately, to be recommended and promoted as a *set of techniques* for achieving political aspirations regarding the ideal citizen through its formative potential.

Governmentality functions, and the 'few informed' can convince the many that becoming literate subjects is of value, by instilling a belief that in choosing to be literate, individuals are obtaining their human and civil rights. As Rose puts it, "[t]he irony is that we believe, in making our subjectivity the principle of our personal lives, our ethical systems, and our political evaluations, that we are, freely, choosing our freedom" (1999a, p.11).

A final word…

When writing a master's thesis (or any longer academic work), there is a general pattern to how this is done. One usually starts with an area of interest and formulates a research question. One perhaps decides upon a theory and a method next. One of the last things one does in the initial stages of preparing for carrying out the actual analysis of the material is to write a section on previous research in the area. The area I was in was two-fold: it was governmentality studies, but it was also (to a certain extent) studies of cultural politics. However, what seems highly

relevant at the beginning of a study may become less so as the analytical work progresses, as new and unexpected conclusions arise. I thought initially that the works of, for example, Anders Frenander on the history (and present) of cultural politics in Sweden would be highly relevant. I thought that his chapters on the state's relationship to the public library would be of interest (Frenander & Lindberg 2012, p.15 ff.). I never realised that *autonomy* in the cultural sphere, which Geir Vestheim explores from the cultural producer's point of view (in a book edited by Frenander) would actually relate, in my material, far more to the *consumer* of (literary) culture (2011). Certainly, I did not foresee the full extent of the role that postcolonial theory, in the shape of Edward Said and Homi Bhabha's work, would have in the thesis until my analysis was well under way – it was when I reached SOU 1974:5, and when immigrants in Sweden were first discussed in terms of reading ability and access to literature and language, that it became apparent to me that concepts of othering and marginalisation would become crucial companions to Rose's 'dividing practices' and dimensions of governmentality in the form of 'problematisations'. On reflection, I should perhaps have anticipated that increasing immigration would bring with it a certain representation of immigrants and cultural participation. However, I did not. If this is a common issue – that analysis raises unforeseen points and allows for unexpected conclusions – does it mean that thesis authors routinely rewrite their "Previous Research" sections? Or can this gap between expectations and conclusions be used as an opportunity for reflection on the process of writing academic texts and on analysis itself? I have taken the latter route. I cannot force previous research, which had seemed relevant in the early stages of preparation and writing, to map on to analytical results which have taken other routes, and I do not wish to rewrite the section, eliding opportunities for reflection on the process of thesis writing.

To conclude this thesis: by employing a governmentality studies perspective, as developed by Nikolas Rose, I have worked to achieve the aim stated at the beginning of this thesis: to trace expressions of political rationality, as they relate to literacy and related concepts, and to offer examples of governmental technologies for the implementation of political ideals and aspirations. In response to my research questions, I conclude that literacy can be seen not only as an empirical concept, defined differently over time in my SOU material and in ever-broadening terms, but that it be understood from an analytical perspective as the product of a particular political rationality, and as a *set of techniques* which facilitate the inculcation of desirable behaviours, values and attitudes in the population, and in turn, act upon the individual through ideals of assimilation, self-empowerment, autonomy, and freedom, and the implementation of normative political judgements related to participation, influence and inclusion, in which the Swedish-born, able-bodied adult reader is normalised.

Summary

The aim of this master's thesis is to trace expressions of political rationality and examples of governmental technologies in selected final reports of Public State Inquiries (SOU), where literacy and closely-related concepts are important features. In order to achieve this aim, I employ a version of governmentality studies perspective primarily developed by Nikolas Rose and based on Michel Foucault's concepts of governmentality, subjectivity, power and knowledge. One important aspect of governmentality studies is the concept of governance. This can be considered in two different ways, according to Rose: as a collective term for efforts to exercise authority over others, either at a national, local or organisational level – in other words, as an equivalent to regulation – or as the sum of outcomes of particular political activity. Rose views governance in terms of the latter definition. Governmentality studies, also termed the analytics of government in Rose's perspective, are concerned with regimes of truth and knowing, the political rendering of phenomena as problematic, the authorisation of experts, and the designation of particular techniques, apparatuses and programmes for the shaping and evaluation of ideal conduct in the population. Ultimately, governmentality studies deal with political rationality, and its resulting governmental technologies, which form a population of acquiescent, self-evaluating, self-regulating citizens under the guise of autonomy and freedom.

Although Rose claims not to offer a formal methodology for the analysis of government, he does provide six dimensions of governmentality which I use to aid my analysis: problematisations, explanations, technologies, authorities, subjectivities and strategies. These dimensions refer to the political rendering of selected phenomena as problematic, the explanatory techniques used to reinforce this rendering and arguments as to the need for intervention, the tools and techniques by which such intervention can be undertaken, the expert, expert knowledge and authority, the subject positions available to people who govern and are at the receiving end of governance, and strategies of governance in the form of hopes, plans and aspirations of government as they become bound to political aims, techniques of reform, expertise and ideology. An important aspect of method, according to Rose, is attention to language, as it is (at least partly) through language that political rationality is produced.

A number of questions which stem from my primary aim, and which I hope to respond to in this thesis, are what kind of political rationality is discernible in these SOU reports; what kind of governmental technologies are suggested as useful or necessary; what aspirations, plans and hopes of government are observable in my material; can literacy be viewed as a set of techniques for the formation of the ideal citizen – if this is the case, how is this expressed? As noted above, I analyse a selection of final SOU reports, in which shifting conceptualisations of literacy and related concepts are observable. Although literacy is defined in different ways in the SOU reports, broadening over time to include information literacy and digital navigation, as well as communicative strategies, beyond the traditional notion of literacy as 'reading ability, reading comprehension, and writing', I view practices of literacy as a set of techniques for the realisation of political ideals with regard to the Swedish population, the most prominent of which, I conclude, constitute the well-informed, lifelong learning, democratically-participant, autonomous citizen. This ideal citizen is, due to 'dividing practices', otherwise termed processes of othering, conceptualised *primarily* as the Swedish-born, able-bodied adult reader. The reading practices of children and young people, 'immigrants' and, to some extent, people with reading difficulties and/or disabilities are problematised and are rendered as objects for techniques of evaluation, supervision and intervention. Ultimately, I conclude that practices of literacy should be viewed as a set of techniques, or governmental technologies, for the formation of the ideal citizen noted above, and the promotion of literacy an act of governance.

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