

I S A K H A M M A R

KRITERIUM

EXPERIENCES FROM THE PILOT PHASE

L U N D

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TRANSLATED BY SEMANTIX

ABOUT THE REPORT

This report is based on interviews done in April, May and June of 2017. The objective was to gather and document thoughts and experiences from Kriterium's pilot phase 2015-2017. Accordingly, this did not involve a complete analysis. Rather, the ambition has been to offer a cross section of activities and developments and also an attempt to portray significant parts of the on-going discussions. Hopefully this report can provide valuable insights into Kriterium's initial period, both for those involved and for outsiders.

This report was commissioned by Kriterium's steering committee and the assignment was offered to me since I was perceived to have a favourable way into Kriterium as a newly joined member of the steering committee, a role I have held since January 2017 in my capacity as the Publication Coordinator at Lund University. My insight into the earlier work at the time was limited since it was my predecessor, Katarina Bernhardsson who had been a part of Kriterium's first pilot phase. When I came into the picture, there was already a desire to utilise some of the many lessons that can be learned after these years through interviews. The timeframes for the assignment, however, did not allow any more in-depth investigation. I have therefore chosen to view the assignment as an attempt to shed light on the broad strokes and on a number of recurring themes based on the discussions I conducted with 14 of those involved.

Despite the limited scope, I have strived for breadth in the selection of interviewees. In consultation with Åke Ingerman and Ulf Zander, I have chosen people with different roles in Kriterium's organisation. Together with Maja Pelling, Ingerman and Zander have represented what one could call the core of the steering committee – the three with probably the most insight into the practical work. In addition to this, the representatives for Riksbankens Jubileumsfond (RJ) and the National Library of Sweden (KB) were selected to be interviewed together with a research representative, Sharon Rider from Uppsala University.

Alongside the steering committee, I have based my approach on three of the books that Kriterium reviewed and approved. Here too, I have been guided by the ambition to capture the range covered by Kriterium. To be able to discern progress in the work of Kriterium, I chose the first book (which is also an anthology), the second book in the project and one of the later books. They differ in terms of academic disciplines and both of the publishers are represented in the selection. Authors and academic coordinators were interviewed for the three books together with two publisher representatives, one from Nordic Academic Press and one from Makadam. The latter are also adjunct members of Kriterium's steering committee. No reviewers were interviewed and the reason is the time factor as well as the fact that the review is anonymous.

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Isak Hammar, June 2017

ABOUT THE INTERVIEWS

This report is based on interviews done with 14 people associated with Kriterium in various ways. The interview questions were formulated to some extent based on a document prepared by Katarina Bernhardsson and discussed in Kriterium's steering committee. The interview structure has been divided into a practical and a theoretical or visionary section. In the former, attitudes to and experiences of, among other things, costs, one's own input, the quality of the collaboration and review, and technology were sought. In the latter part of the interview, the focus was on the idea of Kriterium itself and questions were thus asked about needs, collaborative formats, status and attitude to both the academic monograph and Open Access. The interviews lasted between 25-45 minutes and were adapted to the interviewee's individual role in Kriterium.

INTERVIEW LIST

- Åke Ingerman (Chairman), Professor of Subject Didactics with a specialisation in science and technology, University of Gothenburg
- Ulf Zander (steering committee member), Professor of History, Lund University
- Maja Pelling (coordinator), University Librarian, University of Gothenburg
- Sharon Rider (steering committee member), Professor of Theoretical Philosophy, Uppsala University
- Eva Hemmungs Wirtén (steering committee member), Professor of Mediated Culture, Linköping University, representative for Riksbankens jubileumsfond
- Beate Eellend (steering committee member), PhD, Supervisor for OpenAccess.se, representative for the National Library of Sweden
- Annika Olsson (adjunct steering committee member), Publication Manager, Nordic Academic Press
- Karina Klok (adjunct steering committee member), Publisher and Owner, Makadam publishing house
- Arne Jarrick (author/editor, *Methods in World History*), Professor of History, Stockholm University
- Stefan Amirell (academic coordinator, *Methods in World History*), Docent in History, Linnaeus University
- Eva Borgström (author, *Berättelser om det förbjudna* [Accounts of the forbidden]), Professor of Literary Studies, University of Gothenburg
- Kristina Fjelkestam (academic coordinator, *Berättelser om det förbjudna* [Accounts of the forbidden]), Professor of Gender Studies, Stockholm University
- Daniel Lövheim (author, *Naturvetarna, ingenjörerna och valfrihetens sambälle* [The Scientists, Engineers and the Society of Free Choice]), Senior Lecturer, Stockholm University

- Thomas Kaiserfeld (academic coordinator, *Naturvetarna, ingenjörerna och valfrihetens sabbälle* [The Scientists, Engineers and the Society of Free Choice]), Professor of the History of Ideas, Lund University

THE REPORT IN BRIEF

- The development of Kriterium has been marked by its nature as a pilot project. Concept work, organisational structure and division of responsibilities have progressed through continuous discussion and problem management in the course of the period.
- The development of Kriterium has had a clear progression. This is true of both the assignment description, which was initially perceived by those involved as vaguely formulated, and the practical work of handling and reviewing manuscripts. The experiences from the review process generally seem to reflect this internal development, from initial misunderstanding and communication shortcomings to a smoother process.
- Deficiencies in the platform that had been procured and difficulties in obtaining requested support for it are pointed out as central problems during the pilot phase. These issues have been perceived at all levels and were pointed out by all roles interviewed.
- Kriterium's status as a pilot project has generated goodwill and understanding for the problems that have arisen.
- The assessment of the scope and degree of difficulty of one's own input in the development of Kriterium differs considerably depending on the role in the organisation. The people who had a practical responsibility speak of an initially heavy workload bordering on unreasonable, while those with mainly a theoretical/visionary role describe the situation as acceptable. People tied to individual manuscript reviews rarely point to any workload problems.
- The idea of creating an infrastructure for the peer-review of academic monographs is persistently applauded and the need for Kriterium in the Swedish publishing landscape is generally perceived to be extensive. Today's qualification and publication point system is repeatedly pointed out as the reason. Moreover, today's publishing channels are pointed out as costly and excessively controlled by interests other than the academic.
- The collaborative format of university-publisher-external actor is described as necessary and creative. Both steering committee and editorial board are praised for the members' enthusiasm and differing perspectives.
- Attitudes to costs vary and response to the issue of the funding of Kriterium is different among the interviewees. Both negative experiences and fears about the future have been brought up. The issue is not perceived to have been resolved for either individual manuscript review or for the project as a whole.
- Among a majority of the interviewees in all roles, there is considerable devotion to the academic monograph. The view is repeatedly expressed that the monograph format fits humanists particularly well. The value of academic publications in Swedish is also pointed out in the context.
- The attitude to Open Access and, by extension, to Kriterium's requirement that reviewed works be made openly accessible in digital format varies among the interviewees, but is generally positive. Some of the interviewees emphasise the importance of Open Access on the basis of distribution, public access to research and collaboration. Another argument is that Open Access serves as a counterweight to commercial publishing channels. Issues perceived to be uncertain in relation to Open Access are financing, quality review and the conditions for the commercial book market and its significance to the third mission.

ABOUT THE ASSIGNMENT AND ONE'S OWN INPUT

(Kriterium's steering committee)

Project development of Kriterium during the pilot phase is distinguished by a clear progression. While the initial period is repeatedly described by the members of the steering committee as diffuse and complicated, all of them also maintain that continuous development of both assignment and working methods took place. Altogether, the interviews provide a clear view that Kriterium during its first years was largely marked by the very nature of having been a pilot project.

Three factors can be identified as particularly characteristic for how this development phase is described by those involved who were interviewed. First, the assignment was initially perceived as vaguely formulated and subject to constant negotiation. Second, the division of responsibility was perceived as unclear and to some extent unsatisfactory. Third, the work to develop Kriterium is characterised by enthusiasm, creativity and a long list of different perspectives of opportunities and challenges of publication within the humanities and social sciences. A reasonable conclusion is therefore that positive and negative experiences come from the pilot project's nature and, furthermore, partly coincided. In other words, what has been seen as challenging has also been perceived in different phases as stimulating.

Everyone in the steering committee points in particular to there being ambiguities with the assignment during the first phase of the project. A long list of issues – or even “everything” – is perceived to have been up for negotiation. Here, one finds an example of how the nature of this pilot project have generated frustration as well as enthusiasm. Even the question of whether the project could be implemented at all was initially relevant for some of those involved. A few of the interviewees also describe the work as chaotic or “hysterical” during the first year.

Here, several factors seem to have interacted. In parallel with the issue of what Kriterium shall be, the group was also forced to invent the structure to implement the as yet unfinished idea. Moreover, the interviewees emphasised that the assignment grew on the basis that more manuscripts were accepted for review than initially intended. Lastly, the division of responsibility in both idea work and organisation were unclear and in some cases unsatisfactory. It thereby also appears as if the extensive work with Kriterium during the pilot phase has been to end up in an assignment description, a structure and a division of roles.

The background picture provided by the interviewees with the greatest insight strengthens the picture of Kriterium having arisen from “a conglomerate of ideas” partly originating from different contexts and frustrations. An original and permeating driver was an analysis of – and a frustration over – the academic monograph not being included in today's publication system. The basic idea to make the academic book relevant has, however, touched on (perhaps even competed with) a number of issues about e.g. the Acta series' relevance; the consequences of the qualification and point systems; international publishing patterns; Open Access; and knowledge dissemination in a broad sense. This melting pot of different approaches and drivers seems to live on in Kriterium, something that is overwhelmingly, although not solely, described as positive.

The issue of what Kriterium shall be – and stand for – has accordingly been discussed at the same time that the structure grew forth. It appears that this is a factor that the interviewees on one side found exciting and creative, but it is also clear that it has entailed some stress and an at times unreasonable workload for some parties. Several of the interviewees bring up the lack of fixed frameworks as both a natural part of a pilot project of this kind and as a difficulty necessary to try to handle.

If any problem area is to be pointed out more definitively, it is the division of responsibility. It is obvious that the University of Gothenburg has accepted a large part of the burden during this negotiation phase. A perception that comes forth both in talks with the people in question

and with others in the steering committee is that Kriterium's existence to some extent has come to rest on the shoulders of Åke Ingerman and Maja Pelling. The fact that the assignment has grown in the course of the work has ostensibly played a role in the burden on these people. Ulf Zander and Katarina Bernhardsson at Lund University were also identified as central persons in some critical phases.

In connection with the division of responsibility, the question of compensation for the work also becomes pressing. Here, it seems clear that the estimates for the work with Kriterium were either never formulated or were extensively exceeded at some stages. Several of the interviewees describe how the work with Kriterium was done during their leisure time or in the scope of the administration part of their regular jobs. This has, however, been perceived as largely acceptable and as a part of the everyday academic life. Above all, those involved whose role was rather on the visionary level and who lacked a complete picture of the practical work speak of a fully reasonable workload. Another difficulty that came forth is the rooting of the assignment with individual employers.

That Kriterium has been a pilot project without a clear assignment description or role model accordingly influenced the work. All of the interviewees speak of it also involving a clear progression and currently say that the situation is either stable or even fully satisfactory. One interviewee says that Kriterium "went from strength to strength".

A recurring opinion is that there was a positive and committed spirit in the steering committee. The work on idea development was consistently praised and the interviewees say that they perceived the collaborative format as both necessary and successful. Even if several of the interviewees say that there existed different viewpoints and perceptions of the assignment, this fact does not seem to have been perceived as a hindrance to the progression of the project. Some of the interviewees indeed maintain that there were situations where, for example, researchers and people with ties to the library had different perceptions, but this is nonetheless not described as a source of conflict. Rather, different experiences are identified – such as the publishers' practical and financial horizon – as a strength.

ABOUT THE MANUSCRIPT PROCESS AND REVIEW

(All interviewees)

The experiences from this practical work on manuscript review appear to largely reflect Kriterium's inner development. After talking with authors, academic coordinators and publisher representatives associated with three of the books that successfully went through Kriterium's review, one can illustrate a clear although perhaps somewhat rudimentary progression line.

One shortcoming that is repeatedly pointed out in the interviews is about communication. The problems concern both the manuscript process' procedure in purely practical terms and how Kriterium as an idea has been conveyed and rooted. The author of book 1 directs sharp criticism at the process. Above all, dissatisfaction is expressed with the communication and the author says that he is still not clear on what Kriterium is. In contrast to this, the academic coordinator for book 1 says that he perceives both the assignment and process as successful, except for the platform.

Also for book 2, the process is reported as slow and unclear, although without the author in question expressing dissatisfaction. Communication about what Kriterium means appears to have been deficient at the beginning. While the academic coordinator for book 2 is largely satisfied with the process, there is a point criticism, which here too concerns communication. When the person in question believed that her own input was done, another review procedure was requested, which led to frustration. Author and academic coordinator for book 3 describe the process as satisfactory. Thus the results to some extent reflect Kriterium's development in general as the organisation at this time had achieved more stable routines and some experience of the process. In this context, Kriterium being a pilot project appears to have entailed some understanding among the interviewees.

In terms of the reviews – both specifically of the three books in question and in general – the view is almost solely positive among those who say they had insight (some felt they left this to other parts of the organisation entirely). One exception is a member of the steering committee who actually emphasises that the committee was not entirely satisfied at the beginning and therefore was forced to provide further instructions. The authors are also satisfied with the quality of the review. It is described as thorough and relevant by all three interviewees. The academic coordinators also say that the review maintained a high level and that the manuscript was improved through the comments and opinions provided by reviewers. Even the otherwise critical author of book 1 highlights the high quality of the review.

However, what is pointed out as the project's troubled offspring is the platform procured from Ubiquity Press. From a practical perspective, bugs and the lack of support were highlighted, among other things. It is clear that these shortcomings affected the representative from the GU library. From publishers and academic coordinators, criticism was rather that the platform was not intuitive or adequately streamlined. In fact, the only one who does not express any negative experiences of the platform is the author of the third book.

The publisher representatives emphasise that the process must become smoother in the future and that their work should largely begin after the review is done. They nonetheless describe the pilot phase as developing and rewarding. Also the publishers emphasise the problems with the platform and that it caused a great deal of work and frustration.

During the interviews, a number of thoughts came up concerning the review process. One concerns how involved the editorial board should be in the review process. Another brought up by an academic coordinator is if his/her own role is actually needed. The question of how many times one should subject a manuscript before it is accepted also came up during the interviews. One of the academic coordinators questions whether or not it was possible to "throw out a

manuscript” and compares with the greater authority that accompanies the role as a journal editor.

COLLABORATIVE FORM AND FINANCING

(Kriterium’s steering committee, publisher representatives)

The question of the form of collaboration was mainly answered by the members of the steering committee. The responses primarily concerned the overall model and to a lesser extent the internal organisation model with an editorial board and a steering committee. Insofar as the latter was commented on, no clear complications were mentioned.

Together, the responses indicate that the model chosen where universities and publishers together with national actors (Riksbankens Jubileumsfond, the Swedish Research Council, the National Library of Sweden) was perceived to be successful. Several of the interviewees emphasised that the idea of Kriterium is something that requires cooperation. The reasons are above all to avoid duplication of work and to not re-invent the wheel. Another argument that is highlighted is that Kriterium influences a common infrastructure for domestic publication and is therefore of national interest. It was also emphasised that broad collaboration provides greater legitimacy. The support from the national actors was repeatedly described as crucial. In the other direction, the representatives from Riksbankens Jubileumsfond and the National Library of Sweden confirm that Kriterium is perceived as an initiative in the organisations’ immediate sphere of interest. In this context, wishes and visions were also expressed that more universities should be included in the model.

Several of the interviewees also bring up the importance of the pilot publishers’ commitment. As one steering committee member expressed it, “it has introduced a degree of realism to the discussions”. That Kriterium shall be viewed as a complement and not a competitor was repeatedly emphasised.

Most of the interviewees feel that reviewers should be paid for their assignment. Additionally however, several different attitudes to compensation have come forth. While some feel that assignments as steering committee members or academic coordinators need to be remunerated, others point out that this kind of assignment is included in the job description at their home university. For the part of the publishers, the efforts were motivated based on an interest to be involved in the development of a pilot project. The actual costs for Kriterium as regards working hours have, however, been difficult to evaluate, even if they cannot be considered sustainable from a future perspective.

The authors of the first and third book both emphasise in particular that the question of financing of peer review has not been handled in a satisfactory manner. Both express dissatisfaction with the financial conditions being vague, which led to themselves having to spend time to try and arrange financing.

Also from the steering committee, it is emphasised that there is a risk that the cost to an excessively high degree lands with the author and one of the authors points out in the same spirit a potential structural inequity – that only the authors who can afford it will have their manuscripts peer reviewed. An opinion close to this context is that today’s Swedish system where publishers are paid for publication is viewed as problematic.

ABOUT NEEDS AND STATUS

(All interviewees)

The question of the need for Kriterium can be interpreted in different ways. On one hand, one can ask about the actual need for researchers to have their works peer reviewed. By extension, this also concerns how many manuscripts Kriterium can take on in the long term. For understandable reasons, the steering committee expresses uncertainty about conducting such an analysis at the same time that some members have emphasised that there has clearly been a pent up need and that more manuscripts have come in than expected. On the other hand, one can speak about a more theoretical or visionary need and in this context, the members of the steering committee seem more clear about this than diversified attitudes. A number of perceptions from this perspective can be presented in the following.

In general, most interviewees said that the need for Kriterium is very large. The majority have said that the humanist tradition of writing monographs must be valued more highly. Other needs analyses are based on the idea that Kriterium can and should be a counterbalance to what is described as a publishing system that is unsustainable on the long term. For example, it is emphasised that Kriterium is essentially non-commercial and also governed by academic ideals. It is perceived to be of special value that it is the research's own requirements and conditions that guide the work. In this context, Kriterium is also given the function of being an alternative to expensive publication channels and for publisher control. Both the National Library and Riksbankens Jubileumsfond are said by the respective representative to share the perception that Kriterium is a valuable project.

Also the significance of increasing the value of academic publication in Swedish has been brought up regarding the question of the need for Kriterium. It is emphasised that we have lacked academic publication in Sweden in the same way as in other countries, but a transition towards an international publication pattern is required. Here, Kriterium is considered to fit in well. Kriterium is also considered by several interviewees to have an important role to play in the discussion of what peer review research is and should be.

Another aspect of Kriterium that was brought up as valuable is as a pioneer project. According to such an opinion, there is a common collegial interest in the existence of infrastructure for peer review. Others highlight that Kriterium has entailed collaboration and a forum for really getting a hold of today's challenges in terms of publication. One of the interviewees additionally emphasises that Kriterium as a model is of major international interest, perhaps not least in countries where the publishing system and publishing traditions look different.

In terms of the status that is associated with a Kriterium labelling, the steering committee is more sceptical. Some believe they have perceived a collegial appreciation and acceptance, while others do not have any direct experience of the matter. Several of the interviewees believe that there is still a ways to go to distribute information about Kriterium.

Kriterium is perceived to be valuable also among authors, publisher representatives and academic coordinators. The idea is affirmed and the initiative is praised consistently. Among other things, one of the authors believes that the prevailing qualification system is not applicable to his/her own subject where the monograph is the common form of publication. It is, according to the author, entirely unreasonable that the book does not provide enough "compensation". In several interviews, Kriterium is headlined in such contexts as an asset and a counterbalance. The author of the third book emphasises that the general perception of Kriterium as an idea appears to have been positive. In contrast to the other interviewees, one of the authors is more sceptical to the need for Kriterium at all. According to the author, peer review is something that should be offered by the publishers instead.

Publisher representatives and academic coordinators also point to the value of the actual review for improving the quality of the research. At the same time, an academic coordinator emphasises that there is a large amount of research that is not reviewed and therefore is of questionable value, a perception that also emerged in discussions with members of the steering committee. Others maintain that the quality of Swedish monographs is satisfactory and that the need originates instead from general publication requirements.

ABOUT THE ACADEMIC MONOGRAPH AND THE QUESTION OF OPEN ACCESS

(All interviewees)

It is hardly surprising that the interviewees are overwhelmingly positive to the academic monograph as a form of publication considering that this issue largely comprises a primary driver of the entire project. Improving the value of the monograph as a publication format is repeatedly emphasised in particular. The attitude that the book must be “saved” or “allowed to live on” is also expressed. As more a rule than an exception, the interviewees emphasise that the monograph is especially important for the humanities although it is also highlighted that the monograph has different statuses in different subject areas. The monograph is perceived by several people in the study as necessary to be able to conduct longer and more in-depth reasoning and for a “slow thinking” as somebody expressed it. In their responses, several of the interviewees contrast publication in the humanities with a science publication pattern. Some hereby contrast the monograph with writing an article, which in one case is described as potentially repetitive or too inaccessible.

Some deviating attitudes in the issue were expressed during the interviews, but this rather concerns the monograph being perceived as having its place, but should not however be given priority as a publication format. This pattern is nonetheless more ambiguous and one can without a doubt maintain that a majority of the interviewees in all roles express great devotion to the academic monograph.

The attitude to Open Access and, by extension, to Kriterium’s requirement that reviewed works be made openly accessible in digital format varies among the interviewees, however. It must nonetheless be noted that the attitude is overwhelmingly positive. People who express doubts or want to emphasise that the issue is complicated have generally explained that they find the basic idea of making the research accessible to be reasonable.

In the interviews, the value of Open Access is emphasised on the basis of distribution, public access to research and collaboration. One person points out that Open Access is ultimately a democratic question while others maintain that tax funding requires that research be made accessible. Another argument is that Open Access serves as a counterweight to commercial publishing channels.

Other people in the study point to complications that must be taken into account both in terms of academic publishing in general and in Kriterium’s future work. Some say that they feel torn in the issue or that they have gradually come to change their opinion. Among other things, it is maintained that an extreme attitude towards Open Access is problematic. That this at the same time is a complicated matter even within Kriterium is expressed in some of the interviews.

Several of the interviewees say in particular that they feel uncertain with regard to how Open Access should be financed and by whom. For example, concern is expressed that the cost will end up with the individual researcher and that only those who can afford it will publish with Open Access. Another consideration concerns how to maintain the quality and the review of everything that is made openly accessible. Lastly, some of the interviewees also reason about how the conditions for the commercial book market and its significance to the third mission may be affected by Open Access, or already is.

VOICES ON KRITERIUM

“It feels like we just got by in 2013 /.../ It’s been a journey just to get support for the entire project. We have had to fight to show that this is important and that there is a future in it.”

Maja Pelling

“We didn’t know what it was about or how it would be done.”

Ulf Zander

“Of course, it should be possible to publish a book and get academic recognition for it in Sweden!”

Åke Ingerman

“We never understood what Kriterium was /.../ I still don’t know what the h-ll Kriterium is!”

Arne Jarrick

“I see it positively. The tendency is for the monograph to be highlighted in discussions of alternative publication formats. But you should remember that it is a science paradigm that sets the limits for this transition. The scientists should perhaps learn from the humanities to write proper books.”

Beate Eellend

“The book has an incredibly important role to play /.../ it has an absolute value as a way to think about knowledge and a way of writing that has an incredibly large value at a time when volume is what counts. It is a central node in an understanding for what research in humanities and social sciences does that is valuable. Here, Kriterium can be an important player.”

Eva Hemmungs Wirtén

“Kriterium is a perfect cross between large commercial publishers and Swedish publishers. /.../ It also increases the value of Swedish. It’s a cultural deed.”

Sharon Rider

“It becomes clear that we work differently. We may think it’s sluggish [with the academic administration]. We have much shorter handling times. It’s a little of a culture shock at the same time that it has been very exciting.”

Karina Klok

“There is an extensive need. It’s been a problem that there has been a lot of research that is not reviewed and is of a questionable value. /.../ It’s also about keeping up with the rest of the world. Sweden should not isolate itself with its systems that we had 20 or 50 years ago.”

Stefan Amirel

“There is a glaring need /.../ there is after all no quality review of Swedish monographs today, there’s nothing. There is a great need for this and it has existed for a long time. Actually, it is strange that Kriterium didn’t already exist.”

Thomas Kaiserfeld