Change and stability in archives, libraries and museums: Mapping professional experiences in Sweden

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Abstract

**Introduction.** One of the most prominent topics of professional and academic archives, libraries and museums (ALMs) related literature revolves around the questions of change and continuity of the institutions. The aim of the study is to find how ALM professionals conceptualise factors that contribute to continuity and change at their institutions.

**Method.** The analysis is based on a qualitative analysis of 131 open ended questions included in a web survey of Swedish ALM professionals conducted in February-March 2011.

**Analysis.** The data were analysed using qualitative content analysis.

**Results.** Borrowing from the field theory of Lewin and its derivative, force-field analysis, the professional articulations of the strengths and future prospects of their institutions are interpreted in terms of strategic forces that influence change and stability at ALMs. The study shows that the forces that impede and catalyse change are overlapping to a significant degree that indicates of the possibility of highly disparate alternative strategy formulations for the institutions.

**Conclusions.** More focus on defining the ownership of the strategic goals at ALMs and defining the operating space and core domains of the organisations is essential for formulating their future strategies.

Keywords: archives, libraries, museums, change, strategies

**Introduction**

Archives, libraries and museums (ALM) have found themselves for the past decades in a paradoxical convergence of political uplift and uncertainty on their future role in the digital information society (Usherwood et al., 2005a). The role of ALMs as memory institutions has become a blue-eyed boy of the political imagination. The role of cultural heritage and memory as central societal drivers is especially evident in the political rhetorics of the European Commission, even if closely similar trajectories of discussion are easily identifiable in many other countries including the US (Trant, 2009; Gram, 2002). In spite of the broad political support for the culture, the technological and societal changes have raised questions about the future of the contemporary ALMs. The relative significance of physical collections and displays is declining in libraries (Baker, 2007), museums (Marstine, 2006) and archives (Featherstone, 2006) alike. In spite of the scale of the discussions, there seems to be only a relatively little empirical research on how the professionals conceptualise the strategic position of their institutions. There is a large number of opinion pieces, political programmes and theoretical literature (e.g. Anderson, 2007; Baker, 2007; Barry, 2010; Boonin, 2001), but a very little amount of empirical evidence.
The aim of the study is to find how ALM professionals conceptualise factors that contribute to continuity and change at their institutions. The study is based on a qualitative analysis of the answers to a set of open-ended questions (in total 131 answers) included in a web survey of 145 Swedish ALM professionals conducted in February-March 2011. A set of six themes related to stabilities (enduring values, factors and roles) and seven volatilities (uncertainties, factors contributing to change) emerged in the analysis. The themes were mapped as driving (volatilities) and restraining (stabilities) forces of change and stability according to Lewin’s field theory (Lewin, 1951) and its derivative, force-field analysis (Swanson & Creed, 2013), to provide a better understanding of the present state (equilibrium or an ongoing change) and central forces of change ALMs are facing according to the professionals. Apart from being indicative of the stabilities and drivers of change of the ALMs, the force field analysis provides insights into how the different driving and restraining forces interact and a basis for formulating a desired state for the future and planning for a change that will bring the institutions there.

**Literature review**

The present and future role of the institutions is a popular topic in the professional ALM literature (e.g. Norberg et al., 2009; Abram, 2007; Bailey, 2006). There is, however, only little comprehensive empirical research on how the ALM professionals conceptualise change and continuity at their institutions. In the field of libraries, Macevičiūtė and Wilson (2009) conducted a Delphi study in Sweden on the research needs in Swedish librarianship. The rather indecisive results of the study highlight the difference in opinions and perceived institutional priorities. Librarians have been observed to be often more change-minded than library users and non-users (Wagman, 2011; Evjen & Audunson, 2009; Sinikara, 2007). In addition to the relatively few empirical studies pertaining to the views of the professionals, there is somewhat more literature on the popular perceptions. Usherwood et al. (2005a) conducted a large nationwide survey in the UK on how the British perceive the role of ALMs in the ‘information age’. The researchers conclude that the public perceives ALMs as relevant repositories of public knowledge. The significant aspect of the ALMs is their role as public organisations having a particular relevance as institutions of information and knowledge. A notable aspect of the findings is that the institutions were considered to be relevant and trusted by the respondents even if they were not used by everyone all of the time. However, in spite of the generally rather high esteem of ALM institutions, the appreciation does not necessarily translate to practical support in all contexts. Many institutions have felt a need to struggle in order to reassert their societal mission (Glaser & Zenetou, 1996). The role of ALMs in particular contexts may also be less prominent in particular contexts. The partnership of ALM professionals and other professional groups such as teachers is not necessarily entirely trouble-free (Sacco Ritchie, 2011) and similarly, the relevance of ALM institutions and their functions is not always fully acknowledged in particular organisational (McLeod & Hare, 2005) and political discourses (Newman & McKee, 2005).

Besides the studies of the future role of the institutions, another strand of research has focused to the impact of the ALMs. The empirical studies have tended to be indicative of the positive returns of the economic and social investment in ALMs (e.g. public
libraries in Ward & Hart, 2008; Barron et al., 2005; Griffiths et al., 2004). Usage statistics provide additional indirect evidence of the popularity of the institutions. Public libraries are highly popular in the Nordic countries, especially in Finland while museums and especially archives are used more seldom (Nilsson, 2009; Suomen virallinen tilasto (SVT), 2011; Usherwood et al., 2005b). In contrast to museums and public libraries, academic libraries and archives have been argued to have a visibility problem (e.g. Dickenson, 2006; Ketola & Sjöberg, 2009). Wavell et al. (2002) reviewed the available evidence on the impact of archives, libraries and museums a decade ago. The most conclusive evidence by the time suggested of an impact on personal development, but evidence and indications on their relevance to community empowerment, identity construction and societal well-being had been documented as well. The social impact of the public libraries had been under most intense scrutiny. Somewhat unsurprisingly considering lowest number of users in archives, the authors found least literature on the social impact of archives. In addition, the studies reviewed by Wavell et al. provided positive evidence of the impact of ALMs on learning and local economy. The major barrier of impact seemed to be the difficulty to access the institutions (Wavell et al., 2002).

Besides analytical and empirical literature on the role and impact of the ALMs, there is a growing corpus of critical reappraisals of the changing societal role of the ALMs. Many of the critical analyses especially in library (Leckie et al., 2010) and museum (Henning, 2006) fields tend to derive their inspiration from the continental critical theory. In archival science, the reappraisal of the societal role of the institutions has stemmed from a postmodernist critique of the positivistic legacy of archival theory (Cook, 2001, 1997). There seems to be a certain consensus of the need to reappraise the hegemonic position of the predominantly western idea of the role of the ALMs and a need to broaden their perspectives to incorporate more global perspectives (e.g. McKemmish et al., 2005). Sahlén sees both the contemporary critique and the concept of memory institution as parts of the project of modernisation of the ALMs (Sahlén, 2005). The earlier conceptualisations of the stability of the institutions (Martinon, 2006) are changing and the significance of the institutions is articulated increasingly in terms of culture and heritage (e.g. Barry, 2010; Dempsey, 2000), memory (e.g. Cook, 1997; Gilliland-Swatland, 2000; Kavanagh, 2000), empowerment (Usherwood et al., 2005a), quality of life (The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, 2010), user orientation and their role as a neutral social space, a “third place” (e.g. Lippincott, 2005; Patchen, 2006; Paris, 2006; Boonin, 2001).

In addition to the primarily institutional, albeit politically anchored, debate of the contemporary developments of the ALMs, a major premise of the debate has been the changing context of their operations. Wilson (1995) discussed the future role of librarianship in the mid-1990s drawing four possible trajectories on the basis of the change of the societal values to ultra-individualistic, consumeristic, civic and community-based future. Even if the majority of the proposed trajectories tend to be based on a relatively moderate impact of contextual developments and consequent contextual adjustments (e.g. Knell, 2003; Gränström, 2002), it is not uncommon to see the context as a principal driver of change. Both utopian and dystopian visions of information society (e.g. Gränström, 2002), the increasing and changing role of technology (e.g. Robinson, 2006; Gränström, 2002; Hickerson, 2001; Jimerson, 2004;
Holmberg et al., 2009) and the impact of digitalisation of information and culture (e.g. Bailey, 2007; Jimerson, 2004; Ketelaar, 2004) have raised concerns of the potentially diminishing significance of the ALM institutions in the eyes of the general public (e.g. Hickerson, 2001; Jimerson, 2004). The concerns have evoked both more and less radical urges to be more observant of the contextual development (Barry, 2010) and to reassert (e.g. Hickerson, 2001) or repurpose (e.g. Luke, 2006) the role of ALM institutions (e.g. Jimerson, 2004) in the contemporary society. The notions like Library 2.0 (Holmberg et al., 2009), Museum 2.0 (Srinivasan et al., 2009), Archive 2.0 (Ridolfo et al., 2010), participatory librarianship (Lankes et al., 2007) and participatory archives (Huvila, 2008) are attempts to place a series of external changes within the context of ALM institutions.

Lippincott (2005) suggests that developing library services for the ’net generation’ “can be achieved by examining the characteristics of those students and making a conscious effort to address deficiencies and transform the current situation in libraries.” She also encourages change by continuing that “by blending the technology skills and mindset that students have developed all their lives with the fruits of the academy, libraries can offer environments that resonate with Net Gen students while enriching their college education and lifelong learning capabilities.” (Lippincott, 2005, 13.12-13.13). Preziosi (2006) writes that museum professionals need to reconsider “where we stand, and what we stand for”. In practice, it can be hard to exclude one of the two approaches. As Šola (1992) writes, museums (and all ALM institutions) “have the double task of changing themselves and of galvanizing their public to use museums for their natural requirements”.

It appears that the proactive change is often related to a strive for inclusionism, democracy and egalitarian ideals (Gränström, 2002; Gilliland-Swetland, 2000; Dempsey, 2000). The Museums & Society 2034 (Merritt, 2008) report states that in 2034, “[m]useums are among the few institutions that bring together people of all economic classes”. Eryaman (Eryaman, 2010) goes even further by discussing the role of the border pedagogy of Giroux in the context of libraries and seeing them as sites of radical democracy and questioning of the dominant forms of culture. Luke (2006) discusses the deliberate exhibition of controversies and open-ended dialogue as a central project for museums. As public and publicly funded institutions, the political autonomy of ALM institutions is not a matter of course (Cameron, 2007). Further, as Crampton (2003) argues in the context of art museums, there may be limits how inclusive or critical ALM institutions can be.

In spite of the predominance of the experience of change, there is a certain discord in its essence. On one hand, some authors emphasise the permanence of the tangible aspects of the ALM institutions and their work: collections (Genoways, 2006), physical spaces, the institutions themselves as a form of media (Henning, 2006), and the practical work of professional archivists, museum professionals and librarians (e.g. Cook, 1997; Owen, 1997). The proposed reformulation of the focus of archives as access instead of storage by Menne-Haritz (2001) epitomises these reformatory tendencies by suggesting a new focus to the work that is being done. Cox (2002) makes a similar proposal by declaring the end of collecting and making a case for reflective appraisal as a method for developing archives and archival collections. Besides the arguments of the permanence
of tangible aspects, there is a contrasting tendency to define the future role of the institutions on the basis of the implications of such enduring values as authenticity (e.g. Gilliland-Swetland, 2000; Thibodeau, 2001), curiosity (Henning, 2006), freedom (The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, 2010) or user orientation (Kearns & Rinehart, 2011). For instance, it is stated frequently that ALM institutions provide opportunities for informal learning (e.g. Gilliland-Swetland, 2000; Lang et al., 2006). They function as sites (Kavanagh, 2000, 148) and resources (Kirchhoff et al., 2008) for constructing and elaborating personal and shared memories.

**Force-field approach**

The concept of force-field was developed by Lewin as a framework for explicating factors (i.e. forces) that induce and resist change in a life-space of an individual (Lewin, 1951). The theory has gained prominence and especially a simplified variant of the theory called force-field analysis has been applied in a broad range of fields from social psychology to organisation studies, strategy work and change management. As a result, Lewin’s model become one of the most influential models of change (Thompson & McHugh, 2002) even if as Burnes and Cooke (2013) aptly remark, the force-field analysis is a heavily simplified adaptation of the original theory and as such undermines the relevance and rigour of the original approach to a degree that according to Boje and Rosile (2010), trivialises it. From the organisation studies perspective, Lewin’s suggestion of the normal state of stability of organisation can be linked to a broader trend in post-war scholarship to focus on processes in which an equilibrium is severed by change, which is ideally followed by a new equilibrium (Hatch, 2004).

The premise of the force-field approach is that there are forces that influence the life-space of individuals and the journey when they traverse the life-space in order to achieve their goals. On an organisational level different force fields affect organisation and its pursuits to achieve desired states and strategic goals. The force-field analysis approach focuses on driving and restraining forces but as Burnes and Cooke (2013) underline, the forces are much more complex. For the specific sake of focusing on the principal drivers and stabilising factors (why change is likely or unlikely to happen), this study borrows the terminology of force-field analysis but comes closer to the original Lewinian field theory in the closer analysis of the forces. As the analysis (discussed later in this text) shows, it is often impossible to make clear distinction between individual drivers and same forces can function both as drivers and impediments of change.

**Material and methods**

The aim of this study is to map stabilities and volatilities at ALMs as they are conceptualised by professionals working at the institutions. The analysis of the empirical material addresses two research questions: (RQ1) Which factors are driving change and stability in ALMs according to the experiences of the respondents?, and (RQ2) What are the implications of the identified forces to the strategy formulation of the institutions? In order to control the effect of contextual variables the population was limited to professionals working with in archives, libraries and museums in Sweden. The data were collected using a survey questionnaire. The survey was conducted online.
using Lime Survey 1.90+ open source survey software. The data were analysed using qualitative content analysis.

The perceptions of ALM professionals were measured using a set of five broad open ended questions:

1. What archives, libraries and museums (ALMs) can offer to the contemporary society other public and private institutions, individuals and communities can’t? i.e. if libraries, archives and museums are important and relevant, why?
2. Describe your own vision of a perfect museum, library or archive in the year 2020 and how it is different from today?
3. Can you think about something else that could be vital for realising the vision you described above?
4. Can you think about any other potential barriers to using ALMs?

The previous questions have been based on the assumption that archives, libraries and museums can play to a certain degree similar types of roles in the future. They have still some differences. How the roles of archives, libraries and museums differ from each other in the future?

The survey contained also 22 statements in Likert scale on the future role and priorities of ALM institutions that have been analysed elsewhere (Huvila, 2014). The questions and statements were developed on the basis of the survey of earlier literature on the anticipated future of archives, libraries and museums. The principal sources were the empirical study of Usherwood et al. (2005b) together with the works of Gilliland-Swatland (2000), Merritt (2008) and Pastore (2009).

The respondents were recruited by posting invitations to major ALM related mailing lists and social media sites in Sweden including ark-forum, arkivet.ning.com (archives), biblist and biblfeed.ning.com (libraries), nck-list (museum pedagogy) and sverigesmuseer.se (museums), and promoted further by using the personal contacts of the authors and social networking services including Twitter, Linkedin, Facebook and personal blogs. The participants were informed that three gift tokens worth 200 SEK each would be drawn after the survey.

The sample consists of 131 Swedish ALM professionals with 80/131 (61%) females and 44/131 (34%) males (7/131, 5% with no answer). 87% (114/131) of the respondents were 31-64 years old with 35% (46/131) being between 51 and 64 years. 55% or 72/131 had an undergraduate degree and 50/131 a master’s degree. Only three (2%) had acquired a doctoral degree and one had no formal education. 54/131 (42%) identified themselves primarily as librarians or library professionals, 8% (10/131) as information specialists, 29% (38/131) as archivists and 14 (11%) as museum professionals. The 14 (11%) respondents who did not identify themselves in the four groups worked in archives, libraries and museums related governmental, administration, education, development and consulting duties. The principal employers of the respondents are listed in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Museum of cultural history</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Museum of technology</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art museum</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public archive</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional archive</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community archive</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public library</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic library</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special library</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1:** Principal employers of the respondents.

The studied sample is a convenience sample, but we assume that the dropout is likely to be higher among those professionals with less explicit vision or agenda about the current and future state of their institutions and lower among those who are more likely to make a major difference for the future of the institutions. Therefore, we argue that the material provides a relatively reliable insight into the major themes as they are perceived by Swedish ALM professionals. There is an unknown bias in the material that makes it impossible to generalise the results as is and special care has to be taken when discussing the conclusions of the study in the contexts outside Sweden and the Nordic countries.

**Analysis**

The content analysis of the answers to the open ended questions confirms the popularity of many of the prominent themes present in the literature, but provides at the same time, a more detailed picture of the anticipated change and continuity at the ALM institutions and their activities. The open ended answers gave also possibilities to identify certain convergence between individual themes. The two types of narratives about the stabilities (continuities) and volatilities (changes) at ALMs were analysed separately and are described in the following. There is a certain albeit not complete overlap between two types of themes that were interpreted respectively as restraining and driving forces according to Lewin’s model of force field analysis.
Restraining forces
The themes identified in the analysis classified as restraining forces can be alternatively described as non-contested aspects of the ALMs that stabilise their current position in the society. Even if these factors are seen as stabilisers and restraining factors in the current material, it does not mean that they would remain uncontested or that the setting of goals and developing new strategies could not redefine them and turn them to forces of change.

ALMs as democratic societal institutions: Firstly, the respondents referred to the role ALMs as democratic societal institutions. The theme can be exemplified by such expressions as “the task of making collections available supports democracy” (R11) or “the libraries in Sweden are one of the remaining democratic institutions” (R42). Multiple respondents related the idea of the democratic nature of the institutions to a perceived independence of the institutions (R54), their neutrality (R17) and to a societal transparency as their offering (R62).

Memory function: Secondly, the ALMs were perceived to have an important memory function for society and individuals. The theme was exemplified by such statements as “a society without memory is a barbarian society” (R6), “archives, libraries and museums are memory banks for the collective memory” (R11) and “all of them are memory institutions and that is unique to them” (R14).

Preservation: The third emergent theme related to preservation of information, documents and the material culture. Respondents underlined such factors as the intrinsic significance of the preservation of cultural heritage (R3, R13) and the continuum of collecting and preservation represented by the institutions: “we have collected history a long time and are a bank of knowledge for all” (R21). “Knowledge about our cultural heritage is important and should be taken further to the next generation” (R23) or “coming generations” (R27). Respondent R36, R40 and R48 referred explicitly to the “uniqueness” of the holdings of the ALMs. R72 underlined the significance of the preservation aspect as forming a “link to the history and society of the earlier generations”.

Access: Fourthly, often together with the first theme of democracy, the role of ALMs was portrayed as providers of access to diverse assets including culture and literature (e.g., R68), information, experiences (e.g., R78), stories (R96), knowledge (R113), sources (R126) and cultural heritage (R137). The utterance of R7 that ALMs are “open to all regardless of the level of income” exemplifies the idea of inclusiveness of access. Other attributes attached to access are, for instance, “quality, breadth, freedom and fair” (R10), gratis, no expectations of services in return (R12) and long-term continuity (R12, R20).

Education and bildung: The fifth theme relates to education and bildung (education, formation, personal and cultural maturation). The bildung ideal of the theme was represented by references to ALMs as places for “reflection and possibility to mirror one’s own thoughts and ideas” (R144), reflection and discussion (R139) and as providers of opportunities for critical perspectives to knowledge (R120). The idea of
bildung coalesced often with explicit and implicit utterances about the links between ALMs and education. Partly, the ALMs were perceived to play a role as institutions for education (R139) and learning (R109) and partly, as fruitful partners for educators as they are.

**Competent staff:** Finally, the sixth theme emphasises the role of a competent staff as a stabilising factor and strength of the ALMs. The general theme of the relevance of the staff as a community was exemplified by references to, for instance, “we” as in “we have to continue to protect our autonomy” (R2) and similar phrasings. Respondents described also the vital role of “educated employees” (R34) having a “sound knowledge” (R31) of material objects, literature and other assets together (R34) with a capability to select, preserve and make materials accessible for the general public (R31). The staff at ALMs can also make societal contributions with their understanding of historical processes (R46).

**Driving forces**

Besides describing the stabilities of the ALMs, the respondents were asked to describe their vision of a perfect ALM in the year 2020 and how it is different from today. The analysis revealed seven recurring themes that are partly related to the themes described as restraining forces. Two of the themes, access and competent staff had an obvious overlap to a degree that they were decided to be called with the same names in the both cases. In contrast to the restraining forces, the articulations of the themes classified as driving forces made references to perceived necessity and unavoidability of change at the ALMs.

**Access:** The first theme, access, relates to the role of ALMs as points of access to their materials (e.g., R6, R104) and the openness, flexibility of, and easy and quick accessibility to the institutions (e.g., R10, R12, R19, R20, R23, R27, R31, R41, R42, R49, R51, R112, R119). The institutions should be more welcoming (R28, R70, R145) and put more emphasis on both “cognitive and physical accessibility” (R136), the possibilities to access should be better than today (R19) and the people should feel inspired (R45) and anxious to visit and exploit the institutions (R10, R143). Institutions should put more focus on cooperation with other relevant institutions such as ALMs (R38) and schools (R32), the creativity of displays (R27) and the pedagogical aspects of the openness (R20, R139). ALMs were envisioned to provide access to the “literature of the world” (R6), function as open social spaces (R76) and, for instance, to enliven their “collections of objects and testimony by developing “exciting” exhibitions. The employees of the ALMs should have more access oriented attitude (R27). ALMs should open their data and collections for others to use and exploit (R129). The access is for all independent of social or economic factors (R16, R34, R56, R69, R82, R85, R136) both in physical form and online (R16, R19, R23, R24, R27, R34, R38, R55, R61, R90) with appropriate methods and opening hours (R28, R52, R139). Some of the respondents were doubtful of the possibility to provide total access to everything and considered that an emphasis should probably be put on helping users and providing useful entries to the materials (e.g., R97 cf. R103). Even if in most cases, the access should be unconditional (R47), in archival institutions, it is necessary to consider carefully what can be accessible from secrecy and privacy points of view (R36).
**User orientation:** Secondly, many responses emphasised explicitly and implicitly the need to put more focus on *user orientation*. The focal point of the theme is that it is necessary to improve the understanding of users (R2) and their wishes (R3) and to make institutions more accessible, not only in general, but specifically from the point of view of the users (R10, R28, R92, R105). ALMs should adapt their services to the ways of how users search information (R114) and personalise their offerings (R116, R145). The respondents made references to users in general (R106) and to specific user groups including students, amateur historians and the general public (sic!, as a specific ’group of people’) (R48). ALMs should provide their services on the premises of the users (e.g., R114) instead of appearing (in a negative sense) as “governmental bodies” (R30) to make users want to visit an ALM (e.g., R69, R72). Users should feel the institutions as a vital part of their lives (R90). A user oriented ALM lets its users to take initiative (R87), be participants (R79, R84, R92, R116) and influence the institution (R88, R96) on a community basis (R105). For instance, “an open museum is sensitive to the users and [and a place where they are] initiators and participants” (R84). Respondent R44 described the significance of a “humane contact” as an aspect of user orientation. Similarly to the theme of access, the user orientation is argued as a focus on all users including non-traditional communities of users (R64): “and with all users I mean all, independent of every conceivable exception” (R80).

**Societal relevance:** The third theme relates to an increased focus on the *societal relevance* of the institutions. ALMs should be “more like an integrated and natural part of the [...] society” (R8, also R72, R74, R109) and their relevance is not questioned (R17). They should have a “natural, given role in the society” (R131, also R142). “For the part of libraries, I think that the most important thing is that they have succeeded to re-establish their function in the eyes of the citizens” (R13). The archives are important in the documentation of social rights (R132). In general, they should “function as an integrated societal resource” (R77).

Respondent R138 highlighted the important role of ALMs in fostering and developing societally relevant competences. Respondents underline the potential role of their institutions in a regional context. In the future, “[a]rchives are seen as a natural part of the cultural life in the region” (R90) and the ALMs “work together with other actors for regional development and social inclusion” (R127). In order to function in that particular role, the “collections shall reflect a multicultural society, something that Sweden has become more and more” (R82). The societal theme is related to the previous theme by the perceived societal significance of the inclusiveness of engagement with the ALMs. Several informants refer to the users of the ALMs using societal categories, for instance, by making remarks that ALMs are to be used by citizens (e.g., R92, R131) or “all citizens” (e.g., R48, R63, R68) and specifically by such groups as “politicians” or “young people” (R48, R63) or debaters (R99). In addition to people, respondents articulated the societal relevance of the institutions by the meaningfulness of the institutional premises as social spaces (e.g., R76) and rooms for societal debate (R84, R142) and experimentation (R84). Respondent R21 underlined the significance of the understanding of ALMs from the part the financiers. Even if the societal relevance of the ALMs is easy to perceive as a restraining force, the respondent
R35 noted aptly that the future and relevance of the ALMs is dependent on the societal changes. Respondent R46 refers to the same problem by criticising the lack of understanding of the paradigmatic contexts of the institutions and their practices as a major issue in the future. An increased societal relevance does not necessarily mean a change in the fundamental premises of the ALMs as institutions for information, evidence, culture and history (R46, R55). “A society where these institutions [ALMs] are not important for the people, is poor and history-less” (R89). The attitudes toward the merits of enduring values (e.g., R46) versus the necessity of engaging in the issues of contemporary relevance divided opinions (e.g., R62).

**Digitality:** Fourth driving force relates to the significance of digitality in the future. In the responses, the digitalisation of the institutions, their services and assets is closely related to the notion of access (R9, R11, R30, R38). Resources should be searchable online (R47, R53, R77, R97, R129). The offerings of the ALMs should be to a greater extent (R28, R32, R51, R55, R56, R69, R83, R86, R87, R93, R111, R112, R139), primarily (R25, R31) or completely digitised and online (R22, R45, R82, R99, R103, R124, R126, R129, R134), or “in the cloud” (R11), in order to be available for their stakeholders (R18). A part of the respondents emphasised the complementary nature of physically and digitally based services (R16, R19, R24, R38, R48, R97, R125), but even the remarks about the equal significance of the two are strong indications of the growing import of the digitality in the changing institutional practices and attitudes. As respondent R61 expresses, even if the ALMs do not necessarily need to adapt every conceivable technology, they have to be open to the developments. Perhaps more important is that the current digital challenges such as preservation (R125) and inter-library lending of e-books (R112) are solved.

Another dimension of digitality is that it is perceived as a central characteristic of the future operational context of the ALMs. The future society is an information society or a digital society, and the relevance of ALMs is (at least to a degree) determined by their engagement in digital context (R11). The societal aspect of digitality was apparent also in a remark that in the future society, computer access should be an equal social right than a flat (R82). The user of tomorrow will expect a possibility engage digitally with ALMs (R64). Finally, digitisation can also function as an internal driving force in a sense that it provides opportunities for change and engagement with diverse stakeholder groups. Users can exploit digital assets in new ways in their blogs and web sites (R129, R139). Respondent R32 notes that the digitalisation of archival processes lead to a closer integration of archival and public functions especially on municipal and regional level. Another respondent, R99, writes how “source materials are vividly used in the virtual world”. Respondent R85 describes proudly how “we [our library] write our own ‘local heritage wikipedia’ on the net”.

**Competent staff:** Fifth driving force identified in the analysis is competent staff. Respondents describe future librarians as “navigators that bridge information gaps when people can’t or don’t want to formulate search phrases” (R11). ALM professionals are characterised by professionality (R27, R111), helpfulness and nicety (R69), engagement (R111) high level of education (R27) and high or higher level of competence (R36, R40, R46, R56, R69, R116) and knowledge (R103), and continuous development of expertise
(R27). Some professional roles such as archival pedagogy gets more emphasis in the future (R90). R103 would like to have more time to work with collections in order to be able to disseminate her professional knowledge to the public. R108 would make librarians to move more in the library space. R110 would like to have more employees to give possibilities for individuals to change their work profiles for getting new insights. Individual respondents make also references to motivational aspects of the work of professionals. Respondent R35 sees a correlation with better salary and happiness of the employees and R95 calls for moral fibre and professional pride. R116 suggests that the personality of an employee is going to play a greater role in the future.

**Engagement:** A part of the respondents emphasised engagement as a driving force of the ALMs in the future. In contrast to earlier discussed factors, this and the final driving force of ownership were not uncontroversial. According to a part of the pro-engagement respondents ALMs should be heard in the cultural debate and to focus on setting an agenda of proper culture instead of focusing on “superficialities” (R41). Others are in favour of an active engagement in the societal debate (R14, R72, R78, R119). At the same time, a minority of the respondents emphasised the contrary apolitical infrastructural role of the institutions. The respondent R18 put major emphasis on opening databases for private companies for the development of new digital services: “the state shall not have a monopoly on culture and the mediation of knowledge”. In a less neo-liberalistic sense, for instance, respondent R80 was critical towards the idea of asserting a monopoly of knowledge, but instead of advocating market mechanisms, contrasted it to the ideals of bildung and a consensual acceptance of the multiplicity of opinions. The approach is close to a line of infrastructural argumentation that underlines the nature of ALMs as politically independent and neutral institutions (R60) with an explicit aim of representing and engaging the society at large (R68, R79). According to this type of argumentation, ALMs should functions as spaces for rather than participants in the societal debate (e.g., R135). The strive for neutrality was directly criticised by other respondents (R73) as an impossibility or a slightly hypocritical assumption of omniscience (R72).

**Ownership:** Similarly to the previous force, the (public or private) ownership of the ALMs and their relation to commercial actors were controversial issues for the respondents of the survey. A large number of respondents were in favour of free and gratis entré to the institutions. Many of such opinions were accompanied by no (e.g. R110) or only rather references to the desirable ownership of the institutions. In practice, however, it is likely that the majority of such utterances were in favour of a significant public presence in the institutions and the ALM sector (e.g. R55, R56, R58, R62, R86, R102, R111). In general, the majority of the respondents who made remarks about the issue of proprietorship seemed to be in favour of the public ownership of the institutions and the significance of their independence of private funding and influence (R24, R27, R82, R95, R101, R139, R142), but a significant number was empathetic with the importance of cooperating with commercial actors and dismantling the monopoly of knowledge” held by the ALMs. A middle position between the two was expressed by R52 who favoured a co-location of ALMs with other institutions such as public pools, gymnasia and coffee shops.
Discussion

A closer look at the analytical categories show that there are some evident breaks and discontinuities between the restraining and driving forces of change at the ALMs. In contrast to the simplicity of the force-field analysis framework, it was apparent that the original perspective of the field theory to forces and force fields as significantly more complex phenomena is closer to how the forces emerged in course of the current study. The present material does not give possibilities to generalise the findings or make inferences about the relative popularity of identified views. The material may be expected to be biased by an overrepresentation of vocal individuals instead of average professionals. Finally, the scope of the survey as an ALM instead of archive, library or museum specific instrument may be assumed to have influenced the sample and the responses. It is likely that additional archive, library and museum specific stabilities and volatilities may be identified in institution-specific studies in the future. In spite of the unknown bias of the material, it may be argued to present a relatively reliable insight into how the ALM professionals perceive the change at their institutions. At the same time, these insights can be expected to represent the practiced strategies and aims of the institutions on a more naturalistic level than existing strategy documents. This can be expected to increase the reliability and usefulness of the findings in comparison to necessarily, to a degree, historical document based studies. In contrast to the relative consensus of opinions on the current strengths of ALMs, there seems to be major indifferences concerning how the drivers should be put into practice.

Both respondents of this study and the earlier literature provide a plenty of arguments of the principled continuing relevance of the ‘enduring values’ of ALMs. Even if the professionals have been described as more change oriented in the literature than the users of the ALMs, it seems that a major source of discrepancy in the attitudes might be related to different conceptualisations of means and aims. The present analysis seems to suggest of a relatively similar attitudes of the overall relevance and societal function of the institutions (e.g. Usherwood et al., 2005a). Both present findings and earlier observations suggest that many professionals may be more keen on putting emphasis on technology and offering an active sense of engagement whereas, according to earlier studies, users have often expressed more conservative attitudes. The present material shows, however, that the same dichotomy applies to professionals themselves. A part of the professionals and users alike prefer more active engagement while others prefer an infrastructural and empowering role for the institutions (as with users in Wagman, 2011; Evjen & Audunson, 2009; Sinikara, 2007). It seems plausible to suggest that there is a general dichotomy between the broad acceptance of the abstract relevance of the ALMs in terms of providing access, serving the society, providing experiences, preserving, developing and communicating collections and memory, and the differences of the views of the role of means, for instance, digital technologies, necessity and forms of engagement, user orientation, methods of access, and the relevant competences of the staff. On a fundamental level the dichotomy pertains to the discrepancy of the views of ALMs as proactive or infrastructural institutions. Traditionally, the ALMs have been able to be societally proactive by providing an infrastructure, but as the analysis shows, in the contemporary societal landscape of participation, and the proliferation of the possibilities and perceived desirability of individual choice, engagement is defined in different terms than before. The dichotomous driving and restraining forces can be seen
as indicative of the prevalence of the experience of a broad need to reassert the societal mission of the institutions (e.g. Glaser & Zenetou, 1996; McLeod & Hare, 2005), be more visible in the society (e.g. Dickenson, 2006; Ketola & Sjöberg, 2009), to make an impact (Wavell et al., 2002) and to renegotiate the boundaries between ALMs and other private and public institutions (e.g. Sacco Ritchie, 2011) discussed in the literature.

The lack of consensus on how to meet the three driving forces of engagement, digitality and user orientation is symptomatic of the same uncertainty Macevičiūtė and Wilson (2009) describe in their report of the Delphi study of the research needs of Swedish librarianship. The disagreement on the priorities of practical research and development agenda does not mean that the professionals would be lacking an insight in the major challenges facing their institutions. The question is how the broad issues described as driving forces or volatilities can be translated into the everyday life of the institutions in a way that would serve the persistence of the enduring values described as the current strengths of the institutions.

The echoes of the dichotomy between the proponents of a proactive political engagement and the advocates of an empowering role for ALMs are repeated in the critical ALM literature. Similarly to the notion of memory institution (Sahlén, 2005) and related concepts of, for instance, (cultural) heritage (e.g. Barry, 2010; Dempsey, 2000) and user orientation (e.g. Lippincott, 2006; Patchen, 2006; Paris, 2006; Boonin, 2001) used by the respondents of this study, can be seen as parts of particular projects of modernising or renegotiating ALMs and their societal relevance. Both of the two main branches of the critique, the postmodernist endeavour against positivistic ideals of neutrality and objectivity (e.g. Cook, 2001, 1997), and the perspectives of societal engagement stemming from the continental critical theory (e.g. Leckie et al., 2010; Henning, 2006) are closely related to the first line of the argument. The ALM specific idea of empowerment can be traced back to the general notion of empowerment, and often even more specifically to the techno-utopian ideals of the information society and participatory culture discourses.

Besides dichotomising the proactive and reactive strategies, the driving and restraining forces identified in the material indicate of another closely related paradox of internality or externality of the forces that account for stability and change. Externalising tendencies are not uncommon in references to technology, informationalisation and digitalisation of ALMs and the society, user orientation, ownership and relevant competences in the material of this study or in the earlier literature (e.g. Gränström, 2002; Robinson, 2006; Jimerson, 2004; Holmberg et al., 2009). All of these factors are dependent on the (Lewinian) life space within which ALMs operate and the relevance of specific whether subject-matter related, informational (cf. e.g. Marty, 2012), technical and cultural are both driven and restrained by a combination of internal and external forces. The most apparent externalising tendencies can be seen in the emphasis of user orientation (i.e. needs, preferences and desires of the users), but also societal relevance (as related to a ‘given’ societal conditions), digitality (as a contextual premise) and competences of the staff (from the point of view of empowering the institutions and their users). The questions of access, engagement and ownership are
similarly influenced by external factors, but in the analysed material, their articulation
tended to stem from ALM internal rather than external premises.

In practice, the individual internal and external factors do undoubtedly converge, and as Šola (1992) argues, museums (and indeed all ALMs) “have the double task of changing themselves and of galvanizing their public to use museums for their natural requirements”. At the same time, it is not irrelevant to consider which one of the two should take a lead at a particular moment. The willingness to engage proactively and to be more sensitive to the preferences of the users are both reasonable approaches to overcome the barrier (underlined by Wavell et al. (Wavell et al., 2002)) of the lack of physical, emotional and intellectual access to ALMs, but the outcomes of the two ends of these two strategies of active and passive engagement are likely to have very different consequences.

In the light of Lewin’s field theory and especially in the simplified dualistic context of force-field analysis the on-going change and making of strategic choices are influenced to a considerable degree by dichotomous conceptualisation, and reaction and counter-reaction to same forces that both restrain and drive change in the life space of ALMs. When the desired state (or goal) is defined to a reasonably comprehensive extent, it is easier to see how the different forces are driving or restraining change and where the dividing line between internal, peripheral and external domains of the ALMs is drawn. Simultaneously, it becomes possible to see how many of the forces that are currently articulated as stabilisers can be reformulated as drivers of a particular kind of change.

Conclusions
The present study provides empirical evidence of how archivists, librarians and museum professionals conceptualise the major drivers and curbs of change at their institutions. There seems to be a relative broad consensus of the major assets and role of the ALMs in the contemporary society. ALMs have a significant democratic and cultural function, they benefit of the competence of their staff and play an important role as educators and memory institutions by preserving and providing access to a broad degree of assets. On the basis of the analysis of the descriptions of a perfect ALM in the year 2020, it was possible to identify seven drivers of change at ALMs. In spite of the recurrence of themes, the respondents tended to have fundamentally different opinions on how to tackle with them. A part of the respondents of the present study were strongly in favour of more proactive ALMs while others preferred an infrastructural and empowering role for the institutions. Similarly, there was an easily discernible difference in how various forces were seen as external drivers and on the other hand, as opportunities to change the institutions from inside. Not in spite of the indifferences, but because of them, the aspects of access, user orientation, societal relevance, digitality, staff competence, engagement and ownership are issues that need to be addressed during the current and forthcoming debate on the future role of the ALMs. The first fundamental question is to consider the ownership of the strategic goals at ALMs and how broad institutional diversity or uniformity would be desirable from the perspective of their ‘owners’ (either society at large, communities or other actors). The second one is, how the life space of an ALM should be defined and what should be their core domain (and what should be
specific to the different types of ALMs and particular types of archives, libraries and museums), what is peripheral and what is external.

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