



LUND UNIVERSITY

Exercising freedom of speech

A cultural analysis of the Dawit Isaak Library

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TKAM02 - Spring 2023

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Abstract

This thesis investigates how freedom of speech is implemented in a Swedish library context, by examining what actions and practices the concept is translated into at the Dawit Isaak Library in Malmö, a library focused on freedom of speech and banned literature that opened at Malmö City Archive in 2020. The aim of the study is to illuminate and clarify discrepancies between the theoretical definition and the physical performance of freedom of speech, and it investigates the dilemmas that may arise there. Through the use of Pierre Bourdieu's social field theory, the groups and individuals that interact and negotiate with each other in the Dawit Isaak Library are examined, to see how the interactions shape the library's practices around the theme of freedom of speech. The study uses field material consisting of interviews with employees at the Dawit Isaak Library, and an official document from Malmö Stad with guidelines and regulations for the operation. The two material categories provide different perspectives on the subject, and can be identified as two different actors in the field. The thesis answers the questions of how freedom of speech can be understood in a library context in a democratic society, and how this understanding of freedom of speech is translated into practice. It argues that the Dawit Isaak Library can be seen as a unique field, in which freedom of speech is both mediated and exercised. By being an arena where people can react and relate to the concept of freedom of speech in a concrete way, the library works as a mediator of the theoretical definition of freedom of speech. The study sheds light on libraries' role in a democratic society, and how they can contribute with knowledge on the subject of freedom of speech. It also shows why this topic is relevant to study in 2023.

Keywords: freedom of speech; free speech; artistic freedom; banned books; the Dawit Isaak Library; library selection; field theory; democracy

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the people working at Malmö City Archive, for the opportunity to write my thesis about your Dawit Isaak library. I also want to thank my supervisor, Lars-Eric Jönsson, for all the guidance and feedback that have helped me through this process.

Lund, 2023-05-28

Livia Skåve

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The first issue of *Biblioteksbladet* 2023, the magazine of The Swedish Library Association¹, was dedicated to unfree speech². In the foreword, the editor-in-chief Thord Eriksson wrote about how totalitarian reflexes and indifference to professional integrity can be seen in the political climate in Sweden. Municipal politicians try to regulate which books can be borrowed from libraries, and drag queens are stopped from reading fairy tales for children. This disdain for free speech is shared with the Christian right in the US, where radical conservative forces want to ban literature that is considered “unwanted”, for example with LGBTQ themes or critical perspectives on the country’s racist history, and in Florida librarians and teachers risk penalties if they supply books that have been banned (Eriksson, 2023).

These are only some examples of how free speech is being questioned and challenged around the world. The right to express opinions and ideas without fear of censorship or negative consequences is something many people have been, and still are, fighting for. Authors and journalists are being imprisoned, persecuted and forced into exile, just because they express opinions and thoughts some people do not agree with or consider dangerous. Even in democratic societies like Sweden, where freedom of speech might be seen as something fundamental and self-evident, there is a constant discussion of limitations and boundaries of free speech. What can be said, and what can not be said? What are the limitations? Is freedom of speech unconditional? There are laws, official documents, definitions and formulations that describe and define freedom of speech on a theoretical level, but it is still a very complex and difficult matter to discuss. Outside of the theoretical definitions, the concept of freedom of speech is loaded with meaning and ideas that might differ depending on the person or the context. This thesis delves into this complexity, by investigating how freedom of speech is being put into practice, how the theoretical definition is implemented in a Swedish context, and what actions and practices the understanding of freedom of speech is translated into.

¹ Svenska Biblioteksförningen

² Det ofria ordet

1.1.1 Freedom of speech in Sweden

Freedom of speech³ is a central human freedom and right. It is constitutional in nature, and a prerequisite for the free formation of opinions (Hirschfeldt, 2016). Sweden has a long and special history of freedom of speech and press. The Freedom of the Press Act⁴ that was adopted in 1766, that included the right to express yourself freely and to take part in public documents, was the first of its kind in the world. In May 2023, the act was awarded UNESCO's status Memory of the World. The material of the Freedom of the Press Act is regarded as an important part of the development of human rights and the rise of democracy (Unesco, 2023). The Freedom of the Press Act is one of the four constitutional laws of Sweden. The Fundamental Law on Freedom of Expression⁵ is another. These are two parallel technology-dependent laws of freedom of speech. The Freedom of the Press Act applies to printed documents, and the Fundamental Law on Freedom of Expression applies to television, radio, films, audio recordings, other technical recordings, etc. (von Sydow, 2016).

The right to freedom of speech, protected by the constitution, includes a right for everyone to convey opinions, thoughts, and feelings through speech, writing or image without interference from authorities. The right can only be limited if it is necessary to meet certain purposes that are specifically stated in the constitution. A limitation may never go beyond what is necessary to meet these purposes (Regeringskansliet, 2023). The fact that freedom of speech is regulated in detail at a constitutional level in Sweden strengthens the protective mechanisms. In other countries' constitutions, freedom of speech is usually not ranked so high among the rights (Hirschfeldt, 2016). Internationally, freedom of speech is a part of the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 19 of the declaration states that everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression, which includes the freedom to hold opinions without facing interference. It also includes the freedom to impart, receive and seek information through any media (United Nations, 2023). In 1949, article 19 was developed by UNESCO, the UN's educational, scientific and cultural organization. In collaboration with the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, a public library manifesto was adopted, with the mission of providing citizens all around the world with free access to information and knowledge, by building public libraries. Among other things, the manifest formulates that public libraries are to make all kinds of knowledge

³ I will consistently use the term "Freedom of speech" as a translation of the Swedish word "yttrandefrihet", except in direct quotations or designations where 'Freedom of expression' is used.

⁴ Tryckfrihetsförordningen (TF)

⁵ Yttrandefrihetsgrundlagen (YGL)

and information accessible to its' users, and that the collections and services of a public library are not to be subject to any form of political, ideological or religious censorship or commercial pressure (Svensk biblioteksörening, 2014).

The public libraries in Sweden adheres to the Swedish Library Act⁶, which states that libraries in the public library system must work for the development of the democratic society, by contributing to conveying knowledge and free opinion formation. Libraries must also promote the status of literature and interest in education, information, and research, as well as cultural activities in general, and the services must be accessible to everyone (Bibliotekslag, 2013). As brought up in *Biblioteksbladet* (Eriksson, 2023), libraries are an arena where the question of free speech is constantly actualized. They are a fundamental part of democratic societies, and through their work they administer freedom of speech in a practical way. In a report from 2014 made by the Swedish Library Association⁷ libraries are described as a resource that gives people free access to culture, information and knowledge, and gives its users an opportunity to use their democratic right to think, speak and write freely (Söderlind & Elf, 2014). At a seminar during *Biblioteksdagarna* 2023, an event hosted by the Swedish Library Association, that centered around the theme *openness*, the question whether people working in libraries are democracy activists was discussed. The university lecturer Hanna Carlsson then argued that the Library Act in itself is not neutral, but an active statement for democracy (Claesson, 2023).

1.1.2 The Dawit Isaak Library – a library for freedom of speech

In September 2020, a new unit opened at Malmö City Archive, The Dawit Isaak Library, a library that focuses on the theme of freedom of speech, that collects banned books from around the world. The books all have in common that someone thinks, or has thought, that they should not be read. At this library, the books are available for anyone to borrow and read (SVT Nyheter, 2020). It is an opportunity for the public to find and read literature that otherwise might be difficult to access. Other banned cultural forms, such as music, are available as well. The Dawit Isaak Library also includes collections of non-fiction, with books about freedom of speech, censorship, democracy, etc. The library is named after the Swedish-Eritrean journalist and author Dawit Isaak, who has been imprisoned, without trial, in Eritrea since 2001, for publishing criticism of the Eritrean regime. Located at Malmö City

⁶ Bibliotekslagen

⁷ Svenska Biblioteksöreningen

Archive, the library is a part of the Culture Administration, and the public libraries (Malmö Stad, 2023). By collecting and making banned literature available to the public, the Dawit Isaak Library can contribute to strengthen and preserve Malmö's modern cultural heritage, and reflect the international population of the city. The operation collaborates with several large organizations, both national and international, including UNESCO. Thereby it enhances Malmö's position in contexts relating to freedom of speech, tolerance, openness and human rights (Kulturnämnden, 2021).

1.2 Aim and research questions

The aim with this thesis is to illuminate and clarify discrepancies between the theoretical definition and the physical performance of freedom of speech, by analyzing how freedom of speech is concretized and put into practice in a Swedish library context. Through the example of the Dawit Isaak Library, and the use of social field theory, the thesis investigates the dilemmas and gray areas that exist outside the theoretical definitions and regulations of freedom of speech, what actions and practices that create and shape it, and how it is interpreted in a concrete way in the particular field of the Dawit Isaak Library.

In order to fulfill the aim the thesis will answer the following research questions:

- How can freedom of speech be understood in a library context in a democratic society?
- How is the understanding of freedom of speech translated into practice in a democratic society?

1.3 Disposition

The thesis is divided into six chapters. In the first one, the background of the subject is described, the problem area defined, and the aim and research questions are presented. Chapter 2 describes the methods conducted for this study, and the material that has been used. My relation to the field is presented, along with ethical considerations. Chapter 3 treats the theoretical framework that the thesis relies on. Bourdieu's field theory is described, and how I am going to apply it to my study. In chapter 4 I give an account of previous research in the field of freedom of speech and libraries' democratic mission, which contextualizes the thesis. Chapter 5 contains the analysis, which is divided into two main sections based on the research questions, with subsections focusing on different aspects of the material. In chapter

6 the conclusions and findings of the thesis are presented, along with the applicability of this study.

2. Method and material

To answer the research questions the thesis will use the Dawit Isaak library in Malmö as a case study. As a library that focuses on freedom of speech, and collects books that have been banned or censored from around the world, the Dawit Isaak Library can be seen as a practical manifestation of freedom of speech. It is an operation that embodies the concept, puts it into practice, and has to handle the question of its limits and borders on an everyday basis. Therefore, the Dawit Isaak library is a suitable case for this investigation.

2.1 Entering the field

I first got acquainted with the Dawit Isaak Library during my time as a student employee at Malmö City Archive. From October 2022 to January 2023, I conducted a project that focused on how the archive's public operation is communicated, and how visitors experience it. Through a comprehensive ethnographic field work, where I conducted observations, surveys, interviews and ethnography, I got familiar with the space of Malmö City Archive, and through that, the Dawit Isaak Library. During my observations I spent a lot of time in the library, and through surveys and interviews I gained insight of how visitors perceive the operation. Around the same time as this project, I wrote a cultural analytical article about how space is created at the Dawit Isaak Library, as a part of my master's programme. It was from that article the idea for this thesis came up. The article focused on how freedom of speech was used as a concept when organizing the material objects in the library and used Actor-Network Theory to investigate the materiality in the library, through observations and pictures from my fieldwork there.

This thesis can be seen as an extension of my article, but with a much broader focus and a different material, connecting the library to a bigger context of freedom of speech in Sweden. Even if my pre knowledge and familiarity with the Dawit Isaak Library undoubtedly has shaped the creation of this thesis, all sources used here are new. The writing of this thesis started when my project at Malmö City Archive had ended, and the material used here has been collected for the sole purpose of this study.

2.2 Interviews with the staff

The main part of my material consists of two deep interviews with three individuals working at The Dawit Isaak Library. The first interview was conducted with a single informant, and the second with two co-workers at the same time. The interviews were recorded at the informants' offices at Malmö City Archive, between 21st and 24th of March 2023, and took about an hour each. They were all conducted in Swedish.

The main purpose of the interviews was to receive insight into the practical work that is performed on a daily basis at the Dawit Isaak Library. Additionally, I aimed to understand how the concept of freedom of speech is understood and defined, and translated into practice in this specific context. The interview questions addressed the background of the library, the thought behind it, how they work when collecting the banned books, their experiences of visitors and reactions that the library has got. Furthermore, I asked the informants about their thoughts on freedom of speech related to the operation, how they communicate the concept at the library, and what difficulties or challenges working with this issue may involve.

When the interviews had been recorded, they were transcribed manually by me. Since the interviews were all executed in Swedish the transcriptions have later been translated to English by me. It is important to note that some nuances, details or aspects might have been lost in that process. I have made the choice to translate the Swedish word "yttrandefrihet" in the material to "freedom of speech". In some of the literature I refer to, the wording "freedom of expression" is used. I regard these two formulations as one and the same in this thesis. Through the act of transcribing and translating the interviews I have attained a closeness to the material. I have had to listen to the interviews repeatedly and therefore have been able to analyze the material thoroughly in Swedish, before translating it to English. After the material was translated, a thematic categorization was made. Based on the research questions the material was divided into two sections, one that deals with the understanding of freedom of speech, and one that deals with how it is practiced at the library. When organizing the material I have aimed for distinguishing the more abstract parts from the concrete.

I will not position the informants against each other, to see if their responses match each other. The purpose of this study is not to uncover any "truth" about the library or how the staff works, but to analyze their experiences of working with the concept of freedom of speech. I will not question the truth in, or the thought behind, any of the answers, since the

purpose of the thesis is not to find out “right” or “wrong”. Occasionally comparisons between the responses will be done, to highlight or demonstrate certain points or aspects in the analysis. A part of the interviews focuses on how visitors have reacted to the library, or to certain books or cases in there. It is important to note that even if I discuss the visitors' reactions, and the visitors as a team in the field, it is only done through the staff's perceptions of the visitors. Visitors are not a part of the material and therefore their perspectives are not included in this study.

The informants have all been anonymized. I have made the choice to refer to them as informant 1, informant 2 and informant 3 throughout the analysis, instead of giving them fake names. This is a method to distance both myself and the reader from the informants, and put focus on the content in their answers, and not on their persons. To further avoid identification, I have also made the informants gender neutral in the text, and use the pronoun “they” when referring to them.

2.3 Official documents from Malmö Stad

The other part of my material consists of the operational plan of Malmö City Archive 2022, which contains aims and guidelines of the Dawit Isaak Library. This part of the material contributes with insight in the governing documents that the work at the Dawit Isaak Library relates to. The angle of incidence will provide an additional perspective through which the concept of freedom of speech is materialized and regulated. I have done a textual analysis of the document, where I have examined how the expression freedom of speech is used and what understanding of the concept it implies. I have also studied how and where the Dawit Isaak Library's operation is mentioned in the plan, and what mission it is supposed to fulfill.

I want to emphasize that the operational plan for 2022 that I have studied only is *one* example of an official document. It is not the only text that defines the Dawit Isaak Library's mission – there are other documents with definitions, regulations and formulations. My intention has not been to comprehensively go through everything that concerns the Dawit Isaak Library. The operational plan works as an example of activities, goals and guidelines for the operation that can be positioned against the oral material of the interviews.

2.4 Ethical considerations

It is important to note that I have a closeness to the field and the informants, as I am a former employee at Malmö City Archive. I had pre-knowledge of the Dawit Isaak Library, since I had already studied it in another project, with a different focus. This pre-knowledge has worked to my favor as I have been able to navigate in the familiar surroundings and was already acquainted with the informants. The intimacy to the archive has also come with disadvantages. Closeness to the informants may cause certain bias and concerns regarding embellishing the result. The fact that I knew the informants beforehand has affected me, both consciously and subconsciously when doing the interviews, and analyzing the material. The familiarity resulted in the interviews being relaxed and open, and allowed the conversations to flow more naturally than it probably would have if the informants were complete strangers to me. When analyzing the material I have tried to distance myself from it as much as possible. The theoretical framework has helped me with this. By using the field theory I was reminded of the bigger context of freedom of speech in a democracy, and it allowed me to see beyond the individuals that I have worked with at Malmö City Archive.

Furthermore, there is the aspect of identification. Even though the informants are anonymous in the study, the library is not, and as there are not a lot of people working there, there is a possibility that they could be identified by people with knowledge about the Dawit Isaak Library or Malmö City Archive. But this is an inevitability when studying any kind of public operation or field, and something that the informants are aware of.

3. Theoretical framework

In order to answer the research questions and investigate how freedom of speech is being understood and practiced at the Dawit Isaak Library, I am going to analyze how the library is constructed, as a social and material space, by using concepts of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's (1992, 1993, 1997) field theory as a framework. I will regard the Dawit Isaak library as a field, in which the concept of freedom of speech is being practiced. By identifying the actors that operate within the field, what they are doing and how, I will be able to grasp how freedom of speech is translated into a physical context. In the following sections I will explain the field theory as presented by Bourdieu, and give some examples on how it has been used. Then I will describe how the theory will be applied in my study.

3.1 Bourdieu's field theory

The concept of field theory was developed by the french sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, one of the most influential social theorists of the 20th century. The theory investigates how social spaces, referred to as fields, shape the behavior and positions of individuals. According to Bourdieu (1992, 1993, 1997), a field is, among other things, characterized by defining and establishing specific interests and stakes that are distinct from other fields. Every field has its own set of rules and dynamics, and this shapes both the actions and the perceptions of the individuals that move within the field. A field can be specified through certain practices, rules, norms or power dynamics. These characteristics all take part in shaping the field, and by examining them the understanding of how the field operates is increased (Bourdieu 1992, 1993). "All the agents that are involved in a field share a certain number of fundamental interests, namely everything that is linked to the very existence of the field." Bourdieu (1993, p.73) writes. People who have not been engaged or involved in the field often do not understand the specific interests. They have not been shaped into the field and can therefore not entirely comprehend what drives the behaviors and actions of those within. Bourdieu (1992, 1993, 1997) means that in order to understand the specific interests within a field, closeness and involvement to the context and the practices are demanded.

Bourdieu (1992) argues that there is a constant struggle of establishing and negotiating a field's boundaries. The boundaries take part in defining what practices, actions or actors are considered to be legitimate participations of a specific field. Defining boundaries is a way for groups or individuals in the field to uphold their authority, and control what is regarded as legitimate in that context. For example, in the artistic or literary field this could mean declaring that something does not count as literature or poetry, and thereby excluding it from the field. Bourdieu (1992) also states that in every field there is a struggle between the newcomers who want to enter the field and the dominant agents who want to defend their monopoly of it. The field is sustained by the participants reinforcing their belief in the value of what they do there (Bourdieu 1992).

Essentially, field theory is about exploring how social relations take part in shaping a social space. It highlights how actors shape the field they participate in, but also how the actors are shaped by the field (Bourdieu 1992, 1993, 1997). Swedish sociologist Donald Broady (1989) describes the field concept as a set of tools that gets its meaning by being used in investigations. Investigating a field in Bourdieu's sense involves constructing the system of

relations that connects the positions available within the field. By distinguishing the dominant and dominated positions, and the assets that are attached to different positions, a specific field can be determined in relation to other fields (Broady 1989).

Incorporated in Bourdieu's (1992, 1993, 1997) field theory are the concepts of capital and habitus, which I will only describe briefly, as they are not going to be that significant in my analysis. Bourdieu (1993) describes capital as resources and assets possessed by groups or individuals. Within a certain field they can use these resources to their advantage. There are various sorts of capital, for example cultural, social or economic. Individuals' positions in the field are influenced by their access to capital. Habitus, on the other hand, refers to a set of dispositions, behaviors and attitudes which individuals can gain through experience and socialization. In summary - the concept of capital can explain who gets to play, why, and how, while the concept of habitus can be used to describe and analyze the strategies of the players in a specific context (Bourdieu 1993; Mutch, 2006).

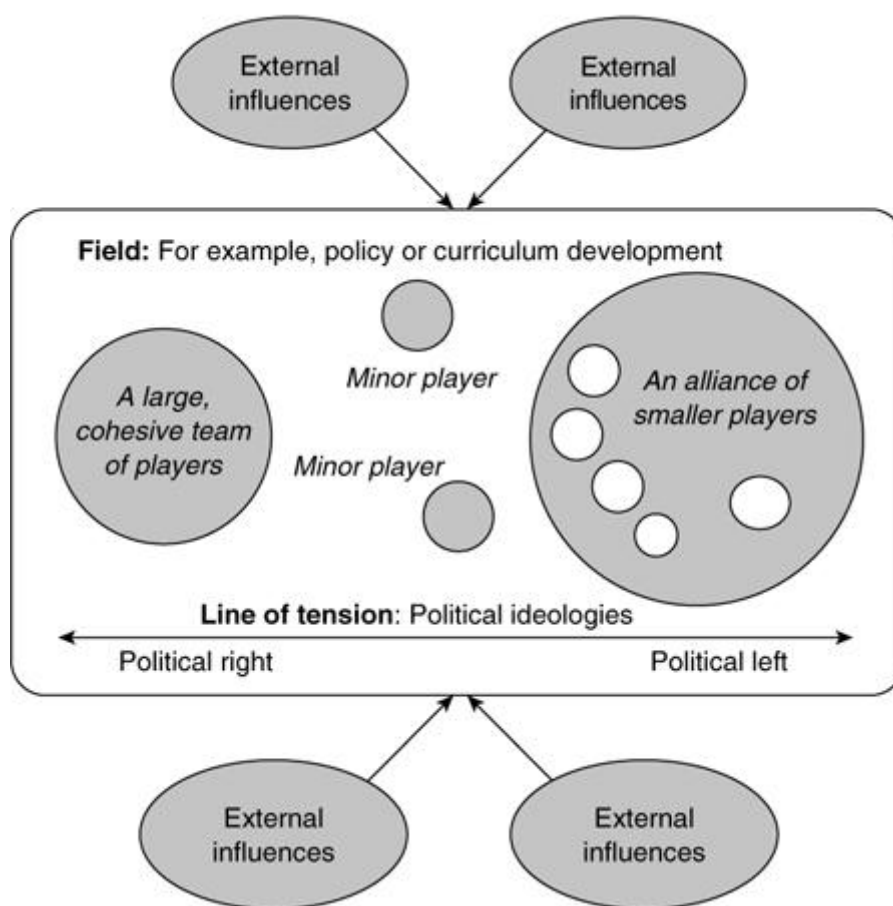
In *Applied Cultural Theory*⁸ (2017) where Bourdieu's conceptual system is described, it is stated that social fields are never static. Instead, there is always space for agency and change, through the constant negotiation of positions and resources, and the defining of boundaries. Each field has its own particular logic and specific resources (Gunnarsson Payne & Öhlander, 2017).

An example that demonstrates how Bourdieu's field theory can be used is a study by Caroline A. Mutch (2006), where she uses the theory to explain decision-making processes in educational policies in New Zealand. She states that the theory has much to offer when it comes to portraying complex interactions and positionings. Mutch (2006) explains that the notions of field, capital, and habitus allow important aspects to be further developed in this case, and asks questions like who was granted entry to the field, which ideological positions were favored and why, who was excluded, how consensus was achieved once the field was set, and what forces from the outside influenced what happened within the field. Mutch (2006) describes the field as a common ground, on which the action occurs. She uses the field model to illustrate the complex and contextual interactions at a particular time. By exploring the educational policy on New Zealand at a micro-level, it allows her to point out the hierarchical distribution of people within a narrower context, as well as the outside influences that affect the field. "The social field model was the only one that allowed me to adequately

⁸ Tillämpad kulturteori

describe, analyze, and visually portray the development of Social Studies in the New Zealand Curriculum as a highly contested process with constant changes in personnel.” she writes (Mutch, 2006, p.170).

Mutch (2006) presents a generic diagram of a social field, where the different actors are mapped out. Within the field there is on the one hand a large, cohesive team of players, and on the other an alliance of smaller players. In addition, there can be a number of individual, minor players that also act within the field. Then there are external influences that are located outside of the field, but still take part in affecting and shaping it. She also includes political ideologies as a line of tension. It looks like this:



(Mutch, 2006, p.164)

3.2 Application of the theory

In my study, the field that is to be investigated is the Dawit Isaak library itself, as a physical and social space. I will regard the field concept as something ductile, and shape it to suit my material. Where necessary, I will depart from the theory, or develop it in a way that is adapted to my study. Bourdieu's (1992, 1993, 1997) model will thus not function as something fixed, but work more as a lens through which I will organize the material.

My intention is to investigate the concrete space of the Dawit Isaak Library. Both how the physical space is shaped around the theme of freedom of speech, and how the different actors that move in there relate to the concept of freedom of speech, and take part in creating the place. By using Bourdieu's (1992, 1993, 1997) field theory I can examine the groups and individuals that interact and negotiate with each other in the library, to see how these interactions shape the library's practices around the theme of freedom of speech. The following questions, based on the field concept, will work as a guidance when analyzing my material: Which actors are at play in the field? What positions are there, and what is being negotiated? What boundaries are defined? What practices are specific to the field? What interests and stakes characterize the field and distinguish it from other fields?

To begin with, there are two main characteristics that define the Dawit Isaak Library as a field. One, that it is a library, and two, that it revolves around freedom of speech. Both aspects are important to address in order to answer my research questions.

How the place is shaped by the fact that it is a municipal library, and how it is shaped by the fact that it is dealing with the question of freedom of speech, are two different themes, or properties, of the field that the actors within relate to.

I will use a similar figure as the one presented by Mutch (2006), when analyzing the material. The model will help me visualize the field and the players within and outside it, and see how well it fits on the Dawit Isaak Library. In the material used in my study, three different groups that take part in shaping the field can be identified. As a point of departure I have mapped them out in the following way:

- *A large, cohesive team of players*
The staff working at the Dawit Isaak Library. They communicate and concretize freedom of speech as a unit, through their work at the library.
- *An alliance of smaller players*

The visitors who come to the Dawit Isaak Library, and take part of the work done by the staff. Depending on the perspective the visitors could also be seen as individual *minor players*.

- *External influences*

The operational plan, which formulates the aims and strategies of the library that the staff must relate to.

This figure is based on the idea of the field as the physical library. Those inside the field are those who physically dwell there. I have chosen to make this definition in order to easier analyze the actors within. However, the concept of the Dawit Isaak Library is larger than the physical room at Malmö City Archive, and it is much harder to frame and define as a field, since there are no physical borders. For example, if the library is promoted at the annual book fair in Sweden, or if the staff make visits at schools to discuss banned literature, the field is expanded outside of the physical space. Therefore, you could discuss the field as both a physical place, and an abstract concept.

The physical place at Malmö City Archive is what contains the book collection, the shelves, the material elements. The concept of the library holds the idea, the purpose of it, and that is what steers the physical place. The concept exists outside of the physical place. When studying the physical place it is easy to identify the different teams, players and actors that move within the field. It is not as straightforward with the concept, since that could include everyone who in any way has heard, read, thought or seen anything about the Dawit Isaak Library. My material consists mostly of stories about the physical place.

In my operationalization of Bourdieu's (1992, 1993, 1997) social field theory I have chosen to use the concepts that are relevant for my study. The field concept is central, as it will allow me to uncover the context where the action takes place. However, I will not lay focus on the concepts of capital and habitus, since it does not fulfill my aim.

4. Previous research

Freedom of speech is a *very* extensive research field that has been studied, debated and discussed for centuries. As my study seeks to investigate the understanding and practice of freedom of speech in a library context, the literature that I relate to here has been selected on the basis of two themes. One, research about freedom of speech in general, which in different

ways discusses the dilemmas, limitations and boundaries of the right, and how it can be practiced in democratic contexts. Two, how libraries in democratic societies navigate around the theme of freedom of speech, in practical aspects such as book selection. The research I bring up is not comprehensive for either of these large fields, but it provides a basis for the field that this thesis is joining. Some literature will also be described more than others, depending on how relatable the findings are to my study. In contrast to previous studies, this study aims to bridge the gap between dilemmas of freedom of speech in a broad context and the dilemmas of operationalizing selection, free access to information and freedom of speech in libraries. My research adopts Bourdieu's field theory to analyze how the Dawit Isaak Library is manifesting the concept of freedom of speech. By examining the informants' understanding of freedom of speech and how it is translated to a practical and physical context, this study seeks to shed light on the contradictions between the theoretical definition and the material performance. Through this investigation, I aim to join a very broad research field, but contribute with a unique perspective. With cultural analysis and ethnographic methods, this particular case will add to the existing body of knowledge and enrich the understanding about libraries and freedom of speech - in relation to each other.

4.1 About freedom of speech

The value of freedom of speech in a democratic context has been investigated by political scientist Ulf Petäjä (2006) who argues that it is problematic that freedom of speech is taken for granted, and that the focus often is on boundaries and limits rather than its justification, in democratic states. He argues that it is problematic to establish the limits of freedom of speech without discussing why it is desirable in the first place. It is regarded as an important element for democracy, and most people agree that it is something good. But there is a general lack of awareness of why freedom of speech is desirable, Petäjä (2006) writes. He notices a difference in this discussion between democratic and authoritarian countries. In countries without freedom of speech, or where it is very limited, people in opposition to the rulers often concentrate on what they do not have and if it is possible they argue for that right, focusing primarily on its cores, with arguments and justifications for the existence of freedom of speech. But in established democracies where this right is a natural part of society, the discussion tends to be about things on the periphery of freedom of speech, such as where the boundaries and limits should be drawn (Petäjä, 2006).

Limitations of freedom of speech can be both legal and non-legal, the author writes. The difference between these two is that legal restrictions are linked to the state legislation, and therefore the state can decide that some statements and expressions are not protected by law. Non-legal restrictions on the other hand have to do with some form of social censorship not supported by law. Perceptions considered unacceptable in a society for example. The focus of Petäjää's (2006) study is to examine the arguments' legal limitations on free speech. Based on the analyzed arguments, he finds that circumstances and statements related to, or risk of, violence, are common reasons for restrictions. These reasons could be seen as relatively general. There are two versions of autonomy arguments, that both rest on the idea that individuals are rational, autonomous beings, and on the basis of that it is almost natural to think that freedom of speech may be limited if the capacity of individuals is reduced, as a result of circumstances. Another argument is that expressions which directly advocate violence against individuals, society or state also could be restricted.

Petäjää (2006) states that a reason for justifying freedom of speech in a democracy is that there is no point discussing limitations or restrictions of freedom of speech if it is not sorted out why freedom of speech is valuable, and that citizens who have not reflected upon the value of freedom of speech weakens the self defense of democracy. The third reason is that there is a shortage of research within the field of political research, political investigations and legal texts, on why freedom of speech is valuable in a democratic context, something that applies to Sweden as well as other democratic states. Petäjää's result shows that the arguments primarily express that freedom of speech should be seen in the light of the ideal type of collective good - which means that they do not motivate freedom of speech on the premise that it is an individual right. Instead, it seems like freedom of speech most of all is motivated by the fact that it is a freedom and right valuable for society as a whole. Based on the five strongest arguments, it is the value of a reliable communication process that gives reason to why freedom of speech is valuable in a democracy. From that Petäjää has presumed that freedom of speech can be limited if that process is absent or injured. A reliable communication process is characterized by different ideas and perspectives, and varying images of reality (Petäjää 2006).

The complications and dilemmas of free speech have been discussed by political scientist Jan Andersson (2004), through analyses of debates related to value conflicts actualized by proposals of legislation on freedom of speech. Andersson (2004) digs into justifications of limiting and restricting free speech, and the values behind the interest of upholding freedom

of speech in a democracy. He points out that hardly any democratic state offers a completely unrestricted protection for freedom of speech, and that in the public debate/conversation it is often claimed that free speech can cause harm, for example by being perceived as offensive. Examining the Swedish constitution, talk of an 'outer limit' for freedom of speech can be noticed in the current legislation. Andersson (2004) ponders over where this limit goes, and how it has been justified historically. One of the dilemmas he investigates is the conflict between protection of freedom of speech and consideration of other interests. Other interests could for example be legislation against defamation or agitation against ethnic groups, crimes against national security or discussions on pornography.

Andersson (2004) writes that freedom of speech often is described in very exalted terms in democratic societies, and that it is seen as a freedom that makes way for all other forms of freedom. At the same time, the written or spoken word has a strong inherent power to influence, and cause suffering. "Few areas so clearly illustrate the thesis that free speech can cause harm as in the case of statements with racist content" (Andersson, 2004, p.33). He reflects upon whether the fact that someone feels offended is a sufficient reason for restricting freedom of speech. The difficulty lies in justifying, on principled grounds, how the line against unacceptable expressions should be drawn. Reasonably, racist propaganda must be regarded as highly offensive, the same could also be said of sexist literature or expressions that insult a person's religious belief, Andersson (2004) writes as an example. The conflict between freedom of speech and racism presents us with a very difficult moral and philosophical dilemma. In the realization of free speech there are many potential conflicts and obstacles. His conclusion is that the only solution to the dilemmas of free speech might be an ongoing dialogue between the citizens. In that way, democracy can be understood as a method for coming to the conclusion of what is fair and reasonable, rather than it itself being understood as a fair way of making decisions (Andersson 2004).

Political scientist Fernández (2018) examines freedom of speech in relation to tolerance and political correctness. He argues that freedom of speech is not absolute or unrestricted, it is relative - in relation to the harm it may cause, and to the purpose it is supposed to serve. Both in public debate and everyday speech there is often a view of freedom of speech as something undivided good - something good in itself, that does not need an explicit justification. This means that the reason for, and also against, freedom of speech rarely gets scrutinized, and that restrictions of it also become difficult to understand.

One of the main points that Fernández (2018) makes is that freedom of speech presupposes a living public conversation where different beliefs and positions are challenged against each other, and accepted truths are tested with new approaches and perspectives. He also presents a figure of hard and soft limits of freedom of speech, and explains the difference between them. Hard limits “refer to the distinction between utterances that are accepted (tolerance) and those that should not be allowed (prohibition) because they cause harm” (Fernández, 2018, p.94). Soft limits on the other hand, separates utterances that are normatively favored, from utterances that merely are tolerated. The soft limits mark the line between opinions that are liked and disliked, appreciated and criticized - a vague, but significant line. Fernández (2018) calls these two limits a simplified, empirical description of how the public sphere of freedom of speech is structured. He also discusses how freedom of speech is important both for the sender, the one speaking, and the recipients, those listening. For the sender it is important to be able to freely express opinions, ideas and creativity, and for the recipients it is important to be able to take part in information, knowledge and art. (Fernández, 2018).

Richard Sorabji (2021) has studied the history of freedom of speech, as well as the use and misuse of it, and discusses cases in which the law has been, or might be, used to provide boundaries for freedom of speech. He then argues that a new important boundary for free speech, that should be accepted voluntarily, would be the line where it starts to hinder its own good purpose. (Sorabji, 2021)

Discourses on free speech are discussed by Khan et al. (2021), through Western and Islamic news media. By examining how the issue was framed after the attack on the french satirical newsmagazine, who published caricatures of Muhammed, the study finds indications that Western discourses on free speech, which includes the right to offend religious sensitivities and secularism for all, are not attractive to Muslims who ascribe more respect to their religion than to things such as free speech (Khan et al. 2021).

4.2 About libraries and book selection

An article written by Lester Asheim (1953), an American researcher in library science, has been crucial in the field, as it describes the differences between censorship and selection. Asheim (1953) states that librarians hardly can be held responsible for decisions that are not theirs to make, and refers to cases where librarians merely are carrying out obligations placed

upon them by law. According to Asheim (1953) the question of censorship contra selection arises when a librarian decides against a book that has the legal right to be represented on the shelves. He describes that when it comes to the practical results, there is no difference for a visitor who cannot borrow a certain book because the librarian decided not to buy it, because it was refused admission in the country, or because a local pressure group forced its removal. He writes that a work being banned from an entire country by legal action is the most pure and simple form of censorship. If that is the characteristic of censorship, then librarians are not censors, since they do not go to law to enforce their judgment, and has no intention of denying access to the book through any channel but that of their own agency, Asheim argues. Unlike the law, librarians do not say that a book shall not be circulated, they only say that *they* will not circulate it. Asheim (1953) asks where the difference lies if the results of the action are the same.

The lawyer and judge Johan Hirschfeldt (2017) has studied the role of libraries in a democratic society, through analysis of the Swedish Library Act. He states that it is a difficult task to convey knowledge about the core values of a democracy in a public operation such as libraries, since conflicting values and interests must be balanced. It requires a lot of experience, professional knowledge, and some good judgment. It is through this work librarians are to defend the democratic society (Hirschfeldt, 2017).

In a report for the The Swedish Library Association Söderlind and Elf (2014) studies how libraries work based on normative documents, in order to gain deeper knowledge of the libraries' media strategy work, as a contribution in the ongoing and constantly relevant debate and discussion about the library's mission and selection of media. The material of the study includes qualitative interviews with librarians from various kinds of public and regional libraries in Sweden, as well as analyzes of media plans from different kinds of libraries, with starting points in a theoretical discussion about libraries' selection versus censorship, as well as the concept of freedom. Söderlind and Elf (2014) note that there is a somewhat complex picture of the position normative documents have in libraries, and that there are reasons to ask questions about what it means in practice to “use” or “relate” to a media plan or manifesto. They point out that concepts such as freedom of speech, censorship, impartiality and neutrality can be perceived as self-evident in modern democracies, but it might not be as obvious what they really mean for the operation of libraries and the professional role of a librarian. A conflict appears between the principle of libraries as arenas where all material should be accessible in order for people to form their own opinions, and the position of

turning down material judged as xenophobic or discriminatory, and not provide that kind of material based on the idea of the library's democratic mission (Söderlind & Elf, 2014).

Librarians handle this dilemma practically in different ways, the study finds. One strategy is to follow a principle of essentially saying yes instead of no, and letting legislation be their limit of acquisition. Another strategy is to compromise between yes and no by buying in single copies, storing the media, not replacing it, or emphasizing the importance of conversations with the borrower about titles that are potentially sensitive. A recurring question is how libraries are to put the mission of protecting freedom of speech and free access to information and knowledge into practice. It is easy enough to say in principle, but how to operationalize it? The right to information and various media without restriction (a freedom to) can be contrasted with the right to not have to meet overly stereotypical or prejudiced images, or other content that could be perceived as offensive (a freedom from).

Söderlind and Elf (2014) mentions that many of the goals or guidelines in the manifestos sometimes can contradict each other, or not in an obvious way be compatible with each other. The ethical rules can open up difficult trade-offs, without directly providing any concrete guidance on possible points of conflict, something that may require a different type of immersion in things like professional ethics and conflict management. However, the manifesto and the ethical rules can form a framework from which important questions like these can be discussed.

Curry (1997) has studied the connection between intellectual freedom and the practice of public librarianship, and compares cases in the United Kingdom and Canada. She digs into the act of selecting, forming library collections, displaying books, and the concerns of material offensive to ethnic religious groups, for example (Curry 1997).

5. Analysis

I have made a thematic division of the analysis, based on the research questions. The first section (5.1) will focus on the understanding of freedom of speech. There, an official document from the City of Malmö (Malmö Stad) will be analyzed, as well as the parts of the interview material that focuses on the overall idea behind the operation, and the informants' interpretation and perspective of the freedom of speech theme. In the second section (5.2) the

exercise of freedom of speech at the Dawit Isaak Library will be discussed, through the interview material that focuses on the practical work, as well as visitors' reactions and responses. The field theory will be applied as a model throughout the analysis, when distinguishing the different actors that take part in creating the field of freedom of speech.

5.1 Understanding freedom of speech in a library context

5.1.1 Operational plan for Malmö City Archive

In order to learn something about how freedom of speech is understood in a place like the Dawit Isaak Library, a good way to start is to look at governing documents that regulate the operation. By distinguishing the core of the operation that the Dawit Isaak Library is a part of, we understand more of what the staff is acting on and what they relate to in their work. The Dawit Isaak Library does not yet have an operational plan of its own, instead it is a part of the operational plan for Malmö City Archive in its entirety, which connects the Dawit Isaak Library to the bigger field of Malmö City Archive as well. I have used the operational plan for 2022 for my study. It includes formulations of the overall mission of Malmö City Archive, and planning based on committee goals and administrative commitments. This can be seen as a set of rules that shapes the actions within the field, since the library's operation proceeds on these formulations (Bourdieu 1992, 1993).

Based on Mutch's (2006) figure, the operational plan will initially be regarded as an external influence of the field. The operational plan derives from the Culture Administration, and formulates aims for what the Cultural Administration as a whole works for. The plan is also directed at the entire City Archive. As I focus on the concentrated unit of the Dawit Isaak Library, the Cultural Administration, as well as Malmö City Archive, could be regarded as something outside of, and above the Dawit Isaak Library. Therefore, I choose to define the operational plan as an external influence. It is located outside of my specific field, but steers what practices and interests take place within it. This could of course be challenged, and seen from a number of different perspectives, depending on what field is being studied, and how.

The word freedom of speech⁹ is used 16 times in total in the plan. It first occurs in the description of the overall mission of the archive, where it is stated that Malmö City Archive shall (among other things) “work for freedom of information and speech” (Malmö Stad

⁹ Yttrandefrihet

2022:4). In the plan for the operation it says that “The city archive protects the equal right of all people to their cultural heritage, to freedom of speech and the freedom to take part in culture in various forms and expressions” (Malmö Stad, 2022, p.5). Here we learn that it is a part of the City Archive’s mission to work for, and protect the right to, freedom of speech. The word, or concept, is not given further explanation or definition in this introduction, which implies a shared understanding of what freedom of speech means in this context. Bourdieu (1993) writes that all agents that are involved in a field share several fundamental interests, and here freedom of speech appears to be one. Furthermore, there is no discussion in the text about what freedom of speech involves, how far it extends or what limits there are. Nor is it problematized, and possible dilemmas that may arise are not acknowledged. Instead, freedom of speech seems to be seen as something self-evident and absolute in the formulation of the archive’ mission.

Neither is it specified in what ways Malmö City Archive are to work for freedom of speech, just that they are - which might leave some room for interpretation and freedom to shape the work around the theme. Based on the committee goal “Cultural public right for the city’s children and youth¹⁰”, one of the desired effects are “Increased knowledge among young people about freedom of speech, artistic freedom and democracy” (Malmö Stad, 2022, p.6). The specific mission of the Dawit Isaak Library appears as one of the strategic efforts to achieve this committee goal. The activity is formulated as “Strengthen Malmö students’ understanding of freedom of speech through banned literature” (Malmö Stad, 2022, p.7). This tells us that the banned literature in the Dawit Isaak Library is supposed to work as a means to strengthen the understanding of freedom of speech. The following clarification is provided:

During 2022, we will offer school visits mainly for year 9 and upper secondary school. About 2 tours per week. The class tours develop young people’s knowledge of freedom of speech, artistic freedom and democracy around the world. We accept classes from all over Malmö. In connection with the class tours, the students get to fill in an evaluation that enables the development of the concept. The class tour ends with the students choosing a book to keep. They can choose between 10-20 different titles. The effect we want to achieve with this is to promote reading and an increased interest in literature (Malmö Stad, 2022, p.7).

The concept freedom of speech is here used in two different contexts. The goal is to strengthen the understanding of freedom of speech, and a way to do that is through the class tours, that are to develop the knowledge of freedom of speech. This suggests that the understanding is strengthened through knowledge. Knowledge about freedom of speech, but

¹⁰ “Kulturell allemansrätt för stadens barn och unga”

also about artistic freedom and democracy. These terms are presented here as three different concepts which together contribute to an increased understanding of freedom of speech. Artistic freedom and democracy appear as equally important components in the desired effect of the committee goal. Based on the formulation in the quote, freedom of speech could be seen both as something to understand and something to have knowledge about. This is an interesting perspective of the concept, because it raises the question if these two do not necessarily have to mean the same thing, and in that case, what are the differences? Can you have knowledge about something without understanding it? The fact that the activity is formulated as “strengthen the understanding” of freedom of speech indicates that there is a gradient understanding of the topic, it is not definitive or static, but something dynamic that you can understand more or less, depending on your knowledge. Books and literature are tools that will help provide knowledge about this subject. By promoting reading and increasing interest in literature through the banned books, the understanding for freedom of speech will be strengthened, according to this strategy. We also learn that the students at class tours will be able to take part in developing the concept, which makes them, and their understanding of freedom of speech, involved in shaping the field. At the same time, the students are being shaped by the field, as their understanding of freedom of speech is increased. The activity of the class tours thus becomes a way to create interaction in the field. The action that is being called for here is above all reading, and in that way the knowledge and understanding of freedom of speech is increased (Bourdieu 1992, 1993, 1997).

Moving on in the operational plan, freedom of speech is mentioned as something that will characterize the City Archive’s activities for children and youths, as well as something that their holiday activities will emphasize (Malmö Stad, 2022). Again, the concept is not further explained or defined. There are recurring formulations of various wishes that Malmö residents should learn about freedom of speech. One committee goal says that in 2022 the Cultural Administration undertakes to increase Malmö residents’ accessibility to the cultural offerings in the city, through development of digital services. Two desired effects of this goal are: “Increased knowledge among Malmö's young people and adults about freedom of speech, artistic freedom and human rights” and “National dissemination of knowledge about issues related to freedom of speech within the library industry” (Malmö Stad, 2022, p.10). The aim to increase and spread knowledge about freedom of speech is consistent throughout the operational plan.

Another goal that the Cultural Administration undertakes, is to contribute to a more open Malmö city in 2022. This is to be done by increasing the residents' knowledge and commitment to anti-racist issues, and about the need for protection of artistic freedom of speech¹¹. The plan formulates that a result of this work is that the collection in the Dawit Isaak Library has been expanded with literature banned in Iran and Ukraine. A concrete effect for residents of Malmö from this commitment is that the Dawit Isaak Library has offered lectures and other programs on censorship, freedom of speech and banned literature. These activities are a way for the entire Cultural Administration to contribute to an open Malmö, and increase knowledge and engagement around anti-racist issues. Increased knowledge about freedom of speech is once again seen as a way to accomplish a greater goal. The Dawit Isaak Library's operations – both the collection of banned literature and their program activities on freedom speech – takes part in this work. Thus, the actions in the field become relevant in a context outside of it.

Based on the committee goal “A creative and attractive city of culture”, the aim is to continue to develop the work of ensuring an up-to-date and relevant cultural offer for everyone in the city. A desired effect is that the Dawit Isaak Library will be relevant to more Malmö residents with a language background other than Swedish, and through that the interest in issues related to freedom of speech and artistic freedom increases. “In 2022, larger stocks of banned literature in Arabic and Persian will be launched and publicized through public events on the theme” (Malmö Stad, 2022, p.14). This will both make the Dawit Isaak Library relevant to more people, and reflect the population of Malmö. Another effort is to increase the Dawit Isaak Library's offerings by launching banned film as one of their mediums. A stock of films that have been banned somewhere, at some point, for some reason, will be bought in during 2022, and will be freely available to borrow, just like the books. “In connection with the launch, program activities are organized for the public that shed light on the phenomenon of film censorship and take place in collaboration with internal and external actors and partners.” (Malmö Stad, 2022, p.15). Here freedom of speech is not mentioned in the strategic efforts, but it is a part of the desired effect. By including banned film in the operation, and by expanding the book collection with literature in different languages they hope to increase interest in issues related to freedom of speech.

¹¹ Konstnärlig yttrandefrihet

To conclude this first section of the analysis, the operational plan demonstrates how the physical space of the Dawit Isaak Library is shaped around the theme of freedom of speech. Freedom of speech is a significant aspect of the operational plan. It is there as a goal that the Cultural Administration strives to achieve, but it is also a theme that a lot of their activities center around. Freedom of speech is something that the Cultural Administration wants people to gain more knowledge about, and to strengthen their understanding of. It could therefore be seen as an important part of the field that integrates and shapes the operation of the Dawit Isaak Library. However, the operational plan does not go into detail in defining or explaining what freedom of speech actually means in this context, what the concept entails. The word is used with a certainty and directness that signals a shared understanding of the concept. However, we have not yet gained any real insight in exactly *how* freedom of speech is understood in this context.

5.1.2 How the Dawit Isaak Library came to be

We now move on to another group of actors in the field, that is, the persons that work with the Dawit Isaak Library, and act, among other things, upon the operational plan above. The following section will focus on how the Dawit Isaak Library started, and what the initial thought behind it was. In the light of the operational plan, I will analyze what part the theme of freedom of speech had in the shaping of the library, and what understanding of the concept that emerges in the informants' stories.

Informant 1 describes the Dawit Isaak library as a niched library focusing on freedom of speech, and artistic freedom in particular. Informant 3 tells me that it started as a new project at Malmö City Archive that was supposed to be about artistic freedom connected to the role of archives. At first this project was fairly undefined. The Culture Administration¹² in Malmö had worked quite actively with issues related to artistic freedom, and institutions like The Art Gallery¹³ and the museums had lifted the question in a number of ways. Malmö is also a part of the international refuge network ICORN, International Cities Of Refuge Network, offering refuge for threatened cultural workers around the world. This context sparked an idea for the project at Malmö City Archive.

The Culture Administration receives threatened cultural workers, and offers protection for their physical person. But it's often their work - what they've written or the music they've

¹² Kulturförvaltningen

¹³ Konsthallen

made or the play or the movie - that has put them in danger, and has forced them to flee, because their production has upset someone in power, so to speak. So I started to think, what is the role of the archive in society? Well, it is to be this pillar of democracy - access to information. [...] And what can an archive do in these contexts? We can be an archive for this production, the production that has put people in danger. (Informant 3)

The project that came to be the Dawit Isaak Library thus started around the theme of artistic freedom, with a thought of archiving cultural works that have put people in danger or forced them to flee. By distinguishing the physical person of the cultural workers from the work that they have done, there appeared a gap to be filled: a place where the artistic works also could be protected. Here the archive's role in society is lifted, described as a pillar of democracy, with the mission of providing access to information. Combining these two components - the need of a place for the production of threatened cultural workers, and the role of archives in the democratic society of today - demonstrates the context that made the Dawit Isaak library possible, and how the idea behind it was born. It started from the theme of artistic freedom, with a background of previous work done by the Cultural Administration in Malmö around that question. The term freedom of speech is not explicitly mentioned in the description of the first initiative, but the emphasis appears to have been on artistic freedom.

Informant 3 explains that the idea evolved from an archive to a library partly because of the informants' previous experiences. But it was also a question of accessibility. Making it an open, public library removes obstacles and makes it even easier to access information, Informant 3 says. This opens up the discussion of the different practices that a library and an archive involve, and what expectations they create in visitors. At a library you are able to walk around the shelves, look at the books, pick and choose as you like, and bring them home to read. At an archive you must know beforehand which document or piece you want to order, you need help from an archivist, and you can only read in the reading rooms on site. It requires some prior knowledge, and makes it harder for visitors to discover new works or subjects. As informant 3 puts it, some of these obstacles are removed when turning it into a library. It could also be argued that in general more people know what a library is, than an archive. Libraries are an integrated part of going to school, for example, which archives are not. Since the whole purpose with this new project at Malmö City Archive was to increase accessibility and make banned and censored works available to the public, the decision to make it a library instead of an archival operation seems logical and matches the theme in itself. When they started to investigate if something like this already existed, they found no public libraries in the world that focus on collecting banned literature in the same way.

When talking to organizations working with artistic freedom, like the international refuge network ICORN and PEN, that protects literature and freedom of expression around the world, they found that there seemed to exist a need for this kind of operation. So by providing access to this specific kind of literature Malmö City Archive had the possibility to fill a gap in the library world, even if the project was initially built upon things already existing and work already done for artistic freedom in Malmö.

Moving on with the project, they turned to the Swedish Library Act¹⁴, with a wish to “go back to the source” as informant 3 formulates it, in order to look at what a library actually is supposed to do. They found that the law further supported this idea. The Swedish Library Act states the following: “The libraries in the public library system must work for the development of the democratic society by contributing to the transfer of knowledge and the free formation of opinions” (Bibliotekslag, 2013). This definition made the staff feel like they were on the right track with the project. Informant 3 tells me that they reasoned in the following way: “If we are to work for a formation of free opinions, then we have to become this archive for the information, the sources, that is being removed structurally in other libraries and other book shops etc.” (Informant 3).

Here it comes to the role of the library in a democratic society, and interpreting the theoretical definition of what a library actually is supposed to do, which is to contribute to the democratic development of society, and be an arena for formation of free opinions. The concepts of free opinion formation and artistic freedom are central themes that distinguish and establish the foundations of the field (Bourdieu, 1992, 1993, 1997).

When they began to build the collection ICORN and Swedish PEN worked as starting points, as both organizations monitor cases where freedom of speech has been restricted. Informant 1 describes how they started to go through ICORN’s lists of names of threatened writers and artists, to see if they could find books by those authors, and then bought the books they could get their hands on. Another list that guided them was the winners of the Tucholsky Prize, awarded by Swedish PEN to a persecuted, threatened or exiled writer or publicist. They browsed that list, bought all the books, and did some research on each. And from that it rolled on. One thing leads to another, Informant 1 says.

¹⁴ Bibliotekslagen

5.1.3 The staff's understanding of the concept

This section will focus on the staff's perception of freedom of speech, how they think about it and what the concept means to them. Being a library that focuses on freedom of speech, they must constantly deal with the definition of this concept, think about what it covers, and where the limits are, in their work with collecting and managing banned literature.

Something that all three informants point out repeatedly in their respective interviews is that their mission at the Dawit Isaak Library is not about them thinking anything about freedom of speech. They have texts of law to follow and build their work around. Informants 1 and 2 explain that freedom of speech is regulated through international law, and that the contents of the Dawit Isaak Library is based on the UN Convention, The Declaration of Human Rights, Article 19, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and UNESCO's public library manifesto. The informants all state that their own ideas, opinions or values have nothing to do with it. "That's what we used to say – this is how freedom of speech is described according to the documents and laws you act upon in a democracy" says Informant 2. Informant 1 thinks that it sparks a different kind of conversation when you point out that they see themselves built upon the Declaration of Human rights and the Child Convention, and also claim that they do not have any answers to what is right. Instead, they see themselves as mediators for the established international and national laws and regulations. Here, an image of freedom of speech emerges as something established and absolute, which is completely defined and understood from a perspective of human rights, and the work of the UN and UNESCO. Informants 1 and 2 disclaim themselves, and the Dawit Isaak Library, responsibility to define what freedom of speech means. Their experience is also that it becomes easier to talk about the library's mission with outsiders based on the premise that they do not take a stand or think they know what is right. From this perspective, freedom of speech is understood as an outside factor, a regulation from above, that defines and sets limits for the Dawit Isaak Library as a field (Bourdieu 1992, 1993, 1997).

The understanding of freedom of speech is also shaped by the fact that the Dawit Isaak Library is a library, and therefore has to act in certain ways. Even if it is a niched library, collecting books of a different kind and in a different way than other Swedish libraries, the Dawit Isaak Library follows no different rules. "We adhere to the Library Act, the Public Library manifesto and the European Convention, everything that every other library adheres to" explains Informant 3. In practice, this means that they cannot take in literature that is

prohibited by Swedish law. “That is, incitement to ethnic or racial hatred, copyright, defamation, child pornography, etc. We cannot take that in and not make that available, as we are a public library” Informant 3 says. This gives them a clear answer to the question of whether there is any book that never could be taken in at the Dawit Isaak Library. As informant 2 puts it: “The answer to that is really what Swedish law says. [...] If a book is stopped according to Swedish law we can’t have it, since we are a municipal operation”. Swedish legislation could therefore be seen as an outer limit to what they can and can not do at the Dawit Isaak Library, a concrete and fixed boundary of the field, within which their understanding of free speech must operate (Bourdieu, 1992, 1993, 1997).

It might seem simple enough. But among the books that they *can* take in, several decisions and assessments have to be done in their work of collecting banned literature. Informants 1 and 2 tell me that they do not have any official criteria for the books they take in but work more from a framework that directs them.

We are working with one definition of what we consider to be a banned book, for instance. And there are certain minimum criteria. It doesn’t have to be a government ban, but it needs to be organized and systematic in some way. Maybe a book has been stopped in a whole school district, or in a certain municipality or an area in a country or similar. Because we must have some kind of framework. And then you also can talk about what’s outside of those frames, that doesn’t fill the criteria. (Informant 2)

By defining this framework for themselves they are able to organize and systemize their work, not least because it makes it possible to identify and discuss the things that don’t fit in their framework. This definition is something that the staff had to make up themselves. A banned book can mean different things in different contexts, for instance because the laws, regulations and possibilities to ban and censor are different in every country. Their minimum criterion is that it must be organized and systematic in some way, which still makes it a bit fluid. By defining what counts as a banned book they can also define what does not count. This means that freedom of speech here becomes a kind of measure to assess which books fit into the collection, and by extension become a part of the field. The staff evaluate whether the book's or the author’s freedom of speech has been restricted, and how well the book fits into the library's mission to increase knowledge about freedom of speech and artistic freedom. Informant 2 explains that freedom of speech is a negative right, and it does not automatically give you a platform to spread a book or text, and explains: “Which means that it’s not censorship if a publisher refuses you. If I have been able to write the book and not suffer any worse consequences than someone saying ‘No this isn’t good enough’... We don’t take in

that” (Informant 2). Informant 3 also talks about this, how freedom of speech is a negative right. It says that you should not be prevented from being able to spread your opinions or your artistic works, but that does not mean that you have the right to be published or included in a library collection, just because you have written a book. Occasionally people have opinions on books they think should be included at The Dawit Isaak Library, informant 3 tells me. In many cases they can meet those requests and take in books they have been recommended, but they do not respond to everything.

It has happened that people have called, or people have come here, and said that “*No publisher has ever wanted to publish this book, I’ve written it and it’s about this and that. You must have it, because it is censored.*” It is not censored, it’s just not good enough to be published. And then it will not automatically be placed here. (Informant 3)

By this, a definition appears of what censorship means and includes in their field. There is a difference between being rejected by a publisher and being subjected to systematic banning or censoring, and the Dawit Isaak Library is not a library for rejected authors who have not been published. But the informants make clear that if a book has been stopped according to their definitions, then they make no difference to the content. Informant 2 explains that it is important that the whole spectrum of freedom of speech is included, so it does not become one-sided. For example, by only including literature that has been stopped by right-wing politicians, or literature stopped by left-wing politicians. Instead, it should be as wide as possible. Since the concept of freedom of speech is often used in political contexts, and can be an issue used in both conservative and liberal movements, I ask if the staff has been prepared for political expectations in any way. Informant 3 does not think that this has been difficult to navigate around. They have to be neutral in their work, and they have their framework to follow. If someone has wanted to ban a book in an organized way, if it has been the subject of a so called Twitter storm, a debate on the culture sections in the newspapers or similar, then it fits in there. This distinguishes what belongs in this field, and what is seen as legitimate (Bourdieu, 1992, 1993, 1997). Informant 2 talks about what freedom of speech includes, and what they want to achieve by having a wide range in their collection.

Freedom of speech is not there to protect everyone with nice, normative opinions that everyone shares, because then you don’t need freedom of speech. Freedom of speech is also there to protect the things that are uncomfortable, and that can differ from context to context and from person to person. What means great controversy for an author in Bangladesh to write, for example, might not at all mean the same in Sweden. That’s what we’re trying to highlight. (Informant 2)

This is an example of how they understand freedom of speech at the Dawit Isaak Library, as something that must include potentially controversial or uncomfortable opinions, because what counts into that is subjective and dependent on the context. By highlighting that, the library can demonstrate the complexity of the concept. That seems to be the main idea of the operation, consistently in the interviews - to illustrate how complex reality is, both when it comes to humans and art.

A major purpose of the library is thus to show that the free word and free culture should not be taken for granted. “There has been a fight for this, this human right that it is, always. And this right is not constant”, says informant 3. What the informants hope the library can contribute with is an awareness of how the right to free speech and artistic freedom is not self-evident or constant, and how people have fought, and still are fighting for it, and that it is being negotiated and questioned all around the world. By highlighting things that here and now may seem strange to have been banned, they can show that this is something that must continue to be discussed, reasoned about, and maybe fought for sometimes, Informant 3 explains. Highlighting what has been banned or considered dangerous in the past can shed light on what is being questioned at present time. By demonstrating and showing people that the will to censor and stop things from being written or read has always existed, freedom of speech is understood as something we actively need to work for. From the perspective that people have always wanted to ban things, the fight for freedom of speech becomes forever ongoing and relevant – which shows the importance of a place like the Dawit Isaak Library. It gives a relevance and urgency to the field (Bourdieu, 1992, 1993, 1997).

Informant 3 continues by underlining that they, the staff at the library, do not have the right answers, they do not say that this is right, and this is wrong. But what they can do is to illustrate what the result will be when you start banning things, and give examples of what will disappear. This can be connected to what Petäjää (2006) discusses in his study, the value of discussing why freedom of speech is something desirable. By demonstrating the negative consequences of restricting freedom of speech, the value of it is illustrated. What emerges here is an understanding of freedom of speech as something that constantly needs to be actualized and reflected upon. It needs to be understood in the light of its history, and compared to what happens *without* it, when freedom of speech is restricted. This is what the Dawit Isaak Library wants to contribute with - discussions, conversations and perhaps above all, an awareness of not taking freedom of speech for granted. Informant 3 emphasizes the complexity:

We humans tend to want to have conversations that are... we get stuck in polarized positions. It's black or white. It's either good or bad. "This is an author who is bad and has written bad books, that should be banned", or "This is a kind author, a good author, who should be read". Reality is rarely that simple. Artistic works are complex, we humans are complex. But one thing is certain, as long as there have been written words, they have also been censored, throughout the ages. (Informant 3)

Here, understanding freedom of speech, what it means and what it covers, becomes central. Informant 3's experience is that people tend to deal in absolutes, to divide it into fixed positions of what is good and what is bad, and what should be read or not. With that approach, freedom of speech gets connected with quality assessment, and it builds upon the notion that what is "good" or "bad" is objective and universal for everyone.

According to Mutch's (2006) figure, the staff at the Dawit Isaak Library could in my study be seen as the large, cohesive team within the field, as they in their professional roles have to work as a unit, practicing and operationalizing the theme of freedom of speech. On the one hand, there are definite and fixed limits. The out-spoken, physical limitations that steer the practical work with freedom of speech at The Dawit Isaak Library - lines they do not have to draw themselves. They only carry the message and provide information, and resign from taking a personal stand in the question. Freedom of speech is understood in this context as something that constantly needs to be discussed and reasoned about.

5.2 Translating freedom of speech into practice

5.2.1 Practical work at the library

This section will focus on the practical work that is being done at The Dawit Isaak library, and how freedom of speech as a theme permeates the operation. If the previous section dealt with the abstract part, this is more about the concrete aspects of the operation. In order to raise awareness, create discussions and ignite conversations about freedom of speech, artistic freedom and censorship, they must first get their hands on the books that are to make up the Dawit Isaak Library's collection. That is the whole premise of the field, and that is also how their understanding of freedom of speech is expressed and embodied in the room. When the legal definitions and fixed limitations are established, the process of translating it into practice takes on. What the Dawit Isaak Library initially is about is collecting books and

making them available for people to read. Informant 1 tells me that the collection consists of two kinds of books, and describes the concrete work of collecting them in the following way:

Practically we've done it this way - we've bought books that have been banned, for some reason, at some point, somewhere. Someone has wanted to stop this from being read, or this author from writing. And we also collect books that give the banned books a context. So, books about geography, history, politics, human rights, art, culture, literature...
(Informant 1)

Here a distinction is being made between the threatened books, the books that have been object for banning or censorship, and books about the context. The banned books could be seen as the prime material of the field, since it is their main purpose and what most of all distinguishes them from other libraries. Then the contextual books become a form of secondary material, a collection that helps framing and explaining the banned books. Together these two pieces demonstrate various aspects in the field of freedom of speech and artistic freedom. It would be a different kind of collection if it only consisted of one or the other. Now they work together, and lift each other. It could be seen as two different ways of embodying the theme of freedom of speech. Information about it, and the subject to it. Both are important for understanding the concept. Informant 2 explains that the contextualizing collection currently is bigger, with a larger number of books than the banned ones. Purchasing the banned books takes a lot more time and effort. "We put more work into the banned books, so to speak. It's a bigger effort. And that's what makes us unique" says informant 1.

The practicality of collecting the banned books is a bit more complex, difficult and time consuming compared to other, regular public libraries, informant 3 tells me. This is partly because they buy a lot of books that regular libraries do not have, and that are not available at their contracted supplier Adlibris. "You can't just press the Adlibris-button and order books", informant 3 states. This is one example of how the Dawit Isaak library is distinguished from "regular" libraries, and thereby distinguished as a field (Bourdieu, 1992, 1993, 1997). The books that they collect cannot be bought at ordinary book stores or suppliers, but have to be discovered and found on their own. Some books are easy to get hold of, especially books that have been translated into, or are written in, English. For example, the whole lot of books that are being censored in the USA right now, informant 3 says. But other books demand close cooperation with organizations such as PEN International, ICORN, Amnesty and other organizations that are close to the authors of banned books. One way is to do purchases

through contacts with refuge coordinators, informant 3 explains. The process can be described as detective work, says informant 1. Through amounts of Internet research they have been able to find indexes and lists over books from various countries that have been banned or censored. For example, American Library Association and PEN America keep statistics and indexes over literature that have been subject to banning or censorship in the USA. “You have to know where and how to look”, says Informant 2. The job of always keeping an eye out for new titles and authors has also started to find its way into their free time, they tell me, and call it somewhat of a work injury.

You sort of get new glasses from working with this. So even in your spare time you easily identify these things. My spinal reflex today if I read an article where someone mentions their favorite author is to immediately look that person up, to see that person’s history. (Informant 2)

An example that they mention is the author Julio Cortázar, who has been censored in Argentina, whom they discovered through an interview with a DJ in a newspaper. This demonstrates how the work at the Dawit Isaak Library affects the staff and gives them a new perspective even in their private lives. It also shows that there is some randomness in how the collection turns out. It is determined by what the staff are able to reach, but also by what reaches them. When things are written about the library, especially internationally, it happens that people contact them and want to assist them in their work. Librarians or literary scholars from different parts of the world who offer to help them purchase banned literature from a specific country or in a specific language.

Most recently we had a Ukrainian literature scholar who has helped us purchase banned Russian and Ukrainian literature. So we are super dependent on collaborations with other parties. Above all in the languages that we do not master ourselves, or the alphabets we don’t master ourselves. (Informant 3)

This means that a part of what books they are able to get their hands on, depends on what help they can get, and from where. So far, the library has gotten help with Portuguese, Ukrainian, Russian, Persian and Arabic, informant 1 explains, and got access to shorter lists over forbidden culture from different countries, for example Cameroon and China. Thanks to help from Iranian writer and journalist Parvin Ardalan, one of the first who resided as guest writer in Malmö through ICORN, the library has got a huge stock of banned literature from Iran, the informants tell me. The practical aspect of language skills is crucial when collecting books. “If you don’t have a basic understanding of language or whatever it may be, all

political events in a certain country, it can be very difficult” informant 2 says. When working with this, the staff have to start at one end, from what they can handle or manage to find on their own. Informant 1 states that they very much rely on help from others. “You realize pretty fast that we have our limits. You don’t speak this language, you don’t know this country’s history or book market, or in this country there’s no Internet...” explains informant 1. For example, informant 2 recently reached out on the library’s facebook page and asked for help with finding literature from South America. Here we learn of some of the boundaries of the field, and limits that steer the practical work that can be carried out in the library, which can be related to what Bourdieu discusses in terms of boundaries (Bourdieu, 1992, 1993, 1997).

Language skills and external help from international organizations or persons are factors that steer what books and works they are able to include in their collections, and therefore shape their work at the Dawit Isaak Library. They have started to build a stock of literature from the Middle East, but says that they have to increase it before making it an official release. Informant 3 explains that they do not have any five-year plan of what to collect, instead it turns out the way it does. Not being able to plan ahead means that they have to be flexible and work based on the actual circumstances and possibilities. But the aim with the collection in the long term is to cover the whole world, informant 1 tells me. Because if they have literature from all parts of the world, they will automatically cover literature from different times and eras, in different languages, that have been banned for different reasons, informant 1 explains. “Our ambition is to have a wide representation, but we will never be able to be comprehensive in any way”, says informant 3. It is also a question of resources, how fast they are able to work. As there are currently only two librarians working at the Dawit Isaak Library they are a bit limited. They can try to steer their work according to what they see is missing in the collection, where there is a gap, but as noted above it depends on what help they are able to get. Another practicality that affects the job is financial constraints. The library cannot afford to buy everything, so some sort of selection always has to be done, which could be seen as a limit, although a more fluid one. What the staff choose to spend the library’s allocation on is also a decision that has to be made, that in practicality is done in the selection. Another practicality that takes a lot of time and requires a lot of research is that each banned book has an *ex libris* - an inset on the first page that describes where, when and why this specific book has been banned or considered controversial. Informant 3 tells me the idea behind it:

We put in an inset, an *ex libris* that explains when, where, how and why... Why is this book here, is it a censored book, is it an imprisoned author, is it an author in exile, and so on... And why is that? Does it contain regime criticism, or criticism of religion, or LGBTQ friendly content, etc etc. And where in the world and about what time, and some other information. By no means comprehensive, but it gives an indication of the most common reasons why books are banned. (Informant 3)

By making it possible for visitors to learn the history of each banned book in this way, the books help to create an understanding of the complexity of the free word, how it changes through time, and is a result of the context it is being reviewed in. Informant 2 says that they hope that the *ex libris*es can help the visitors to get a grasp of what the library is about pretty quickly and easily. That it can raise thoughts and spark conversations when people walk around and look at the shelves. The fact that a book can be considered controversial for opposite reasons at different times shows that freedom of speech is not something absolute or definite. The *ex libris* also gives the book an accuracy. That piece of paper turns the book into something more, it changes the meaning and perception of it, since it tells the reader why the book is a part of this collection. It is also one of the physical things that distinguishes the Dawit Isaak Library from other libraries. If that information was not there, the experience would be different. For a visitor without pre-knowledge a banned book is just a book, the same as at any library. The *ex libris*es can be seen as a bridge between the banned books and the contextual books, that ties these collections together, and allows visitors to understand the whole picture. It is one example of how the theme of freedom of speech is being actualized and communicated in a practical way at this site. The banned books are turned into actors that take part in shaping and creating the field (Bourdieu, 1992, 1993, 1997).

Then there is the other part of the collection. The contextual books are purchased in a more regular and traditional way. The informants have subjects that they keep their eyes on, books about political or democratic movements or different historical events that are relevant, informant 2 explains. Here the language aspect is also relevant. The informants focus above all on things published in Swedish and English, which steers the supply. "We have to buy what is being published, so to speak", informant 1 states. They are also somewhat guided by what supplier they have procured contracts with, which is a Swedish, western online book store. It is mainly from them that they are to buy books to the contextual collection. They have the possibility to do direct procurements, should they notice that a particular book that they want or need does not exist at the supplier, says informant 2. These are some examples of practicalities, or external influences, that affect the field (Mutch 2006).

Informant 1 talks about how they try to be conscious of the western-perspective that comes from being in this part of the world, and that they strive to include non-european authors in the contextual collection. “For example, if I’m looking for books about the political situation in India, or India’s history, then I’m looking for Indian authors” says informant 1. But they are aware of the fact that what they are exposed to and know about are affected by being located in this part of the world, and working from this perspective. They are also steered by how much information there is about each country or context. When doing research they notice that in some countries there is not much written about censorship at all, even if they know censorship and banning has occurred there.

The informants tell me that they are working on activating the book collection and the questions of freedom of speech and artistic freedom in several different ways. They organize program activities, panel discussions and lectures, and the library receives visits from school classes where freedom of speech, censorship, and the being and freedom of art is being discussed, says informant 2. There is a wish for the collection to be open and available to everyone. When it comes to shaping and creating the physical room of the library the staff try to work a bit thematically, when choosing what books to display. For example, around March 8th they highlighted female authors and books about feminism and women’s rights, on World Poetry Day they lifted poetry, and when it is Pride they lift books about LGBTQ-questions, informant 1 and 2 tells me. This makes the library somewhat of a reflection of what gets attention in society. When talking about displaying books, choosing what is visible in the room and the personal impact in that, Informant 3 explains that the library profession can be categorized into two different categories - a censor and a selector, in line with Asheim’s (1953) article. Informant 3 explains the difference:

A censor is someone who deselected and removes. “No, this isn’t good, this is a stereotype, this one is bad, or this shouldn’t be read”. Or you have a selector, someone who complements. “Okay here we have this problematic book that says something that people might get upset about.” Then we can also complement it, with other opinions [...] other angles on what is being written, so to speak. I think that the library competence itself lies very much in that. To make different perspectives available. (Informant 3)

It is obvious that they strive to be the selector, by complementing books that might be problematic with other perspectives and angles. Through this selective action freedom of speech is being practiced in a concrete way, by allowing as many voices as possible to be heard. Then of course there always has to be some kind of selection when choosing what books to front with, to display in the room or to recommend on Facebook. But it is in that the

competence of working in a library lies, informant 3 means. It is a practice that defines them. This also reflects the issue of freedom of speech in a bigger perspective, and demonstrates the role the Dawit Isaak Library can have in today's society. Informant 3 says the following:

I think that we have a very important role. I understand that it is difficult for many, partly in the library profession. I mean, regular public libraries can't have everything, and they are forced to opt out. I understand that it can be difficult to navigate "correctly" in these questions, then, and that it maybe becomes easy to feel with your gut, rather than thinking about what people want to read and why. And who we are to decide what people should get to read. (Informant 3)

Here a difference is being made between feeling and thinking, and a rational approach is advocated. Above all, the staff want to create conversations. They strive to have a curious and permissive attitude against all kinds of reactions, and avoid being categorizing in their methods. Instead of saying that someone is wrong for thinking that a book is offensive and should be banned, informant 1 says that they try to ask what people mean, and let them explain why they think that. "I'm thinking that so far, knock on wood, this has turned out well. I think it works pretty disarmingly. That people dare to tell how they think and how they look at things", informant 1 says. This is an example of how the staff think, and how they want to meet people's opinions of what is right or wrong - with a curiosity, to listen and hear how people think, to create a discussion. This once again demonstrates how the mission of the library is being manifested through their daily work and their approach to these questions inside the field. The library is seen as a place where you can have dialogues and discussions, which is built upon the notion that they are able to meet and talk to the visitors. That demands cooperation, an exchange between staff and visitors. In that interaction the field is created and defined (Bourdieu, 1992, 1993, 1997).

The informant's experiences are that this strategy has worked well so far, that people have dared to express their thoughts. They have no bad examples where this has not worked out. It indicates that they are right when they say that their approach of not valuing anything and being open for discussions works disarmingly, and helps to avoid anger or resentment. It can be seen as a deal or a contract in the field (Bourdieu 1992, 1993, 1997). Informant 1 brings up current cases that demonstrate the complexity of freedom of speech, where they themselves do not have any answers:

A very good example in a Swedish context is gangster rap, for example. We often bring that up during school visits. And I find that very difficult, I have no answer at all. I don't really know what I think. It's different from day to day, sometimes I feel like "But it has to be like

this!'. Paludan is another example... [...] But that's when it gets interesting, when you can point out 'Do you see now how difficult it is? And who gets to decide where the limit is drawn, who gets to decide that?'. (Informant 1)

The Danish-Swedish right-wing extremist Rasmus Paludan figured heavily in the media at the beginning of 2023, among other things for having burned the Koran outside the Turkish embassy in Stockholm, something that created a great debate about the limits of freedom of speech (SVT Nyheter, 2021). By being transparent of their own insecurity and difficulty of knowing what to think they can show how complex the discussion is, and the dilemmas that may arise. Once again, their own presence in the library, in their roles as librarians, becomes a part of the concept. It also raises the question of who should get to decide, who has that right. Informant 1 says that they use to point out that there is a legal system that covers these questions and you can turn to that if you think something has crossed a line. What they want to talk about is whether the logical consequence of someone not liking a book is that no one else should get to read it, and if people think that is logical. When visitors have opinions or think that they, or some book, have crossed the line, the informants' experience is that this rhetoric works most disarmingly, informant 1 and 2 explain.

Informant 1 tells me that they try to be humble in their work, and share what they find so others can take part of it. By doing that they hope that people want to give back in return, like a dialogue. "We don't want to sit here and own things, be gatekeepers. We really want people to use our material, to take the information and spread it. We want to work in a climate where you can cooperate and share with each other, and so on", says informant 1. This aspiration distinguishes the field (Bourdieu, 1992, 1993, 1997). It goes hand in hand with the theme, to open up and have a dialogue about the content of the Dawit Isaak Library. What they see as the library's mission is to create possibilities for conversations and to raise thoughts, ideas and awareness about democracy and freedom of speech, above all. That's what they want to contribute to society, informant 2 explains to me. This is an example of how the understanding is translated into practice, and it also relates to Petäjää's (2006) study. He argues that the self-defense of democracies are weakened by citizens who do not reflect upon the value of freedom of speech. By activating this subject among the visitors, the Dawit Isaak Library's can therefore be seen as taking part in strengthening the self defense of democracy.

As established in the previous section, the outer limit of what they can take into the library is the Swedish legislation - what is forbidden in Sweden right now. But they want to include

Sweden's role in banning literature as well, both today and throughout history, and they have found ways to do so within the law. They can inform and actualize Sweden's history of censorship in different ways. "We do that all the time, talk about the film censorship that existed for example... And other current examples", informant 1 says. If a book is not allowed to be published in Sweden, they can still acknowledge and raise discussions about it. As the Dawit Isaak Library is located at Malmö City archive they also have the possibility to make use of the archive, since there are other laws for that. Informant 3 explains:

We might be able to take in copies of books as archival documents. For example, if this book was banned due to copyright reasons and so on. If Cissi Wallin's book had been convicted in court, for example, [...] now it wasn't, but had it been we could have had a copy in the archive, as an archive document. But not in the library as an available book to borrow.
(Informant 3)

The book that informant 3 refers to is the Swedish author and debater Cissi Wallin's autobiographical book *All that was mine: The story that must not be told*¹⁵ from 2020, in which she accused a named well-known man of rape. The Chancellor of Justice¹⁶ charged Wallin with grave defamation in 2021, and pressed for the book to be confiscated. In case Wallin had been convicted, the state would then have collected all unsold copies of the book and destroyed them. But Wallin was acquitted of the charge (SVT Nyheter, 2022). By transforming something to an archival record people would be able to order it over the counter and sit in the archive's reading room and read it. This has not happened yet, but they are prepared if it should, says Informant 1. They could also lift books stopped by Swedish legislation in other ways, by providing information about it, for example. Informant 2 uses the same case as informant 3, when talking about Swedish censorship, and states that if Wallin had been convicted they would not be able to keep her book on the shelf anymore. "But then we could talk about it, and lift it in other ways. To work around it and still be able to highlight Swedish censorship as well", informant 2 says. The fact that they both mention Cissi Wallin's case indicates that her book is something they have discussed previously. However, it evades the more sensitive, uncomfortable potential cases of books that might have been charged for agitation against ethnic groups or child pornography, and if they would have the same interest of making those available in the archive. On the question of grey areas and borderline cases, I ask informant 1 and 2 about cases where it might be hard to define where the lines are. Sometimes it may not be completely clear what the laws entail in

¹⁵ *Allt som var mitt: historien som inte får berättas*

¹⁶ Justitiekanslern

practice. Are there any grey areas outside of that for example? Without mentioning a specific example, informant 1 answers that it is, all the time. When they find the work difficult, informant 2 thinks it is safe to have the legal documents to lean back upon, like a reminder. Here some of their personal experiences appear. There are situations where it is not always easy and clear to relate to the legal texts when working with this in practice. But when it feels difficult it gives a sense of security to have the legislation to rely on. I ask them if there ever has been a situation where the legislation has not been able to guide them, where they have had to make a choice on their own or decide where to draw a line for themselves in their work. Informant 1 does not think it has happened yet. Informant 2 agrees, but develops:

But if you talk about personal limits, I'd say you cross them all the time. For example, I've purchased a lot of books that I think are disasters, that I wouldn't read, or [...] where I don't agree with the author. But I don't think, [...] I don't believe that someone becomes anti-semitic from reading an anti-semitic work for example, I don't believe that. And that makes it easier to... Of course, there are books I'm uncomfortable with, but just because I am, doesn't mean a visitor is. So, it's not my job to decide what others get to read. That's not my mission. (Informant 2)

In their roles as staff at the Dawit Isaak Library the informants have to go outside of themselves, and think beyond their personal opinions, even if personal opinions are activated, like the quote tells about. This shows how the practical work is a little more complicated than the understanding of freedom of speech on a theoretical level. The staff has to separate their personal selves from their professional roles. The belief that reading about something does not make you think in a certain way or agree with what you read, makes it easier to cope with books that might make the informants feel uncomfortable on a personal level. They keep coming back around to their position of not deciding what other people should have access to.

As a library for books that have been banned or censored for different reasons, we, as staff, cannot set any personal limits of our own. [...] It's not our personal preferences that control the content of the library. We lean back very confidently on the Library Act in particular, and Article 19 of the UN Convention on Human Rights and so on, which says what kind of literature it is that can and cannot be spread. So we disregard personal opinions (Informant 3).

They are very clear that their personal opinions or preferences cannot affect the content of the library. The legal definitions help to place them above personal opinions. They, as staff, are not there to decide what can be read or not. Here, the understanding of freedom of speech comes in line with the practice, and shows that even in situations where it is difficult to navigate, they hold on to that understanding. This demonstrates the power that unites the field (Bourdieu, 1992, 1993, 1997). There is one potential situation that could restrict them, where

they would have to put up limits due to safety reasons, that comes up in both interviews.

Informant 3 says the following:

There could be books that - I don't know what it could be, and it hasn't happened yet, but maybe it will - that we can't put on display publicly in the library, because it would risk violence. But it hasn't happened so far. (Informant 3)

Informant 2 tells me almost the same thing:

It could potentially be a case where it would pose a security risk to have a specific work or book. I mean, where you can't risk ours' or other staffs' health. [...] Of course, we would make sure to have that work or whatever it is, but then we might have to think differently about how to make it available without it being a danger to us and the visitors. (Informant 2)

If a book was so controversial or provoking to someone that it would pose a threat for staff or visitors to have it publicly, they are prepared to adjust to that situation. It can be seen as a case where logic, laws and what theoretically is allowed would have to be put aside for feelings and outside reactions. What is "right" would then be opposed to what is safe. This is an example of where the theoretical definition of freedom of speech collides with practice and reality. Petäjää (2006) mentions specifically that risks for violence are common reasons for restricting free speech. This kind of restriction has not in fact happened at the Dawit Isaak Library, and is therefore only a potential scenario, but it is obviously a scenario the staff have considered, and they are prepared for the possibility that it could happen. "Then you also might have to think about reference copies or archival record solutions." says Informant 1. So if it were to happen they would find solutions to work around the risk or threat, since they still would want to have the book or work in question. It goes with their mission: if an artistic work would get such strong reactions there would also be a reason to have it, to inform of it and to discuss it. Through these different aspects of the practical work at the Dawit Isaak Library, we can see how the understanding of freedom of speech is translated into practice in a democratic society. It shows how the theme is concretized through the collection of literature at The Dawit Isaak Library and how they have worked with the concept of freedom of speech when creating the place.

5.2.2 Meetings with visitors

This section will continue the analysis of the interview material, and focus on the parts that regard the staff's experiences of and interactions with visitors of the library. Both to the

physical library, but also people that in different ways have reacted to the library and contacted them on social media or over telephone. The visitors can from Mutch's (2006) figure be seen as another team of actors in the field, but different from the staff in the sense that they do not have to be cohesive and united in their interactions with the field.

The Dawit Isaak Library will always have to struggle with the fact that people have very different perceptions about what freedom of speech is. Different definitions of the word itself, different ideas of where the limits are, and of what should be included or protected by it. "It can be very very individual", Informant 2 says. They tell me that the name of the library actually has to do with what perception people should get.

The fact that we are called "The Dawit Isaak library" has to do with that. Because if the name was "The Freedom of Speech Library" different people would put different things and different meanings into that concept. [...] That we were allowed to name it after Dawit Isaak, to call it the Dawit Isaak Library is great because when you tell his example, his history, it becomes an example... It is much more clear what it's all about. So that's what I use to say. (Informant 1)

Here we learn that the operation actively wants to avoid the word freedom of speech in the name, even if it is a part of the description. Instead of being called "The Freedom of Speech Library", it is "The Dawit Isaak Library – your library for freedom of speech" (Malmö Stad, 2023). It is an important difference, and it demonstrates how much is put into the word freedom of speech. Even if it *is* a library for freedom of speech, Dawit Isaak's name and story becomes a symbol that better communicates the library's mission. It directs the focus to something else.

When I ask what kind of reactions the library gets, or has gotten since it opened, informant 3 answers that they have not received a lot of reactions, not more than positive ones. Informants 1 and 2 have also met with mostly positive reactions, and very little critique during their time open. "It has happened that people think x or y, or 'I would not do this or this', but it's rare for people to become upset for real. No, we've been pretty spared from that, I'd say" Informant 2 says. Sometimes they can notice that people come in with certain expectations on the library, which they then discover to be incorrect.

We notice in meetings with some people that there is a kind of expectation - that we sometimes become some sort of projection, that people think 'Oh this fits right into my view and my activism' or what it might be. And then they notice that 'Okay, this wasn't what I expected'. But so far it hasn't led to someone being upset, it's more 'Okay, this was not for me'. (Informant 2)

This goes back to the concept of freedom of speech being associated with political stances, as discussed in 5.1.3. Hearing about a library focused on free speech makes people ascribe a certain meaning to it, perhaps an active stance on either the political left or right, or a liberal respective conservative approach. When they then discover that the library has (or strives for) a neutral position, they still meet it with acceptance, rather than disappointment – according to informant 2's experience. This acceptance can be seen as an example of a contract made that takes part in creating the field (Bourdieu, 1992, 1993, 1997). Informant 3 tells me that there were some writings on social media when the Dawit Isaak Library opened in 2020, where people expressed preconceptions of what the collection would include. “Of the sort ‘Ah now they’re opening some kind of leftist, politically correct library in Malmö’”, Informant 3 recalls. Many were certain that the library would not include books like *Tintin in the Congo* or *Pippi in the South Seas*, books that in different ways have become the subject of discussion and reprisals in Sweden, due to racist stereotypes. Another preconception was that they certainly would not have *Mein Kampf*. The staff responded to these kinds of reactions by explaining that they in fact had all these works in their collection, because they have been subject to banning and censorship historically, and therefore fits into the collection of the Dawit Isaak Library. In this way, the arguments against their operation lose their strength, informant 3 thinks.

The informants have noticed that the library gets more attention when questions of artistic freedom, censorship or freedom of speech are actualized in society. “You notice that when our questions are discussed a lot, or are up-to-date, there’s a tendency for more people to contact us, and being curious about what we do or want to come for a visit and so on” says Informant 2. This demonstrates how the library’s mission relates to developments in society, and connects it to a bigger field of discussions about democracy, human rights, freedom of speech and politics. Informant 1 tells me that they often get asked if there are any books that they would never take in. From the previous sections we know that the answer to that is what Swedish legislation says, combined with their definition of what counts as a banned book. But what is interesting here is the visitors’ expectations behind the question. It could be seen as a form of challenge, but it also indicates a curiosity of the library’s limitations.

One thing that has turned up now and then since we opened, and still happens, is that people anonymously want to tip us about books they think are provocative, like *Mein Kampf* or something like that. “But you probably don’t dare to do that” - that kind of thing. It happens occasionally. And also as a question, when we have school visits – “Do you have *Mein Kampf*?”. So that one is... it’s like the symbol for... in some way. (Informant 1)

Many people thus seem to have the image of *Mein Kampf* - Hitler's partly autobiographical book about National Socialism – as the ultimate example of something that could challenge freedom of speech. They do have *Mein Kampf* at the Dawit Isaak Library, as it is a book that has been, and still is, banned in many countries, informant 1 explains. That the book is charged with a certain symbolic value also appears in a story that Informant 3 tells, about a lady who called the library when it had just opened. She had read about the library and wondered if they had *Mein Kampf*, and informant 3 answered that they had.

She said “Then I would like to ask to borrow it remotely. Because I’ve worked actively against racism all my life, and I’ve been trying to borrow this book for almost my entire life, at public libraries nearby, and it can never be obtained. I want to try... I want to understand what I’m working against. How the arguments go and how I can respond to them in the best way”. And I think that [...] says a lot about the importance of being able to go to the source, and the importance of access to information. And that perhaps we librarians should not be the ones to decide when it is the right reason to read something, and when it’s wrong. (Informant 3)

This story highlights the purpose of The Dawit Isaak Library, and shows why there are reasons to have access to all kinds of literature. Knowledge about a subject considered problematic or disturbing can be a means to understand a perspective and thereby be able to know how to meet, and work against it. Once again *Mein Kampf* becomes a kind of symbol for where the line is, and also a part of a narrative that helps the staff communicate the mission of the Dawit Isaak Library.

There are some cases where people have become upset over certain books or cases at the Dawit Isaak Library. Informant 3 points out that they have all kinds of books that people can get angry about, for different reasons: “From the fact that it criticizes religion or whatever it may be, regime criticism, or has LGBTQ-friendly content”, informant 3 explains. One example that upset visitors is when they highlighted Lars Vilks, a controversial Swedish artist, who got internationally famous due to his caricatures of Muhammed. The pictures also made him a target for militant Islamists, and he had to live with police protection for the rest of his life (SVT Nyheter, 2021). Informant 1 tells me that when they acknowledged Vilks’ death on the library’s Facebook page, by putting up a picture and a text about what has happened connected to freedom of speech, then some people commented and thought that it was wrong to lift him.

Visitors have also – because he’s on the map over threatened authors and journalists – thought that “I don’t think you should have him there, I don’t like him” or something like that. “I think he crossed the line” ... That sort of thing. (Informant 1)

This is an example of something that has upset a number of people, both online and in the physical library. Many people seem to have thought that Lars Vilks crossed a line for what should be included in the concepts of freedom of speech or artistic freedom. Here, the agreements of the field are challenged (Bourdieu, 1992, 1993, 1997). Informant 2 clarifies their, and the library’s, position by repeating that they do not take a stand for any of the artists or authors that they lift, not for the content or the person. “You are allowed to think that Lars Vilks was an idiot, but he did suffer a lot of negative consequences because of his art. And that’s why we lift him.”, Informant 2 states. With the case of Lars Vilks the library’s aim of taking a neutral position becomes visible. The informants do not put any value behind any of the cases they lift, but they highlight people who have suffered negative consequences because of their art. Then people are free to think that something is good or bad. But what they want to communicate is that things should not be banned or removed just because some people do not agree with it.

When I ask if they have any books that they perhaps would not actively recommend or put on display, Informant 1 and 2 tells me about an event that made them reflect upon that. They had set up the book *Mustafas Kiosk*, a Danish picture book that has been criticized for racist stereotypes, with the cover outwards. Then someone came into the library and was upset about that. “In Denmark this author is a famous anti-racist, who works for anti-racism, [...] it was praised for diversity, but in Sweden it was criticized for these, as perceived, stereotypical images. So then we had a discussion here”, informant 1 tells me. The incident with *Mustafa’s Kiosk* is an example of a situation when it was not obvious what they should do, and where a visitor’s reactions made them discuss whether it was right to put this book on display.

Informant 1 expresses that the opinions about this particular case are differentiated among the staff at Malmö City Archive, which is reasonable, since they are all different. Informant 2 continues by stating that their aim never is to upset someone. “It can be good to provoke, because that raises thoughts, but... [...] Perhaps I wouldn't put up *Mustafas Kiosk* as a book recommendation on Facebook and write 'this book is great'”, Informant 2 says. Stating that it can be good to provoke to a certain degree implies that there is a line, and they want to stay on the right side of that. Actively praising a book criticized for racist stereotypes might be to cross the line, according to informant 2’s reasonings. Informant 1 develops the case by saying

that something they can do with cases like *Mustafas Kiosk*, is to write a Facebook post with information about the book and the author, and explain what has happened. This indicates that the key aspect is the way in which they choose to present or frame something. The answer seems to be to not put any valuation in it, and by that avoid showing their own presence or standpoint in the case. As informant 2 puts it:

When we write book recommendations, we don't really take a stand but are pretty neutral in the way we convey it. We describe what the book is about, and what the author or the book have suffered from. Then it's up to the visitors to form their opinion about it. (Informant 2)

A part of the work then lies in the hands of the visitors. The staff does one part, and then the visitors pick up and do the rest, so to speak. The Dawit Isaak Library here becomes a common ground on which the action occurs, and different groups of actors co-creates the field (Bourdieu, 1992, 1993,1997).

The fact that *Mustafas Kiosk* was received in such different ways in Sweden and Denmark also demonstrates how complex these questions are, as they are perceived differently in different contexts, even two countries so close to each other as Denmark and Sweden. The whole collection of banned literature at the Dawit Isaak Library consists of books from countries all over the world, with completely different norms, history, political systems, religions, geographical conditions, etc. etc. That the image of what is considered to cross the line, what is okay or not, and what should be removed or banned differs is therefore not so strange. This is something the informants notice that people react to when visiting the library.

People can be very surprised when they find a Harry Potter book here and say "But this isn't banned!" - Yes, it is the most removed children's and youth literature in the United States, at school libraries there. It must not be read by children and young people there, due to the fact that it contains magic, that is to say, it challenges Christianity. So what happens when we start to ban things? That's the thought we want to raise. (Informant 3)

Harry Potter is an efficient example, since it is such a popular and well-read book. The fact that it is currently banned in places in the world shows how something that is taken for granted in one context, is being banned in another. The informants hope that these types of insights can help visitors understand the importance of protecting the free word, and raise awareness of how close it is, and that banning happens today. Informant 2 tells me that this is what they use to say when meeting school classes, that one purpose with the library is to see that the free word is not something to take for granted, not even in a safe, Swedish context. You have to work actively for it all the time not to lose it. Informant 1 says the same, that

their hope and ambition is to arouse thoughts and feelings, and for people to want to have these important conversations about not taking freedom of speech for granted. The Dawit Isaak library, the collections and their work, can become a physical reminder of this question and the complexity of it. This is an example of how the understanding of freedom of speech is translated into practice in this particular context.

Something that takes part in tying the actors together in the field, and an important theme that recurs in both of the interviews, is the aim of the Dawit Isaak Library to be interactive with the visitors. Informant 2 says that the place should not only be shelves and books, but something more should happen when you are standing there. They want it to raise thoughts and ideas, and they strive to achieve this through different elements in the room.

We want the room in itself, the collection, to feel alive, and for there to be some form of interactivity in it, so that there is a give and take. So that we collect opinions, points of view, suggestions for purchases... We have a map we work with in different ways, where we right now highlight journalists and authors who have been threatened and killed, and where people can leave suggestions on more active authors or journalists or subjects [...] Cases to lift... And then we try to take the notes visitors have left, and try to do something with that.
(Informant 2)

By making the room a place where the visitors can express their opinions the theme of freedom of speech is actualized, and translated into a physical action, as it allows those who visit the library to get their voices heard and take part in shaping the collection. Everyone is able to leave suggestions on persons or works they think should be included. Material objects such as the map also help to visually communicate the focus of the library, and create action just like the *ex libris*es, by raising thoughts and inspiring conversations. There is a “Tip us”-form on their webpage, where people can leave suggestions on books they think should be included in the collection. So these elements are not only a way to let the visitors express their opinions, at the same time they are a great asset for the staff in their job of expanding their collection of banned books. In addition to this, there are “What do you think?”-notes in the library, where people can fill in which book they were most surprised to find there, or if they think books should be banned, and if so, what type and why, informant 3 tells me. Through those they are able to learn more about the visitors’ opinions on book-banning, and their experiences of the library. For example, some people think that it is wrong to blaspheme religion, or to expose children to LGBTQ-friendly content. “People can have different opinions, and that’s pretty much the purpose of the entire library as well, to be able to be an arena to discuss this. Because it’s not that simple”, says informant 3.

By activating the visitors in these ways and giving them an arena to raise their voices, the theme of freedom of speech permeates the entire operation in an efficient way. The giving and taking that informant 2 mentioned is central, since that is an interaction through which the field is created. The staff's intention of creating conversations and discussions with the visitors, both in person and through means of communication such as notes and "Tip us"-forms for suggestions, becomes a way to connect the different teams in the field, and make the different groups of actors co-create it (Bourdieu, 1992, 1993, 1997). It is also a strategy for implementing what Andersson (2004) suggests as the only solution to the dilemmas of free speech - an ongoing dialogue between citizens. When the visitors are invited to a discussion and are allowed to express their thoughts and opinions, the library can become an arena for discussing freedom of speech - and by that it becomes something more than a library just for borrowing books. It distinguishes itself in relation to other fields (Bourdieu, 1992, 1993, 1997). The interactive elements can also be a concrete way to communicate the library's neutral standpoint, since it signals that they want to know how other people think around these questions. By actively asking the visitors if they think books should be banned and why, they let them make a choice, without judging or rejecting it. The goal of the library to be an arena free opinion formation is manifested here, and is in direct contact with the operational plan of Malmö City Archive.

A reaction the informants often see when meeting school classes or receiving organized visits, is surprise that there are so many things that have been banned, from so many places in the world, and that there are so many different reasons for people to censor or stop different cultural expressions. Informant 1 believes that most people gain some insight from this. They usually ask the students to discuss if books, movies or music should be banned, and generally the answer to that is no, and that the problem is more complex than that. "They think that some things are disturbing and so on, but that the answer to that might not be to try to stop a book or movie or whatever it is" says informant 2. Informants 1 and 2 reason about whether the focus of the library in itself could be a reason for getting less critique.

I would guess that it's more common at a regular library, that people become upset about what they find, because...At some point, when what we do here have settled in people's consciousness, they come here with an expectation of finding things that may upset you, much more clear than at a regular public library, I think. So, it happens that people think that "You can't have this one!". But you can always talk to people (Informant 2)

The comparison to regular libraries frames the special field that the Dawit Isaak Library is. When people have grasped the concept of what they do, accepted the field one could call it, it

might make it easier to also accept that books or things in there could be upsetting. If you know that you walk into a library focusing on freedom of speech and literature that have been banned or censored you probably expect to find different things than at an ordinary library. So it's all about the expectation the library creates. Informant 2's impression is also that visitors who've had opinions or disagreed about something have been open for discussion, also something that could have to do with the fact that visitors "agree" on other things than they would at an ordinary library. Here the Dawit Isaak Library distinguishes itself as a field, in relation to other libraries. It also comes down to your image of what a library should be. If a library is to be a place that never offends anyone there are a lot of things that they cannot have. The shelves at The Dawit Isaak Library, and every other library as well, would be fairly empty. "Because everyone has different limits. Things that make you sad, that you don't like..." (Informant 1).

The informants also point out that it is an active choice to come to the library. To be offended by a specific book, you have to take quite a lot of steps. "You are to come here, get a library card, find the catalog, walk to the shelf and pick it up and open it on that exact page", informant 1 says. This demonstrates how you have to enter the field, step inside of it, in order to be a part of it. There also lies an amount of personal responsibility in that, informant 2 says. If a visitor feels very bad, or gets very upset, by seeing certain books, then that person might have some personal responsibility not to go to that shelf. "The library is not something imposing. After all, you choose yourself whether to enter or not." informant 2 states. This could mean that when choosing to enter the field, the visitors to some extent agree to the conditions of it. Informant 3 says something similar:

If people take the time to come here and open these books and get pissed off, then of course it happens, so to speak. But we have such a wide range of books that it usually makes people go 'Oh okay, it's not just these types of books, it's also this' and so on and so on. (Informant 3)

Once again, the ambition of a neutral position in the library seems to work disarmingly, and making people accept that there are things they do not agree with. By including a wide range of perspectives, opinions and voices, the mission of the library is communicated in a practical way to the visitors, and invites them to actively take part in creating the field.

5. Conclusions

5.2 Discussion

By applying Bourdieu's field concept as a lens on the studied material, I have tried to identify the following aspects of the Dawit Isaak Library: what actors are at play, what positions there are, what is being negotiated, what boundaries are defined, what practices are specific, and what interests and stakes characterize the field. Before moving into further discussions around the result and the theoretical framework, I will here describe the findings of each aspect.

There are two main groups of actors that take part in creating the Dawit Isaak Library: the staff, and the visitors. Those who work there, and those who come there to use it, in different ways. The interview material shows that it is in the interaction between these two groups that the theme of freedom of speech really gets actualized and embodied, for example through discussions of what books the library should contain. Another important group of actors are people from different parts of the world, with special knowledge and language skills, who contact the library and provide help in accessing banned literature from new countries. PEN and ICORN are examples of this. The Culture Administration in Malmö is another actor that takes part in creating the field, for example through the strategic efforts and committee goals formulated in the operational plan. The Swedish Constitution, UN's article 19 and UNESCO's Public Library Manifesto could also be seen as actors that set the theoretical definitions of freedom of speech, that the Dawit Isaak Library's practical work relates to.

The staff constantly strives for a neutral, or objective, position in the field, of having an open, curious and permissive attitude, and including all perspectives and all kinds of literature. This is at the same time an educative position, that communicates the library's mission to the visitors. There is also a biased, or subjective, position, that includes visitors who are upset or offended by things they find in the Dawit Isaak Library, who are judgemental, or for some reason think that some things should not be included or highlighted in the library. On a personal level the staff can be in the subjective position, also reacting and thinking different things about the contents of the library. The professional role is placed in one position, and the private self in another. The main thing that is being negotiated at the Dawit Isaak Library is what people should get to read, and where the limit of freedom of speech is. What books

should be included in the library, what books should be highlighted and lifted, what books should be recommended. Boundaries of the field include practical aspects like the law, which defines what the library legally is allowed to do. The library's economy is a different boundary, which decides what the library can afford to buy. The languages the staff master and the help they can get access to are boundaries as well. Another boundary is safety risks, if it would be dangerous to have a certain book in the library.

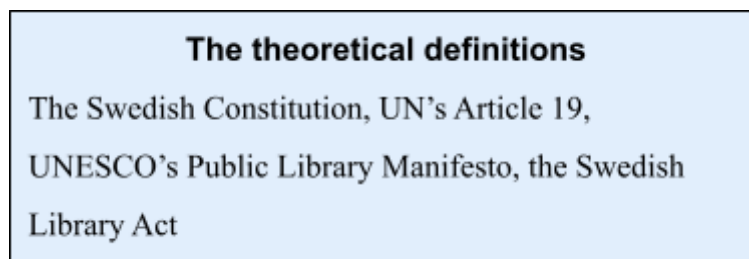
There are several practices that are specific to this field. Collecting banned books from around the world, doing research and gathering information about the books, and purchasing them. Putting in ex-libris in the banned books, that explains their history. Making the books available to borrow. Reading the books, taking part of the words that someone has wanted to stop from being read. Learning about specific authors, journalists or artists that have suffered negative consequences for something they have created. Having conversations and discussions about freedom of speech and artistic freedom through school visits. Leaving suggestions on books that should be brought into the library. Expressing opinions or thoughts through notes and forms. A way the Dawit Isaak Library distinguishes itself as a field is by comparing and relating to other libraries. The informants often mention "regular" libraries, a comparison that works both ways. On the one hand as something similar, that follows the same laws and regulations as the Dawit Isaak Library does, but on the other hand as something the informants distance themselves from, by pointing out differences between the Dawit Isaak Library and regular libraries. These comparisons demonstrate how the Dawit Isaak Library is shaped both by the fact that it is a public library, and that it deals with the question of freedom of speech. The interests and stakes that characterizes the field of the Dawit Isaak Library is above all this unique mission of focusing on freedom of speech, striving to include all perspectives and contextualize them. This is what distinguishes the Dawit Isaak Library from other libraries, and according to parts of what the informants say, this can make the act of book selection easier, since they have a steered focus, and a steadfast method for their selections, based on a framework of what counts as a banned book.

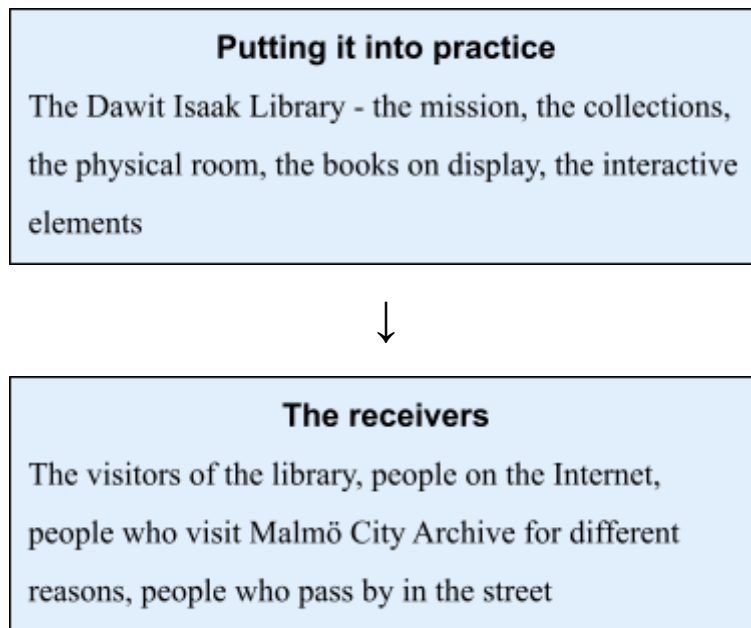
When analyzing the material I have used a model over a social field, presented by Mutch (2006), which helped me map out the groups that create the field. The staff was viewed as a large, cohesive team of players within the field, that works as a unit to communicate and concretize freedom of speech. The visitors of the library that take part of this work were viewed as an alliance of smaller players in the field, and the operational plan was defined as an external influence. This model worked adequately, but it can also be problematized. The

positions could be changed. For example, the staff can very well be regarded as a cohesive team, but they are only cohesive when they are in their professional roles, and operationalizing the mission of the library. In their personal roles the informants are not cohesive, as they can all have different opinions and thoughts on the library's content or the definitions of freedom of speech. In that way, the staff can become a part of the other team as well. The alliance of visitors is in one sense a larger team than the staff, since the visitors are more in number than the staff. The staff is a fixed team, with established rules and positions, and a set number of players. The visitors are a dynamic, constantly changing team that can consist of as many players as possible. But they are not a unit. The visitors are incoherent, with different opinions, thoughts and feelings, that relate and react to the content of the Dawit Isaak Library in different ways, and they all have different perceptions of what freedom of speech is. Instead of a team or an alliance the visitors could also be seen as individual minor players that do not relate to each other but only move within the field as separate entities. The operational plan of Malmö City Archive can be seen as an external influence, in the sense that it does not come from within the Dawit Isaak Library, but it could also be regarded as a player within the field, depending on how far the field extends.

The Dawit Isaak Library works as a link between the laws and the people, a concretization where the question of freedom of speech and artistic freedom is put into actual practice through the collection of banned books. As an embodiment of the subject, the Dawit Isaak Library becomes a mediator of the theoretical definition of freedom of speech, as well as something people can react to and relate to in a concrete way. It could be visualized as a figure where the laws and regulations are above, the people visiting the library below, and the Dawit Isaak Library itself in the middle, interacting with both parts.

How freedom of speech is communicated:





This figure shows both how freedom of speech is understood in a library context, and how the understanding is translated into practice. We also see that the receivers are not in direct contact with the theoretical definitions. It is through contexts like the Dawit Isaak Library that the visitors can get in touch with the concept. This visualizes the staff's responsibility, but also the relief of not having to be responsible, of not having to draw the lines or make the definitions themselves. Even if there are selections and choices to be made, the Dawit Isaak Library relies on the written laws and regulations. And even if it is sometimes difficult to know where to draw the line - with the examples of *Mustafa's Kiosk*, gangster rap and Paludan - the staff expresses a relief of not having to choose sides themselves. The strategy is to encourage conversations and discussions, and welcome different opinions. Instead of providing definite answers or rules, the library becomes an arena for actualizing and discussing these questions. The space – more than just the physical room, but the concept of the library on an abstract level, the idea of it – is created through interaction with others. People who give tips and recommendations, who react and comment and discuss becomes a sort of self-fulfilling spiral that enacts freedom of speech and the right to free formation of opinions.

As the field that is being studied is a library focused on actualizing freedom of speech, freedom of speech is what all actors relate to, and what is being negotiated and practiced. Through the Dawit Isaak Library freedom of speech becomes something palpable, that people can relate to. Within this field, various terms and concepts are being used that revolve around

the word freedom. Freedom of speech, free speech, artistic freedom... What these concepts mean in practice and what distinguishes them from each other is hard to tell from my material. The library does not clarify everything about what these concepts stand for, but through the materiality of the library the concepts are concretized. The physical collection exemplifies what freedom of speech can be, and what it cannot be. The Dawit Isaak Library becomes a field where freedom of speech on the one hand is mediated, by highlighting, informing about and making available literature and other cultural works, which have been banned, opposed, or put the author in prison, in exile, or in other ways in danger. By teaching people how freedom of speech is not a self-evident right, on what grounds it can be curtailed, and how people have fought for it, the Dawit Isaak Library can contribute to a greater awareness of the complexity of the issue, and the importance of actively protecting free speech. On the other hand, the Dawit Isaak Library can act as a platform or an arena for people to *use* their freedom of speech. By being actively invited to talks, discussions and actions based on the subject, about the contents of the library and about the issue in general, visitors and guests become involved in creating the field. Two main messages emerge from this: First, appreciate what you have in a democratic society like Sweden, do not take it for granted, and understand that freedom of speech is a right that people have fought for, and are still fighting for. Secondly, use your own voice to express opinions and try to influence what you think is wrong, but also listen to what others think and say, and accept that people have different opinions.

The overall purpose of freedom of speech is to protect things that are uncomfortable, that might upset people and that might be subject to attempts of banning. Otherwise there would not be a need for it. But this is difficult, since it is different in every context. Something that is controversial in one country is not at all controversial in another. It reshapes and changes, and thus the limits and borders are moved. This demonstrates how freedom of speech in practicality is not absolute, but individual. Here it is important to shed some light on Sweden's unique position in this field, with constitutional protection of freedom of speech and the world's first Freedom of the Press Act of its kind. The Dawit Isaak Library is a product of Swedish democracy, and of the Culture Administration's work in Malmö. The fact that the question of artistic freedom has been lifted and actualized in a number of places in Malmö created the right conditions for opening a library for banned literature. The Dawit Isaak Library can be seen as an expansion of something already existing, bouncing off other institutions in Malmö that also work with this theme. It did not come out of nothing, it was

not created in a vacuum. It raises the question of the situated meaning to this field, and if a library of this kind could have been opened somewhere else, in a different Swedish town.

5.1 Summary

The aim of this thesis has been to examine the understanding and exercise of freedom of speech in Sweden. Through the use of Bourdieu's field theory, the Dawit Isaak Library's work around the concept of freedom of speech has been analyzed. By material consisting of an operational plan for Malmö City Archive, and extensive interviews with staff at the Dawit Isaak Library, the research questions the thesis aimed to answer was the following: *How can freedom of speech be understood in a library context in a democratic society?* and *How is the understanding of freedom of speech translated into practice in a library context?*

The study finds that in a library context in a democratic society, freedom of speech can above all be understood from the national legislation; the Swedish Constitution and the Swedish Library Act, and the international framework; the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and UNESCO's Public Library Manifesto. How freedom of speech is translated into practice in this context depends on the understanding. All actions and practices carried out at the Dawit Isaak Library derive from an overall understanding of freedom of speech as something that needs to be protected and safeguarded, and that has to be activated through knowledge, conversations and discussions.

With this thesis, I argue that the Dawit Isaak Library could be seen as a unique field, where freedom of speech is mediated and exercised at the same time. It is an interaction, which can be said to reflect the paradox of the right from a larger perspective, that it both means a right to express one's voice, and an obligation to listen to others'. By separating the abstract understanding of freedom of speech from the concrete practice of it in the field of the Dawit Isaak Library, somewhat of a contradiction emerges. On the abstract level, it appears simple, obvious and clear where the limits of freedom of speech are and how the staff should relate to it in their work. But in the concrete practices, with collecting books, meeting visitors, choosing what to display, and which books to recommend, dilemmas sometimes arise. The business relies on Swedish legislation and international definitions of freedom of speech as a human right, but it cannot be avoided that there are still a number of small choices that the staff have to make every day, which in different ways define how freedom of speech is understood and practiced in this specific field of a library context in a democratic society.

5.3 Applicability

Freedom of speech is a topic that is always relevant, and right now the discussion is very present. The purging of books and restrictions on cultural expression in the USA, the Swedish politicians' wish to interfere in libraries' operations, and the Freedom of the Press Act's new status as World Memory all illustrate why this topic is important to study in 2023. This thesis can provide insight into how freedom of speech is understood and acted upon in a democracy, the dilemmas, challenges and difficulties that it includes, and the importance of discussing this subject. The study sheds light on the significance of libraries, their role in a democratic society, and how they can help us navigate around these questions. This thesis also contributes with research on the relatively unexplored field of the Dawit Isaak Library in Malmö, the first library of its kind in the world, and the amount of work it does for freedom of speech in Sweden.

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Figure

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