The objective of this paper is to contribute to an ongoing theoretical discussion on rethinking curriculum theory. Various meanings of time and history, culture and agency in curriculum studies are discussed and comments made on didactics as a possible link between socio-historical and curriculum-theory approaches. Theoretical and methodological framework includes the curriculum-theory perspectives rooted in frame factor theory and highlights historical and theoretical analysis. I explore challenges evoked when concepts originating in one educational perspective confront a different theoretical strand, and I argue that such boundary work offers prolific means to rethink curriculum theory. I suggest that allowing Reinhart Koselleck's conceptual history, in addition to James V. Wertsch's reasoning on voices of collective remembering, to influence a vocabulary of curriculum theory would strengthen the theoretical tradition. I ground my arguments in empirical data and theoretical discussions within a number of research projects which I have been recently involved in.

Keywords: curriculum theory; didactics; philosophy of education; educational science; educational history; teacher education

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The objective of this paper is to contribute to an ongoing theoretical discussion on rethinking curriculum theory, while identifying some of its challenges and promises. I explore time and history as well as culture and agency in curriculum studies and discuss challenges embedded in the shift from a frame factor perspective to a programme of curriculum inquiry within the curriculum-theory tradition inspired by Ulf P. Lundgren; one ambition is to open a dialogue between concepts that belong to different theoretical frameworks. The paper also comments on the historical boundaries between curriculum theory and didactics. The text highlights a number of theoretical issues in curriculum theory, originating in the discussions initiated at the first, second and third conferences on curriculum theory in 2005, 2007 and 2009, respectively. The theme of the 2005 conference was curriculum theory revisited (Forsberg ed., 2007). Curriculum as an epistemic object was discussed (Forsberg, 2007), and concerns were put forward regarding an increased vagueness embedded in the use of the concept curriculum, together with a growing fragmentation of education as a science (Lundgren, 2007). A revitalised curriculum theory was seen as a tradition that might be able to constitute an amalgamation between an educational science with its own inherent concepts and other traditions which invaded education without such an amalgamation (Lundgren, 2007), and with this in mind, important revitalisations rooted in the linguistic and pragmatic turns were discussed (Englund, 2007). In his contribution, Westbury (2007) challenged the field of curriculum studies by envisioning a curriculum research that addresses ‘the practical’ as a meta-theory of schooling, rather than theorising texts. In the second and third conferences, curriculum as an epistemic object was clearly the focus (Englund, Forsberg, & Sundberg, 2012).

Choosing a curriculum-theory perspective as the point of departure for educational research means questioning how knowledge transmitted in an educational context is selected, valued and organised and how such processes can be understood. It means being curious about what kind of knowledge is at stake, its possible content and how transmission and valuation take shape. It means seeing the curriculum question as a problem. Thereafter, however, different leads may be followed.

One strand highlights a historical perspective – what were the historical processes, events and circumstances that made certain selections, organisations and evaluations of knowledge dominate an educational context? Another perspective focuses on the social space in a broad
sense – what social, cultural and material facts realise and form parts of a curriculum? What meanings are embedded in the specific spaces of schooling? School buildings, classrooms, laboratories, schoolyards, textbooks, data media, furniture equipment, and so on, mediate significance; artefacts take part in building a knowledge vocabulary. And, third, the last trace leads to studying actions in the classroom, speech acts, communication and interaction (Linné, 2011, 2012b). These analytical levels or leads – leads that of course may be combined in various ways, inspire the text that follows.1 Comments are made on the first strand under the heading ‘Time and history, continuity and change’, while the section headed ‘Culture and agency’ focuses on both space and action; I touch upon places, localities and material objects in the course of representation. The final part of the paper explores some relations between curriculum theory and didactics. My intention is to choose empirical cases that respond to Westbury’s (2007) appeal for a revitalised curriculum theory that addresses ‘the practical’, the actual educational context, rather than theorising texts.

Time and history, continuity and change

Time and history are concepts from which it is hard to escape when discussing curriculum theory, its history, positions and future challenges (Linné, 2007a). Let me begin with the shift from frame factor theory to a curriculum-theory perspective initiated by Lundgren (1983a, 1983b, 1991) in the 1980s and the early 1990s. On the move from frames to curriculum, Lundgren (1984) emphasises the provisional character of the theoretical perspective – a programme of inquiry rather than a coherent deductive theory. Step-by-step the programme was developed further – new questions were asked and new concepts added. In the following, I include some of my own studies to illustrate the step-wise and circuitous moves.

Continuity, change and a social theory

One challenge that confronted the development of the programme concerned its shift from a structural to a socio-historical approach, from a structural way of analysing classroom discourse, where history was seen as a more or less external process, to a stance wherein questions were asked about how the historical and societal conditions which caused frames to take a certain shape were constituted, and how traditions were built and maintained (Lundgren, 1984, p. 78). My doctoral dissertation on tradition and change in teacher education (Linné, 1996, 1999a) responded to that challenge. The challenge boiled down to analysing the field of tension between continuity/tradition and change over time, and to interpret periods of transformation using historical data on changing relations between state and the civic society (Linné, 1999b). My ambition was to explore the contradictory pattern of forces, the bricolage of strivings, the struggles for power and control in the socio-historical context of teacher education. In the course of representation, a number of didactical approaches were documented as an aspect of the struggles and fields of tension.

The shift and widening of the perspective to include a more dynamic way of dealing with the socio-historical facts called upon a theory that related statements on social, economic and cultural processes to statements on how those processes were transformed and mediated in educational contexts. The work of Bernstein (1977, 1990, 2000) represents one of the few theoretical approaches that relates macro to micro, that links assumptions on state and society, production, division of labour and class relations to power and control in curriculum, to classroom work and communication processes – and, indirectly, to didactics. As analytic tools, Bernstein’s entwined concepts of classification and framing make it possible to explore both the educational scene and the play that is staged. Power and control speaks through classification and framing, ‘insulation is the means whereby the cultural is transformed into the natural, the contingent into the necessary, the past into the present, the present into the future’ (Bernstein, 1980, p. 11).2

The concept of frame, as well as the concepts of framing and classification, touches upon a basic theoretical problem in social science – the question of how human beings categorise their world and divide the world into what is inside and what is outside, what is sacred and what is profane, what belongs to one phenomenon and what belongs to another. This was one of Émile Durkheim’s (1912) pivotal problems, a problem that has challenged scientific theory over and over again. Boundaries mean closure, defence of what is and what struggles to advance positions, but also struggles to cross borders, to see something new on the other side, to capture new symbolic or material assets – boundary marks design the contours of a social field (cf. Bourdieu, 1984/1996, 1992).

Time as restriction and time boundaries

The fact that the perspective grew from roots where constraints, boundary maintenance and framing were fundamental contributed to highlight time in its sense of restriction. Time constrains the number of actions possible in an educational context; time restricts vocabularies and communicative turn taking. The ways in which time is divided and classified give important clues

1For a more elaborate discussion of the strands, see Linné (2012b).

2The collaboration that Lundgren and Bernstein established in the 1970s and 1980s proved important to the field of curriculum theory; at the time, it was most inspiring to recurrently take part in small-scale seminars where Basil Bernstein discussed the progress of his theory with Lundgren and colleagues (cf. Bernstein, 1990, preface, Bernstein & Lundgren, 1983).
to the selection, organisation and evaluation of knowledge. Time sets boundaries for action.

However, the notion of time as restriction approaches the notion of time boundaries, periods of time in history – boundaries between something old and something new, boundaries between past and future, between analytically created historical periods. Bourdieu (1984/1996, pp. 187–221) talks about critical moments in history, when the habitual order begins to waver and spaces of possibilities for an instant appear undefined. Such critical moments appear when boundaries are deeply challenged – boundaries between private and public, between state and civic society, between gender positions and social classes. And, certainly, some such critical moments appeared in the history of Swedish teacher education – critical moments at the outbreak of modernity. The order of discourse was, for a while, open to negotiation. New voices were heard and new positions awaited their owners. Battles were fought in Parliament in the 1840s and 1850s concerning knowledge selection and instruction technologies as well as degree and character of state control and admission rules. Given the deep social transformations around the turn of the century, profound reformulations of goals, principles of content selection as well as ideas and technologies of instruction took place, while new groups paved their paths into an educational elite and teachers were assigned broader professional positions. Bernstein’s concepts of classification and framing as tokens of power and control proved useful as generative tools in my analysis of stability and change, as did Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of social field – a concept used to understand conflicting curriculum principles being proposed or enacted, and to help identify the new voices and new positions.

At the time, Bernstein’s theory was criticised for not offering conceptual tools to include change, transformation and social complexities. Several researchers belonging to the Swedish field of curriculum theory took part in the discussion. T. Englund (1986) developed his conceptual scheme, which assigned conflict and change an important role in curriculum history; B. Englund (1997) elaborated upon the concept of change and the meaning of cultural reproduction. Bernstein (1990, p. 199 onwards) stresses that the main principles of his model refer to an arena of conflict rather than to a stable set of relations, and points out the potential sources of conflict and resistance between political and administrative agents, between what he calls the official recontextualising field and the pedagogic recontextualising field, as well as among family, local community and school. In his later development of the model, he uses conceptual tools such as modalities to capture varying combinations of classification and framing and advances concepts such as horizontal and vertical discourse as devices to bring the analysis of complex epistemic contents one step further (Bernstein, 1999, 2000). He repeatedly refers to the dialectics between what is said or thought and what is yet to be said, yet to be thought; here lies a summoning to establish control, maintain order, constrain admittance – but also a potential for struggle, resistance, defence and change. Highlighting these aspects of the theory and putting them at stake appeared inspiring (cf. Linné, 1996, pp. 34–35).

Interestingly enough, you may notice an increasing tendency in contemporary curriculum studies to bring the ‘grand’, coherent theories back into the discussion – and with them, an interest in historical analyses, time and time boundaries.

Time and history

How time is used in curriculum studies may be further discussed in numerous ways. Curriculum studies may be structured in the form of diachronic narratives, organised along state curriculum texts over time in order to discover textual variations, to give a historical background or a context of the present – what becomes of time in such an approach? Time may be referred to in general terms, as an abstract, but empty, phenomenon that includes conflicting ideas and struggles, while little is said about how historical events and processes influenced the practical curriculum transformations. Time becomes invisible; it turns into a black box. History becomes something that once was.

Another, more dynamic approach highlights the critical potential of history. Bourdieu (1998) emphasises the importance of giving back to doxa its paradoxical character, and to take apart the processes that convert history to nature, that transform the cultural and arbitrary into something given by nature. A critical historical analysis can open argumentative deliberations in order to uncover the ways in which what appears necessary or natural has come about as an answer to a certain problem in a certain historical context – and, consequently, may be seen as contingent. Westbury and Milburn (2007) advocate this use of history in their appeal for a curriculum research that contributes to ‘making curriculum strange’ – a ‘knowledge of “strange curricula”’ estranges the familiar,

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1 Cf. Hirdman (2001) who shows that the outbreak of modernity momentarily threatened the core of the existing gender order.
2 For thick descriptions of these transformations which focus on teacher education, see Linné (1996); for special analyses and case studies, see Linné (1999a, 1999b, 2007b, 2012a, 2012b).
3 A number of curriculum studies inspired by Bernstein have provided data on such conflicts and resistance processes (cf. Eliasson, 2012). In his doctoral dissertation, Nylund (2013) draws upon Basil Bernstein’s theory together with Tomas Englund’s in an analysis of Swedish vocational education.
4 Apart from Bernstein and others, see Margaret S. Archer’s theory on educational systems that has attracted considerable attention. As for an example that sets out to further develop parts of Archer’s theory, see Skinningsrud (2012); see also Wermke (2013).
5 See also Sundberg’s doctoral dissertation (2005) on time and schooling.
giving us the capacity to look at the familiar in new ways’ (p. 4).8

Still another challenging way of viewing time and history is offered by Koselleck (2004). His concepts of Erfahrungsraum (space of experience) and Erwartungshorizont (horizons of expectation) form basic categories of knowledge that make history come into existence – history is constituted by experience and expectations made by acting and suffering humans. The two concepts are categories of knowledge that contribute to the potentials of history (or histories, cf. Jordheim in Koselleck, 2004). Both are intimately intertwined: one presupposes the other. History is not only past time; it consists of memory and hope, experience and expectation. Through their capacity to hook on to each other, experience and expectation appear to be excellent concepts to use in analysing history (Koselleck, 2004, pp. 167–170). In pointing at man’s temporality, they also refer to the temporality of history (p. 170).

In defining the two concepts, Koselleck (2004, pp. 171–173 and passim) emphasises that layers of time gone by are present in the entity made up by experience, without any indications of before or after. Experience is past time being present, appropriated and containing the experience of others. A moment of time contains layers of past and present as well as horizons of future. Accordingly, temporal layers impregnate written curriculum texts. Temporal layers load curriculum concepts with displaced meanings, possible to reconstruct in curriculum analyses.9 The layers of the past will reflect transforming relations between state and civic society, as well as between private and public. And layers of past experience will form future horizons.

Accordingly, teachers’ narratives, teachers’ notions of their professional world, can be seen as fabricated of layers of what once was; layers of professional experiences, communicative actions and layers of agency, conceptions and judgments once made. They might be inscribed in the present and become part of collective memories, and so help shape the future. Different voices speak, link together or confront each other. The same applies to textbooks. Using such a perspective, a vocabulary may be developed to elaborate on the meaning of tradition in curriculum theory.

Culture and agency

Another challenge, rarely referred to in the programmatic texts, was also at stake in the shift from frame factor theory to a curriculum-theory perspective: the role of the agents in history, or the field of tension between structure and agency. In the history of Swedish teacher education, for instance, agents at both central and local levels reformulated, carried and transformed fundamental traditions in highly important ways. It was even possible to identify generations of teacher educators, and shifts of generations, having an impact on the curriculum content. In particular, important shifts of generations took place parallel to the main transformation periods. Using Mannheim’s (1952) words on the role of generations in history: through their similar location in a historical process of time, members of a generation acquire a common, limited set of possible experiences that creates conditions for certain common forms of thinking and acting. Generations take part in similar social and intellectual movements; they share to some extent the same destiny.10 And, apart from a broader picture of basic patterns and their transformations over time, variations regarding principles of knowledge selection, organisation and evaluation took place at different educational locations. Local arenas as well as local agents strongly influenced the curriculum and the didactical ideas and practices.

In that study, however, no particular reasoning on local cultures was made – primarily, a local level of analysis was discerned in relation to a central level, although movements and influences between levels were noted. In other words, a hierarchical model reflecting a structural–technical approach still prevailed. The theoretical perspective required a vocabulary that in a more elaborate way highlighted local voices, places and localities in their own rights, as social facts sui generis.

Local cultures, places and voices

Since the shift from frame factors to curriculum, a number of curriculum-theory studies set out to explore the meaning of local educational cultures, as well as to make the voices of teachers and students heard. In an early study of schools in different municipalities, Arfwedson (1985) elaborates upon the concept school code in an analysis of different school cultures. Ödman (1995) refers to curriculum theory in his history of mentalities and education, Kontrasternas spel, where history on macro and micro level is outlined. Ödman’s and Hayek’s (2004) rich study of life and education at the orphanage ‘Stora Barnhuset’11 in

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10 In the project, Shaping the public sphere (cf. Broady et al., 1999, Englund & Käreland, 2008, Linné, 2006, 2010, Skog-Ostlin, 2005, Ullman, 2004), supported by the Swedish Foundation for Humanities and Social Sciences, we studied a generation of Stockholm women around 1900, their strategies in shaping the public sphere and their contributions to the development of modern public life – including schools, curriculum and teacher education.

11 Stora Barnhuset was a large orphanage in Stockholm in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries; it had its own school, its own teachers and its own workshops.
the 18th century, Främlingar i vardagen, grows out of deep hermeneutical roots and focuses on life as lived at a local institutional context. The text embodies the pedagogical and didactical practices at the orphanage, and its social institution that legitimated the practices. It brings to life the meaning of being a child or a teacher at the orphanage and demonstrates how they were both prisoners of the institution, and it interprets governmentalities and immanent pedagogy.\textsuperscript{12} Systematic discretion synthesises the prevailing principle of governing.

Ödman and Hayek let broad sets of data speak, including material objects, buildings, furnishing, and so on. Such an approach certainly concerns ‘the practical’, concerns data as embedded in their context, and helps us to understand what happens in the inner work of schools under certain circumstances (cf. Westbury, 2007). It demonstrates the need for including concepts that manage to bring thick descriptions of institutional culture, its governing principles and material artefacts, into curriculum theory.\textsuperscript{13} Turning to studies of such qualities, concepts and arguments originating in different theoretical positions open up the opportunity for a prolific rethinking and revitalisation of curriculum theory.

In the project, \textit{Practical knowledge meets academia}, the research group (Linné, Englund, Eliasson, Holmberg, Tellgren, Sandström, 2011) inquired into knowledge production and core values over time within three predominantly female teacher education traditions, rooted in private enterprises and attracting limited attention within curriculum studies: those of early childhood teachers, nursing teachers and teachers of textile craft.\textsuperscript{14} We explored the transformation of practices and notions as these knowledge cultures were incorporated into the academic system of higher education in Sweden. The study meant inquiring into relations among power, knowledge and gender. We used the concept of ‘knowledge culture’ as an analytical tool to grasp the contextual and collective character of knowledge formation. A knowledge culture builds a context of collectively shared practices, a web of shared meanings, values and norms, including shared disagreements. A knowledge culture is conveyed in cultural tools: spoken language, including categories and metaphors, ways of classifying and ordering time and space, objects such as texts and pedagogic devices. We found Wertsch’s (2002) thinking helpful in understanding how epistemic cultures are constructed and reconstructed, continually over time, as webs of voices of collective remembering. Wertsch’s reasoning on this point appears consistent with Koselleck’s thinking of history as memory and hope, experience and expectation, and to include such a vocabulary in a curriculum study could help reinvigorate the initial theoretical constructions.

\textbf{Materiality, artefacts and mediodal tools}

An epistemic culture includes technologies and artefacts. Meanings are embedded in the specific places and materialities of schooling. School buildings take part in teaching students who they are and who they are expected to become,\textsuperscript{15} classroom designs frame a pedagogic space and its interaction, artefacts and technologies contribute to an epistemic vocabulary. The intelligence tests and observation boxes in the history of early childhood teacher education represent a different epistemic discourse than the looms and sewing machines of the teacher education of textile craft. The organisation of the room and the spatial positioning of the teacher according to the recitation method certainly imply different relations of power and control of instruction as compared to monitorial technology (cf. Landahl, 2013b; Linné, 2007b).

In the field of the history of education, a growing interest in the material aspects of schooling has emerged over the past decade (cf. Lawn & Grosvenor, 2005).\textsuperscript{16} Already in the 1980s, Westbury (1980), Hamilton (1989), Reid (2007) and others introduced important analyses of the material space of schooling as part of a curriculum-theory perspective. And last but not least, the frame factor theory grew out of deep concerns with the material conditions of education. To revitalise and further develop such an emphasis on the material basis of education and didactics in rethinking curriculum theory appears most promising. At the same time, another conversation with the socio-cultural tradition would be opened (cf. Wertsch, 1998).

\textbf{Curriculum theory and didactics – some further notes}

So far, I have explored some challenges embedded in the shift from a frame factor perspective to a programme of curriculum inquiry within the curriculum-theory tradition inspired by Ulf P. Lundgren. I have emphasised challenges that confronted some of my own studies. I have highlighted time and history as well as continuity and change in curriculum studies and made some comments on conceptual tools to help explore tensions between tradition and transformation, between what is stable and what is on the move. I have highlighted boundary work that opens a dialogue between concepts and thoughts that belong to different theoretical perspectives – hopefully some of my

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\textsuperscript{12}A concept developed by Ödman (cf. 1995) to indicate the didactics inherent in a pedagogical situation.

\textsuperscript{13}For a study influenced by curriculum theory that explores life and text at the learned school in the 18th century, see Rimm’s doctoral dissertation (2011); for a study that analyses the culture at a special experimental educational institution around the mid-20th century, see Landahl (2013a).

\textsuperscript{14}See Eliasson (2012), Englund and Linné (2008), Holmberg (2009), Linné et al. (2011), Tellgren (2008), the Swedish Research Council supported the project.

\textsuperscript{15}Just one example: above the boys’ entrance at a Stockholm elementary school, consecrated in 1902, was the maxim ‘Knowledge is power’, and above the girls’ entrance could be read ‘Exercise makes the master’ (Linné, 2004).

\textsuperscript{16}See also a number of articles in the History of Education and the Paedagogica Historica over the past few years.
examples may be helpful in such an amalgamation between an educational science with its own inherent concepts and other traditions as called for at the first curriculum-theory conference. I have discussed three different analytical layers of curriculum studies – layers that in one sense go beyond the linguistic turn in terms of highlighting material objects and cultural aspects of agency and action.

I have repeatedly touched upon didactical matters. To be explicit: didactics in the sense of a critical research approach evidently bears much resemblance to the curriculum-theory perspective discussed in the paper. With didactics as an emerging research discipline in Scandinavia, questions concerning the legitimacy of a school or subject content, its problems of selection, its historical traditions and its problem of mediation are brought to the fore. Selective traditions of school subjects or content areas are analysed, historical content emphases as well as instructional practices and their roots are studied and analyses of lesson dialogues are used with the purpose of discovering meaning dimensions. In addition, representatives of the didactic research field include studies of institutions, as well as analyses of spatial designs and multimodal approaches to communication, within the boundaries of didactics.

So why do we need curriculum theory? Or, alternatively, is didactics necessary as a research discipline, when curriculum theory exists? To partly understand the blurred boundaries, I think you need to look into the socio-historical contexts of education as a science and teacher education as a field of practice – to look back into the spaces of experience and horizons of expectations of their histories. A few glimpses from the Swedish scene might contextualise the discussion.

When the first university chair in educational science in Sweden was established at the beginning of the 20th century, the demands of teacher education, the teaching profession and the teaching practice were emphasised as arguments for the chair; leading teacher representatives acted inside and outside Parliament to bring it to fruition. When Wilhelm Rein, professor of education at Jena and a prominent disciple of Herbart, visited Stockholm in 1895 for a series of lectures on Herbart’s educational philosophy and the more formalised Herbartian didactics developed by Herbart’s successors, the auditorium became crowded, educational journals quoted the lectures at length and voices representing both an older education elite and its opponents found Rein’s ideas most worthy of taking into consideration (cf. Berg, 1894; Kastman, 1895).

At the same time, however, hopes grew for a future that would take a different turn. It was not Herbart’s philosophical theory as to what a human is and how education turns one into a cultural and social being – a theory beyond both applied ethics and applied psychology – that outlined the horizon of expectations. The territory of educational science in the shape of systematic philosophical reasoning had been challenged. In his inaugural lecture, Hammer (1910) as the first chair holder balanced between describing education as a philosophical, historical, psychological and social science. However, he devoted the major part of the lecture to psychology – and educational psychology with its focus on learning became the core of the newly established discipline. Empirical psychology placed the soul of the child in the laboratory, and a new, promising future appeared to lie ahead. Great expectations were directed towards a vision of the child at the centre of curriculum; Key (1900) proclaimed the century of the child, Helga Eng testified to the importance of the child psychologist William Preyer’s thought ‘Vom Kinde aus’ for her embarkation upon a research career – a career that made her the first woman to achieve a chair as professor of education in Scandinavia (Lonnå, 2002). Representatives of a new generation of teacher educators visited the United States, at Teachers’ College at Columbia University, and saw a whole new research area on the soul of the child which had achieved important results that ought to be included in Swedish teacher education. Empirical psychology – later including testing – became the science that was expected to further develop schooling and pedagogic practice.

Meanwhile, didactics in the sense of a narrower school technology lived on in textbooks and at teacher training colleges. Didactical handbooks of the 19th and early 20th centuries focused on the basic questions of selection – of content, of methods and on the legitimate reasons for schooling and school subjects. The answers were, however, highly normative. References were made to authorities such as God, nature, the child’s development, the evolution of mankind, the nature of a school subject and theories of perception and learning. Struggles took place for and against various teaching models in the discursive field of teacher training; teacher educators built their identities around recognised values on the didactical arena. Classic didactical ideas of restrained teaching (Hopmann, 2007) hardly dominated the space of experience, although references were made to the nature of the child and to the necessity of relying upon the child’s own active work when teaching subject content. To behold the world – teaching by object lessons, together with recitation methods, had replaced monitonal technology as the legitimate framing of the classroom but rules guiding a

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17Only 7 years earlier, Carl Kastman, high public officer representing the educational sector, was more critical of Herbart’s didactical ideas (cf. Kastman, 1888) – obviously he partly considered them too radical. Herbart had been introduced to a broader Swedish public in the 1870s by way of an edited translation of Hermann Kern’s work from 1873.

18In 1903–1905, Otto W. Sundén, head of a Swedish teachers’ college and later involved in reforming teacher education, wrote a series of articles based on such an experience; he looked forward to experimental psychology as a basis for selection of curriculum content and methods of transmission (Sundén, 1903, 1904–1905).
craft, and providing teachers with model lessons as well as with training to write lesson drafts in the form of word-by-word manuscripts, were fundamental in the education of elementary school teachers throughout the 19th century (Linné, 2007b). A practical theory, based on techniques of questions and answers, and general rules on how to phrase a question in order to initiate clear perceptions – separate inner pictures of different contents – amalgamated with abstract ideas of Bildung as the goal of education. Only step-by-step, and following major societal transformation, did replication of strict models become less frequent in favour of more open narratives.

Didactics as a science of today enters such a space of experience. It confronts expectations of finding the ‘best’ way of teaching subject content, of producing the right answer to students’ success or failure to learn something, of saying something relevant when it comes to the results of international knowledge testing. Didactics as a critical science needs analytic tools to capture the meaning of its histories, and conceptual tools to explore selection and meaning-making processes as research problems. Its continental roots in a philosophical tradition have provided some. Curriculum theory, with a different space of experience has provided others – tools that respond to the appeal for contextuality (Hopmann, 2007) that is embedded in continental didactics as a science.

With the frame factor perspective – later to develop into the programme of curriculum inquiry referred to above, important steps were taken to broaden the horizon of expectation of educational science beyond empirical psychology. In the footsteps of reforms that led to the comprehensive school, the classroom came into focus as a place for educational research. The classroom as a place for pedagogy, and the pedagogic process as an epistemic object, called for a number of new empirical research questions. This relocation of epistemic object cleared the way for a genuinely pedagogic research approach. Steps were taken away from educational science as applied psychology – the existing reductionism came to be deeply questioned (cf. Kallös & Lundgren, 1975, 1979).

Taking such a history into account throws light upon why this curriculum-theory tradition amalgamated with socio-linguistic theories that focused on classroom communication and with sociological theories that set out to explain the conditions of the classroom processes – approaches that hardly used the word didactics when analysing what took place in schooling, its selection processes or modes of transmission.

Exploring their both diversified and common historical, theoretical and practical spaces of experience and horizons of expectations would, I believe, strengthen the dialogue between curriculum theory and didactics. The appeal for contextuality embedded in didactics as a science calls for analyses of institutional and cultural conditions that frame pedagogic action. I have argued for some such boundary work from a curriculum-theory perspective. I have also discussed conceptual tools of hermeneutic and socio-cultural traditions that would be helpful in reinvigorating the vocabulary of curriculum theory. Perhaps didactics, with its roots in continental philosophical traditions, constitutes an excellent link between epistemic and socio-cultural studies on one hand and curriculum theory on the other.

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