Online Outdoor

Technological, Discursive and Textual Transformations of the Activity of Skating

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Compared to the many studies on work and educational settings, as well as on the forming of purely digital communities and identities, there are still few studies of the integration of communication technology in everyday leisure activities. In this paper, a case study of a long distance skating organisation illustrates how technology can permeate even the most physical outdoor practices. Among the questions asked are: How do traditional communication patterns in this community change when new technology is used? What new genres emerge and how are they shaped: which modes are used and what voices are heard? How does the discourse in and on the activity change – and how does the activity change? In focus are the different media and modes, which are mixed when www, e-mail, text messaging, GPS, photography and film are adapted to the needs of the core activity. It is shown that the practices of skating become increasingly discursive and textually mediated and that discourse becomes more multimodal and intertextual.

Keywords: discourse community, activity, multimodality, intertextuality, intermediality, textualisation

Leisure time activities seem to get increasingly technologised. Mobile phones, computers and other technical equipment are used for an ever wider range of purposes. It is likely that more and more of our everyday enterprises and projects are becoming mediated. As a consequence, discourse is likely to play a more central role: we will do things by communicating – and by communicating about what we do, what we have done and what we plan to do. Thus, technology may not only 'affect' discourse, it may also reinforce and develop new domains and functions of discourse. And discourse will take part in the re-shaping – and most likely expansion – of the activity. The aim of this article is to explore how one specific leisure activity, and the discourses of this activity, change with an increased use of communication technology. The activity in focus is long distance skating, a physical outdoor venture, but also an activity which involves planning, analysing, organising, documenting, narrating, commenting and discussing – practices which all can be supported by communication technology.

There are many ways in which we can scientifically understand and describe how meaning-making is interrelated with social interaction and the use of artefacts. Here, social semiotic and socio-cultural perspectives will be used in order to provide a theoretical framework and analytical tools. This means that focus will be on how one community makes meaning and builds activities with the help of material resources, which themselves provide meaning potential. Empirically, relevant findings and possible points of departure for this study can be found in many disciplines and fields. Investigations of text use and meaning construal in context can be found in applied linguistics and the ethnography of communication. Studies of how people more specifically use technology in order to participate in activities are conducted within e.g. CMC (Computer Mediated Communication) and CSCW (Computer Supported Cooperative Work) studies.

The present study relates to ethnographic literacy research, as represented by e.g. Heath (1983), Barton and Hamilton (1998) and Karlsson

(2006), with the main difference being that I compare two points in history in order to track changes in communication patterns. Additionally, the competency aspect of literacy is downplayed and instead the main interest is the integration of reading and writing (and to some extent talking) practices in other activities. A special focus is given to practices which are mediated through different kinds of communication technology. One recent and relevant study is Bellander (2010) where six young people are followed and their everyday use of communication technology is studied. Bellander argues that technology is not the main factor governing the communication practices developed by the teenagers and linguistic styles they adopt. Rather, she highlights the role of activity types, and shows how communication through mobile phones and msn chat displays similarities to face-to-face communication. This can be understood as an attempt to resist common views on how technology affects – and damages – the language of young people.

In CMC research, the integration of communication technology into everyday, 'non cyber' practices are normally not the main interest. Instead, most research focuses on activities and communities that are 'virtual' or principally technology-based. However, one type of communication technology is quite often studied in everyday contexts: mobile phones. For instance, Weilenmann and Larsson (2001) and Weilenmann (2003) study young people's use of mobile phones, taking into account both text messages and spoken conversation. The anthology *Mobile Communications*, edited by Ling and Pedersen (2005), assembles a number of studies of how mobile phones change and affect human relations and communication patterns. Esbjörnsson, Juhlin and Weilenmann (2007) investigate the integration of mobile phone use in the activity of driving, with a focus on safety and adapted driving behaviour. One important point made is that the use of technology is adjusted to the requirements of the situation. Similar to Bellander, Esbjörnsson *et al.* can be said to problematise the common understanding of effects of technology: that mobile phones affect driving in a negative way. However, the question of how the use of

artefacts might change and re-shape the activity of driving, if not harm-fully, is downplayed.

The mobile phone studies are close to the area of CSCW, where the focus is normally on the activity rather than on communication or dis-course. Most CSCW studies deal with professional settings, where ad-vanced technology is a constitutive part of the work environment and a necessary condition for most activities carried out. As stated by Bayerl and Lauche (2010), few CSWS studies deal with low tech industries. Their study, however, focuses on the implementation of ICT tools in the enter-prise of offshore oil drilling. Their interest in how this rather concrete and physical activity adopts technology is similar to my interest in how ice skating becomes technologised. One point in Bayerl and Lauche's study is that the use of ICT might change established roles in a work team. Generally, CSCW studies show how the use of technology may help in distributing responsibility and participation.

In relation to linguistic and ethnographic communication studies, this paper deals with a rarely investigated kind of activity, since it's not educational, nor professional. Also, the core enterprise of the activity (skating) has little to do with discourse and texts. As opposed to CMC and CSWS studies, the technology is not given from the start, but is rather framed by the case study and changing over time. The following questions are asked: What are the roles played by texts in the activity of ice skating, today (with the www, e-mail, GPS etc) and seventy years ago (when print on paper was used)? What modes are involved now and then (speech, writing, visual display, images etc), and to what extent does (and did) different modes and media interact? To what extent and in what ways do different kinds of technology promote intertextuality? Do texts relate to each other? Can different voices be 'heard' in the meaning making processes, and do the voices interact? On a more general level, the article aims at investigating how traditional communication patterns, in and around a given activity change when digital technology is introduced,

what new genres emerge and how discourse in and on the activity changes in relation to the new resources.

I will focus on a specific system of activities within the organisation: the reporting of ice conditions and current tours. The analysis will deal with the texts used for these purposes; how technology is used in the community to create a set of genres that are closely intertextually linked, and how this network of texts in different media contributes to discursive changes. The linking of contexts, media and texts will be discussed using perspectives and concepts mainly from social semiotics and from socio-cultural interaction studies. These will be presented in the next section.

Theoretical Tools: Activity, Materiality and Intertextuality

Activities, or practices, are common points of departure in interactional sociolinguistics, ethnographic literacy studies and applied linguistics. The main reason for bringing in perspectives from these areas is the need to contextualise the use of communication technology found in the case study suggested. For this purpose, the situation-based analysis of dialogic activities (cf. Levinson 1979; Linell 1998) and a perspective in which the group and its purposes are viewed as central are both useful. The activity framework contextualises interaction at a meso level by focusing on defi-nitions of situation, purposes, tasks and goals, roles, places and settings, time, mediations and use of artefacts; thus, technology is seen as part of an activity, rather than an external and autonomous phenomenon. Its impact is partly determined by the community: its goals and purposes, the discursive patterns that have been formed etc, partly by the afford-ances for potential changes that are being offered.[1]

Theories on discourse communities and *genre* (eg. Swales 1994), including chains and networks of genre, share a focus on goals and pur-poses, but are aimed to a larger extent at exploring norms and textual patterns. In comparison, the concept *community of practice* (Wenger 1998) provides a more dynamic view on individuals' paths towards participation, but on the other hand the community in itself, and its

communicative means, are less in focus. However, Wenger's theory includes a notion which is relevant and fruitful for the study of the textualisation and technologisation of an activity, namely *reification*. This is related to texts and written communication by Barton and Hamilton (2005) who argue that written texts, through their materiality, are reifications of a special and more powerful kind.

In studying how multiple and interrelated contexts are realised and managed in discourse, *intertextuality* is a highly useful concept. I will follow the tradition of Michail Bakhtin as it has been developed by, among others, Norman Fairclough (1992), where intertextuality is understood both as a means of letting other voices into the text and as a way of bringing in other contexts, with their frames of reference, norms and ideologies. Among linguists and discourse analysts, intertextuality has mostly been applied to studies of professionally produced mass media texts or institutional genres, such as research articles. I believe it is also a powerful tool for understanding how people in their everyday textual practices deal with complex contexts, especially when using communication technology.

A complementary perspective, which can account for the role of the media in the activities and for the relation between discourse and technology, is social semiotics and concepts such as *materiality* and *multimodality* (Kress & van Leeuwen 2001; van Leeuwen 2005). The main interest within this tradition is to study how meaning is made in the interaction between 'sign makers' in their social contexts and the materials (sounds, space, form etc.) available to them. An often used term is *mode*, which normally refers to a semiotic resource that has been culturally shaped and conventionalised, e.g. language. A concept partly overlapping intertextuality and multimodality is *intermediality*. Studies of intermediality are normally found in literary or media studies or in research on popular culture, where the media or the interrelated texts themselves are the main interest. This research has generally focused on professional media production and on the transfer of the 'same' story or work e.g. from book to

film to computer game (e.g. Bolter & Grusin 2001; Gunder 2004). Literary research has also explored the phenomena of hypertext and hyper linking, and attempts have been made to typologise different kinds of link structures (Aarseth 1997; Gunder 2001). Less attention has been paid to the linking of different media, such as written text, photos, films, sounds, maps etc, and the way this linking ties activities and perspectives together.

In this study, genre will be used on a macro level, to describe the communicative forms and conventions that develop over time (section 3.2). On a meso level (in section 4), *activity*, *materiality* (or *multimodality*) and *intertextuality* will be used to analyse the use of communication technology in three dimensions: first from an ethnographic perspective, where the texts are seen as tools used in the activity; second, from a semiotic perspective, focussing on modes and semiotic resources; and third, from a dialogical perspective, with a focus on text relations and the interplay of voices.

Background, Data and Macro-analysis of the Textual Landscape

The example of a Swedish long distance skating organisation will be used to explore how technology today can permeate even the most physical outdoor practices, whose core activities – in their original forms – have little to do with computers and digital networks. In addition, the example will illustrate how various technologies linked together contribute to transforming offline, physical 'doing' into a profoundly mediated practice, partly construed through discourse and interaction – a process of change which would probably apply to most traditional communities of practices entering the digital era. The exploration will begin with a necessary description of the organisation and its history.

The Stockholm Ice Skate Sailing Association – A History of Skating and Communicating[2]

In 1901, the Stockholm Ice Skate Sailing Association (in Swedish abbreviated SSSK) was founded by a small group of skating and ice skate sailing enthusiasts. This event was an expression of the growing interest in nature and healthy outdoor life which developed among economically and culturally dominant groups as a reaction to the ongoing urbanisation process by the end of the 19th century. SSSK was founded in order to organise people interested in skating on natural ice for recreation rather than for competition purposes. Most of the members, 200–300 during the first couple of years, were white collar workers and people with a university education. Quite a few were high-ranking military officers, and even some members of the royal family participated. In many ways, founding the club was a way of manifesting social belonging and prestige as well as shared ideological views regarding a healthy life. The aim of organising the activity was also practical – safe skating requires the company of others as well as up-to-date and reliable information about ice conditions. People gathered to skate in groups, benefiting from each other's skills and local knowledge, but also to share information about ice formation and suitable skating areas. Thus, from the very beginning, communication was an important part of the association's scope.

During the first 70 years, the club remained rather small, with around 1 000 members by the end of the 1960s. Then the interest in long distance skating, and the popularity of the club, increased dramatically. Towards the end of the first decade of the new millennium SSSK organised 11 000 members, and more than 1 000 tours were made each season. The members are still to a large extent university educated and quite a few of them hold leading positions in the business world and the public sector, although the members today form a less homogenous community. The system for reporting ice and planning tours is highly specialised with club officials assigned different tasks following a weekly schedule. Over time, safety issues have come to play a central part in the

organisation, which has resulted in extensive education and documentation practices.

Since SSSK started out as a rather small and informal gathering of people, information about where and when to assemble for the weekend's tours was posted in a couple of sports stores in town for the first year. There were also ads placed in the newspaper. Soon it was realised that for safety reasons the information needed to be restricted and targeted. Post cards were then sent home to the members prior to each weekend. As early as 1955, telephone answering machines were installed. The ice reports were now read out loud and recorded, and members could call a secret number and listen whenever they wanted. An important change took place in 1968 when another answering machine, 'the recorder', was installed. Here members could report their own ice observations, and as a result the organisation's communication took its first step towards the reciprocity that was to characterise it in later years. The machines became more and more sophisticated, and towards the end of the millennium callers identified themselves by entering a code and could then choose from a long menu of information services and register for the tours. Everyone was convinced that the phone-based information system would be long-lasting and that written communication about rapidly changing phenomena like ice belonged to history. The last written message was sent out by post in 1981. But things were to change once again.

The next communication revolution was the Internet. As early as the beginning of the 1990s, a simple web site was set up by a couple of leaders. In 1996 the domain sssk.se was registered and the official web site was launched. It included, apart from basic information, the regularly published *isnytt*, '*ice news*', and an interface where all the leaders could write and publish tour reports. At the same time, the club started to use e-mail and mailing lists, both for internal communication between ice reporters and leaders and for disseminating *ice news* to the members. Today the web server hosts a highly advanced set of information and communication functions. Each member logs on with a personal password and can then

access information or upload tour reports, ice observations, photos and GPS tracks. Members also register for tours on the web site, and the list of participants is visible to all members logged in. A number of mailing lists as well as *ice news* are available for members to subscribe and send messages to. A description of the textual landscape on and around the web site is found in the next section.

In 1997 the answering machines received around 8 000 calls a day during the skating season, which equals 0.9 calls per member per day. In 2007 the number of calls each day was 451, i.e. 0.04 calls per member per day, and the figures continue to drop. In May 2008 the phone-based *ice news* was shut down.

Interrelated Internet-Based Communication Channels and Text Genres

On the present SSSK web site, there are texts of basically two kinds: more or less stable information texts and different kinds of news-oriented materials. In addition, texts of the latter kind are saved in archives. Among the stable information texts we find advisory texts on safety, knowledge about equipment and ice, different club documents and inquiries, presentations of the leaders, links to other organisations and a database of lake and sea locations. The following genre descriptions will be devoted to the second kind of texts, the dynamic news-oriented ones.

The base of the textual flow is *ice news*, which has its origins in the written piece of paper that was first publically posted, then sent out to members and later recorded on the answering machine. *Ice news* consists of several sections, the most important being the ice conditions and tours. The text is jointly authored by the ice reporters of the week, who have different responsibilities and tasks. Each of them writes his or her part (and until the season 2007/2008 read it aloud into the answering machine). The different sections are "Headlines", "Ice situation", "Tours", "Distant ice situation" and "Ice skate sailing". They have their own link on the website, with the tour section containing a link to the registering

site. Most members also subscribe to *ice news* by e-mail. The message they get is linguistically (but not visually) identical to the texts published on the web (as well as those that were read aloud on the answering machine). It is sent out at least three, sometimes four times a week.

Another web-based genre is that of 'ice observations'. It has its origin in 'the recorder', the answering machine members could use to report their observations to the ice reporters. This genre is generated by an interface for writing, where the user first chooses the body of water in question, then submits an entry for a number of fixed options (e.g. Recommendation, Degree of ice coverage, Bearing capacity, Thickness, Surface, Hindrances, Source of information), along with a space for free comments as well as the author's name and phone number or e-mail. The body of water, selected from a list of lake and sea locations, automatically adds coordinates to the observation as well as a link to a map. The stable format has made it possible to create an application for text message reporting, where each headline and each option has a code number. Someone could actually report an ice observation standing on the ice and have it published on the web immediately. In addition, the observations are sent out to subscribers by e-mail. The ice observations can be illustrated by photos and GPS tracks which are uploaded in separate interfaces and then linked together.

A similar but more elaborated genre is the 'tour report'. At first, these were written only by the leaders, but since 1998 all members can write reports from private tours. These reports are created through an interface similar to that of the ice observations, but with different headlines and more free space. Among the posts to note are: Date, Leader/Author, Starting place (and time), Ending place (and time), Number of participants. Length of tour, Number of accidents, Number of 'baths' and, with more writing space, Skating pathway, Ice conditions, Weather conditions, Participants and Experiences. Tour reports can be linked to photos and GPS tracks as well as to ice observations. Films can be uploaded through

a link to YouTube. The tour reports are not sent out by e-mail, but some-
times they are reviewed and commented upon in *ice news*.

The textual web of *ice news*, ice observations and tour reports, with
photos and tracks, are linked together with similar information systems
for other clubs via the joint national project 'Skating Network'. This
means that each weekend of skating generates an extensive amount of
text documentation for members who want to spend their Sunday evening
in front of the computer. The formats that have been developed for report-
ing and sharing information make it easy for members to quickly scan
the web site for the information they want. At the same time, the focus
on certain key bits of information (figures, names and fixed options),
some of which are searchable, has strongly contributed to the discourse
on long distance skating, as will be shown below.

Ice and Tour Information in 1936 and 2008

In order to relate the changes in communication patterns and media use
to discourse features, I will explore a few text examples from two points
in history: 1936 and 2008[3]. One of the main differences is that in 1936
the information about ice conditions and tours was one-way and conveyed
in a single text, a message sent out by post to the members. In 2008 a
large number of texts from different parties and in different genres to-
gether form the information landscape, as was shown above. Here three
genres have been chosen: first the official information message, *ice news*,
which was written down and sent out by e-mail using the *ice news* mailing
list, published in the restricted area of the web site and read aloud on the
phone answering machine. This particular *ice news* was published (and
sent out) on February 16, 2008, on a Saturday. The other texts chosen
are closely connected in time and concern the same weekend: two tour
reports from the day after (February 17), including photos and GPS
tracks, and the *ice news* from the beginning of the following week, Mon-
day February 18.

The ice report from 1936 and the *ice news* from 2008 are reproduced and translated in Figure 1 and the examples (1) and (2) below. The other texts from 2008 are exemplified when they are referred to in the analysis.
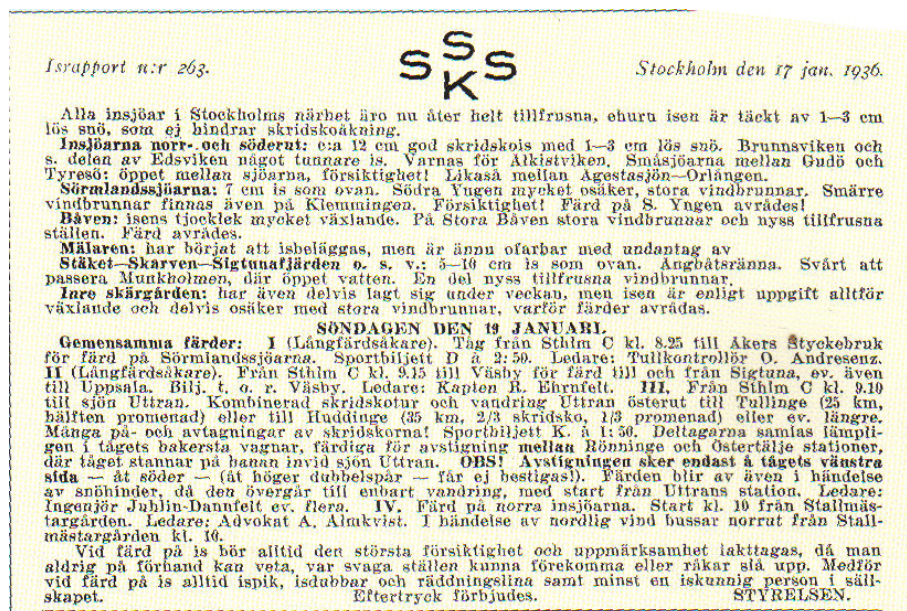

Figure 1: Ice report from January 17, 1936, facsimile

Example 1. Ice report from January 17, 1936, translated

> Ice report no. 263
> SSSK
> Stockholm Jan. 17, 1936
>
> All lakes in the vicinity of Stockholm are now completely frozen, but the ice is covered with 1–3 cm light snow which does not impede skating.
> **The lakes to the north and south:** About 12 cm good skating ice with 1–3 cm light snow. Brunnsviken and s. part of Edsviken somewhat thinner ice. There is a warning for Ålkistviken. The small lakes between Gudö and Tyresö: open water between the islands, caution! The same between Ågestasjön–Orlången.

The Sörmland lakes: 7 cm ice, as above. S. Yngern very unstable, large wind holes and newly frozen places. Tour is not advised.

Mälaren: has begun to form ice, but still unnavigable with the exception of

Stäket–Skarven–Sigtunafjärden etc.: 5–10 cm ice as above. Steamboat channel. Difficult to pass Munkholmen, where there is open water. Some newly frozen water holes.

Inner archipelago: Ice has also formed in parts during the week, but according to information received is too variable and in parts unstable with large water holes, which is why tours are discouraged.

SUNDAY JANUARY 19

Joint tours: I (Long distance skaters). Train from Sthlm C at 8.25 to Åkers Styckebruk for tour on Sörmland lakes. Sport ticket D 2: 50. Leader: Customs Inspector O. Andresenz. **II** (Long distance skaters). From Sthlm C at 9.15 to Väsby for tour to and from Sigtuna, poss. also to Uppsala. Ticket. r/t. Väsby. Leader: Captain R. Ehrnfelt. **III.** From Sthlm C at 9.10 to Lake Uttran. Combined skating tour and walk Uttran east to Tullinge (25 km, half of it walk) or to Huddinge (35 km, 1/3 walk) or poss. further. Skates must be removed and put on frequently! Sport ticket K 1: 50. Participants assemble preferably in the cars at the very back of the train, ready to exit the train **between** Rönninge and Östertälje stations, where the train stops on the railway along Uttran. **Warning: Exit only from the left side of the train** – facing south – (double tracks on right – cannot be walked on!). The tour will be held even if there is snow blocking, when it becomes only a walk, starting at Uttran station. Leader: Engineer Juhlin-Dannfelt poss. others. **IV.** Tour on the northern lakes. Start 10 o'clock from Stallmästargården. Leader: Lawyer A. Almqvist. If there is a northerly wind buses north from Stallmästargården at 10 o'clock.

When skating on ice, the utmost caution and attention should always be observed since one never can know in advance where weak spots could occur or cracks could open. Always bring ice pike, ice prods and throwing line, and at least one person in the party knowledgeable about ice. Reprinting prohibited. THE BOARD.

Example 2. *ice news* from February 16, 2008, original and translated[4]

Rubriker 2008-02-16 av Mårten Ajne
Dubbla utfärder

Högtrycksryggen har givit bäriga nyisar på mindre sjöar runt Stockholm och söderut och givit hård yta på tidigare stöpisar i Bergsslagen och norra Uppland. Längre norrut finns snöfras och bulighet kvar.

Köldperioden verkar vara över för denna gång. Väderprognosen förutspår växlande molnighet och övergång till plusgrader sent i kväll. Framåt dagen blir det 5-8 grader med västlig vind.

Även om det betyder att istillväxten utbyts mot avsmältning så borde både kärnisarna och stöpisarna tåla detta imorgon.

Idag åkte fler än 200 på Åmänningen, Aspen och Snyten. Åmänningen var lätt bulig men Snyten hade slät stöp eller snöis, främst landnära. I morgon blir det tidig start till Hörendesjön som idag var mycket fin med släta stöpisar. Det blir därutöver en sen start till kärnisarna på Uttran med ett mer begränsat åkområde. Lyssna vidare i fack 20.

Fjärrisar finns i fack 40, meddelande om Veteranfest i 32 och Vikingarännet i 35.

God tur i morgon önskar kvällens israpportör

Isläge 2008-02-15 av Dick Lindström
Det senaste dygnet har medfört stabilisering av befintliga isar och till en viss del nyläggning.

Sjöarna i norra Uppland hör till den förstnämnda kategorin. Dock har det idag dragit in snöbyar vid Upplands och Sörmlandskusten.

Åkbara som tillkommit är bl .a Tämnaren; blandat underlag, öppna områden och brunnar, Vällen; till störst delen jämn, svagare parti vid Lindholmen, drevad , ej hindrande snö. Gisslaren; hård o slät, lätt pudrad Valloxen och Långsjön Stava nylagda och bäriga.

I Sörmland har man idag åkt på snöpudrade Nackasjöar vilka befanns nätt o jämnt bäriga.

I övriga delar av Sörmland har den kraftiga vinden effektivt stört möjligheterna till nyisläggning.

Skogsjöar , t ex i Åkers Bergslag, har dock hunnit bli bäriga. Som t ex Göksjön, Malsjön, Holmsjön, Bredsjön m fl.

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Tur 1 2008-02-17 utlyst av Mårten Ajne
Hörendesjön med bussar
Utfärd söndag 17/2 med tidig start för grupperna I-5 och U39

Med abonnerade bussar klockan 0800 från Ragnar Östbergs plan, Stadshuset, för färd på Hörendesjön mellan Västerås och Sala och eventuellt kringliggande sjöar.

Grupp 1: Thure Björck
Grupp 2: Anders Björkman
Grupp 3: Jonas Sjöberg, Per Kågeson och Ulf Hellsten
Grupp 4: Stig Domander, Martin Svenzon och Per Jutemar
Grupp 5: Johan Widén och Eva Bartsch
Grupp U39: Åsa Söderbergh

Transportchef är Per Kågesson.

Välkomna!

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Headlines 2/16/2008 by Mårten Ajne
Double excursions
The ridge of high pressure has produced new load-bearing ice on smaller lakes around Stockholm and given a hard surface to previously slush ice in Bergslagen and northern Uppland. Further north there is still crisp and bumpy snow.

The period of cold seems to be over for now. The weather forecast predicts variable cloudiness changing to warm temperatures late this evening. During the day it will be 5-8 degrees with a westerly wind.

While this means that the ice building is being exchanged for melting, both solid ice and new ice should hold up tomorrow.

Today more than 200 skated on Åmänningen, Aspen and Snyten. Åmänningen was slightly bumpy but Snyten had smooth slush or snow ice, mainly close to land. Tomorrow it will be an early start to Hörendesjön which today was very nice with smooth slush ice. It will furthermore be a late start to the solid ice on Uttran with a more limited skating area. Listen further under slot 20.

Distant ice is in slot 40, messages about veteran's party in 32 and Vikingarännet in 35.

This evening's ice reporter wishes everyone a nice tour tomorrow

Ice situation February 15, 2008 by Dick Lindström
The past few days and nights have brought stabilisation of existing ice and to some extent new ice formation.

The ice in northern Uppland belongs in the first category. However, there have been flurries up the coast of Uppland and Sörmland.

Additional skatable lakes include Tämnaren, mixed surface, open areas and water holes. Vällen; mainly flat, weaker area at Lindholmen, snow drifting, not blocking. Gisslaren: hard and smooth, slightly powdered, Valloxen and Långsjön Stava newly formed and load-bearing.

In Sörmland today people have skated on snow powdered Nacka lakes which were found only just bearing.

In the rest of Sörmland the strong wind has basically destroyed any chance of new ice formation.

Forest lakes, e.g. in Åkers Bergslag, however have had time to become bearing. Like for instance Göksjön, Malsjön, Holmsjön, Bredsjön and others.

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Tour 1 February 17, 2008, advertised by Mårten Ajne
Hörendesjön with buses
Excursion Sunday 2/17 with early starts for groups I-5 and U39

With chartered buses at 0800 o'clock from Ragnar Östbergs plan, City Hall, for tour on Hörendesjön between Västerås and Sala and possibly surrounding lakes.

Group 1: Thure Björck
Group 2: Anders Björkman
Group 3: Jonas Sjöberg, Per Kågeson and Ulf Hellsten
Group 4: Stig Domander, Martin Svenzon and Per Jutemar
Group 5: Johan Widén and Eva Bartsch
Group U39: Åsa Söderbergh

Director of transportation is Per Kågesson.

See you there!

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The following discussion will use the texts as focal points, but the textual perspective will alternate with an overall macro view of the activities and texts involved and over time, in order to illustrate the complexity and interrelation of possible explanations and causal chains. It will be shown that differences in language use can be explained in part by the different media used and by changed communication and participation practices within the discourse community.

Of course, many differences could be related to what can be seen as general language and discourse changes. Written Swedish has generally been said to have undergone a number of changes during the second half of the 20th century, intimisation being one of them (Josephson 2004, 89–98). However, changes like these do not occur in language in isolation. They have their origin in specific discourse practices, and – above all – in the new functions of written language. Explaining the differences between the 1936 and 2008 texts by relating them to changes in the skating organisation is thereby one way of situating general tendencies, in language as well as in society. This is not to deny that this skating organisation is a part of larger cultural and historical contexts. Rather, I want to highlight the fact that accumulated changes are always instantiated in particular situations and communities.

Text Analysis

The use of communication technology for meaning making purposes will be analysed under three sections. First, from an activity point-of-view, where the role of text artefacts as meditational tools will be explored. Then, there will be a focus on the multimodality of the communication. Finally, the concept of intertextuality will be applied to describe both relations between texts and the different voices involved.

The text(s) in the activity

In 1936 the written ice report was the only message concerning weekly activities and current ice conditions which was distributed to all the

members of the club. The leaders may have been keeping notes of some kind, but these were not disseminated to members. All other communication was probably personal, face to face, before, during or after skating. The mediated and widespread information in 1936 had its function *before* the tours, for planning and making decisions. The texts from 2008 cover a broader range of functions, although they are all related to the skating activity on a particular day. Conveying information for planning and personal decision making is still an important function. However, in nearly all the texts there is a substantial amount of reporting on tours made. This information can be used for planning, but its main function is most likely to share experiences and to give all the members a sense of fellowship by telling everyone what other members have done. Furthermore, one might consider the function of taking an active part in public club activities and thus promoting oneself. I will elaborate on this below.

The number of texts involved in one weekend's skating in 1936 and 2008 is not comparable. It can be noted that quite a lot of the texts in 2008 are written by people other than club officials, while the single text in 1936 was written by "the board". The tour reports that have been chosen are two of the 47 uploaded by SSSK members on this particular weekend. Of these, 17 were reports from private tours, uploaded by ordinary members. On occasions when the ice situation is more favourable, the proportion of private reports would most certainly be even higher.

We could talk about a discursive or even discourse-driven personalisation of the relations in the club, in spite of the huge increase in the number of members.[5] One way to note this is by looking at the signatures behind the texts. The 1936 message is signed "THE BOARD", whereas all the texts in 2008 are signed using people's full names. Even the ice reporters' official texts in *ice news* are signed, which means that there is an individual person taking responsibility for each piece of information. There are names in the 1936 text too – the tour leaders are presented – but only the initial of their first name and their surname. Instead, there

are titles – something which would seem rather anachronistic in 2008. Nowadays, everyone is a private individual, but some are better known than others. In fact, writing many ice observations and tour reports might be a way to become more famous in the club, or at least recognised. It should be noted that many members use name tags (with full names) on their jacket when they participate in tours – tags which are provided by the club. These tags can be seen as a low-tech tool used in the practice of socialising, but also in the practice of maintaining hierarchy and specialisation, since leaders and other officials have different colours on their tags.

The increased number of texts, the many genres for different purposes and the fact that everyone can write and upload them have probably contributed to making the discourse on skating increasingly text-mediated. One could even say that parts of the skating activity are text-mediated. To be active in SSSK means not only to go skating but also to take part in the reading and writing about skating. In this way, ice skating has become to some extent a discursive activity. The fact that dealing with texts is a substantial part of the skating activity might explain both why the texts are highly standardised on the macro level and why the language used is at the same time implicit, exact and casual. The standardisation, with slots to fill or options to choose from, makes certain parts of the discourse, above all the descriptions of ice conditions and basic facts about the tours, exact and effective. At the same time, there is room for casual and personal expressions in writing about experiences, participants or specific events.

Standardisation could to some extent be traced back to 1936, when the two sections of the text have their given functions and need no explanatory headlines or introduction. The only headline provides information about the date, but no metatextual guidelines. The last section in the 1936 text contains information that is no longer conveyed in 2008: a message with the double function of warning members about taking

dangerous risks and at the same time of being a sort of liability disclaimer. The 2008 personal, casual touch in addressing members is not found. It is clear that, in 1936, the team-building, social and person-promoting communicative functions were not text-mediated, at least not on a weekly basis. In 2008, a larger number of voices and relations are present in the public text landscape, which will be further explored below.

Moreover, the official ice and tour informing text, *ice news*, is less strictly structured below the macro level, where it is divided into major sections. Each section mixes standardised and impersonal information with comments and narrations. In the first part, "Headlines", which has no counterpart in 1936, the tour announcement is embedded in the reporting of earlier tours and description of ice conditions, and is thus justified. This way of overtly arguing for the choice of tour areas is common in issues of *ice news* from recent years. One might say that the same information was also present in 1936 (except for earlier tours), but here the reasoning and conclusion processes are not marked in discourse. Instead, information is strictly sorted into two parts, which seem to have nothing to do with each other.

Furthermore, the ice is described with a more varied vocabulary and in a more distinctive way in 2008 than in 1936, where the author quickly summarises the conditions, writing "tours are discouraged". One activity-based explanation is that a larger number of members today make private tours and need more detailed information in order to make their own decisions. This in turn, is made possible thanks to the wider dissemination of information through Internet, where the ice reports can be read by all members. Another interpretation is that the increased explicitness has to do with shared responsibility and the position of the ice reporters. This will be touched upon again when intertextuality is explored below.

Materiality, modes and media

One can note that the main information mode in SSSK has gone from writing/reading, via speaking/listening and back to writing/reading. However, this path of development is complicated by the fact that the communication media involved have changed as well, which means that the material conditions for writing and reading in 1936 are very different from those in 2008. Another change is the transformation in the directions and roles of communication. When paper and post were used, the communication was one (or a few) to many, and one-way. During the time of the answering machine, it was mainly one (or a few) to many, but in the case of the recorder rather one to one (or a few). With this as the only exception, the direction was still mainly one-way. With the Internet, the situation is entirely different; many write to many (with the exception of certain genres) in a two-way, or rather multi-way manner. All these aspects are relevant in describing the differences between the texts from 1936 and 2008.

One would expect the signs of intermediality to be non-existent in the 1936 text. The only other medium that could be involved, apart from any hand-written drafts, would be spoken conversation between the members of the board, but traces of this are hard to find. Instead, the text is homogenously shaped by the resources of the rather small piece of paper, and it is interesting to see how the materiality and spatiality of the note are used as a meaning-making resource. The text is divided into two main parts, which are marked off by some space and the headline of the second part "SUNDAY JANUARY 19". The first part, about ice conditions, is structured around water locations and organised visually through indentations and bold face. In the second section, bold face is used both to organise the information (tour no. **I**, **II**, **III** etc.) and to stress important words ('**between**'). Thus, visual resources are used to economise and squeeze all the relevant information into the limited space.

Compared to this, the *ice news* of 2008 is typographically 'clean', i.e. no boldface or other graphical arrangements are used. One could say language is the only mode, which can be explained by the fact that *ice news* has a highly intermedial production process: normally, it is written first in order to be read aloud into the answering machine – a practice with a long tradition (which can be seen in the fact that the author uses the word 'listen' in guiding readers/listeners to the different parts) – then uploaded on the web server and sent out by e-mail. All three media have different affordances, and the text needs to work regardless of those. Thus, language is the only mode to be used.

Unlike in the 1936 text, the space disposable to the authors of *ice news* in 2008 is unlimited and only restricted by conventions. This might explain why the names of the tour leaders are organised in a list and not as in 1936 in running text, but not why the lake and sea locations are not listed. One explanation could be that the description of ice conditions is a text meant to be read through, in order for readers to get an idea of the situation as a whole, while the leaders named are read selectively by members searching for their group. In that case it is even more remarkable that the lake and sea locations in the 1936 report are listed, or at least made searchable by separate paragraphs, indentation and bold face.

The genres of ice observation and tour report are to a larger extent shaped by the medium in which they are designed, produced and distributed (cf. Kress & van Leeuwen 2001). In particular, this applies to the tour reports, which are only available on the web site. These texts are structurally and visually divided into two main parts, with the upper one displayed in two columns. This part of the text includes the key data of the tour – data which are also used in making annual reports and storing tour reports in the database. The rest of the report can contain additional written text, and photos are found at the bottom. One of the reports from February 17, 2008, is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: A tour report from February 17, 2008

When listed on the site for tour reports, the headlines and key data are shown as in Figure 3. (The small icons in the left column indicate whether the report contains photos, GPS tracks or films.) Members who log onto the site to get an overview of today's tours are thus first presented with the headline, the name of the leader/author, the club name (if it is not filtered from the beginning – in the default mode, reports from all the organisations taking part in the Skating Network are displayed), group, number of participants and tour length in kilometres. These data recur in the discourse about the tours. Participants in the bus compare tour lengths

and ask each other which leader they went along with. Ice reporters also often pick these key data when they summarise the weekend's tours. Thus, the visual structure of the reports corresponds to what meanings are important in the activity.

Figure 3: A list of tour reports from February 17, 2008

Apart from the key data, the tour reports can include freer and even more personal narratives and accounts of the tours. These are then found in the middle of each report, above all in the section "Experiences". The report in Figure 1 contains a rather typical reflection about a place worth

visiting, which also implies a positive evaluation of the choice made by the group:

> Väl värt att ägna en stund åt Ängelsbergs bruk och herrgård där reno-veringsarbeten pågick. Fin andra rast där, vid den uppdämda Snytens forsande utlopp mot <u>Åmänningen.</u>

> 'Certainly worth spending some time at Ängelsberg ironworks and manor, where there were renovations going on. Nice second break there, by the rushing outflow of the dammed Snyten into <u>Åmän-ningen.</u>'

Names of lakes are automatically linked to posts in the database, as are names of leaders or other club officials.

The section "Skating pathways" has changed dramatically in the last couple years with the spread of GPS devices. Earlier, this was a place for detailed descriptions of directions with names of islands, bays and penin-sulas. Today these descriptions are often short. In this example, there is a reference to the GPS track, which is linked in below. The author writes: 'See track (…)'. The track, shown in Figure 4, tells the story of the tour by other means. Pathways are expressed by lines on the map, which gives exact geographic information but which (in this particular interface) says nothing about the direction chosen. Lake names are present on the map, but names of smaller islands, suitable places for breaks and detailed com-ments about the surroundings are gone. There are currently discussions in the club about developing the track presentations with the possibility of marking difficult areas and linking them to photos. This could actually mean that one domain in the documentation of tours, the spatial and geographical description of pathways, will be a lost domain for language in favour of the visual modes. Already today, both leaders and other mem-bers use collections of recent tracks as an important aid in planning tours. In a way, this replaces some of the verbal information about ice conditions as well. The new source of information instead provides a visual image of where other people have skated and where the ice is therefore probably

OK. The spaces which have been avoided can be understood to be weak or to have a bad surface.
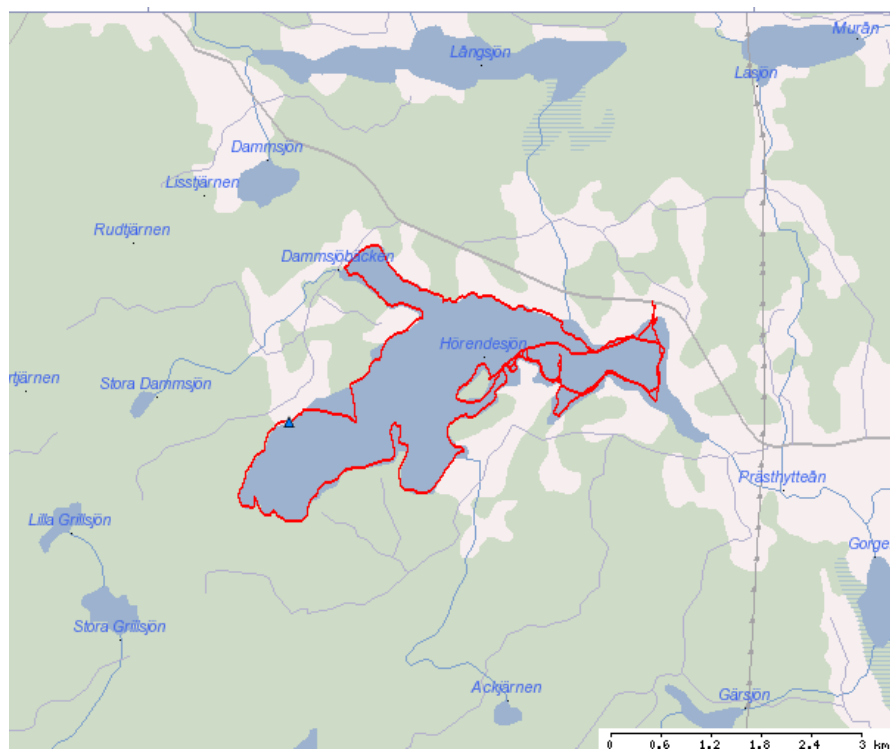

Figure 4: GPS track from Lake Hörendesjön

In 1936 no graphical illustrations are used, and it is tempting to explain this by technical restrictions. Then again, the practices in the organisation were different in 1936, and fewer members planned their own tours based on previously gathered information compared to today. If a simple map was needed in 1936, it could be reproduced, but since most readers planned to join the organised tours, this was not necessary. Today, GPS tracks and other visual aids are used by members who skate in private groups or who want to take a more active part in the organised tours. It is reasonable

to understand this change in textual practices as being due to both technological development and changed activity patterns, and to consider these two aspects of change as mutually related. For instance, the practice of naming participants was established long before it was possible to upload photos in the reports. Thus, technological development here reinforces and to some extent changes the nature of something that was already there.

Intertextuality

Apart from the increased intermediality which was explored in the last sections, technology also supports the mixing of voices, i.e. the textual practice of relating to what others have said or written. The relations to other texts and the presence of other voices are highly characteristic of the 2008 texts, while the report from 1936 is more of a detached, one-voiced utterance. In digital texts, intertextuality can be realised in at least two ways. First, it is connected to intermediality and linking, and thus built into technology. Second, there can be intertextuality of a more general kind, as with any textual communication. Authors can refer to or quote other texts and they can use discourse elements which invoke other discourses (cf. Fairclough 1992). These two kinds of intertextuality are often related – and connected to materiality and multimodality.

The *ice news* of February 16, 2008, is itself a highly intertextual text, consisting of several parts with different authors. The section "Headlines" functions as an introduction and a menu, telling visitors what other parts are available. The different authors mark their presence by giving their name in the beginning and (in some cases) by signing off at the end. In the tour section, a different construction is used to label the speech act carried out by the reporter: 'advertised' ("utlyst") which gives this utterance a different quality than the others. He underlines his special position as an advertiser by ending each tour announcement with 'See you there!'.

As was mentioned above, the 2008 *ice news* is written in a way that allows readers to judge for themselves and draw their own conclusions.

This is partly done through what Fairclough calls manifest intertextuality. The ice reporter initially refers to the weather forecast, thus placing authority (and responsibility) on the shoulders of the Swedish Meteorological Institute, SMHI. At the same time, he shows us his sources of information and makes it possible for us to judge their credibility. In the section "Distant ice situation", the author mentions 'reports' and 'ice observations' and summarises what they have said. Elsewhere in *ice news* the fact that other voices are present is made explicit, but then by using more subtle markers (underlined) such as in 'In Sörmland today people have skated on snow-powdered Nacka lakes which were found only just bearing.'

The dialogue initiated by the ice reporter, named Mårten, is taken up in the second tour report, where the author explicitly addresses him, in the section "Experiences". Note that he uses only his first name.

> Hörendesjön, där inga av dagens ca 50 åkare, tidigare varit, var en trevlig erfarenhet. Tack Mårten som valde den! Vår grupp valde att stanna kvar hela dagen.

> Hörendesjön, where none of today's roughly 50 skaters, had been before, was a nice experience. Thanks Mårten who chose it! Our group chose to stay all day.

And the day after, parts of this utterance are taken up by the next ice reporter, who summarises the weekend's tours:

> Distansturen gick till ungefär samma område som lördagsturen dvs. till Åmänningen och angränsande sjöar, bl.a. med en för alla ny sjö; Hörendesjön. Inga av dagens ca 50 deltagare hade åkt på sjön tidigare.

> The distant tour went to about the same area as the Saturday tour, that is, Åmänningen and lakes in the vicinity, including one lake that was new to everybody; Hörendesjön. None of the day's roughly 50 participants had skated on the lake before.

Conclusions

The overall aim of this paper has been to investigate the embeddedness of computer-mediated communication in everyday practices, and the relations between modes and media, discourse and practice. This has been made through a case study of a Swedish long distance skating club. Key concepts have been *activity*, *materiality* and *intertextuality* – aspects which are closely related and to some extent include each other.

By examining the communicative history of the club it was shown that mediating artefacts have been present throughout the history of the organisation. Pins, name tags and written texts of different kinds were important community tools from the beginning. However, the affordances of the technical tools have changed, and so have their role and place within the skating activity. This was further explored in an analysis of texts from 1936 and 2008.

Three points can be made. First, the discursive, or textually mediated, share of the activity as a whole has grown larger. One could say that skating has become more and more of a literacy practice (Barton 2007). More is made through written text. Less is being done on the phone. Also, things are made through text that were not done at all earlier. People write about their tours and read about others' tours. New ways have developed for participating in the different activities of skating. Members who have never met, and who would normally not have a chance to meet and talk, can take part in each other's experiences. Skaters can be inspired by tours described, and plan similar tours – or just enjoy them on the screen. This can be understood in terms of *distribution*, more specifically as *distributed participation* and *distributed experience*, construed semiotically through texts.

Second, discourse has become more multimodal, and the different modes show specialisation to some degree. For instance, details about ice conditions as well as personal relations and individual experiences tend to be given more space in written discourse, while for instance geographical facts are preferably conveyed by image. The specialisation of modes

resembles that of some scientific discourses, where certain meaning is always expressed through graphs and figures. An interesting research task would be to further explore the multimodal development and change of leisure activity discourses, made possible by technology such as GPS and mapping devices.

Third, more voices are heard – by more people. (In fact, a year ago a comment function was added to the tour reports, increasing the interactivity further). At the same time, the discourse community has changed. More members have access to vital information and knowledge compared to 10 or 20 years ago. This may imply that hierarchies based on knowledge and information access are flattening. A parallel may be drawn to the findings of Bayerl and Lauche (2010), where established roles of participants tended to change when technology was introduced. Still, hierarchies can be reinforced through information technology, by solutions such as separate mailing lists, sections of the web page protected by pass words etc.

From a linguistic or discourse analytic perspective, one of the most important reasons for exploring specific 'real life' activities and their use of computer-mediated communication in different genres for different purposes is to problematise the idea that communication technology *affects* language use (cf. Bellander 2010). In the end, language or language use most certainly changes, but this should be understood in the context of how activity, medium and discourse develop in relation to each other. Moreover, we need to study not only how discourse might change, but also how it may gain or lose domains in an activity.

Acknowledgments

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Notes

1. It should be noted that I use the term activity somewhat broader than both Levinson and Linell, since my aim is not to frame micro-patterns in conversation, but rather to capture 'what people do' recurrently and in similar and recognizable ways. For this purpose, the distinction of activity-types is not necessary.

2. This section is based on information from the book *Stockholms Skridskoseglarklubb 1991–2001* and the articles Dahlgren (2002) and Dahlgren (2007).

3. Compared to later winters, the skating season of 2007/2008 was rather 'normal', regarding temperature, snow and ice conditions. Tours were arranged on a regular basis and the situation in February 2008 resembles in many ways that of January 1936 when it comes to ice access and relative activity intensity in the organization.

4. Due to limited space, a few sections are omitted, and marked by (---). These are "Tour headlines" and "Distant ice situation".

5. Again, this can be related to an over-all tendency of intimisation of public discourse. Nevertheless, we can here see the mechanisms at work: i.e. how discourse, materiality and culture co-construct the change.

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