Title: Identitet och förändring – en studie av ett universitetsbibliotek och dess självproduktion (Identity and change – a study of a university library and its self-reproduction)

Language: Swedish, with a summary in English

The aim of the study that took place between 1989 and 1999, has been to understand how a Swedish university library and its task environment relates to the library identity in connection with a process of organisational change.

The investigation has focused on how the power dynamics of change are structured and how the inertia of change could be understood by means of an autopoietic (self-reproductive) model.

Formal decisions, standpoints, and attitudes in internal documents were surveyed and analysed. In order to catch different attitudes and standpoints to organisational change representatives of the staff and external members of the library board were interviewed. Library users, i.e. professors, lecturers and students, have answered a major questionnaire concerning their attitudes and view of the library and future information provision at the university.

By means of systems theory and systems methodology five different organisational subsystems – goals and objectives, technique, structure, management, staff/productive system - have been analysed to expose powers that act with and against the decided change. A cybernetic approach including autopoietic models was thereafter used to improve the understanding of the library's inertia of change.

The study reveals the organisation's tendency to lock itself up in ingrained patterns of behaviour with regard to traditional tasks and operative activities, which was observed in all the subsystems studied. This inertia has been interpreted in terms of autopoiesis and analysed and understood in the overall cybernetical process of the organisation.

In conclusion: In order for an evolving and developing autopoiesis to take place in the organisation, the strategic and top managerial part of the organisation should resist perceiving the operational systems as allopoietic but autopoietic in their own right. A communicative and informative co-ordination between the top management and the operative core of the organisation is essential for a sound, integrated, autopoietic development of the library to take place.