In a recent research evaluation exercise within our university researchers asked for other measurements of impact than the traditional citation-based ones. One researcher described how he actively engaged with a mainly local community in Sweden, and asked for data supporting these activities. By now we know it would be possible to gather data but there are some issues involved, the coverage of data being one issue. The altmetric data providers present today quite naturally focus on international sources (Twitter, Mendeley etc) to find data. To a large extent, the Swedish community participate in these international sources, but local alternatives like news outlets exist as well. The rising interest in measuring impact through governmental reports etc is probably relying even more on local national sources. Another issue is that researchers communicating outside academia in Sweden write in Swedish, and publish through mainly Swedish, or Nordic, publication channels. These channels often do not use identifiers such as DOIs which help the tracking process. Researchers witness that writing in Swedish is not always fondled by research funders and the government, as we see a strong political wish to place Sweden in a top position in the global research community. Still, many researchers find the outreach to society important and lately we have seen increasing demands for demonstrating societal impact even on a national political level.

Euan Adie is referring to an idea from Impact Story: present the researchers with data which they can use to build their impact stories (the conference blog: http://altmetricsconference.com/opportunities-responsibilities/). This is probably a sound approach, since comparable data is distant, if even possible. Here I see a role for libraries as discussion partners. We would probably be involved in discussions about data limitations and coverage of different sources. What would be the more efficient ways to support the researchers in these matters, given the issues raised above? Should we work with altmetric services and ask them to include local sources in their product? We would be one among many countries interested in this. Should we direct our energy toward Nordic publishers, maybe starting with ourselves and our university presses, and push us/them to adapt new technologies such as the DOI? Or as always, why don’t do a little bit of both?

To further clarify the challenges, I will describe some examples. One of our university’s researchers is studying religious education, and is frequently engaged in the current political debate in Sweden. Her publication list contains roughly 50 % publications written in English and 50 % in Swedish. One of her recent reports is published by the Brookings institute in Washington and has received a considerable amount of attention on Facebook and Twitter (PlumX). Many of her publications written in English gathers attention, articles and books more so than chapters. Her Swedish publications have received very scarce, but valuable attention; for example students giving advice to each other about the texts on Twitter.

The other example considers a researcher in marine archaeology. This is a subject that gathers quite a lot of interest in mainstream media and popular science journals. Right now we see a surge as new technologies make it possible to find all those wrecks known to be somewhere in the Baltic Sea. This researcher’s publication list show that two-thirds of the publications are written in Swedish, and the other third in English. Although we know that his works, and he himself, is quite widely seen in Swedish society, PlumX reveals a rather modest attention for his publications. Also here, articles and books, are more frequently captured. One of his articles shows a Mendeley reader audience from Africa, America and Europe.
When we tested PlumX for the first time we saw that publications written in English generally gathered more attention. This is not surprising considering the potentially wider audience. However, publications written in Swedish gathered more attention on Facebook.

The Swedish publications gathering attention usually don’t have a DOI, and we see they are traced through the links in our institutional repository. The Facebook activity we detected could be due to a small test sample, but the pattern is still there with more data (and Twitter does not show this pattern). This could indicate that Facebook is used to a greater extent to communicate with students and a general public here in Sweden.

These examples show that publications written in Swedish surely gather attention, but not like the ones written in English. Further, the publication type also matters. PlumX are struggling like other altmetric providers to gather chapter-level data.

We see that the challenges at hand are twofold: 1. tracking publications where they are discussed in the Swedish society. The discussion goes on in news outlets such as Dagens Nyheter and Svenska Dagbladet. Professional and popular science journals would also be of interest. We also have some popular blogs, for example HumTank: a blog dedicated to the humanities, and its influence on society. Also subject blogs such as Politologerna, which deals with political science, are of interest. 2. tracking publications written in Swedish without internationally used identifiers such as DOI. In this category we find the grey literature, governmental reports but also publications from Nordic publishing houses.

Here are some suggestions for possible research questions regarding local issues. When publications in Swedish are shared, which links are mainly used? Would it be possible to see some effect of using DOIs or other internationally known identifiers? For example, we are publishing here at the University. We see that these publications gather some citations in Google Scholar, and that they are shared in social media as well. Would other identifiers give us more possibilities to trace the publications?

Are there any patterns in how publications are shared on Facebook? Are publications written in Swedish shared among students, and in what ways (student groups, teacher-initiated groups)? What about a wider audience? Are the publications shared privately or in groups, and is the researcher involved, invited to be or by their own means? All these questions depend on the accessibility of Facebook data, which I gather might pose a problem.

As we struggle to meet up with researchers’ wishes for new ways of demonstrating their impact on academia and society, I would like to have a discussion with participants at the altmetric workshop about local issues. The library is already discussing altmetrics with researchers, how can we be a part in the process of advancing the ways of demonstrating impact? I suspect there are others struggling with this question and I guess some have already started to work with this particular question.