

SOU Explorer: An analysis platform for explorations of how research is cited and used in official reports of the Swedish Government

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Abstract

It is generally acknowledged that it is important that political decisions are grounded in expert- and evidence-based knowledge. In this project, we want to explore if and how scientific knowledge is incorporated into government decision documents.

We are in the process of creating an open platform using public government data sourced from “Riksdagens öppna data” that can be used for searching for reports by content as well as assigned metadata, integrate data from external sources, provide analyses in real-time, and various forms of information visualisation. Potential users of this platform include both academic researchers and teachers, journalists focusing on investigating political discussions, policy analysts, and politicians themselves.

The platform will implement methods for investigating citation patterns in the official reports of the Swedish government with regard to what kind of research that is cited, as well as how and why research is cited (as indicated by the relevant citances, i.e., citation contexts). References to research could be manifest or latent, explicitly by citing or implicitly by paraphrasing research (an example could be, e.g., (Cantril, 1967) versus “Cantril’s ladder”, or ‘life quality scale’).

To this end, we will use pretrained language models such as the Swedish BERT models produced by KBLab (National Library of Sweden) for natural language processing tasks like named entity recognition and topic modelling. What actors such as ministries are mentioned, what events and developments can be identified, and what structural changes can be discerned over time with regard to how research is referenced?