

**DISCIPLINARY BOUNDARIES BETWEEN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES AND  
HUMANITIES**

**INTERDISCIPLINARITY, RESEARCH POLICIES AND PRACTICES :  
TWO CASE STUDIES FROM SWEDEN**

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## DISCIPLINARY BOUNDARIES BETWEEN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES — TWO CASE STUDIES FROM SWEDEN

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## **INTERDISCIPLINARITY, RESEARCH POLICIES AND PRACTICES: TWO CASE STUDIES FROM SWEDEN**

In this report, we discuss some of the advantages and problems attached to the issue of interdisciplinarity, research policies and practices in the Swedish higher education context of today. The report is conducted in the framework of a collaborative research project, on opportunities for and obstacles to interdisciplinarity in eight European countries.<sup>1</sup>

In this report, we will briefly introduce the Swedish research policy in relation to interdisciplinarity of the last fifteen years. Thereafter, we continue with case study 1. In this section, we inquire into the role of the thematic research council, the Swedish Council for Planning and Coordination of Research, the FRN, at the end of the 1990s. We have investigated two interdisciplinary research projects, funded by the FRN in the thematic research program Gender, Religion and Morality (1998-2000), in order to get a picture of the interdisciplinary “outcome” of the FRN’s allocations for interdisciplinarity. As for our next case study, case study 2, we investigate the re-organisation of the structure for research funding made in 2000 and its resulting effect on interdisciplinarity, by way of an inquiry of the Swedish Research Council. Following this, we discuss the capacity to handle interdisciplinarity in the comparative section. Here, we compare the management of interdisciplinarity in the previous and in the new system for research funding. The findings in this report will finally be summed up in a concluding chapter.<sup>2</sup>

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

During the last 15 years, there have been large socio-economic changes in Sweden as in the rest of the western world. These changes are of importance when it comes to education and research. Among other things, there has been extended European collaborative work, through the Bologna agreement with its decentralisation of the decision-making process and the harmonisation of higher education. The increasing amount of externally funded research is another trend that has its equivalence with other European countries. There have, moreover, been demands for research that can handle the disparate questions that appear in the complex societies of today (see Latour, 1993: 8). Consequently, the reforms in the area of higher education in Sweden are to be understood in the light of these changes, that is both nationally and internationally (Lundberg, 2005: 5).

In the Swedish context of research policy, these structural and organisational changes have been explicitly described as efforts to, among other things, bring science closer to the society, to produce a higher rate of excellent research and to create possibilities for interdisciplinary research.

Nevertheless, the ambition to develop interdisciplinary collaboration in research is not new in the context of Swedish research policy. Ever since the early 1980s, until it was discontinued in 2000, the Swedish Council for Planning and Coordination of Research (the FRN) developed collaborative interdisciplinary research, for example between such areas as technology and the humanities (Svedin, 2005). The recent EU research policy in the area of interdisciplinarity, however, has not only resulted in an

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<sup>1</sup> All reports are published on the project’s website, [www.hull.ac.uk/researchintegration](http://www.hull.ac.uk/researchintegration)

<sup>2</sup> Case study 1 was researched and written by Mia Liinason who also wrote the introduction, summaries, comparative section and conclusion. Kerstin Alnebratt researched and wrote case study 2.

increased number of involved persons, but also in more powerful main figures on the scene.

The present-day structure of Swedish research funding is constituted by three large funding councils and a number of smaller research foundations. The structure of research funding is divided into a) a public funding agency with three research councils, nine research foundations and 10 public authorities, b) local authorities and county councils, c) EU-grants, d) private funding agencies, such as Swedish and foreign organisations and enterprises.

Apart from national funding for postgraduate training and research, the remaining research funding comprises of external resources for research and contract work, mostly provided by research councils and sectoral agencies, together with local authorities, county councils and companies in the private sector. The basis for long-term planning is the governmental grant, which also makes strategic allocations possible. External grants are perceived as complementary: they are received in competition and are regarded as a quality criterion (Holm, and Liinason 2005a: 4)

## 1.1 METHODOLOGY

The discussions on ‘disciplinarity’, respectively ‘multi-‘ and ‘interdisciplinarity’ in this report are based upon distinctions made in the *Comparative Report on Interdisciplinarity*, produced at an earlier stage of this research project and published at the project’s website: [www.hull.ac.uk/researchintegration](http://www.hull.ac.uk/researchintegration)

‘Multidisciplinarity’ is mainly described as an additive process, where different disciplines only join in collaborative research administratively. Interdisciplinarity can, furthermore, be ‘instrumental’ or ‘cognitive’. ‘Instrumental interdisciplinarity’ is a process where elements from different disciplines are integrated. It is a crossing of disciplinary lines, without an aim to challenge the borders of the disciplines (see Long, 2002: 14). ‘Cognitive interdisciplinarity’ is a critical position striving to challenge the arbitrariness of the borders of disciplines. This critical stance pushes ‘interdisciplinarity’ closer to the more challenging level of transdisciplinarity. ‘Transdisciplinarity’, finally, is understood as a more critical concept than multi- or interdisciplinarity, demanding a restructuring of higher education in favour of a stronger reflexivity on disciplinary perspectives and striving to produce knowledge beyond disciplinary thinking (Holm, and Liinason, 2005b: 4).

This report is based on published material such as government bills, official documents, assessments and other forms of ‘grey material’, as well as non-published material, interviews, and published articles. All in all, we did 11 interviews, ranging in duration from 30 minutes to an hour. Seven of them were made over the telephone and four of them were made face-to-face. We asked the interviewees, verbally and/or in writing, whether they wanted to participate in an interview. All of them answered in the affirmative. Six of the interviews are with representatives from the Swedish system for research funding, situated at different levels in the system: one managing director, one secretary general, one head of the research council’s research department, two chairpersons of boards at different levels and one research secretary. The remaining five interviews are with researchers who benefited from the funding, two in the first case study and three in the second. We made both informant interviews and respondent interviews. In order for us to a) get a view of the policies of FRN and VR on interdisciplinary research and b) to be able to describe how FRN and VR handle interdisciplinary research applications in their internal assessment process and how the different areas of founding are used we made interviews with former and present executives from the Swedish system for research funding. Here, the

executives are seen as informants, i.e. giving information of a factual character, such as details of structural and organizational character etc. Furthermore, the interviewed researchers are to be seen as respondents. They give individual narratives of personal experiences, such as thoughts about and experiences of interdisciplinary research. During the interviews we took notes. Then, we interpreted the material with a focus on interdisciplinarity, research policies and practices in the context of Swedish higher education. Each interviewee read and approved the transcribed interview made with him/her. Worth noting is however, that informants in high positions in the research council were very careful about what they said in the interview, and how this should be understood by readers. Nevertheless, the greater part of the researchers, as well as the staff and commissioners, formerly appointed at the FRN, presented a relaxed attitude. The raw transcriptions of the interviews made within the range of this report are archived at the Department of Gender Studies, Göteborg University.

Without commenting on the officially approved competence of the highly appointed commissioners, it may be interesting to relate their cautiousness to Pierre Bourdieu's (1996) theory on the logic of the accumulation of power. Bourdieu compares accumulation of power in similar settings with a kind of treadmill, in which high-ranking individuals depend on constant motion, where commitment generates commitments in a continuing accumulation of power that attracts suppliants, which, in turn, establishes further power accumulation (Bourdieu, 1996: 126, 155). The cautiousness mentioned above may illustrate the exposed position of individuals of high status in the context of higher education.

## 1.2 GOVERNMENTAL POLICY

The most important funding council of Sweden today, the VR, has the mandate to handle basic research of all kinds. At the same time, the VR is commissioned to create good conditions for multi- and interdisciplinary research (*Utbildning och universitetsforskning* 2003: 248). From a general point of view, the VR has a rather positive attitude to interdisciplinarity. In its latest publication on research strategies, the VR emphasizes interdisciplinarity, especially between areas such as the natural sciences and technology (Vetenskapsrådet 2004: 24). This attitude derives, however, from the Swedish government's commitment to interdisciplinarity. Throughout the time span studied, the government has had a generally positive attitude to interdisciplinarity. It has interpreted the development of interdisciplinarity as important for, among other things, two reasons: a) the potential to develop new kinds of knowledge through interdisciplinary research; b) the positive effect of interdisciplinarity for the solving of the complex problems of the society of today (*Forskning och samhälle* 1997: 69, *Forskning för ett bättre liv* 2005: 85).

Nevertheless, Lena Trojer, professor in techno-culture, humanities and planning at Blekinge Institute of Technology, stresses some significant details concerning the conception of knowledge and interdisciplinarity policy in the bills from the beginning of 1990s until 2000. In an analysis from 2001, she emphasizes the large variety of conceptions of knowledge in general and of interdisciplinarity in particular in the different governmental bills during this time span (Trojer, 2001: 2-4).

In 1993, the education minister Per Unckel presented the government bill *Forskning för kunskap och framsteg*. The bill builds on a quite traditional conception of knowledge. It refers to basic research and describes the conception of knowledge as cumulative. According to this bill, the aim of research is to seek the truth. Nevertheless, three years later, in 1996, the new education minister Carl Tham presented the governmental bill *Forskning och samhälle*, in which the (utilitarian)

relevance of research *for* society was made explicit. Here, the interest in a mix of interdisciplinarity, research ethics, gender research and collaboration with regional trade and industry is high. This bill demands descriptions for a complex production of knowledge, with a focus on the transgression of different kinds of borders. In 2000, the educational minister Thomas Östros published the governmental bill *Forskning och förnyelse*. In this bill, basic research came to the foreground again, accompanied by a linear view of knowledge growth. Now the importance of a strong disciplinary base is re-emphasised. Here, interdisciplinarity is treated with caution. There has, moreover, been a change in the use of terminology. In the bill from 2000, the word 'interdisciplinarity' is no longer used alone, but in the following string of words: 'multi- and interdisciplinarity' (Trojer, 2001: 4). In 2005, education minister Leif Pagrotsky presented the governmental bill *Forskning för ett bättre liv*. Here, basic research still is regarded as important. The role of multi- and interdisciplinarity is described in terms of applied and 'need oriented' research, i.e. it is an attempt to combine truth-seeking, cumulative basic research honoured by the strongest voices in the established research community with the funding-providing, utilitarian socialdemocratic approach. Nevertheless, the intersection between different disciplines is highlighted in the bill, as well as the importance of crossing different kinds of borders (*Forskning för ett bättre liv* 2005: 85, 91f).

Besides, the changed view of knowledge processes, disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity during the last 10-15 years, is reflected in the structure for research funding, something that will be discussed further in the comparative section of this report.

### 1.3 SWEDISH RESEARCH COUNCILS 1990-2005

At the beginning of the 1990s, the following eight disciplinary research councils existed in Sweden: the HSFR, the MFR, the NFR, the TFR, the SFR, the RALF, the SJFR, the BFR<sup>3</sup>. As seen from their designations, these research councils were clearly disciplinarily oriented. In addition, there existed one thematic research council in Sweden at that time: the Swedish Council for Planning and Coordination of Research, the FRN<sup>4</sup>. The FRN focused on large questions and funded research through thematic research programs. Consequently, the activity in the FRN was organized in thematic areas, such as sustainable development, gender research, elder research, long-term research etc. (Svedin, 2005).

In 1994, seven research foundations were established. The explicit purpose of these research foundations was to make research more pertinent to society and to facilitate co-operation with trade and industry. This step involved a change in Swedish research policy, that was increasingly directed towards applied research, commissioned research and problem-oriented research. Furthermore, during the years after 1994, the division between governmental and external grants changed, so that the share of external grants increased from 49% in 1997, to 55% in 2002 and consequently stressed the demand for competitiveness in research (Holm, and Liinason, 2005a: 21).

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<sup>3</sup> The Swedish Council for Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences (HSFR), The Swedish Medical Research Council (MFR), The Swedish Natural Science Research Council (NFR), The Swedish Research Council for Engineering Sciences (TFR), The Swedish Council for Social Research (SFR), The Swedish Council for Worklife Research (RALF), The Swedish Council for Forestry and Agricultural Sciences (SJFR), The Swedish Council of Building Research (BFR).

<sup>4</sup> The Swedish Council for Planning and Coordination of Research (FRN).

A comprehensive re-organisation of the structure of research funding was made in 2001. By then, the former nine research councils were transferred into four: The Swedish Research Council (the VR), The Swedish Council for Working Life and Social Research (the FAS), The Swedish Research Council for Environment, Agricultural Sciences and Spatial Planning (the FORMAS), and Swedish Agency for Innovation Systems (VINNOVA).

The new organisation for research funding increased the amount of research-representatives in the council's boards, by way of an articulated motivation to strengthen the scientific quality of research. Moreover, in contrast to the directed research programs announced by the FRN, the VR wanted to support spontaneous, 'ad hoc' interdisciplinarity, i.e. interdisciplinarity arising through initiatives taken by the researchers themselves. This attitude of the VR is due to, among other things, a concern for the destitution of basic research. In addition, this concern illustrates the view of the VR of the importance of a solid disciplinary basis as the starting point for interdisciplinary research (Vetenskapsrådet 2004: 21). This has transformed the space for interdisciplinary research from the previous existence of interdisciplinarity as a clearly defined area in the organisation of funding, to an integrated existence as 'mainstreamed' into every area of research in the new system for research funding.

The VR forms the core of the new organisational structure for research funding. It is responsible for the funding of basic research in all areas of science and it is organised along the following three scientific areas: the humanities-social sciences, engineering and natural sciences, and medicine. Furthermore, multi- and interdisciplinary initiatives are mentioned as important assignments for the Swedish Research Council (*Forskning och förnyelse*, 2000: 3, 99ff.).

The FAS is thematically organized according to research on labour market, labour organisation, labour and health, public health, welfare, care and social relationships. It covers a wide range of approaches from basic research to more applied efforts, and stimulates activities aimed at interdisciplinary approaches within its area of responsibility (*Forskning och förnyelse*, 2000: 113).

The Swedish Research Council for Environment, Agricultural Sciences and Spatial Planning (FORMAS) is also thematically organized according to research on environment, agriculture, social culture, garden-, fishing, and reindeer industry, forestry and forest works, settlements and social planning. FORMAS encourages and supports scientifically significant research related to sustainable development. It covers a wide range of approaches from basic research to more applied efforts and stimulates activities aimed at cross-sectoral and interdisciplinary approaches within its area of responsibility. The council is also commissioned to promote gender studies within its area of responsibility (*Forskning och förnyelse*, 2000: 117f.).

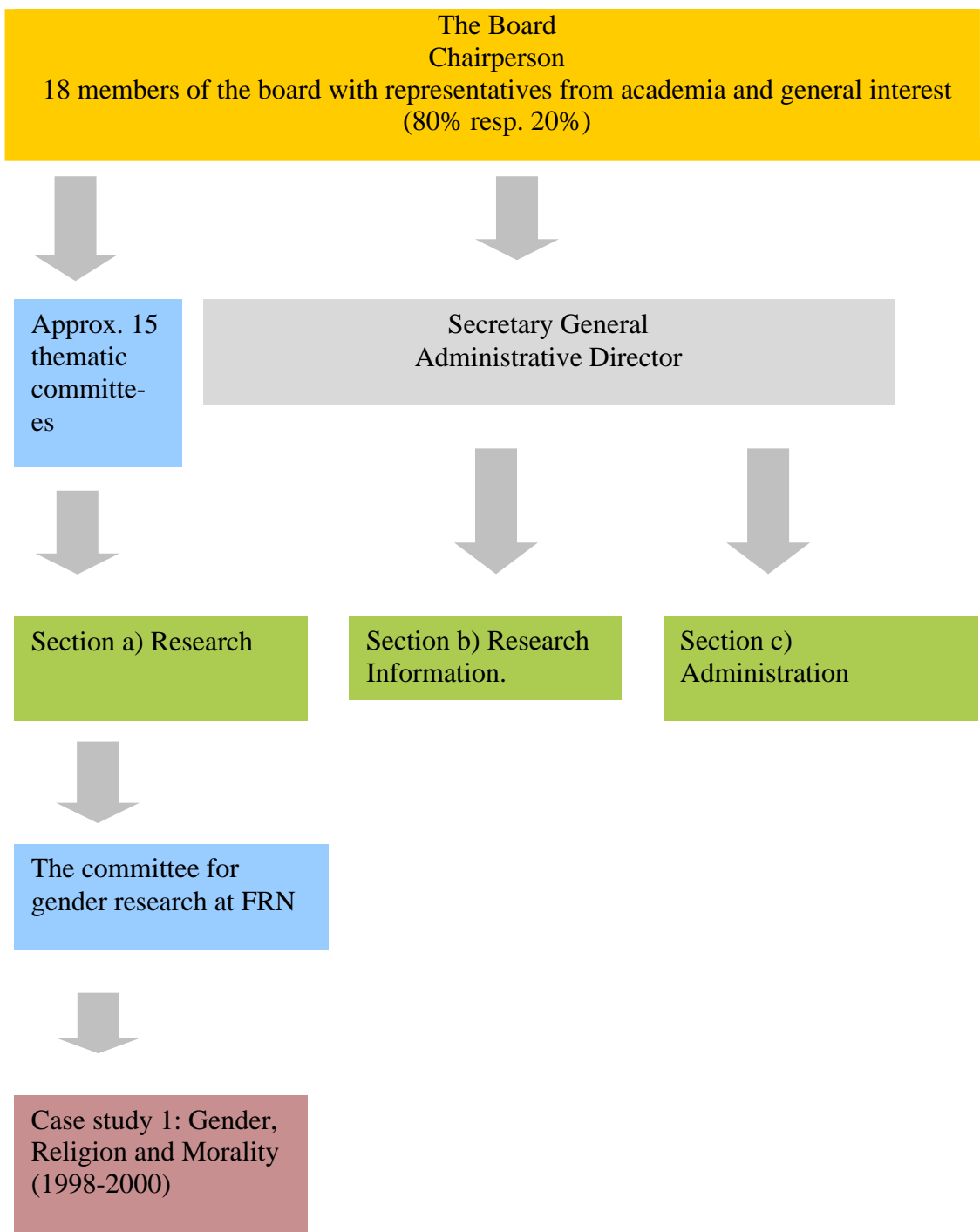
The Swedish Agency for Innovation Systems (VINNOVA) integrates research and development in technology, transport and employment. VINNOVA's commission is to promote sustainable growth by funding research, technology and development and to develop effective innovation systems (*Forskning och förnyelse*, 2000: 119).

## **2. CASE STUDY 1: THE FRN – GENDER, RELIGION AND MORALITY, 1998-2000**

With a certain focus on the FRN organisation and structure, in the following section we highlight the area of interdisciplinarity, created by governmental policies at this point in time. In order to grasp the practical dimension of these policies, we have conducted interviews with

- i) Barbro Westerholm who was the chairperson in the thematic committee for gender research at FRN 1991-2001 (by then, she was also a member of parliament);
- ii) Anne Marie Berggren, the research secretary at FRN with a certain responsibility for gender research (she is also a scholar in gender history);
- iii) Uno Svedin, head of the research department at the research council and chairperson of the expert group for interdisciplinarity 1998-1999; and
- iv) Lena Trojer, who was the chairperson of the Joint Action Group between 1996-2000.

**Case study 1:  
Gender, Religion and Morality (1998-2000)  
Swedish Council for Planning and Coordination of Research (FRN)**



In the context of Swedish research funding during the years studied, there was no “research program” in the European/English sense. Nevertheless, in order to strengthen certain areas of research, the FRN did make several thematic statements, using key-words. In practice, “statement” has several similarities with the notion of a “research program” in the European/English sense. We will therefore use the phrase “research program” instead of “statement” in the sections of the report dealing with research funding by the FRN.

In Case study 1, we consider the research program Gender, Religion and Morality, announced between the years 1998-2000. We have chosen this program mainly for the following reasons:

- a) Policy put into practice. To scrutinize interdisciplinarity through a certain research program gives us an opportunity to discuss governmental policy and its effects in practice.
- b) It is illustrative. The research program Gender, Religion and Morality was established just before the re-organisation of the whole system for research funding. This research program is illustrative for the FRN as well as for the earlier system.
- c) It is comparable. Since they are quite closely related in time, it is possible to compare this research program with the object of our second case study, located in the present system for research funding.

## 2.1 THE FRN - POLICY

The FRN was a small council, commissioned to initiate and support research with an explicit impact on society. The research council should

- Allocate funding for research projects within certain areas, especially areas of social importance, as well as significant, but neglected areas of research, preferably of an interdisciplinary character.
- Allocate funding for expensive research equipment.
- Give information about research to society as well as between researchers. (Trojer 2000: 93; *Om forskning*, 1990: 36).

At the beginning of the 1990s, interdisciplinary collaboration between researchers from ‘neighbouring’ disciplines was quite common, whereas interdisciplinary collaboration between widely differing fields of study was infrequent. In order to find a solution to the complex problems of the modern society, the need for interdisciplinary collaboration between researchers from both hard and soft sciences was identified as important. Consequently, the government gave the FRN the task to stimulate and inform about interdisciplinary research projects in order to further develop interdisciplinary research (*Forskning och samhälle*, 1997: 69).

### Organisation

The main areas for the activity of the FRN were, as mentioned earlier, research, infrastructure (“heavy equipment”) and information. Research and infrastructure was allocated a sum of approximately 10 500 000 Euro (100 millions SEK), whilst the information section was allotted less. The organisation was constituted by the Board and the secretariat. The Board was composed of 18 members, representing all the other research councils, the government, the labour market, county councils and local authorities. Thus, every research council, as well as large organisations and the parliamentary parties were represented on the Board of the FRN. The research

councils elected their own representatives, while the government elected the chair and the remaining members of the Board. The Board met six times per year. The Board appointed the working thematic committees, among other things.

The Secretariat was conducted by a secretary general, responsible for the research activities, and an administrative director, responsible for the administrative and financial aspect of the FRN. Committees and working groups were, in turn, tied to the diverse thematic areas (*Arkivbeskrivning FRN*, 2002:1,2).

### **The thematic committees<sup>5</sup>**

The FRN was not directed towards disciplinary research, but focused on basic goal-directed research. It was research with a focus on large questions, a kind of problem-oriented research.

The activity at the FRN was not divided along disciplinary lines, but in accordance with thematic frames, constituted through large questions of sustainable, long-term interest. As examples of thematic committees, the following groups can be mentioned: the committee for natural resources and environment, the committee for elder research, the committee for long-term research, the committee for longitudinal research, the committee for gender research etc. All in all there were around fifteen thematic committees at the FRN<sup>6</sup>.

The composition of the thematic committees was interdisciplinary. There were not only senior researchers, but also representatives of society, although still individuals with an academic background, in a mixture of 80% representatives with professor's competence (or similar) and 20% representatives of the general interest.

In the management of research applications, the thematic committees were allotted the same kind of preparatory function as ordinary preparatory groups. Simultaneously, the thematic committees also took initiatives for the strengthening of weak areas of research. These thematic committees had, thus, a wider function than the preparatory groups at the VR of today. Their work involved expert assessments of applications within areas these preparatory groups had initiated. Consequently, their work was at the same time pro-active and traditional, with preparation and assessment of applications.

The members of the thematic committees were appointed for three-year terms of office, with a possible prolongation for another period of three years. The thematic committees, however, had a longer lifetime. Depending on the theme, the thematic committees had a lifetime of approximately ten years. The Board of the FRN regularly made decisions about new themes and their focus. Such initiatives were often matched by a current government bill.

The general quality principles at the FRN were scientific quality, relevance and innovation. The applications were carefully assessed, with certain demands considering their interdisciplinary character. Larger allocations together with other research councils, were also sometimes launched by the FRN. However, a committee often took the initiative to support a specific research area in need of a certain backing. The interplay between the humanities, the social sciences and the natural sciences for example, was an area of this kind, in need of support from the FRN<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> The material for this section was collected through a telephone interview with Uno Svedin 12/10-05.

<sup>6</sup> For a register of some of these committees, see Appendix 2.

<sup>7</sup> At this time, there existed an operational funding exchange in order for applications not to be dropped between two chairs if they were considered as belonging to more than one research council. Here, representatives from every research council could present applications, of possible interest to others.

## The FRN and the EU

The FRN was established in 1977. It developed a well-functioning interdisciplinary working method, with its thematic committees that focused problem areas, such as the environment, alcohol abuse, elder research etc. At the beginning of the 1990s, for example, there was a discussion at European level about collaboration between natural sciences and social sciences – questions that the FRN had already been working on since the early 1980s. Consequently, the FRN found the research policy of the EU interesting, although they had been working with the same issues for many years, by the time the ideas were presented in the EU (Svedin, 2005).

## Interdisciplinarity, gender research and gender equality research

By the mid-1990s, the government asked for socially beneficial research. As earlier mentioned in this report, the guiding principles from the government were that research should meet the requirements of society. On account of its capacity to find solutions to the complex questions of the society of today, interdisciplinary research and forms of collaboration were at this time, viewed as an important goal and direction for research (*Forskning och samhälle*, 1997: 41, 69). At the same time, the government demanded the development of knowledge production. The traditional view of knowledge production, as conducted within a discipline at one single department, was called into question and challenged by a view on knowledge production as interdisciplinary and heterogenous, preferably with a global scope. Consequently, this resulted in claims for a development of international collaboration and interdisciplinarity within research and higher education (*Forskning och samhälle*, 1997:15, 28).

Furthermore, gender equality within the academy was seen as an important way to increase scientific quality, especially because of the significance in the composition of preparatory committees, the formulation of research programmes, as well as the scientific appointments at the separate departments in the academy. In order to achieve collaborative forms of research and to increase scientific quality, the government increased the grants to gender research, equal opportunities research<sup>8</sup> and interdisciplinarity at the FRN (*Jämställdhet mellan kvinnor och män inom utbildningsområdet*, 1995: 17, 164). The government demanded more efficient structures for co-operation across the borders in the whole system of research funding. Changes had to be made in order to facilitate collaborative projects for gender research and for female researchers (*Forskning och samhälle*, 1997: 3, 30, 40).

Thus, in order to develop and strengthen interdisciplinarity, gender research and gender equality within the academy, the government implemented the following changes within the system of higher education in Sweden:

1. The promotion of flexibility, executed by giving every institution of higher education its own public funding for research<sup>9</sup>.
2. The promotion of research with a gender perspective, as well as the strengthening of gender equality within the academy, among other things in the form of 18 new gender research appointments.

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Funding plans were made and projects were exchanged. The peer review system occurred after this division (Svedin, Uno 2005).

<sup>8</sup> By the mid-1990s, the designation of this area had shifted from 'equal opportunities research' to 'gender equality research'. The designation used in this report will consequently shift too when accounting for the development after 1995.

<sup>9</sup> This could, however, result in renewed obstacles, depending on the single institution's approach and organization (see Holm, and Liinason 2005a: 38).

3. The establishment of the Samverkansgruppen, the Joint Action Group, with a focus on gender research and interdisciplinarity, located within the FRN-research council, in order to promote flexibility and renewal in the area of research funding (*Forskning och samhälle*, 1997: 5,3)

### **The Samverkansgruppen, the Joint Action Group**

The Joint Action Group for gender and interdisciplinarity was established by the government in 1996. The Joint Action Group worked across the borders of every Swedish research council<sup>10</sup>, with the specific brief to identify interdisciplinary research of high quality. It was constituted by two members from the respective research council, often the chair and secretary general. Every single research council contributed to the funding, while the FRN functioned as secretariat and disbursed the administrative costs of the Joint Action Group (Trojer, 2005).

In the Joint Action Group, there were discussions about general questions, such as working teams and large allocations that were going to be jointly announced between the research councils. One suggestion for a joint theme of this kind was The Origins of Life. Furthermore, the Joint Action Group created two expert groups, with a focus on interdisciplinary research and gender research.

### **The expert group for interdisciplinarity**

The Joint Action Group elected a chairperson and members from the expert group for interdisciplinarity. Every secretary general (or a senior researcher appointed by the secretary general) of the research councils was a member of the expert group for interdisciplinarity<sup>11</sup>. The expert group for interdisciplinarity produced a document on how interdisciplinarity should be considered, as well as general outlines for the management of interdisciplinarity (Svedin, 1999: 1).

### **The expert group for the integration of gender research**

The Joint Action Group elected a chair and members to this expert group. It was constituted by representatives from every Swedish research council, as well as representatives from the Norwegian research council and the Danish research forum. The task of the expert group was to develop and strengthen the conditions for and support of gender research in every research council. Within the range of the Joint Action Group, the expert group started to develop a model for integration of gender research into the system of research funding (Trojer, 2000: 5).

## **2.2 SUMMARY**

The government explicitly commissioned the FRN to deal with interdisciplinary research. Interdisciplinary collaboration between widely differing fields of study, such as the humanities and the engineering sciences was furthermore especially promoted. In addition, the thematic committees, constituted by academics from a large variety of disciplines, made the establishment of interdisciplinary collaborative projects easier.

The FRN had a clear connection to society, the labour market and trade and industry, through the composition of the Board. This fact established possibilities for utilitarian forms of interdisciplinary research, i.e. problem oriented or applied

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<sup>10</sup> The joint action group was constituted by the following eight authorities: The FRN, HSFR, MFR, NFR, SJFR, SFR and TFR and the Swedish National Space Board (Trojer, 2005).

<sup>11</sup> See appendix 1 for a list of members in the expert group for interdisciplinarity and in the expert group for the integration of gender research.

research. Simultaneously, the thematic committees were constituted by members from both academia and society, although the representatives from the society were also academically.

However, the Board selected the questions to be addressed in the thematic committees. Every 10<sup>th</sup> year, new thematic allocations were made. The members of the thematic committees were appointed for three years only, with a possible prolongation for another three years. An arrangement like this established possibilities for broad interdisciplinarity, and accomplished by long-term concentrations, attended to complex problems, not seldom of relevance to society.

The Joint Action Group, moreover, composed by every research council, could transverse disciplinary and organisational boundaries in order to establish large co-operative research projects. Its ambition was to develop possibilities for interdisciplinarity as well as gender research across the organisation for research funding. This was accomplished by the two expert groups, who understood it as an attempt to support interdisciplinary and gender research in a two-fold way: via an existing group commissioned for that purpose, through attempting to integrate interdisciplinarity or gender research in every area of research.

Consequently, the support of interdisciplinary research from the FRN was made possible by way of:

- The explicit assignment from the government to support interdisciplinary research, established possibilities for interdisciplinarity, by way of organizational form, conceptual attitudes and earmarked funding for areas in need of support.
- The organizational form at the FRN included several thematic committees, which in their turn were constituted by members from a range of different disciplines. With explicit attention to interdisciplinarity between widely differing fields of study, as for example the natural sciences and the social sciences, these were commissioned to manage applications on a large scale.
- The Joint Action Group, which promoted large collaborative research projects across disciplinary and organisational lines in the whole system of research funding. The ambition to bring about an integration of the support for interdisciplinary and gender research was here supplemented and supported through this organisational and administrative frame at the FRN.

## **2.3 PROGRAM**

### **The committee for gender research at the FRN**

The large allocation to gender research and gender equality within the academy had its origin in the Swedish government, whose opinion was that gender equality within the academy would raise the quality of research. This goal should be achieved by the promotion of promising women researchers that too often were seen as being restrained by the glass ceiling in the academy. Moreover, in order to establish a fair preparation of applications from women researchers, the government wanted to develop competence in gender research within the preparatory evaluation committees in the research councils and in the peer review procedure.

The parallel strengthening of funding for gender research was furthermore considered an important issue by the Swedish government, among other things because of the intention to develop new knowledge of gender equality and inequality, as well as to develop the theoretical and methodological findings of the subject field. In order to strengthen gender research and gender equality, the FRN was allocated

funding for gender research and gender equality research by the government from 1991 until the research council was discontinued in 2001. The money was to be used to reinforce women's position within the academy, as well as to develop research with a gender perspective (Ve, , Gustafsson, Saarinen, 1999: 5).

Another explicit aim of the committee for gender research was to support interdisciplinary research. Nevertheless, few research projects supported by the committee were properly interdisciplinary. Some were projects with themes like "art and journalism", "theory and practice in the research community", "problematizing western economic thinking through theological liberation movements in the Third World". Most of the interdisciplinary projects were to be found in one of the most wealthy research areas at that time: medical research, with themes like health, sexuality and assault against women. Furthermore, many research projects within information technology, were viewed as multi- or interdisciplinary (Ve, Gustafsson, Saarinen 1999: 32).

### **Organisation<sup>12</sup>**

In 1991, the committee for gender research was established at the FRN. The Board at the FRN selected the members of the committee. It was composed of researchers and representatives for the general interest, with a recognized competence in the complex of problems attached to gender. There were 11 members in the committee. During the three initial years of the committee of gender research, it had members with the following expertise: one representative from physics, two representatives from medicine, one from psychology, one from sociology, two representatives from 'general interests' (one of these was a head of the National Statistics Office in Sweden, the other an author), one representative from history of literature, one representative from law of procedure, one from history and one from business economics. The chair was a member of parliament and there was also one research secretary.

### **Interdisciplinarity**

One of the purposes of the research programs of the committee for gender research at the FRN was to support research with an interdisciplinary profile. I.e. the FRN thus favoured a strategy that corresponded to the double strategy in gender research: to bring together researchers and research across the disciplinary borders and to transform the existing scientific disciplines and their borders. Furthermore, because gender research often explores areas of praxis, as well as changes, in society, researchers in gender research often share a multi- or interdisciplinary profile (Ve, Gustafsson, Saarinen, 1999: 32).

### **Research programs 1991-1997**

During the 1990s, the focus in the research programs was on gender in general. The committee published extensive research programs, formulated in following way:

With renewed resources at their disposal, the Board wants to contribute to a continuously positive development of Swedish women's and gender equality research from a broad perspective. Even if the Board does not now want to specify any areas that ought to be specially attended to, it may be stated that women's and equal opportunities research within the humanities or the social sciences already has developed quite well. Beyond continued allocations in these areas, the Board

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<sup>12</sup> The material in this section is based on a telephone interview with Barbro Westerholm 11/11-05.

wants to encourage ideas of research that broaden women's studies and equal opportunity research, to include for example, women's studies in medicine, linguistics, technology and some other less attended to aspects of women's studies and equal opportunity research.<sup>13</sup> (Ve, Gustafsson, Saarinen, 1999: 17f).

At this point in time, evaluations showed that gender researchers were seldom funded via disciplinary research councils. Moreover, gender research was looked at with distrust. Because of this, and because of the fact that the competition was harder for gender researchers than for ordinary researchers, the need for earmarked funding for gender research was regarded as necessary (Westerholm, Barbro, 2005).

Through the committee for gender research, gender research was legitimated and, above all, was given an increasing amount of funding resources. At that point in time and in comparison with the rest of the Nordic countries, the gender committee at FRN accomplished the largest and lengthiest allocations for gender research. This is a fact that above all was made possible by the support from a number of active politicians and funds from the government (Ve, Gustafsson, Saarinen, 1999: 28, 34).

### **Gender, Religion and Morality**

Those engaged in work with gender research at FRN during the 1990s experienced an expanding research field. However, problems with institutional security and a lack of funds from the universities were present in gender research at the same time. The resources allocated to gender research at this time came exclusively from a political direction. All the research projects approved for funding by the committee for gender research at FRN, were funded directly by the government and never from the ordinary funds of the FRN (Ve, Gustafsson, Saarinen 1999: 24; Westerholm, 2005).

Nevertheless, different demands on gender research from the government, the researchers and the FRN often crossed each other. The government demanded research with relevance to society; the researchers asked for theory development and the FRN demanded information and development of the area of gender research. Consequently, the strategy of the committee for gender research was to meet all these demands in broad research programs (Trojer, 2000: 92).

In 1997, the committee for gender research administrated 295 applications. During the same year, the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation handled 37 gender research applications, HSFR 79 and the research council for social research 79 gender research applications: all in all 196 applications in the area of gender research and gender equality research. A comparison between the differing numbers indicates that the gender research programme at FRN had a leading position in the area of gender research and gender equality research (Ve, Gustafsson, Saarinen, 1999: 20).

Nevertheless, the committee for gender research at FRN had only a small amount of money to distribute, both in comparison with other research councils and in comparison to the total amount of applications (Westerholm, 2005). Ever since its start in 1991, the committee for gender research had a high amount of applications, as illustrated in this table:

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<sup>13</sup> The quotation is translated from Swedish by Mia Liinason and Ulla M Holm.

Year	Applications to the amount of:	Sum to distribute:
1991	32 milj. SEK	3 milj. SEK
1992	33 milj. SEK	9,2 milj SEK
1995	80 milj. SEK	10,5 milj. SEK
1997	100 milj. SEK	11 milj. SEK

(Source: Westerholm, 2005)

The number of applications in 1994/95 was to 180, and 53 of them were granted (Westerholm, 2005).

Furthermore, the applications to the committee for gender research trebled from 1991 until 1997. Consequently, it became clear in the beginning of 1997 that the amount of applications were too high for one committee to handle. Moreover, the allocation of funds did by an average last for approximately 20 per cent of all the applications within the area. For this reason, two thematic areas were established during the years 1998, 1999 and 2000: *Gender, power and institutional changes* and *Gender, religion and morality* (Trojer, 2000:91).

It was seen as important to establish wide research programs, and to support both societally important research and the internal development of gender research. This intention was also the most significant reason why these thematic areas were chosen. The committee for gender research observed a need for gender research in the area of religion and morality, due to, among other things, immigration and globalisation in relation to the view of women in the Christian Bible. As for the other thematic research program, power and dominance were considered as relevant topics for the further development of gender research (Westerholm, 2005). During these research programs, the committee had at its disposal approximately 1 000 000 Euro (10 million SEK) to distribute per year. Nevertheless, the committee did handle a continuously ascending amount of applications, as illuminated in following table:

Year	Amount of applications
1998	133 applications
1999	135 applications
2000	280 applications

(Source: Berggren, 2005)

The preparatory committee was constituted by the members of the committee for gender research. They met approximately three times per application: first to distribute applications, then, to choose among the accepted applications and take decisions about funding, and finally, when the applications were awarded funding. If the representative members did not possess sufficient competence to accomplish the assessment, the application was given to two external experts. The representative members wrote formal reports on every application under their responsibility.

Interdisciplinarity was implicitly embedded in the area of research handled by the FRN. Applications from every research area were admitted. The important thing,

however, was that the applicant was competent in the area of gender research. The committee examined the applicants' competence in gender research as well as the applicants' capability to conduct interdisciplinary research, by scrutinizing their lists of reference, the researcher's treatment of the subject, as well as the researcher's level of knowledge in the area (Berggren, 2005).

The committee tried to use a grading scale of the same kind as used in medical research councils. It did not function for preparations of applications from the humanities, however (Westerholm, 2005). The assessment was made from evaluations of competence, relevance, originality and methodological skills. Thus, except for the grading scale, the committee for gender research used the same standards as the disciplinary research councils at that point in time.

### **Evaluation: outcome of the research projects funded by the committee for gender research at the FRN**

An evaluation of the granted research projects was made in the 1999. A questionnaire directed to researchers in the gender research program at FRN showed that between the years 1991 and 1997 it resulted in 14 completed PhDs and two licenciates. Another 11 PhDs were due to be finished in 1999 and 45 still further ahead. On average, approximately half the funded researchers worked alone, while the other half worked in a research team. During the same period of time, the gender research programme resulted in 98 monographs and anthologies, 128 articles of which 60 were published in Swedish journals, 44 in international journals, 24 in Nordic journals, and another 128 in popular science magazines. More than half the researchers had presented their results at scientific conferences and quite as many had established some kind of networking collaboration together with other researchers in the same academic field.

To conclude, the gender research programmes seem to have contributed to the development of gender research to a great extent during its years of existence. Many of the researchers engaged in research projects supported by the FRN indicate that the research program had the function of giving the research area legitimation and making it visible (Ve, , Gustafsson, Saarinen, 1999: 20, 22).

The difficulties during the years were two fold: 1) The large variation of progress in different disciplines. Should FRN support disciplines with a recent interest in gender research or should they support advanced research in the field? 2) The great lack of money. The amount of applications were constantly much higher than the final number of awarded research projects.

Moreover, it is clear that the committee for gender research supported a lot of dissertation writing. There are two important reasons for doing so. At first the low amount of funding, and secondly the fact that gender research was a subject field under construction. Grants to PhD students writing dissertations was seen as something important to the development of the subject as a whole (Westerholm, 2005, and Berggren, 2005).

## **2.4 SUMMARY**

The committee for gender research was composed of representatives from a range of different disciplines: in its first period of time, the committee had representatives from the following eight disciplines: physics, medicine, psychology, sociology, history of literature, business economics, law of procedure and history. The chair was a member of parliament. Consequently, the constitution of the committee reflected the preparation for, and the efforts made to handle, interdisciplinary applications.

Apart from the aim to support gender research and gender equality research, another aim of the committee for gender research was to promote interdisciplinarity, by the way an aim in agreement with both the FRN-policy, as well as the strategy in gender research to bridge disciplinary barriers. However, interdisciplinarity proper was rare among funded research projects, and at that point in time mainly visible in the areas of medicine and IT.

The broad research programs between the years 1991-1997 were important for the development of the gender research area. The two thematic research programs between 1998-2000 were identified because of a lack of funding and administrative resources. The low number of administrative personnel and the low level of funding, compared to the large amount of applications the committee was supposed to handle, compelled the committee for gender research to narrow the research programs. The fact that gender research did not get any allocations from the FRN shows a reduction of the value of gender research, made by scientific representatives at the FRN. A course of events that furthermore points out the importance of earmarked funding and of support from individual politicians.

All in all, the promotion of interdisciplinary applications in gender research and gender equality research by the committee for gender research at the FRN was made possible by way of:

- An explicit assignment from the FRN to support interdisciplinary research, in all its varieties but with a special focus on “wide” interdisciplinarity, i.e. between the humanities and medicine for example.
- The spreading of disciplinary competence in the composition of preparatory committees.
- The support from individual politicians and earmarked funding from the government.

## **2.5 RESEARCH PROJECTS**

In this section, we discuss two research projects, funded with research grants from the research program Gender, Religion and Morality. At first, we discuss a collaborative project: *Divination – cosmic order, solution of problems and gender*. After that, we discuss a project, designed and performed by one researcher: *Fatherhood-responsibility-movement: Changed gender relations in family, state and labour market*.

The projects were chosen for three motives: first, we wanted to look at research projects that were performed in collaboration as well as by one single researcher – in order to, among other things, find out if one single researcher can conduct interdisciplinary research. Secondly, we wanted to investigate a research project with a variety of connections, national as well as international. Finally, we wanted to spread the investigation over different fields of research.

## **Divination – cosmic order, solution of problems and gender (Divination – kosmisk ordning, problemlösning och genus).**

Researchers: Britt-Marie Näsström, Gerd Pettersson, Eva Rosén-Hockersmith.

Department: Science of Religion, University of Göteborg

Project time: 1999-2001.

Amount of funding: 1999: 35 340 Euro (340 000 SEK)

2000: 43 700 Euro (420 000 SEK)

2001: 46 800 Euro (450 000 SEK)

This project was planned, designed and performed within the field of religion, more specifically history of religion. The researchers had all taken a PhD in the field and were at that time located at the same department. The aim of the project was to study social and cultural constructions within, as well as through, divinations (the art of prophecy) in Celtic, Old Norse, Greek-Roman and Indian cultures. Moreover, the researchers wanted to visualize connections between traditions and practices of divinations and the construction and reconstruction of gender. The study employed several methods such as textual analysis, field studies, interviews, participant observation and oral history, in order to get information about myths, histories, rituals and legends (Näsström, 2001: 1, 3, 5). From the start the project was divided into the following three sub-projects (Näsström, 2005):

- Britt-Mari Näsström investigated *Divination in Europe, Greek-Roman and Norse cultures*. Her study focused on divinations in judicial decisions, the norms and the belief in Fate in connection to divination. She also studied Norse medieval handicraft products.
- Gerd Pettersson studied *Divination in Celtic and Norse cultures*. With an aim to investigate the Celtic tradition of “second sight” and “bardic poetry” in Great Britain and Northern Ireland, she planned to examine the original sources and to do literature studies at the University of Ulster and the University of Edinburgh. This, however, was not accomplished, among other things because of the lack of money in the research project.
- Eva Rosén-Hockersmith examined *Divination in Indian cultures*. In order to investigate divination and gender in 1) traditions of Brahman Sanskrit, preferably wisdom divinations, 2) in the environment the urban middle class, with reference to astrology, such as horoscopes, chiromancy and intuitive divinations, and 3) in a general popular context, focusing on divinations of trance and possession, observance of omens, the use of talismans etc., she conducted field studies in Calcutta, India (Näsström, 2001: 1, 3, 5).

### **Research process**

Britt-Mari Näsström<sup>14</sup> was research coordinator for the project. In order to write about Divination in Europe, she received a small amount of money from the joint resources in the project. Nevertheless, she became a professor during the project time, an advancement that required much work. Consequently, the research team came to the

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<sup>14</sup> The material to this section was collected in a face-to-face interview with Britt Mari Näsström, 2005-10-07.

conclusion that every one should write her own part, and that Pettersson and Rosén-Hockersmith should produce the larger amount of results in the project. This, however, did not prevent the research project from being difficult to manoeuvre and while Näsström had a full-time job as a professor, no one could direct the project. To her, it was difficult to get peace and quiet in order to work at the department. In addition, she had a lot of teaching to do. Näsström did not get any time for writing, and the other researchers started to get irritated over the low level of funding they were allotted by the department. Although they had reached a consensus on significant elements in the research process, for example the methods to be used, they had different views of the central concepts, such as gender for instance. Initially, they met at the department every other week and sent material via e-mail and discussed findings at their meetings. Gradually, and in proportion to the growing conflicts, they met more and more infrequently. After the project time ran out, they did not bring the project to an end.

This was a project with internal difficulties. Much time and effort was invested in the conflict. It was hard for Näsström to co-ordinate the project and difficult for Rosén-Hockersmith and Pettersson to collaborate. The disputes between Pettersson and Rosén-Hockersmith, among themselves as well as between them and the head of the department, increased. According to the research co-ordinator, this research project resulted in a failure, without hardly any production of significant research results.

## Publications

### *Monographs*

Author	Title	Publishing company	Locality/ Year
Britt-Mari Näsström	Fornskandinavisk religion: en grundbok	Studentlitteratur	Lund: 2002
	Blot: tro och offer i det förkristna Norden	Studentlitteratur	Stockholm: 2002

### *Articles*

Author	Title	Journal	Year/issue/pages
Britt-Mari Näsström	'I begynnelsen... : om skapelsemyter i grekisk och romersk religion'	Medusa	1999: 1, p. 26-30
	'Manliga män och kyskhetsideal: från soldaten i fält till kristna munkar'	<i>Kvinnovetenskaplig tidskrift</i>	2003: 3/4, p. 7-14
Gerd Pettersson:	'Profylaktiska, prognostiska och krigiska svin i Europa'	<i>Humanistdagboken</i>	1999
Eva Rosén-Hockersmith:	'Helig vetenskap eller bara skadlig vidskepelse? prestigeladdad kamp kring astrologins roll i Indien'	<i>Politisk och kulturell tidskrift</i>	2001: 4, p.16-17.

*Lectures*

Lecturer	Title	Location	Year/month
Britt-Mari Näsström	‘Präster och Profeter’	Presentation at Vetenskapsradion, P1 (the editorial office for science at the Swedish Broadcasting Cooperation)	2000: January
	‘Kärleksmagi i fornskandinavisk religion’	Göteborg University	2000: March
	“Völvor och sejdmän i genusperspektiv”	Göteborg University	1999: October
	‘Mannen som förlovade sig med en staty’	Göteborg University	1999: October
	‘... I väntan på en frälsare’	Lecture at Göteborg Cathedral	1999
Gerd Pettersson	‘Den aktuella shamanismforskningen’	Gävle university college	2000: May
	‘Våld – hjältar och marodörer’	Vetenskapsfestivalen , Göteborg, Sweden	2000: May
	‘Profylaktiska, prognostiska och krigiska svin i Europa’	Göteborg University	1999: October
Eva Rosén-Hockersmith:	‘Kosmologier och genusuppfattningar inom Hinduismen, part I’	Museum of Ethnography, Göteborg, Sweden	2000: April
	‘Kosmologier och genusuppfattningar inom Buddhismen, part II’	Museum of Ethnography, Göteborg, Sweden.	2000: April

*Conferences*

Lecturer	Title	Conference	Place/Year/Month
Britt-Mari Näsström	‘Gudens röst – om pythian i genusperspektiv’	<i>Språk och kön 2000</i>	Göteborg, Sweden, 2000: October
	‘Healing hands and magical spells’	11 <sup>th</sup> international SAGA-conference.	Sydney University, Australia, 2000: July
	‘Sacrifice and divination in Old Norse Religion’	The Vikings: Navigators, discovers, creators	Sofia University, Bulgaria, 2000: May

*Conferences, continued..*

Lecturer	Title	Conference	Place/Year/Month
Gerd Pettersson	'Obsessed Warriors'	Holiness and Masculinity	University of Huddersfield, U.K, 2001: July
	'Some remarks on Early Irish and Norse Horseracing – in myth and reality'	Paper at a medieval conference	University of Leeds, U.K.2001: July
	'Violence, Divination and Gender in the Early Fenian Tales'	Emerge 2000. Early Medieval European Research Group Conference	2000: September
	'Gender, divination and their Relation to Sacred Order in some early Irish tales'	International medieval Congress 2000	University of Leeds, U.K., 2000: July
Eva Rosén-Hockersmith	Participated in the conference Från periferi till centrum. Genusforskningens institutionalisering	Swedish secretariat for Gender Research	Göteborg, Sweden, 1999: December

**Discussion**

When focusing on issues like research questions, objects of research, methods used and publications, it is quite reasonable to consider *Divination – cosmic order, solution of problems and gender* as an interdisciplinary project. The research project investigated the art of prophecy in different parts of the world in different epochs. It clearly had a thematic approach. It used several methods, such as participant observation, oral history and interviews, as well as a multitude of knowledge. The project utilized history, religion, ethnology, sociology and social anthropology.

The collaborative part of the project cannot, however, be regarded as interdisciplinary. All three of the researchers have a PhD in the same discipline. In addition, they were located at the same department during the whole project. They published and gave lectures independently. On the other hand, they published their results in interdisciplinary journals, such as *Kvinnovetenskaplig tidskrift* and *Politisk och kulturell tidskrift*. Furthermore, their lectures were given in a variety of settings, from the university in Göteborg to the Swedish Broadcasting Cooperation. Concerning conference papers, however, they were mostly given at disciplinary, or subject-oriented conferences. This illustrates both the interdisciplinary currency in the research project, as well as the multi- or interdisciplinary status of their discipline, history of religion.

As earlier mentioned, however, the research project had collaborative difficulties. This had its origin in an economic conflict, but funding was not their only point of disagreement. Another central conflict was the different understandings of the concept of *gender* among the researchers. This was a barrier towards interdisciplinarity, significant for the establishment and understanding of interdisciplinarity and research practices. The disagreement on the concept of *gender* had a decisive role in the

outcome of the research project and its failure with no formal conclusion, no collaborative publication or paper-presentation, and towards the end of the project a severe lack of co-operation, as discussed earlier.

The inability of the research team to become united in their understanding of the concept of *gender* points to one of the challenges with interdisciplinary work: to actualize the interdisciplinary potential to push our conceptions a bit further. Consequently, this shows that interdisciplinarity is not only a question of working methods, but also the difficult question of processes of knowledge and knowledge-production.

The function of interdisciplinarity as a field for complex processes of knowledge production is an often forgotten consequence in interdisciplinary research projects, often understood as problem oriented, or ‘applied’ forms of research. This double function is for instance exemplified by the view of Bengt Hansson, philosopher and secretary general in the Vetenskapsrådet’s Scientific Council for the humanities and social sciences. Bengt Hansson focuses on two kinds of interdisciplinarity: a) cooperative interdisciplinarity, in contrast to b) cross-fertilization. Cooperative interdisciplinarity, he stresses, appears when people from different disciplines work together on common tasks, while cross-fertilization concentrates on explanatory structures with an aim to create better ones. These two strategies offer, according to Bengt Hansson, radically different results. Cooperative interdisciplinarity has the capacity to solve problems immediately, while cross-fertilization is capable of dealing with questions of fundamental understanding. Interdisciplinarity in the second sense is, in his view, very hard to achieve (Hansson, 1999: 339, 341, 343). Hanson breaks with this formal division, however, when he outlines the possibility for a mixture between these two varieties of interdisciplinarity. His outlook is, nevertheless, based on the conception that creative ideas originate in the individual mind. This is a fact that, according to Hansson, implies that collaborative interdisciplinarity, i.e. problem solving interdisciplinarity, cannot be occupied with the creation of new knowledge, a point of view that draws on conventional aspects of processes of knowledge.

The position of being outside the ordinary system creates a possibility to produce a criticism of traditional constructions of knowledge. It is even quite likely that interdisciplinary subjects, like gender studies for example, break with the predominant knowledge structure (Kalman, 1996: 2). This can be established in the use of a mixture of different methods, research strategies and/or explanatory models (Pryse, 1998, 7). Although, as illustrated by the research project that “failed”, it is important to stress that interdisciplinarity is not learnt. Interdisciplinarity is to be regarded as a practice and as a consequence of the continual training and the systematic strive toward more flexible mental patterns (Liinason, 2004: 11).

**Fatherhood responsibility movement: the controversy about changed gender relations in the family, state and labour market. (Faders-ansvars-rörelsen; omtvistandet av förändrade genusrelationer i familj, stat och arbetsmarknad).**

Researcher: Anna Gavanas

Department: Department of Social Anthropology, University of Stockholm

Project time: 1998-1999.

Amount of funding: 1998: 8 300 Euro (80 000 SEK)

1999: 36 000 Euro (346 000 SEK)

Anna Gavanas<sup>15</sup> wrote her thesis out of this project, but the FRN was not her sole funding source. During the final work on her dissertation, she was appointed as a PhD-candidate at the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Stockholm, by way of a Stockholm University Social Sciences Grant (1999-2001).

Anna Gavanas' dissertation *Masculinizing fatherhood: sexuality, marriage and race in the U.S. fatherhood responsibility movement* investigated the incompatible moral and structural outlooks that drive competing constituencies of men within the strategic alliance called the 'Fatherhood Responsibility Movement'. Gavanas examined the complex gendered implications of the Fatherhood Responsibility Movement, as well as its sexual politics. She focused on the ways that sport and religion are used as unifying and contested homosocial arenas, and traced the ways masculinization and heteronormativity are reinforced within fatherhood politics. By placing the control of innately promiscuous male heterosexuality at the centre of the social and moral order, Gavanas describes how the Fatherhood Responsibility Movement differentiates masculinity from women and gay men.

According to Gavanas, The Fatherhood Responsibility Movement's contradictory attempts to virilize as well as control the maleness of fatherhood emerged in both adversarial and friendly responses to feminist politics. She described the asymmetrical positioning in the construction of masculinities in the following points of reference: white middle-class marriage proponents primarily construct masculinity in a binary opposite to notions of women, and representatives of poor and minority men primarily conceive of themselves as men in structural relation to other men (i.e. white middle-class men). Gavanas' study was empirically based and brings up multiple dimensions and voices through interviews as well as intriguing participant observation from within its male-exclusive settings. Her study illuminates ties between fatherhood politics, the Marriage Movement and the Promise Keepers and reveals the racial and sexual politics of fatherhood.

Gavanas describes her interdisciplinary working process as an enormous advantage. She perceives her interdisciplinary position as a privileged position, with the opportunity to collaborate with like-minded researchers without prestige. Moreover, the research question – and not researcher specialization – is in focus. Another benefit mentioned was the possibility to choose whom you collaborate with. In comparison to the support from other departments, the support from her "home-department" was tiny. Therefore, it would have been more difficult for her to "stay disciplined" and not to work interdisciplinarily. Furthermore, her disciplinary background has not resulted in any collaborative difficulties. The only thing she

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<sup>15</sup> The material to this section was gathered in a telephone interview with Anna Gavanas, 10/10 2005 .

referred to as something difficult was her lack of a variety of methods, such as for example demographic method.<sup>16</sup>

## Publications

### Monograph

Title	Publishing company	Locality/ Year
Masculinizing fatherhood: sexuality, marriage and race in the U.S. fatherhood responsibility movement	(Diss.) Stockholm University	Stockholm, 2001

### Articles

Title	Book/Journal	Editor/Publishing company/Year/Issue
'The Fatherhood Responsibility Movement: The centrality of marriage, work and male' sexuality in reconstructions of masculinity and fatherhood.'	In: <i>Making Men into Fathers. Men, Masculinities and the Social Politics of Fatherhood</i>	Edited by Barbara Hobson, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002
'Entries: Fathers' Rights and the Fatherhood Responsibility Movement.'	In: <i>Men and Masculinities: A Social, Cultural and Historical Encyclopaedia.</i>	Eds: Kimmel, Michael and Amy Aronson, Santa Barbara, Ca: ABC clio Press, 2003
'Domesticating masculinity and masculinizing domesticity in contemporary U.S. fatherhood politics.'	<i>Social Politics</i> (special issue on Collective Interventions around Partnering and Parenting)	Vol. 11: 247-266

<sup>16</sup> In order to work as a post doc at SUNY, State University of New York, Gavanoas was given a 18-months scholarship after her dissertation. During this time, she was invited by Professor Fiona Williams at CAVA, Leeds University, to present her dissertation at Leeds University. In the meantime, they established a new interdisciplinary research project, funded by the EU, with a focus on migrating nursemaids in the EU. In this new research project, Gavanoas investigates the circumstances in Sweden, England and Spain. By the 1<sup>st</sup> December 2005, she was about to begin a new interdisciplinary research project, funded by the Swedish Research Council (the VR), together with Hilevi Ganetz and Johan Fornäs, 2005-2007. Here the focus is popular music from different angles and Gavanoas' part of the project is a study on women as DJ's. This project is investigated in the second case study of this report, Case study 2.

*Lectures*

Title	Location	Year/month
'Men's Movements and the Politics of Gender, Family and Sexuality'	Guest lecture at the Swedish Program course "Body, Sexuality, Culture" at Stockholm University	2003, April 9
'Att Domesticera Maskulinitet och Maskulinisera Domesticitet'	presentation at Högre Seminariet at Tema Genus, Linköping University.	2003, Feb 11
'Gender Sociology and U.S. Masculinity Politics'	Lecture at the Gender and Sociology course of Barnard College, headed by Professor Elizabeth Bernstein.	2002, Sept 26
'Fatherhood Politics and U.S. Men's Movements'	Lecture at the University of New York Center for the Study of Gender and Sexuality	2001, Nov 20

*Conferences<sup>17</sup>*

Title	Conference	Place/Year/Month
'The Fatherhood Responsibility Movement: Cutting Across Contemporary U.S. Men's Movements.'	Gender and Citizenship Within and Across Policy Borders	Riksbanken Symposium at the Swedish Parliament 2001, Oct 29
'Recognition Struggles, Fatherhood and Comparative Welfare States'	International conference	Sigtuna, Sweden, 2001, Oct 26-28:
'Masculinizing Domesticity and Domesticizing Masculinity'	Men and Masculinities-series	Center for Women's Studies at Stockholm University, 2001, April 19
'The Fatherhood Responsibility Movement: The Centrality of Marriage, Work and Male Sexuality in U.S. Reconstructions of Masculinity and Fatherhood.'	<i>American Anthropological Association</i> , presented at the Panel: Households and Youth Cultures in the New Economy.	San Francisco. 2000, Nov 14-19

<sup>17</sup> See appendix 4 for a continuation of the list of conference participation, proceeding from this research project, between the years 2002-2003.

*Conferences, continued*

Title	Conference	Place/Year/Month
'Transition of Gender, Welfare States and Democracy'	<i>TSER conference</i> , led by prof. Ilona Ostner.	Göttingen University, Germany, 1999, Feb. 23-25
'Recognition Struggles Project'	The International Working Group on Social Movements	Silja Hotel Ariadne in Stockholm, 1998, Oct 23-25
'Fathers and the State'	Conference at Silja Hotel Ariadne in Stockholm, led by Docent Barbara Hobson.	1998, Sept. 18-21

During the project, Gavanoas participated in many international networks with a focus on questions of gender and welfare. Moreover, she was invited to several conferences, both in disciplines other than her own, as well as in thematic conferences, with a focus on areas such as gender and power, for example. In addition, she gave a number of lectures in differing scientific contexts.

**Discussion**

Gavanoas' work is clearly interdisciplinary. With a focus on contrasting argument and the rhetoric surrounding masculinity and conceptions of family, race and gender, this is a research project that presents research questions covering a range of disciplines: history, sociology and political science, to mention just some of them. The methods used are however quite ordinary for social anthropology: interviews and participant observation. This is, by the way, the only area Gavanoas mentions as difficult when it comes to interdisciplinarity.

Apart from her dissertation, Gavanoas has published two articles in edited books and one article in the interdisciplinary journal *Social Politics*. Furthermore, she has given several lectures, in different universities. She has presented papers at a number of conferences, among them one disciplinary conference, the rest thematic, or interdisciplinary. Consequently, she has an interdisciplinary profile, both by means of the places she distributes her research findings, but also by way of the topics brought to discussion, such as questions on fatherhood, democracy and gender.

All in all, Gavanoas appreciates interdisciplinary research. Here, the interdisciplinary way of working is described in terms of possibilities: to choose whom you will collaborate with, as well as to place the research questions in focus instead of starting from the researcher's disciplinary training. One great advantage with interdisciplinarity is the researcher's agency, illustrated when Gavanoas stresses the great benefits of interdisciplinary work, such as the possibility to decide what you will study and how it is going to be pursued. In addition, her description tells a great deal about problems attached to disciplinary research, and illustrates that disciplinary research can be narrowing.

Simultaneously, her description states the fact that the term 'discipline' refers to intellectual divisions in research communities, often based on both intellectual and institutional factors. Moreover, it emphasizes the ongoing critique of disciplinarity, arising from ministries, funding bodies at research policy level as well as from interdisciplinary researchers, expressing that disciplinarity runs the risk of leading to

scientific rigidity and producing results that are useless for others except the research team (Holm, and Liinason, 2005b: 6).

Consequently, the intellectual and spatial agency, drawn from Gavanas' description of her interdisciplinary research, stresses some problems attached to the highly driven specialisation of the established disciplines, as well as the arbitrariness of disciplinarity in itself, something that otherwise could be taken for granted, as "organization, content, methodology or purpose of research" (Salter, and Hearn, 1996: 43).

Gavanas' description illustrates the challenge of the interdisciplinary crossing of disciplinary boundaries. It exposes a diversity of institutional affiliations, as well as a quantity of national and international contacts. It also exposes the interdisciplinary researcher's vulnerability. To find a shelter from being shut out from research communities, the interdisciplinary researcher may establish informal networks. This is a fact that emphasizes the importance of the social dimension in interdisciplinary research.

## 2.6 SUMMARY

With respect to the formulation of questions, the object of research and in the methods used, the research project conducted in the history of religion had large possibilities to produce highly interesting interdisciplinary research. On account of the following points, however, the interdisciplinary potential in the research project disappeared:

- Collaborative difficulties caused by contested understandings of concepts, central for the investigation, as well as a dissension over the distribution of scarce resources among the researchers in the team.
- Epistemological and methodological disagreements. A restricted approach to the production of new, synergetic forms of knowledge among the researchers. This was, among other things, illustrated in the individual presentation of research results, and, by means of obstacles to the invention of creativeness in the establishment of a shared methodological, i.e. ontological and epistemological, basis.

Gavanas' research project is, on the other hand, clearly interdisciplinary, among other things on account of:

- the interdisciplinary research question, with an investigation topic crossing a range of disciplinary borders.
- the dissemination of the research results, presented in a variety of places and settings,
- her multi-institutional affiliation, a fact that simultaneously produces a kind of social vulnerability, which, in turn, creates the need for an alternative centre, often established by way of informal networks.

### 3. CASE STUDY 2. INTERDISCIPLINARITY, GENDER AND RISK, 2001—, AT THE VR

#### 3.1 POLICY LEVEL

Case study II highlights the situation of interdisciplinarity after the major shift in Swedish research-funding organisation. Since the VR was established there have been no research programs. Initially this was regarded as a problem for our study. In our research team we discussed how the situation should be handled. I also had discussions with other researchers. One of them was Lisbeth Larsson, professor in literature at the University of Göteborg and a member of the board for the VR. These discussions led to a conclusion that there were strong reasons to look deeper into a special funding area called *Interdisciplinarity, gender and risk*. The board of the VR had decided that this funding should be open for projects that did not last more than three year and were i) either inter- or multidisciplinary, ii) or contained a gender perspective, iii) or could be seen as a risk project. According to the guidelines for how this funding area should be handled it is clear that the purpose was to pay attention to this kind of projects. It is also noted that this concentration was to be followed up in order to give the VR more knowledge on the occurrences and the preparation of this kind of project application (Vetenskapsrådet, beslut, diary number 111-2003-4413)

Another special funding initiative that could have been studied given the lack of a proper program was a proclamation, based on a governmental decision, called '*Multidisciplinary research on democracy*'. In its bill (2001/02: 80) the government writes, among other things, that the complex and fundamental character of today's democratic issues need to be studied from different angles, by different disciplines, and with different methods. The long-term purpose was to build a national platform where PhD students and established researchers from different universities could meet.<sup>18</sup>

One of the interesting motives to choose *Interdisciplinarity, gender and risk* was that nobody seemed to know exactly how it was used. It is not possible to apply directly in this funding area. The VR has a website with a database including all funded projects; it is not possible to search for projects funded in this area. If one, however, performs an advanced search and puts in the board of the VR as the deciding instance and interdisciplinarity as the description, one will find a list of twelve projects. Five of these are support for longitudinal databases, two concern heavy equipment, four are gender research on medicine and public health related issues, and one is an application from Chalmers (a technological university). When I, after a lot of asking around, received a list from an administrator at the VR – ten other projects were listed. I recognised two of them since they also occurred on still another list, i.e. the list one gets when using the database to search for interdisciplinary projects funded through the ordinary application process. This list contains thirty-two projects. It is hard to get an immediate understanding of how these different funding areas are connected and how the VR's support for interdisciplinary research is organised. When I talked to various people at the VR's office I was repeatedly forwarded to new administrators higher up in the hierarchy. During this exploratory stage of the research process, it became more and more obvious that there are several reasons to take a closer look at the funding area *Interdisciplinarity, Gender and Risk*, but that this must be done in relation to the ordinary application process. The research

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.vr.se/forskning/beredning/sida.jsp?unitId=58&viewIndividualLink=sida.jsp> 2005-12-13

question is simply how the VR's support for interdisciplinary research is conducted in general and which role the area interdisciplinary, gender and risk plays.

To examine the policy level interviews with representatives of the VR were required. The aim with these interviews was 1) to clarify how interdisciplinary research is managed in relation to monodisciplinary research, 2) to find out how the different funding sources are used, and finally 3) it is of interest to gain a view of how high representatives at the VR relate themselves to interdisciplinary research.

In addition, a review of relevant official documents was needed. I examined the occurrence of, as well as the content of policy documents, bills, directions of importance for the way VR handles interdisciplinary research projects. In the decision to create the funding area "Interdisciplinarity, gender and risk", the VR underlined the importance of evaluations. These are of special interest for our study (Vetenskapsrådet, beslut, diary number 111-2003-4413)

When it comes to selection of projects, the lack of programmes makes it a problematic issue. There is a great range of different interdisciplinary projects funded by the VR and they are not connected to each other. The projects represented in this report will therefore be regarded as individual examples of interdisciplinary projects funded by the VR. The ambition is to choose interdisciplinary projects, from the project database, that appear to have divergent approaches.

### **Policy level at the scientific council VR**

The VR is, as mentioned before, the most important funding authority in Sweden. In their action plan for the years of 2005-8, interdisciplinarity is mentioned as an area that requires special attention. Most examples are from natural science and technology. In the scientific council for Natural and Engineering Science, there is a special preparatory group for interdisciplinary research projects. Gender research is mentioned as an interdisciplinary field funded by the VR.

In the action plan, the VR underlines the need for intensified attention to "the increasing importance of inter- and multi-disciplinarity research" (Vetenskapsrådets aktionsplan, 2005-08: 58). As part of this work, *Tvärvetenskap – en analys (Interdisciplinarity - an analysis)* was published in 2005. This is a report produced by the department of analysis at the VR (Sandström, 2005) According to Per Omling, the director general for the VR, this report forms the basis for discussions for the ongoing efforts of VR to support interdisciplinary research.

In the absence of other policy documents concerning interdisciplinarity, this report will, in combination with a short interview with Omling and a longer one with Bengt Hansson,<sup>19</sup> secretary general at the scientific council for Humanities and Social Sciences, constitute the basic material when the views of interdisciplinary research at the VR are examined.

### **Organisation**

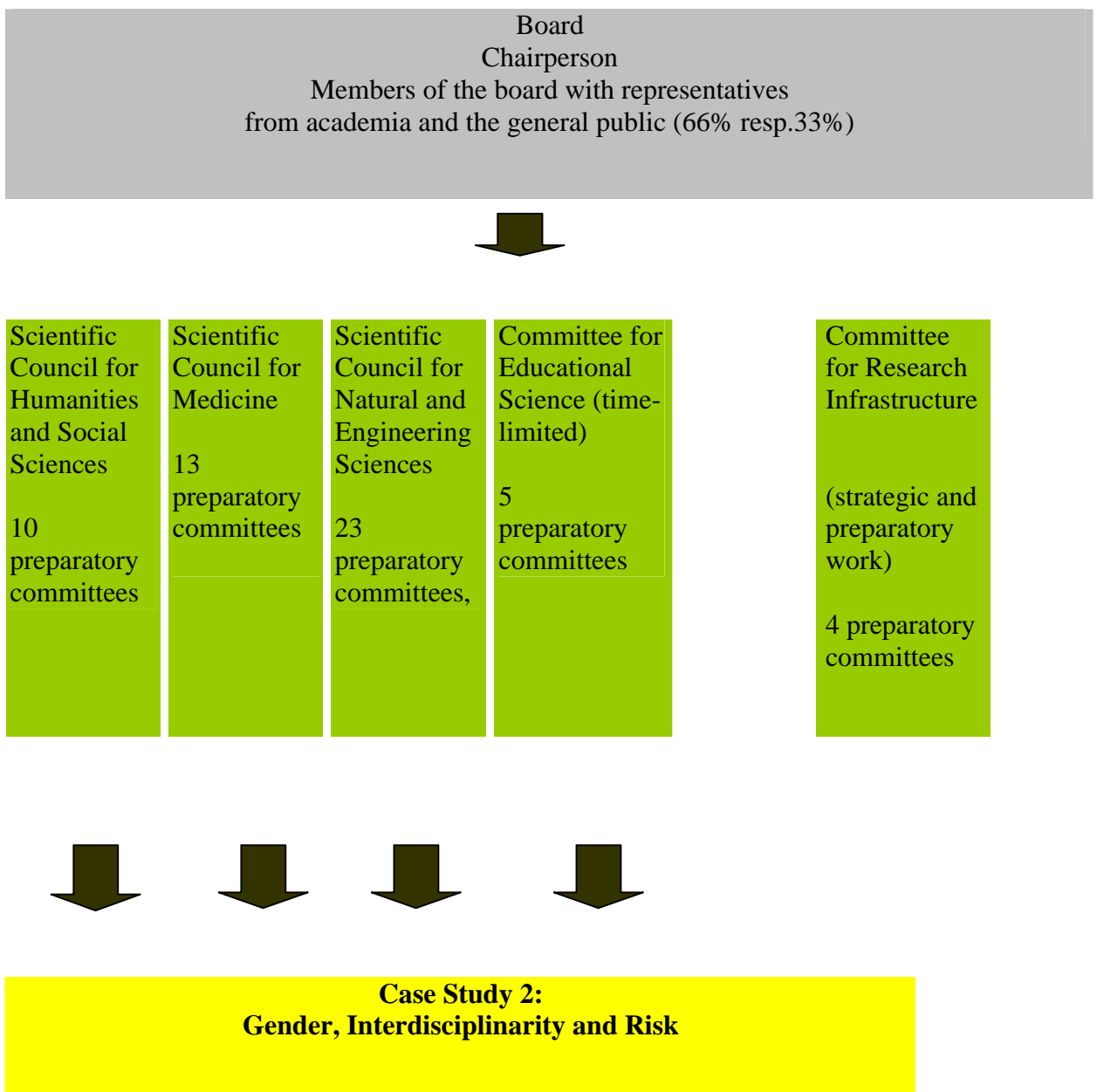
The VR is divided into three scientific councils and two committees. There is one scientific council related to Humanities and Social Sciences. Within this council there are nine preparatory groups<sup>20</sup>. The preparatory groups are organised along disciplinary lines. According to Bengt Hansson, the ambition is to break disciplinary boundaries, but due to practical reasons this is difficult. Instead they try to avoid

<sup>19</sup> Interview with Bengt Hansson: 2005-10-26, at the VR's office in Stockholm, Per Omling: 2005-11-21, telephone interview.

<sup>20</sup> There are actually ten groups, but one is vacant for the moment ([www.vr.se](http://www.vr.se) 051103).

categorisations by having researchers from different disciplines in each group. Since the commission, in Hansson's opinion, is to support basic research, it is not possible to have a thematic organisation.

**Case study 2:  
Gender, Interdisciplinarity and Risk  
The Swedish Research Council (VR)**



## Interdisciplinarity – an analysis

The main results of the report are:

- Interdisciplinary research is on the increase, mainly because of reasons internal to science.
- Peer review is neutral in relation to inter- and monodisciplinary research.
- External demands for interdisciplinary research result in more applied research. Can lead to a lack of depth in research.

In the report, the Swedish term “tvärvetenskap” is used.<sup>21</sup> The authors regarded this as an umbrella term, which can be divided into interdisciplinarity and multidisciplinary. According to the report, disciplinary boundaries can be seen as differences in methods and theories, but also as socio-cultural differences. The latter dimension is strengthened by the fact that higher education is based on disciplinarily organised knowledge. The report does not regard this as a problem, since it is presupposed that a researcher needs significant disciplinary training before he/she is ready to cross the disciplinary border (Sandström, 2005: 20).

However, the report discusses the role the disciplinarily organised scientific councils play in preserving a given structure. It is established that the councils play a key role when it comes to withholding or promoting a scientific dynamic. That is why governmental research politics in many ways have aimed to stimulate interdisciplinarity, even if the conceptions of how this should be done are vague. Despite this vagueness, increased interdisciplinary research is a goal. There is also a duty for the VR to report back to the government for how the support for interdisciplinary research is conducted. In the authors’ opinion the terminological vagueness must be considered a problem. The criteria for how goals are fulfilled, as well as methods for support, are open to interpretations (Sandström, 2005:20). They say that interdisciplinarity has become a difficult issue to manage for the scientific councils, since it is difficult to determine what interdisciplinarity is and what it is not. In the report it is underlined that the VR has to clarify the terminology for interdisciplinary research (Sandström, 2005:126). The following definitions are used (Sandström, 2005: 15f):

- Disciplinary research = institutionalised science, restricted to one discipline and including basic education, post-graduate education, professional methods and a well-defined and agreed-upon core of knowledge.
- Multidisciplinary research = co-operation between different disciplines, with no obvious connection. The co-operation does not lead to any changes of the research frontier for the involved disciplines. Instead each discipline contributes with its own way of elucidating a demarcated and common problem, as seen from the present standpoint of knowledge.
- Interdisciplinary research = co-operation between two or more disciplines leading to an integration of knowledge. The integrative dimension pertains to the content, methodology, theories of as well as organisation of knowledge. Researchers, trained in their respective disciplines, strive for an integration of different forms of knowledge and try to extend the research frontier. They also establish a shared vocabulary and common conceptions. More than

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<sup>21</sup> A literal translation of this word would be “cross-scientific”. The general translation is “interdisciplinarity”.

disciplinary co-operation is required to achieve interdisciplinarity – it demands an active exchange of theories and methods.

Regarding the view on disciplines the differences are, compared to the definition given in the *Comparative Report on Interdisciplinarity*, (Holm and Liinason, 2005: 6), not that significant. The definition in the latter report does not explicitly talk about core knowledge. Regarding multidisciplinary there is coherence in seeing it as an additive process.

According to the VR report interdisciplinarity has the purpose to move the research frontier. Holm's and Liinason's definition stresses that interdisciplinarity seeks to achieve a knowledge synthesis. Despite the fact that the VR report demands more than disciplinary collaboration – i.e. requires active exchange of theories and methods – it never reaches a level where disciplinary borders are challenged. It is explicitly stated that researchers have to be trained in their disciplines to be able to participate in interdisciplinary co-operation. There is no distinction between instrumental and cognitive interdisciplinary research.

The uninterest of the VR report in challenging disciplinary borders is even more obvious when the authors finally lay down 'transdisciplinarity' as an unnecessary term. It is discussed as a possible term, referring to a situation where researchers borrow concepts and theories from each other. Yet, since the extent of such borrowing does not correlate with the extent of integration, they argue this point of view to be problematic. As an example, it is pointed out that researchers can borrow from other fields of research with no co-operation at all (Sandström, 2005: 17). Implicitly, this gives us a view of interdisciplinary research that requires two or more researchers in co-operation and that interdisciplinary research cannot be achieved by a single researcher. However, this view is not consistently argued in the report. There are objections to what is called a tendency to understand interdisciplinary research as a momentary activity (Sandström, 2005: 126). Export of theories and methods between disciplines happens often non-momentarily and sometimes with a great time delay, according to the authors. Therefore the demand for concurrence has to be ironed out.

This line of reasoning should have consequences for research funding, the authors of the report argue. Especially they argue against programmes for interdisciplinary research in the funding system. Instead they recommend a deeper trust in the spontaneous development of disciplinary research. Strong disciplinary research will lead to important processes of export and import between more or less contiguous fields of research (Sandström, 2005: 126).

Another area of use for the term 'transdisciplinarity' is suggested for all-embracing scientific and technological fields, used by several disciplines and which could even be regarded as a ground for new vaguely demarcated, discipline-like research fields (Sandström, 2005: 17). Why transdisciplinarity as a term is not useful in this situation is not discussed. But it could be interesting in relation to fields like Gender Studies. Gender Studies does not fit in as a discipline, since it lacks or questions its own methods or a canonized core of knowledge. Gender Studies is often described as an interdisciplinary research field and as critical of traditional disciplines. There will therefore be a problem for researchers in this field to participate in cooperative projects, no matter whether they occur at a multi- or interdisciplinary level. What does trained in their discipline mean for a researcher who has been trained, from undergraduate education to PhD, in a multi- or interdisciplinary field? Trained in interdisciplinarity, the single researcher is supposed to design her/his projects in this way. If the report from VR, at least implicitly, has the opinion that

interdisciplinary research must be co-operation between researchers problems arise for researchers from for example gender studies. This situation will be examined in greater detail when we reach the program level.

The authors discuss the conditions for a single researcher to run interdisciplinary research. If, as they say, one accepts Kuhn's theory on scientific theories from different paradigms as incommensurable, then the conception of a single interdisciplinary researcher becomes unrealistic. Therefore the thought of interdisciplinary research courses must be challenged. Further, they question the idea of problem-based research, as it occurs in funding agencies' interdisciplinary research programmes. Yet, the authors stress experiences which show that interesting things happens in the borderland of disciplines. The authors underline that import and export of methods, theories, hypotheses and ways of working, maintain the growth of knowledge. Bourdieu is mentioned as an example of a prominent researcher distinguished by interdisciplinary creativity who carries out synthesised theory building (Sandström, 2005:72). What is not mentioned is that Bourdieu had difficulties in finding his disciplinary abode.

According to the report, interdisciplinary working forms are common when the change rate is high. Three different kinds of disciplinary border crossings are identified. First we have *interdisciplinarity ad hoc*. This is supposed to be the most important drive for interdisciplinarity. It is ruled by a demand for import of new knowledge by researchers themselves. The conclusion in the report is that research councils do not oppose or make it difficult for interdisciplinarity, but their possibilities to plan or design interdisciplinary research areas are limited. The second form of interdisciplinarity in the report is what is called 'society relevant interdisciplinarity' (or interdisciplinarity relevant for the society). This form can be organised in research programmes. But the authors consider such research as closer to the newly established sectoral research councils like FAS and Formas. In connection to this it is relevant to notice that neither FAS nor Formas handle applications in the humanities and that the VR council for humanities and social research has no interdisciplinary programmes<sup>22</sup>. The last form of interdisciplinarity, referred to in the report is techno-economical interdisciplinarity. With this term they refer to applied research in new areas. According to the report research like this is genuinely interdisciplinary and need-oriented (Sandström, 2005: 125). The financial support comes from Vinnova and SSF. Most of the two latter forms of interdisciplinarity, where there are research programmes, are thus medicine, natural sciences and technology.

The report claims that several evaluators consider social sciences to have difficulties to integrate different disciplines. This may be due to the supposed fact that certain ways of thinking or traditions of research methods are not possible to combine. In the report science is referred to as a number of clustered fields, more or less separated from each other. Disciplinary borders are often created by coincidences and are more often results of social processes than of cognitive structures. It is rather research economics and organisational reasons that form a need for delimitation. Each cluster, or part of it creates its own definition of research problems, which complicates the possibilities for understanding between researchers from different clusters. It is therefore risky for funding agencies to steer towards interdisciplinarity. Groups of researchers with small possibilities of understanding each other in such cases are forced to work together (Sandström, 2005: 10f, 79).

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<sup>22</sup> Apart from the earlier mentioned proclamation on multidisciplinary democracy research. This proclamation is a result of a governmental decision.

*There are several reasons why interdisciplinarity increases; most of them are internal to science.*

Interdisciplinarity has no value of its own according to the report. Instead it should be seen as a way for research to encourage its ability to solve specific problems (Sandström, 2005: 18). That researchers need to import knowledge from other disciplines is seen as the crucial point. In the report it is stated that the extent of interdisciplinary research is so high today that it is not meaningful to demand more interdisciplinarity or more programmes (Sandström, 2005: 11).

*Peer review is neutral in relation to inter- and monodisciplinary research.*

According to the report three of five Swedish researchers describe themselves as interdisciplinary. Forty-two percent of the applications to the VR can be categorised as interdisciplinary.<sup>23</sup> The success rate is the same as for monodisciplinary research. Between 2001 and 2003, thirty-one percent of the applications for humanities and social science were interdisciplinary. The success rate for these was fourteen percent, while monodisciplinary applications had a success rate of fifteen percent. In this context it is important to underline the fact that not all research fields have their own code of categorisation. This is for instance the case for Gender Studies.

*External demands for interdisciplinary research may result in more applied research.*

This can lead to lack of depth in research. There has been a strong trend towards interdisciplinary research co-operation, organised in academic centres. According to the report resources have been allocated to this specific form of interdisciplinary co-operations, while the old departments, which, as they argue, carry on the scientific traditions, have weak financial development. The authors of the report are worried about a situation where interdisciplinary initiatives may lead to underfunding of basic research, while resources to applied research increase.

### **The research council for humanities and social sciences.**

The reason why the VR has no research programmes or thematic priorities is that they only judge applications on quality criteria. "We only judge on quality. It is much better than to rule by programmes." (Bengt Hansson, 2005-10-26) The support for interdisciplinary research projects is integrated in the ordinary funding process. Hansson refers to interdisciplinary as a means, not a goal as such. To support the best researchers is to support interdisciplinarity. According to the report above, two of five applications to the VR are interdisciplinary. The success rate is on the whole the same as for monodisciplinary projects. If this is also true for the council for humanities and social research is not possible to tell. The report does not divide up the applications that way. Bengt Hansson has no answer to the question of how many interdisciplinary applications are received by the council. "We do not now how many interdisciplinary applications there are, and we have no need to know." (Hansson 2005-10-26) In his opinion this kind of figures will always be uncertain since there is no official classification.

The reason why this need does not exist is, according to Hansson, that the system at VR itself manages well to handle interdisciplinary applications. In his view, top-ranked projects often tend to be interdisciplinary. The best researchers often have a need to leave their own discipline. Yet what is designated as interdisciplinarity may

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<sup>23</sup> The report defines interdisciplinary applications as applications in which research subjects emerge from more than two disciplines. These research subjects shall diverge on disciplinary level in the official (SCB) statistics (Sandström, 2005: 40).

vary from project to project. Hansson is himself not totally satisfied with the definition given in the report *Tvärvetenskap – en analys*. Instead he takes the disciplinary distance as a starting point when he distinguishes between different kinds of interdisciplinarity. At first, there is, what he calls, ‘close interdisciplinarity’. It is often conducted by researchers at the research frontier. There is a spontaneous quest for knowledge beyond disciplinary borders. This is an on-going import of knowledge, which is necessary in order to move the research frontier. It is often these researchers’ projects that are top ranked in the quality reviews of the preparatory groups. “This close, naturally grown interdisciplinarity is rewarded through our rewarding of originality”, says Hansson.

Secondly, there is an intermediate form of interdisciplinarity, by which he means co-operations between researchers from different disciplines within the same scientific council. According to Hansson approximately ten percent of the applications are of this kind. Finally, there are examples of truly wide interdisciplinarity. Here we find co-operations between disciplines from different faculties. There are rather few applications of this kind, and they often tend to convert into new research areas. As an example, Hansson mentions how linguists and researchers in technology began research co-operation that today has become information technology. Naturally fruitful connections between disciplines of great distance from each other often result in new research areas of their own. Gender Studies could perhaps also be an example of this.

## Discussion

There are two research approaches lined up against each other without a clarification of their relationship. On the one hand we have a picture of pure science, science that should not be disturbed with decrees on interdisciplinarity coming from the outside of science. This is an ideal characterised by intra-scientific needs for an ongoing quest for knowledge beyond one’s own disciplinary border. *Interdisciplinarity ad hoc* refers to a situation when the researcher needs to import knowledge from other fields. This is also where we can find more permanent interdisciplinarity.

On the other hand we have applied research. It is called ‘research relevant to the society’ or ‘techno-economic interdisciplinarity’. Much of this form of research pertains to technology, medicine and the natural sciences. The more society-orientated research is often politically decreed. As an example from the last research bill, the government asked for more research on the cultural significance of public health. The government also stated that this research must be multidisciplinary (*Forskning för ett bättre liv*, 2005).

We can further state that neither the bill, nor the action plan of the VR or the report *Tvärvetenskap – en analys* discuss interdisciplinarity as a critical approach to academia or academic traditions. This must necessarily have an impact on research fields, critical to science, such as Gender Studies, but also Cultural Studies, Ethnicity Studies, Postcolonial Studies, Critical Race Studies, International Relations, etc. Transdisciplinarity is described as an unnecessary term and neodisciplinarity is not mentioned. Maybe, and likely, peer review works well in relation to co-operations between well defined disciplines? How it works for critically orientated and interdisciplinary research fields one cannot tell on the basis of our material. The view that demands, external to science, must lead to more applied research is not necessarily true either. According to the report there is a risk that external demands will have a severe impact on the possibilities to enter more deeply into different subjects. Why critical forms of interdisciplinarity cannot lead to greater understanding

is not mentioned. Simultaneously interdisciplinarity ad hoc, i.e. interdisciplinarity not promoted by the funding agencies, is regarded as significant for excellent research, since it moves the research frontier. The crucial point here is the researchers' freedom and the battle between basic and applied forms of research.

It is obvious that the VR does not want any external demands for interdisciplinary. When Per Omling, the director general at the VR described this view on spontaneously grown interdisciplinarity, he referred to his own research. "I have myself received funding for a project with researchers in technology, medicine, and biology. We never defined our work as interdisciplinary, but obviously it was. We just thought it was fun." This view of interdisciplinarity as something that appears spontaneously will be even more obvious in the next section.

### 3.2 SUMMARY

The research policies of VR in the area of interdisciplinarity are somehow paradoxical, with general principles about the promotion of interdisciplinarity and an organisational form, arranged along disciplinary lines:

- The promotion of interdisciplinarity: There is an explicit promotion of interdisciplinarity at the VR, in the commission from the government as well as in the action plan 2005-2008. Nevertheless, the promotion of interdisciplinarity is preferably performed in/between the areas of natural sciences and engineering sciences.
- The discipline as the researcher's firm base: The VR has the conviction of the discipline as every researcher's solid base. Interdisciplinarity is conducted by researchers that are excellent in their disciplines. The discipline is therefore the qualified researcher's point of departure.
- An emphasis on spontaneous interdisciplinarity: At the VR, interdisciplinarity is regarded as something that shall arise from the researchers themselves, spontaneously and in a 'natural' way, i.e. without intervention from above. This kind of interdisciplinarity is called 'ad hoc' interdisciplinarity.
- The low amount of money allocated to research funding. For interdisciplinary projects, mainstreamed into the ordinary preparatory process, this is a grave circumstance. Every separate preparatory committee protects its own, disciplinary area, and no one has the assignment to cover the whole (Trojer, 2005 and Westerholm, 2005).

### 3.3 PROGRAM LEVEL – INTERDISCIPLINARITY, GENDER AND RISK

The board of the VR earmarked special funding for projects, of a maximum of three years, that are (i) inter- or multidisciplinary, (ii) have a gender perspective, or (iii) can be recognised as a "risky" project, i.e. an interesting project where you cannot predict the quality of the outcome. As mentioned in earlier it has had some difficulties to figure out how this funding is related to the ordinary funding structure at the VR.

In the guidelines for this special funding area it is clear that it is a task of the preparatory groups, in their ordinary review process, to mark all applications they consider to be multi- and interdisciplinary, have a gender perspective or be a risky project. Otherwise, these applications shall be treated as any other application when it comes to ranking and prioritising (Vetenskapsrådet, beslut, diary number 111-2003-4413). The handling officers at the VR shall also mark projects belonging to more than one preparatory group. According to the secretary general at the council for humanities and social sciences it is, however, not meaningful to spend a lot of time

classifying projects as interdisciplinary, or risky, just for the statistics, since the fund for this area is so small. An experienced chair of a preparatory group has learned to recognise those projects that will have a chance to be funded in this way. It is the most typical interdisciplinary projects that are forwarded, those which have a possibility to succeed in competition with projects from other councils.

According to the guidelines, multi- and interdisciplinary projects are those which refer to more than one discipline. The difficulties to define multi- and interdisciplinarity are supposed to be well known. New subject areas can for instance, be considered as interdisciplinary before they are established. Despite this, the VR has a duty to develop the follow-up of multi- and interdisciplinary research. The council must secure that projects that fit badly with the organisational frames get an adequate support (Vetenskapsrådet, beslut, diary number 111-2003-4413).

The preparatory groups have no legal obligation to explain their decisions. According to Hansson, the VR has, however, internal instructions to do so, which the preparatory groups must follow. Each preparatory group, and the committee for Educational Sciences must compile a list with the projects they give priority to. This list should include considerably more projects than those expected to be funded. Since three different kinds of projects are involved in the funding area: interdisciplinarity, gender and risk, the councils shall mark them by the level of importance. The internal prioritising of projects with a gender perspective should be done after a consultation with a representative from gender committee<sup>24</sup> (Vetenskapsrådet, beslut, diary number 111-2003-4413).

On delegation from the board, the director general makes the decisions of which projects shall be funded from this funding area. The preparations are made by a group of people, including the general director, the deputy general director and the secretaries general from the preparatory groups. The decision is made before the preparatory committees have their decision meetings. If applications from your own group have been funded by the interdisciplinarity, gender and risk funding area, the preparatory group will have the opportunity to fund additional ordinary projects (Vetenskapsrådet, beslut, diary number 111-2003-4413). Bengt Hansson underlines that this fund is very small. For the year of 2006 it has 734.000 Euro (7 M Skr) for projects from all preparatory groups and the committee for educational sciences. Therefore it is important to stress that most interdisciplinary projects are supported in the ordinary funding process. Single projects can, however, be caught in between. According to Bengt Hansson Interdisciplinarity, Gender and Risk “is a valve for us who work in the preparation process” (Hansson 2005-10-26).

### **The ordinary application process**

When you apply for support from the VR a standardised form is used. Apart from common information on the applicant and a description of the project, you have to categorise your research. In the form you have to state, which subject area the research concerns. Gender Studies is on the list but other newly established research fields like cultural studies are missing. After that you are asked to suggest which preparatory group (you can suggest more than one) your application should be reviewed in. For each preparatory group, the disciplines included are listed. Disciplines like theory of sciences, that have existed since the sixties are missing, and

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<sup>24</sup> The gender committee is subordinated to the board of VR. Its task is to support and promote gender studies, and to work for giving gender perspectives an impact in research in general. The committee plays a proactive and policy-forming role ([www.vr.se](http://www.vr.se)).

so are newer subject areas like Gender Studies and Cultural Studies. However, researchers with a cultural studies or gender perspective take part in different preparatory groups. If you think your research has a gender perspective, there is a special box to be ticked.

The next step in the application process is to classify your research with code-numbers. Here the subjects are subdivided even more specialised. Under the heading Social Sciences there are codes for Sociology and Political Science, but also for research on Europe, research on youth and cognitive research. Here the researcher in theory of sciences can find a code, but not a researcher in Gender Studies or Cultural Studies. These researchers, and others whose subjects do not exist on the list have to define their research as something else. One could argue that the application process includes a disciplining process.

According to Bengt Hansson you do not have to choose a preparatory group. The choosing should be seen as a possibility for the applicant to affect in which preparatory group you want the project to be judged. If the applicant refrains from this opportunity, the scientific council decides which preparatory group shall judge the application. Some years ago there was a possibility to mark your application as interdisciplinary (as you still do in regard to the gender perspective). According to Hansson this did not work satisfactorily. Too many marked their applications as interdisciplinary in the hope to get easier funding. "Some of them were fraud, others were obviously strained", says Hansson (Hansson 2005-10-26). He also said that the classification codes were not utilized by the VR. It is the Central Office for Statistics (SCB) that uses them in their follow-up reports on research.<sup>25</sup> According to Hansson the VR is not pleased with their classification. But it is hard to change the codes since the SCB is eager to be able to conduct longitudinal measurements.

In the preparatory groups qualitative rankings are made. Originality and potentials for new creations and innovations are heavy arguments in the quality judgements. Decisions are made in the scientific council, after evaluation procedures with external peer reviews in the preparatory groups. There is a basic distribution of funds between the preparatory groups. To avoid a situation where the chairpersons from each group only guard applications from their own group, there is also a free funding quota. If more than one preparatory group, which is possible, reviews a project one of them has the main responsibility, while the others make a customary quality check of the project.

As mentioned before, the VR not only have a duty to support interdisciplinary research, they also have a task to follow-up and review it. According to Bengt Hansson, *Tvärvetenskap – en analys*, shall be seen as an answer to this request. It has been accepted by the board. It is a well-argued, and considerable report, but it does not have the status of being the VR's official position on interdisciplinary research. The director general of the VR, Per Omling, confirmed this approach (Omling, 2005-11-21).

As noted earlier, the report claims that the social sciences tend to have difficulties to integrate their research areas with other disciplines, due to the seeming impossibility to bring together different traditions in methods and certain thought styles. According to Bengt Hansson there is a point here. Natural scientists divide the world into sections. The research object defines the subjects. Social scientists on the other hand may study the same object but from different angles. It is the aspect of the object you study that defines what you do and the choice of methods most often

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<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, these codes are used for the analysis in *Tvärvetenskap – en analys* (Sandström, 2005).

follows from this aspect and definition. When you in this way also become defined by your methods, it may be more difficult to transgress disciplines. At the same time, Hansson argues, you can see how a subject like Political Science has imported a lot from Political Economy. This process also works in the opposite direction. The borders become more fluid through the ongoing import and export of knowledge at the research frontier.

When it comes to the term transdisciplinarity, Bengt Hansson regards it as a research political invention. The disciplinary borders are erased at the frontier level. At the routine research level, the disciplines are still needed. He underlines that there is a strong connection between interdisciplinary research and the best disciplinarily trained researchers. They often have a need to renew their own science and will spontaneously search knowledge outside of and transgress the borders of their own discipline.

### 3.4 SUMMARY

All in all, the support of interdisciplinary research is ambiguous and possible to understand in a two-fold way:

- On the one hand, there seems to be an understanding at the VR that a lot of the most excellent applications are interdisciplinary. This kind of interdisciplinarity springs from a need of researchers at the research frontier to transgress their own disciplines. Such researchers borrow theories and methods from other disciplines in order to move the frontier.
- On the other hand, the VR pays special attention to the support of interdisciplinarity. This is, among other things, due to an awareness that interdisciplinary research projects may fit badly with the organising frames of the VR, and are therefore in need of a special attention. The funding area *Interdisciplinarity, Gender and Risk* is an example of this, although it is very small and only a minority of the proposed applications are granted funding.

The applications forwarded to the funding area *Interdisciplinarity, Gender and Risk* seems to be the most excellent examples of interdisciplinary research. These projects are said to be so good that they also would have been funded through the ordinary process. Accordingly, it is not research projects that fit badly into the organising frames that are supported. Together with the claim that the best interdisciplinary research is done by researchers trained in disciplines, this situation may cause problems for researchers from new, interdisciplinary based research fields. Or for researchers from fields where interdisciplinarity partly constitutes a critique of the established disciplination of scientific knowledge production.

### 3.5 PROJECT LEVEL

In the beginning of this project, there were difficulties to clarify which projects were funded from *Interdisciplinary, Gender And Risk*, and which were funded in the ordinary process. After the review above it is quite obvious that *Interdisciplinarity, Gender And Risk* is just the “valve” that Bengt Hansson called it. The projects funded from this money are so highly ranked in their preparatory groups that they, anyway, would have been funded in the ordinary process. According to Per Omling this circumstance may even lead to a decision to remove interdisciplinarity from this funding pot. It is therefore interesting to study what has been funded in the ordinary process. A quick check shows that thirty-two projects marked as interdisciplinary have been supported. Two of these have been selected for a further study here. In the

database of the VR one can read abstracts of all funded projects.<sup>26</sup> A strategic selection has been made, based on a possibility to show a spread of interdisciplinary designs. Since the VR is a rather new organisation, there are no projects funded before the year 2002, from which follows that most projects are not yet completed.

The two projects chosen for closer scrutiny have received funding in the frame of the ordinary process. They were picked after review of the VR project database. According to the provided abstracts and other information, these two projects appeared on the one hand to be different in regard to, organisation, methods used and the subjects involved. On the other hand they both had a gender perspective and were explicitly interdisciplinary, and thus comparable to interdisciplinarity and gender studies projects before the reorganisation of the funding system.

### **Gender and popular music: a cultural studies project**

Institution: The University of Uppsala, Centre for Gender Studies

Amount of funding: 105.000 euro (1.000.000 SKr)  
 108.000 euro (1.030.000 SKr)  
 111.000 euro (1.060.000 SKr)

Hillevi Ganetz is a senior lecturer at the centre for gender studies at Uppsala University<sup>27</sup>. *Gender and popular music: a cultural studies project* is a newly funded project described as interdisciplinary in the VR project data base. It is a cultural studies project with an emphasis on popular music in a broad sense and contains six parts focussing on various aspects of popular music. The music business is investigated through studying how gender is constructed in the production of records, but also in the soap opera called 'Fame Factory'. Female DJs in electronic dance music are also scrutinised and so is the reception of music videos of globally famous female artists by their Swedish fans. Finally the project looks at how gender is constructed in film music at the intersection between image and music. The goal of the project is to understand formations of gender in these contexts. According to Ganetz, it is the process of understanding that is important.

As the initiator of the project, Ganetz selected and contacted the rest of the team. In her opinion, it was her familiarity with the field and the people working in it, in combination with an understanding of what was needed in the project that was crucial. The team consists of three researchers with half-time jobs in the project. One is a musicologist and two are anthropologists. In addition, another three researchers are affiliated with the project. Two are PhD students, one in Cinema History and Theory and one in Musicology. The sixth person is a musicologist who himself applied to cultural studies. All the researchers share an interest in music. Many of them have music as a hobby in one way or another. According to Ganetz, this creates an easy-going attitude to music, and at the same time it brings in a lot of knowledge. It is a common starting point, important for conducting the project.

Ganetz' own background is very interdisciplinary. Her PhD was in the history of literature, but she left this discipline, since she thought there was no understanding or interest in popular literature. "I have never felt comfortable in narrow disciplines", she says. For her it is necessary to be able to work with theories and methods from various disciplines. After history of literature, she turned to the interdisciplinary field of communication and media science, with a focus on cultural studies. Now, she is

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<sup>26</sup> [www.vrproj.vr.se](http://www.vrproj.vr.se)

<sup>27</sup> Telephone interview with her, 2005-10-12.

working at a centre for gender studies. In her opinion this is the kind of interdisciplinary milieu which suits her. It is the combination of gender studies, cultural studies and media sciences that has been important for her interdisciplinary training. “But, I am rather a gender studies scholar, focusing on media, than a media scientist focusing on gender”, as she puts it.

### **Research process**

According to Ganetz, this project is explicitly interdisciplinary and it has to be so. “Complex issues require complex answers”. The project is interdisciplinary due to the object studied: music as a cultural artefact and a phenomenon. It is not only about music as sound, but also about music as a visual medium. Interdisciplinarity manifests itself also in how the investigation is carried out. They do not just focus on the music, but also on the music business in a broader perspective. Finally, Ganetz points to the participating researchers and their backgrounds which bring interdisciplinarity into the project.

When Ganetz was asked to describe how interdisciplinarity was expressed in the research process, she opened with a very clear line: “It’s a bloody job!” She described the process as hard work to reach a synthesis. This demands very close co-operation. The team has to meet, physically, at least once a month. Ganetz underlined the importance of the physical space. In this project it is easy to meet, since all of them live in the same area. In these meetings, they read each other’s texts, exchange reading suggestions and discuss each other’s work. Even if the participating researchers have the main responsibility for different parts of the project, some texts have to be written together. It is also important to cross-refer to each other, and to use each other’s results and ideas.

In projects like this the researchers need to share basic theories. Here the emphasis is on gender studies, intersectionality and a global perspective with a focus on popular music. From Ganetz’ point of view there must be a common will to leave the disciplines. “It takes courage to dare to tramp into other disciplines”. The methods used in the project are mainly qualitative. Principally they use textual analysis and ethnographical studies, like participant observation.

The project is still in its initial phase. So far no results have been presented. On the other hand, Ganetz thinks that the application process in itself was important for the project. Since all the researchers were involved, a feeling of togetherness was created in the team. One of the difficulties they met was about funding. They applied for a higher amount than they were given. This resulted in a situation where the PhD students could not participate as it had been planned. In consequence they had to re-organise the project.

When it comes to reporting and dissemination of results, this is still at the planning stage. At least one volume written by the three main researchers is planned. Beyond that they plan to publish in anthropological journals and in journals for media science and cultural studies, in Swedish as well as international. Apart from participation at conferences in the international organisation IASPM (International Association for the Study of Popular Music), they plan to organise their own conference at the end of the project period. The target group for this will be researchers in music in a broad sense.

According to Ganetz, she has learned a lot through earlier participation in interdisciplinary projects. She underlines that good organisation and planned meetings are needed. She herself has only positive experiences and stresses openness, fearlessness and a will to listen as the way to good results.

### **The decorated man. An economic-ethnological study of masculinity, aesthetics and power in a translocal context.**

Researchers: Magnus Mörck, Maria Tullberg, Marie Nordberg, Barbara Czarniawska  
 Department: Göteborg University, School of Business, Economics and Law, Centre for Consumer Science

Planned project time: 2003-2005 (There has been a minor delay, estimated end of project: summer of 2006)

Amount of funding: 89.300 EURO (852.000 SKr)  
 89.300 EURO (852.000 SKr)  
 89.300 EURO (852.000 SKr)

This project involves co-operation between researchers in ethnology and business economics attending to male fashion and masculine bodily aesthetics as an important factor in the construction of gender. All researchers have a PhD. One of the ethnologists gained it during this period but not in this project. Mörck<sup>28</sup>, who is the main applicant, is a senior lecturer, for the present at the Centre for Consumer Science. Czarniawska<sup>29</sup> is attached to the interdisciplinary Goteborg Research Institute (GRI) at the same university, just like Tullberg, who has a PhD in business economics. Nordberg<sup>30</sup> wrote her thesis at the ethnological department at Göteborg University, but has her regular employment at the department for Gender Studies at Karlstad University.

The purpose of the project, according to Mörck, is to “marry” gender and consumer science through fashion with a focus on masculinities. It is about masculinities research from a performance perspective. This performance is scrutinised among male “metro-sexual dandies” at hairdressers, as well as among a European business elite taking part at shareholders' meetings. The project raises questions as how gender is produced and what role men's embodiment plays in superior positions. They want to visualise the male body and how gender is formed in discourses of fashion. Robert Connell's theories are tested in the project. And they want to investigate which variations and contradictions can be identified in the production of masculinities at the hairdresser in Vilnius, and in the director's office in Turin.

In discussions on gender, the woman is mostly at the centre; she is the one being gendered. This project focuses on to men as gendered creatures. Thus they hope to avoid the traditional focus on female subordination. Instead they want to scrutinise how men dress in neutral suits, actually to remain those in power in the directors' rooms of Turin ([www.vrproj.vr.se](http://www.vrproj.vr.se) 2005-12-06).

### **Research process**

The project consist of two parts, one conducted by Mörck and Tullberg and the other conducted by Nordberg. The first-mentioned part, with two researchers, can be

<sup>28</sup> Interview at Mörck's office 2005-10-07, at CKF.

<sup>29</sup> Professor Barbara Czarniawska is a high profile researcher in Management Studies at GRI and Professor Designak at the European Institute for Advanced Studies in Management, Brussels. <http://www.hgu.gu.se/item.aspx?id=3328>

<sup>30</sup> Interviewed 2005-10-24, at the department of ethnology, Göteborg University.

described as a successful collaboration. The collaboration between the two projects parts have faced more difficulties. According to Nordberg *The Decorated Man* began as a more closely connected project, but during the project period its two parts have become more separated. Initially they had common seminars on literature. Gradually these mutual meetings have become hard to organise. In the later period, they had no regularly booked meetings. In Nordberg's opinion, this is a problem since the holding of meetings is a key condition of interdisciplinary co-operation. The reasons for this development are too little time and too great geographical distances. In Nordberg's opinion, the emergence of such problems depend on the funding system. The lack of research positions at the universities leads to a situation where researchers end up in continuous project employments which often over-lap each other. Most of these project employments are half-time positions and in order to earn their living, the researchers have to do a lot of teaching or to combine this with other projects.

Even if the lack of regular meetings is a problem for the project, Nordberg is of the opinion that she could not have done her part without Mörck's consumer-scientific knowledge. Reading each other's texts has brought new and important angles of approach. This is also what Nordberg points out as the highlights in the project. Nordberg is clear what she wants: "I do miss the daily relations. The everyday conversations that Marie and Magnus can have." She is clear about the reason for this; the research group have been involved in too many other projects. She describes the situation as "Once in a while we try to throw a lasso to the other boat". According to her they still have a hope that it might be possible to re-connect the parts of the project. A planned anthology is one way to achieve this and in addition they have had an article draft on theories and methods in Gender Studies on fashion accepted by *KVT*<sup>31</sup> In spite of the difficulties Nordberg still thinks that the common work on developing new theories is a big challenge.

Her opinion is further emphasised in the other part of the project. Mörck's and his colleague Tullberg's, two disciplinary backgrounds have been most important for their project: "My ethnological background contributes, among other things, with knowledge on rituals. Marie has foremostly worked on organisational issues and leadership." He is clear about their knowledge and experiences as important for how they have approach the shareholders' meetings. Together they have invented an ethnographic method for observations. According to Mörck, this had been impossible to accomplish alone. He describes the process as a "hesitant attempt", in an on-going dialogue between the researchers, finally leading to a new method for observations. In his opinion, the disciplinary breadth has, above all, been important in the development of their method. For him, the new method must be regarded as an important project result in itself.

On the question, why this is an interdisciplinary project, the spontaneous answer is that this is interesting and therefore fun. Nordberg had already done work on hairdressers. "We realised there was a possibility to continue this, and add more to it", Mörck explains. This formed the team: "I asked Nordberg, and then we needed an economist." This was how Tullberg came into the project. Czarniawska is more of a supervisor in the project, not least when it comes to methodology. The results of the project have attracted a lot of attention, not at least in mass media. The researchers have also initiated conference sessions on fashion to two conferences. Last year, 2005, at the National Conference on Cultural Studies in Norrköping

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<sup>31</sup> *KVT* (Kvinnovetenskaplig Tidskrift) is the leading journal on Gender Studies in Sweden

(AC SIS), and 2006 to the ethnological and folkloristic congress *Metamorfoser*, in Stockholm.

#### Articles

Author	Title	Journal	Year/issue
Mörck, Magnus, Tullberg, Maria	"Bolagsstämman – en homosocial ritual i marknadens mitt	Kulturella Perspektiv	2005/2
Mörck, Magnus	"Jag har en fråga till dig Marcus Wallenberg		
Nordberg, Marie	"Allt utom en hocheyfrilla!" Män, makt, frisyrier och mode	NIKK Magasin	2005/1

#### Conferences

Lecturer	Title	Conference	Place/year/month
Mörck, Magnus	"En två eller tre knappar? Affärsmaskulinitet i kostym".	<i>Nationell forskarkonferens för kulturstudier, (AC SIS),</i>	Norrköping/2005/juni
Nordberg, Marie	"Det viktiga är en maskulin touch!" Maskulinitet som konsumtionsvara i frisörbranschen	Nationell forskarkonferens för kulturstudier, (AC SIS)	Norrköping/2005/juni
Tullberg, Maria & Magnus Mörck	Se så'n stil han har. Om kostymens roll i det maskulina ledarskapets estetik.	<i>18th Nordic Conference on Business Studies</i>	Århus/2005
Mörck, Magnus & Tullberg, Maria	The Bending of Gender and Sexuality in a Bleeding Organization.	<i>The 21st EGOS Colloquium "Unlocking Organizations"</i>	Berlin/2005/30 June - 3 July.
Mörck, Magnus & Tullberg, Maria	The Business Suit and the Performance of Masculinity	<i>Interdisciplinary Conference of Fashion and Dress Cultures (Denmark's Design School)</i>	Copenhagen/2005/26-28 October
Mörck, Magnus & Tullberg, Maria	Catwalk för direktörer. Bolagsstämman - en performativ performans av maskuliniteter	<i>Nordisk Mansforskningskonferens</i>	Södertörn/2004

*CFK reports*<sup>32</sup>

Author	Title	Year/number
Magnus Mörck, Maria Tullberg	"Catwalk för direktörer. Bolagsstämman - en performativ performance av maskuliniteter"	2004:02a,
Marie Nordberg	"Det hänger på håret - maskulinitet, feminitet, makt, mode, konsumtion",	2004:02c
Philip Warkander	"Jag vill att det ska synas att jag bryr mig" - unga män om sina klädstilar",	2004:02b

**Ups and downs in the project**

Mörck describes participation at disciplinary conferences not close to one's own as a difficulty when doing interdisciplinary research. "I don't know the people I'm talking to. It is hard to know where to place your focus in this particular conference," he reasons. His experience is that it is hard to know what is of real interest in disciplines you are not that familiar with.

Regarding interdisciplinary in general, Mörck thinks it might be easier for more open disciplines like business economy and ethnology to co-operate. He describes how the researchers in this project neither had any problems in relation to research methods nor the gender theoretical approach, nor the theories on masculinity they used. However, he predicts that it might be harder to reach agreement when the international comparison is to be done.

Nordberg is familiar with the object studied in the her part of the project, the hairdressing salon. As Mörck mentioned, her earlier work on hairdressers was a source of inspiration for the project. What is new for Nordberg in this project is research on consumers and fashion. She describes her dual competence, ethnology and masculinity research, as an asset. She is comfortable in both these fields. She regard herself mostly as a gender studies scholar, based on the conferences she participates in, where she has published and the academic relations she has.

Both Mörck and Nordberg mentioned the academic, interdisciplinary milieus they are drawn and attached to as important for them. Nordberg's research group at the Gender Studies department at Karlstad University consists of researchers coming from sociology, business economy, pedagogy, science of religion as well as public health.<sup>33</sup> To be in an environment like this gives training in interdisciplinarity, but at the same time, Nordberg underlines that it is also a lonely position. She is the one who is expected to bring ethnological perspectives. On the other hand, she argues, that it is in co-operation with non-ethnologists that the ethnological perspective is elucidated. In her opinion, interdisciplinary co-operation requires a knowledge basis of one's own – through the meeting with others this basis becomes evident. According to Mörck, narrow disciplinary environments bring too many negative things. Ethnology is a small discipline with rather few international connections, a reason why he has

<sup>32</sup> Reports produced at the Center for Consumer Science (CFK)

<sup>33</sup> [www.kau.se/genusvetenskap](http://www.kau.se/genusvetenskap)

deliberately striven for interdisciplinarity. At the Centre for Consumer Science he can develop interdisciplinary cooperation. He also underlines that interdisciplinary centres are good milieus to house projects like this.

### **Discussion**

In these two projects we can see examples of different kinds of interdisciplinarity. Yet, they did not correspond to the initially expected differences. In *The Decorated Man*, Mörck and Tullberg succeeded in achieving an integrated co-operation in terms of content, methodology and theories of knowledge. They are researchers trained in a specific discipline - but also in interdisciplinarity – striving towards an integration of knowledge with a view to move the research frontier. It is obvious that the approach is more about cognitive than about instrumental interdisciplinarity. Mörck has a critical attitude towards what he calls “narrow disciplines”. His description of participating in disciplinary research conferences underlines, however, the problems interdisciplinary researchers meet in a disciplinary academic world. He takes up a critical position, and strives to challenge disciplinary borders.

Both Ganetz’ and Mörck’s seeking for interdisciplinary settings can be understood as a will to participate in knowledge production beyond the limited disciplines. Transdisciplinarity could be a useful term for this position. Nordberg’s part of *The Decorated Man* must be regarded as interdisciplinary, even if it is mostly carried out by a single researcher. According to the VR terminology it might be described as knowledge import. On the other hand, Nordberg said she could not have achieved what she did without Mörck’s approach on consumer science. Yet, the connection between the two parts seems to be more on an instrumental level than on a cognitive.

#### *Social networks*

Mörck as well as Ganetz described their personal familiarity with their fields of study and the researchers working in them as decisive factors when the teams were built. Ganetz talked about a “we-feeling” as a condition for success. Nordberg, on the other hand, mentions the absence of regular contact as the most important reason why *The Decorated Man* was done more or less as two parallel projects. She also gave reasons for why this happened. Most importantly, she was critical of the funding situation for researchers.

#### *Time and space*

The geographical distance between the researchers and lack of time together were mentioned by Nordberg mentioned as the major problems. In her opinion the researchers are forced into a maze of different projects and teaching in order to make their living. In Ganetz’ description a similar situation occurred when they did not get all the funding they had applied for. That forced them to modify their project to fit with the allocated funding. What effect this will have on the project is too early to tell.

To succeed in interdisciplinary projects, the need for regularly meetings is stressed. The importance of reading each other’s papers and joint writing is also necessary. An image of interdisciplinary “craftsmanship”, developed through experiences, emerged.

#### *Disciplinary rootlessness*

It is interesting to note that all the researchers interviewed described their striving to take part in interdisciplinary settings. This striving manifested itself not only in these projects, but also through their academic locations. In the VR report *Tvärvetenskap –*

*en analys*, the importance of being trained in a discipline is underlined as a requirement for success in interdisciplinary projects. The three researchers interviewed here can all, also, be considered as trained in interdisciplinarity. But Nordberg underlined the need for a knowledge basis of one's own. Yet all of them are attached to interdisciplinary centres or departments. Mörck also described these environments as important when projects like these are carried out.

### 3.6 SUMMARY

Maybe because of the fact that Ganetz's research project was in its initial phase by the time we looked at it, this project, in some ways, seems to have large possibilities to create interdisciplinary research. Both projects share conditions that can be considered advantages as well as disadvantages:

#### *Gender and Popular Music:*

- The research object, research questions and methods used are clearly interdisciplinary, with a focus on broad themes and important facts in the surrounding milieu of the research theme.
- A shared methodology, i.e. shared ontological and epistemological outlook, indicated in the emphasis laid on common forms of knowledge by the researchers in the group.
- Collaborative dimensions. Each participating researcher's background in interdisciplinary projects of different kinds, means that this is a research team with experience of interdisciplinarity. Consequently, the project co-ordinator emphasized regular and frequent meetings, discussions, borrowing of research results and cross-referencing. Facilitated by the fact that they all live and work in the same geographical area, and share the same personal interest in music.
- The researchers have half-time jobs in the projects, and are also occupied with other work.

#### *The Decorated Man:*

- Concerning research questions, research object, methods used etc. the research project is clearly interdisciplinary. The research project focuses on a large topic, with different cultural and social aspects.
- Common theories on gender and masculinity. The research group points to a mutual conceptual development, illustrated among other things in the research design, utilising a common ethnographic method.
- All of the researchers have earlier experience from interdisciplinary research. The project is hosted by a interdisciplinary research centre.
- In the collaborative part of the project, however, there have been difficulties to maintain the interdisciplinary ambition between the two parts, with regular and frequent meetings, for example. The reasons for this, according to the researchers themselves, are lack of time and money and the geographical distance between researchers. On the other hand, collaboration has been successful in the part of the project carried on by Mörck and Tullberg, who are located at the same university.

## 4 COMPARATIVE SECTION

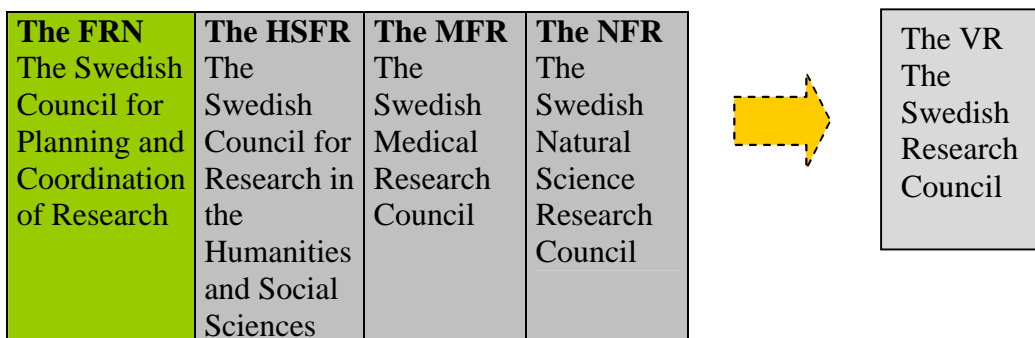
In this section, we make a comparison between the earlier and the present system for research funding and, based on the findings from the case studies we make a comparison between the possibilities and obstacles for interdisciplinarity in the different systems of research funding.

### 4.1 RESEARCH POLICY 1990 - 2005

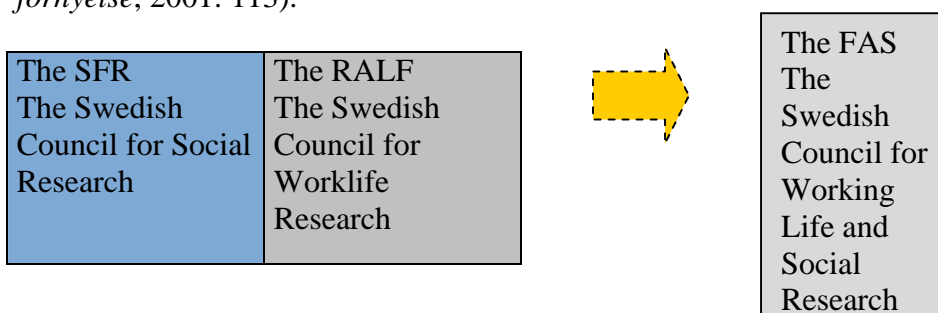
In order to strengthen interdisciplinary research, there have been several structural and organisational changes during the last ten to fifteen years. In spite of this, however, many universities and university colleges have kept their traditional organisation. Moreover, a disciplinary identity is regarded as an important part of a researcher's professional identity (Holm, and Liinason, 2005a: 35).

As earlier discussed in the report, the FRN promoted interdisciplinary research in a certain direction through research programs. In 2001, the government searched for an organizational structure able to handle interdisciplinary applications by researchers from all research areas – not only in the range of these directed thematic research programs, decided in advance. Thus, in 2001, the new structure for research funding was launched.

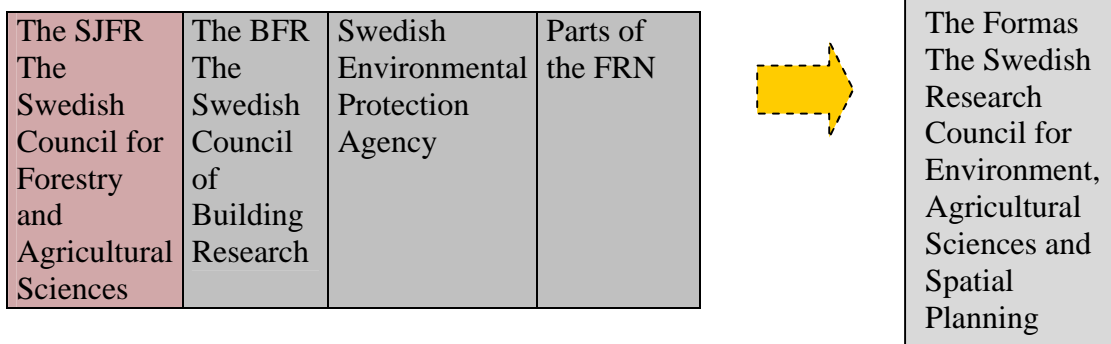
In order to stimulate multi- and interdisciplinary research, a re-arrangement of the organisational structure took place in 2001. By then, the VR took command of the work, formerly executed by the FRN, the HSFR, the MFR, the NFR and the TFR. Consequently, the VR now promotes basic research within every scientific area. Furthermore, the VR maintains the quality of Swedish research internationally, and promotes flexibility and innovation in research. One important task are initiatives towards multi- and interdisciplinarity (*Forskning och förnyelse*, 2001: 100).



Moreover, the FAS took command of the work formerly executed by the SFR and parts of the areas of responsibility formerly undertaken by the RALF. The FAS now promotes basic and applied research within the areas of welfare, public health, care, labour market and the division of labour. The FAS also identifies and promotes multi- or interdisciplinary research, especially in the area of social research (*Forskning och förnyelse*, 2001: 113).



The FORMAS promotes multi- and interdisciplinary research (*Forskning och förnyelse*, 2001: 117). The research foundations supplement the work of the research councils, primarily through a focus on interdisciplinarity and applied research (*Forskning och förnyelse*, 2001: 133).



### Status and management of interdisciplinarity in Swedish research policy: The FRN

In the earlier system for research funding, there was a strong division between disciplinary and interdisciplinary research. Alongside the eight research councils, assigned to handle research from every single disciplinary area, the FRN was assigned to handle interdisciplinary research. Consequently, the existence of the FRN brought about actual possibilities for interdisciplinary research. As mentioned earlier in the report, this was made possible among other things because of an explicit demand from the government. Moreover, the organizational form of the FRN with thematic committees, made up in order to handle large collaborative research projects, resulted in actualized possibilities for interdisciplinary research. Likewise, the existence of the Joint Action Group established possibilities for large collaborative research projects, with an ambition to transgress disciplinary as well as organisational borders in the system for research funding.

The Joint Action Group was, however, established as an attempt to support the disciplinary research councils in handling interdisciplinary applications (Trojer, 2005). This was, however, hard to accomplish. At the end of the 1990s, the sharp divisions between disciplinary and interdisciplinary research made interdisciplinarity and large collaborative research projects hard to handle. Simultaneously, there was a growing concern for the destitution of basic research when scrutinizing the research programs from the FRN.

### Status and management of interdisciplinarity in Swedish research policy: The VR

The re-structuring of research councils took place in 2001. By then, every disciplinary research council, as well as the FRN, were merged into the VR, the FAS or the FORMAS, as earlier described. The three scientific councils of the VR are: The Scientific Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences, the Scientific Council for Medicine, and the Scientific Council for Natural and Engineering Sciences. Each Scientific Council is sub-divided into preparatory committees, constituted along specialized and disciplinary lines, such as aesthetics, sociology, economics etc.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>34</sup> <http://www.vr.se/forskning/beredning/index.jsp?omr=hs> accessed 05-10-19.

Consequently, the new organisational structure suffers from several difficulties in the management of interdisciplinary applications.

One of the purposes of the restructuring of the research council in 2001, was the requirement from the government to strengthen spontaneous interdisciplinarity, i.e. interdisciplinarity that arises from the researcher's own initiative. This was done, mainly for two reasons: firstly, because of a conviction that interdisciplinarity of high quality arises out of a solid disciplinary basis, and secondly, because of a concern for the quality of interdisciplinary research. Secondly, a point of view that all of a sudden implied that the FRN had jeopardized the quality in interdisciplinary research. Consequently, the VR strives for spontaneous interdisciplinarity.

### **The process of restructuring: policies on interdisciplinarity**

At the end of 1990s, discussions were held in the Joint Action Group, located at the FRN, regarding the view that a research problem cannot always find its solution within the frames of one single discipline. The answers how interdisciplinarity ideally should be performed were, however, many. Multidisciplinarity was not seen as disturbing. At this point in time, multidisciplinarity was often mentioned as “small interdisciplinarity”. Here, the researcher did not call any basic theories into question. “Large interdisciplinarity”, on the other hand, emphasized collaborations between large traditions of knowledge, as for example between technology and the humanities. This was difficult. The question of how this was going to be handled was a point of discussion, with a focus on processes of knowledge. Questions like ‘How should knowledge be produced – and by whom?’ illustrated the negotiative part of the discussion, where interdisciplinarity was understood as a question of interpretive preferences (Trojer, 2005).

Through its thematic committees and directed research programs, the FRN managed to handle so-called “large interdisciplinarity”. In the present system of research funding, however, there is no clear consensus on how the strengthening of this kind of interdisciplinarity should be done. Now, the VR claims to have integrated interdisciplinarity within each area of research. Nevertheless, the VR entails large organisational as well as conceptual hindrances for the development of interdisciplinarity.

In the absence of a formalized framework that might provide qualified support to interdisciplinary researchers, difficulties arise for them. Interdisciplinarity is handled with caution at the VR – especially varieties of “large interdisciplinarity”. Consequently, the VR harbours the following organisational and conceptual obstacles for interdisciplinary research:

- First, the VR is commissioned to handle basic research of all kinds. Every preparatory committee is assigned to meet the needs of the disciplines within its field. That is to say, it has disciplinary, but necessarily not interdisciplinary, competences. Furthermore, when the VR stresses the importance of a disciplinary base, it produces expectations on the interdisciplinary researcher to be as qualified as disciplinary researchers within their disciplines (Trojer, 2005).
- Secondly, the VR's estimation of ‘ad hoc’ interdisciplinarity, creates sequences of problems for the interdisciplinary researcher. As illustrated by the strategic “ventilator” at the VR, the pot of funding for *Interdisciplinarity*, *Gender and Risk*, there is stiff competition between interdisciplinary applications for an extremely small amount of funding. Nevertheless, if an interdisciplinary research application is not approved for funding in this

category, it is managed by the ordinary preparatory committees, i.e. disciplinary committees. The conviction of ‘ad hoc’ interdisciplinarity keeps the VR from establishing any kind of framework for managing interdisciplinary applications. But, as earlier described, alongside the disciplinary assessment procedure, the emphasis on ‘ad hoc’ interdisciplinarity causes severe problems for interdisciplinary researchers with an ambition to make a career (Westerholm, 2005).

- Thirdly, the VR has a conservative division when it comes to conceptual approaches to the production of knowledge in general and interdisciplinarity in particular. In their most recent writing, *Research Strategies for the Swedish Research Council 2005-2008*, the VR emphasizes the importance of crossing disciplines. Simultaneously, they state that their focus on interdisciplinary research is brought from areas such as natural sciences and technology within the sphere of the so-called ”benefit research”. This form of research is contrasted with so-called ”curiosity research” within subject-fields such as the humanities and the social sciences (Vetenskapsrådet, 2004: 4, *Forskning och förnyelse*, 2001: 101<sup>35</sup>). While suitable both in a market- and management-oriented model of higher education, and in the radical and critical parts of the academy, in areas such as gender studies, gay and lesbian studies, postcolonial studies etc., this argumentation draws on a division that reinforces the paradoxical situation of inter- and transdisciplinarity (Hark, 2005: 2). It implies that research arising from the humanities can hardly be beneficial, and that research that is profitable seldom involves curious pondering. These divisions produces an imbalance that may render obstacles for the establishment of interdisciplinary research, not only because of the need for the development of concepts in every area of research, but also because of the simplistic view of knowledge and knowledge-seeking strategies observed (Holm, and Liinason, 2005b: 5).

Questions of interdisciplinarity are closely related to our conceptions of knowledge. Categories of knowledge may be perceived as institutions “constructed and maintained in cultural space” (Thompson Klein, 1996: 35), illustrated by the conventional division made by the VR above. New forms of knowledge practices need, however, to be institutionalized in order to achieve influence, which means that they need some kind of exterior and material frame (Cf. Thompson Klein, 2005: 35-36). Not least because of the interest in the creation of new categories of knowledge, as well as the creation of new knowledge-seeking strategies, the implicit belief in ‘ad hoc’ interdisciplinarity is inexplicable. In sum, however, the VR’s promotion of interdisciplinarity results in a vagueness around how, and by whom, interdisciplinary research is going to be looked after in the Swedish system for research funding today.

## 4.2 RESEARCH PROGRAM

### **The committee for gender research and gender equality research at the FRN**

The committee for gender research and gender equality research was assigned to develop gender studies as a research area. At the same time, they were allocated a small amount of resources. One way to handle this situation was to give support to individual researchers in their work with dissertations. By way of distributing

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<sup>35</sup> The distinction between benefit/curiosity is particularly upheld by the government.

financial support to each area of research with a focus on gender issues the committee sought to establish the research area in a broad sense.

As discussed earlier, the committee for gender research experienced a reduced value from other areas of research at the FRN, illustrated by, among other things, the fact that they did not get any funding from the FRN. Instead, the committee was given resources directly from the government, in the form of earmarked funding. This funding established, however, possibilities for the longest and most extensive concentration of gender research ever, at that point in time. It was, moreover, recognized as extremely important for the establishment and growth of the research field.

### **Interdisciplinarity, Gender and Risk at the VR**

The funding area *Interdisciplinarity, Gender and Risk*, is among other things, motivated by an organisational disposition at the VR, as organised along disciplinary lines. This funding area has the potential of giving attention to interdisciplinary research projects, but has only a very small amount of money. Therefore only a small amount of interdisciplinary projects can be approved for funding in this area. The remaining part returns to the ordinary preparation, in the disciplinary committees. Concerning interdisciplinarity, this is not so much of a problem for excellent researchers, highly qualified and well recognized in the system of higher education. The troubles come when the applying researcher is not recognized as an excellent, or highly qualified disciplinary researcher. In order for the promotion of interdisciplinarity at the VR to be anything other than empty rhetoric, there is a great need for a new organisational form, capable of managing varying forms of interdisciplinarity and for earmarked funding, reserved for the support of promising research areas still under construction.

### **4.3 RESEARCH PROJECTS**

As discussed earlier in our report, the analysis of the research projects we investigated showed some severe difficulties and important areas, when it came to the establishment of interdisciplinary research. Successes and failures in the research projects funded by the FRN or the VR were quite balanced. Nevertheless, with respect to the formation of questions, the object of research and methods used, every research project studied had large possibilities to produce highly interesting interdisciplinary research. The following possibilities for interdisciplinarity were observed in the research projects studied:

- A thematic focus in the research projects, such as music, fatherhood, the art of prophecy etc. Objects of research, as well as research questions, theories, methods and analysis were often clearly interdisciplinary.
- Creative research processes. With a realistic idea of the difficulties with collaboration, the researchers had an ambition to meet often, read, discuss and frequently use the research results among themselves.
- Shared methodological standpoints, i.e. shared ontological and epistemological claims in the research group, necessary for the transgression of established borders of knowledge, i.e. the creation of *cognitive interdisciplinarity*.

The following areas of trouble were observed in the different research projects:

- Cognitive interdisciplinarity is difficult to achieve. In some of the projects studied, there was a restricted approach to the creative production of knowledge. This produced obstacles for the transgression of cognitive borders and the invention of “new” knowledges.
- The lack of time and money. The development of interdisciplinary skills is described as a time-consuming and demanding task. It is something you must learn. Consequently, this is mentioned as a reason why the lack of time and money in some of the research projects forced researchers to work more individually and less collaboratively than they originally wanted.
- Social vulnerability. The interdisciplinary researcher often had a multi-institutional affiliation, i.e. connections with several departments. From this follows that the researcher was not really ‘at home’ in any department, a fact that produces a social vulnerability.

#### 4.4 SUMMARY

In a comparison of the possibilities to manage interdisciplinarity in the earlier system for research funding with those in the present system, it is obvious that the earlier system, divided along disciplinary lines, with sharp divisions between each research council’s area, was negative for the establishment of interdisciplinary research. Nevertheless, the existence of the FRN counterbalanced this negative condition. In this report, the FRN is understood as an important instrument for the establishment of interdisciplinary research areas. Simultaneously, the present ambition of the VR seems to be heading towards the opposite direction, although concentrations on disciplinary research are said to create obstacles against the establishment of interdisciplinarity as well as the creation of new areas of knowledge.

Consequently, our report stresses the following requirements for the promotion of interdisciplinary research:

- A formalised framework for interdisciplinary research, preferably organised within the ordinary research council.
- An organisational form that can manage interdisciplinarity, as well as a conceptual approach that can handle the production of knowledge and knowledge-seeking strategies without conventional restrictions.
- Earmarked funding. In order for interdisciplinary research not to be left behind by more powerful research areas, earmarked funding is decisive for the growth of interdisciplinary research.

#### CONCLUSION

Thus, paradoxically, although the government’s ambition at the turn of the century was to strengthen the possibilities for interdisciplinarity, the re-organisation of research funding seems to create more obstacles for researchers with interdisciplinary projects than the earlier system did and consequently creates higher barriers for the growth of interdisciplinarity. The following explanations emerge in our report:

The FRN on the whole and the thematic research programs from the committee for gender research and gender equality research, attended to here, offered actual possibilities for interdisciplinary research, and especially “wide interdisciplinarity”, by way of:

- An explicit assignment from the government to handle interdisciplinary research in all its varieties, with a special focus on “wide interdisciplinarity”.

- The constitution of the Board with connections between academia and society produced increased possibilities for, above all, problem-oriented and applied forms of interdisciplinary research.
- The organizational form with thematic committees made the funding council capable of managing interdisciplinary research applications.
- The Joint Action Group that promoted large collaborative research projects across disciplinary and organisational lines in the system for research funding.
- The support from individual politicians and the earmarked funding from the government for certain areas of research, in need of support.

The VR has a commission to promote interdisciplinarity of all kinds. Nevertheless, the VR is an organisation with large built-in difficulties concerning the management of interdisciplinary research. The VR's understanding of disciplinarity as the firm basis for interdisciplinarity establishes several difficulties for interdisciplinary researchers, of a conceptual, as well as an organizational, character:

- Conventional conceptions of knowledge. Through a narrow-minded attitude to the establishment of possibilities for the creation of new knowledge and knowledge-seeking strategies, as well as a neglectful attitude to forms of institutionalized frameworks for interdisciplinarity, the management of interdisciplinarity at the VR draws on conventional conceptions of knowledge.
- The incentive to establish 'ad hoc' interdisciplinarity, without intervention or control from above. This is counterproductive towards the commission from the government to promote interdisciplinary research. This trust in 'ad hoc' interdisciplinarity means that the organisational principle at the VR is directed along disciplinary lines.
- Organizational form. The VR is commissioned to handle basic research of all kinds. The organizational form, with scientific councils, preparatory committees, application forms etc. is assigned to meet the needs of disciplinary researchers. Consequently, obstacles arise for interdisciplinary researchers, regarding such things as assessment procedures, preparation and evaluation of applications.

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## APPENDIX 1

### Members in the Expert group for interdisciplinarity

Anna-Lisa Lindén (SJFR)  
David Magnusson (HSFR)  
Denny Vågerö (SFR)  
Gunnar Öqvist (NFR)  
Gunnar Tibell (the National Space Board)  
Jan Larsson (FRN)  
Olle Stendahl (MFR)  
Uno Svedin (chair in the Expert group)

### Members in the Expert group for the integration of gender research

Barbro Westerholm (FRN)  
Bengt Gustafsson (Uppsala University)  
Charlotte Hall/ Sofie Björling(TFR)  
Elisabeth Gulbrandsen (Norwegian research council)  
Engegerd Runesson (MFR)  
Gunnar Leman (NFR)  
Hilda Rømer Christensen (Coordinator from the Danish research forum)  
Inga Persson/Erland Bergman (SFR)  
Ingrid Sandahl (the National Space Board)  
Lena Trojer (chair in the Joint Action Group and in the Expert group)  
Marianne Glass (SJFR)  
Maud Eduards (HSFR)  
Ning de Conick Smith (Danish research forum)

## APPENDIX 2

Some of the thematic committees at the FRN (1977-2000)

Source: *Arkivbeskrivning FRN*, Vetenskapsrådets arkiv, Stockholm 2002:5

Abbreviation	Committee
SALFO	The committee for long-term research
NAMI	The committee for natural resources and environmental research
-	The committee for co-operative research
ISH	The committee for individual-society-health
KOMBI	The committee for library- and information sciences
HUMDIM	The committee for Swedish Human Dimension
-	The committee for gender research
-	The committee for longitudinal research
-	The committee for risk research

### APPENDIX 3

Some of the research projects, funded by the thematic proclamation Gender, Religion and Morality (The FRN 1998-2000)

Research project	Researcher	Institution	Project time	Amount of funding
Islams syn på genusrelationer	Nader Ahmadi	Socialt arbete Stockholms universitet	1999	230 000
			2000	230 000
			2001	230 000
Hedersmord eller könsvåld? Kön, kultur och religion i unga arabiska muslimers förståelser av våld	Åsa Eldén	Sociologiska institutionen Uppsala universitet	1998	80 000:
Etiken i Birgitta Trotzigs och Katarina Frostensons poetik.	Carin Franzén	Litteraturvetenskap Stockholms univ.	1999	345 000
			2000	345 000
			2001	345 000
Faders-ansvars-rörelsen; omtvistandet av förändrade genusrelationer i familj, stat och arbetsmarknad	Anna Gavanoas	Socialantropologi Stockholms univ.	1998	80 000
			1999	346 000
Med egen ingång. En etnologisk studie av religion, kön och kulturell förändring i svenska moskéer.	Lena Gerholm	Etnologi Stockholms univ.	1999	270 500
Underordning i teologin: Bärande princip eller tyngande barlast?	Christina Grenholm	Teologi Uppsala Universitet	1998	350 000
			1999	350 000
Den hotade familjen – familj, kön och moral under 1800-talets andra hälft.	Karin Johannisson	Idé och lärdom Uppsala	1999	340 000
			2000	408 000
Divination – kosmisk ordning, problemlösning och genus	Britt-Mari Näsström	Religionsvetenskap Göteborgs universitet	1999	340 000
			2000	420 000
			2001	450 000
Kyrkans undervisning och katolska ungdomars konstruktion av kön	Minna Salminen-karlsson	Tema teknik och social förändring Linköpings universitet	2000-2002	Hur mycket pengar?
Kön, religion och modernitet	Inga Sanner	Idéhistoria Stockholms universitet	2000	400 000
			2001	350 000
			2002	350 000

Patriarkalism i äktenskap och samhälle – genuskonstruktion i den tidigmoderna Sverige	Maria Sjöberg	Historia Stockholms universitet	1998	345 000
			1999	345 000
Olikhet i olika kontexter – etisk analys av texter där kvinnor och män maximeras	Karin Sporre	Teologi Lunds universitet	1998	65 000
Kön, islam och modernisering – Istanbul och Teheran 1920-tal till 1990-tal	Göran Therborn	Sociologi Göteborgs universitet	1995	450 000
			1996	367 000
			1997	445 000
Frikyrka, manlighet och politik	Klas Åmark	Historiska inst. Stockholms univ	2000	350 000
			2001	350 000
			2002	350 000

## APPENDIX 4

Fatherhood responsibility movement: changed gender relations in family, state and labour market, Anna Gavanas

### *List of conferences*

2003, Aug 22:

"Masculinizing Domesticity and Domesticating Masculinity." Paper presented at the Gender and Power 5<sup>th</sup> European Feminist Research Conference, Lund University, Sweden. Panel "Families, Fatherhood and the Private Sphere."

2003, Aug 13:

"Domesticating Men: Century-long Dilemmas of U.S. Fatherhood Politics." Paper presented at the 4<sup>th</sup> Conference of the International Federation for Research in Women's History, at Queen's University in Belfast, Panel 39: "Sexuality, Family Boundaries and Gendered Obligation: A Comparative Discussion of Social Policy in the United States and Mandatory Palestine."

2002, Nov 22:

"Fatherhood Responsibility," Welfare Reform and U.S. Men's Movements. Paper presented at the American Anthropological Association, New Orleans. Panel: The politics of "Reform": Critical Views on Welfare and Anti-Poverty Policies in the United States.

2002, Nov 1:

"Domesticating Masculinity and Masculinizing Domesticity in Contemporary U.S. Fatherhood Politics." Paper presented at the Conference "Collective Interventions on the Terrain of Care and Intimacy. International Perspectives." University of Leeds, England

2002, Sept 25

"U.S. Fatherhood Politics." Paper presentation at the Globalization Seminar Series at the Sociology Department of State University of New York, Stony Brook.

2002, May 24:

"Marriage as a Minefield in Contemporary U.S. Sexual Politics." Paper presented at "Farewell to Heteronormativity," Gothenburg/ Sweden

2002, April 15:

"The Fatherhood Responsibility Movement." Paper presented at the Columbia University School of Social Work/ New York. Policy Brown Bag Seminar.

2002, April 3:

"Masculinizing Domesticity and Domesticating Masculinity: Dilemmas and Implications of Contemporary U.S. Fatherhood politics." Paper presented at Northwestern University/ Chicago's Workshop in the Sociology of Gender.

## APPENDIX 5

### Interviews:

Berggren, Anne Marie, interviewed over the telephone, 2005-11-09

Ganetz, Hillevi, interviewed over the telephone, 2005-10-12

Gavanas, Anna, interviewed over the telephone, 2005-10-10

Hansson, Bengt, interviewed face-to-face, 2005-10-26

Mörck, Magnus, interviewed face-to-face, 2005-10-07

Nordberg, Marie, interviewed face-to-face, 2005-10-24

Näsström, Britt-Mari, interviewed face-to-face, 2005-10-07

Omling, Per, interviewed over the telephone, 2005-11-21

Svedin, Uno, interviewed over the telephone, 2005-10-12

Trojer, Lena, interviewed over the telephone, 2005-10-17

Westerholm, Barbro, interviewed over the telephone, 2005-11-11