



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

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## 1. Introduction

This report is part of the research project “Changing Knowledge and Disciplinary Boundaries through Integrative Research Methods in the Social Sciences and Humanities”. The project focuses on the construction of disciplinary divisions and the possibilities for interdisciplinary research in the Social Sciences and Humanities. In a comparative perspective between eight European countries (Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Norway, Sweden, Spain, United Kingdom) the research project analyses the forms interdisciplinarity takes in research policies and practices. It also highlights what kinds of barriers exist to the implementation of interdisciplinarity in the countries involved in the project.

In this report we use the concepts of multi-, inter- and transdisciplinarity following Holm and Liinason (2005, 5; cf. Salter and Liora 1996, 29-43; Bruun et al 2005, 28-32). With multidisciplinary we refer to a parallel existence of different disciplines in proximity to each other, where knowledge is produced from within the disciplinary frameworks and then combined. Thus, multidisciplinary refers to an additive process where the disciplinary system itself is not questioned. With interdisciplinarity we mean integration between different bodies of knowledge which aims to create a new knowledge basis. Different disciplinary data, methods and theories are combined to produce a broader understanding of the issues under consideration. We discuss two kinds of interdisciplinarity – instrumental and cognitive interdisciplinarity. Instrumental interdisciplinarity aims at problem solving and is often connected to applied research. Cognitive interdisciplinarity focuses on questions related to concepts, theories and methods, thus discussing integration on a more epistemological and methodological level than instrumental interdisciplinarity. With transdisciplinarity we mean knowledge production that goes beyond disciplinary thinking. It adopts a reflexive and critical stand towards disciplinary knowledge production.

In addition, we make a distinction between narrow and broad interdisciplinarity. Narrow interdisciplinarity occurs between disciplines which are close to each other conceptually and/or historically (Bruun et al 2005, 29). They apply common approaches or use similar methods, theories or concepts. An example of this could be interdisciplinary work within the Social Sciences – between for example Sociology, Social Policy, Social Psychology and Social Work. Broad interdisciplinarity, on the other hand, involves disciplines or knowledge areas which are conceptually removed from one another (ibid, 29). The integration becomes more difficult, since the differences in theories, methods and concepts are large. An example of this would be interdisciplinarity that integrates Natural Sciences with Social Sciences.

This report analyses the role of interdisciplinarity in the Finnish national research system focusing on research programmes. First, we study how interdisciplinarity is discussed and stated as a goal in Finnish research policy documents. In the second part of the study, we take a closer look at the role of multidisciplinary and interdisciplinarity in two completed research programmes. We analyse the statements of the programme documents and the activities organised during the programme from the point of view of multi/interdisciplinarity. In addition, a few research projects within these research programmes are studied in more detail to highlight how

multi/interdisciplinarity shapes (or does not shape) the practices of doing research and working in a project.

The two case studies of this report are called *Marginalisation, Inequality and Ethnic Relations in Finland (SYREENI)* and *Interaction across the Gulf of Bothnia (SVEFI)*. The SYREENI programme was funded by the national research council, the Academy of Finland, during 2001-2003. The programme focused on the mechanisms leading to inequality and marginalisation in society with special reference to ethnic relations. The SVEFI programme ran in 2000-2003. It was funded partly by the Finnish and Swedish research councils and partly by private funding bodies in Finland and Sweden. The aim of the programme was to study the co-existence of Swedish in Finland and Finnish in Sweden, and the dependence, non-dependence, interaction and tensions between the countries – historically, today and in the future.

The report proceeds in the following way. Chapter 2 introduces the Finnish research funding system and analyses the role of interdisciplinarity in Finnish research policy. Chapter 3 focuses on the *Marginalisation, Inequality and Ethnic Relations in Finland*-programme. Chapter 4 discusses the implementation of the *Interaction across the Gulf of Bothnia*-programme. In chapter 5 a comparison is made between the two programmes and the implications of the results are discussed. Chapter 6 concludes the findings of the report and makes suggestions for future action.

## Material

The material in this study consists of policy documents of the Finnish research council and several kinds of material from the two case studies. The policy documents by the Finnish research council, the Academy of Finland, used in the report are: *Scientific Research in Finland. A Review of Its Quality and Impact in the Early 2000s* (Oksanen, Lehvo and Nuutinen 2003); *Academy of Finland. Research Programme Strategy* (2002); *The Academy of Finland's Forward Look 2000* (2000); and *The Academy of Finland's International Strategy* (2002).

The case studies were conducted on the basis of the following material: programme memorandums, presentations of the programmes on their web sites and specific leaflets, presentations of the projects belonging to the programmes (their abstracts and web pages), programmes of conferences and conferences organised within the research programme, notes taken at these conferences and some papers presented at the conferences, evaluation reports, lists of publications, and volumes published at the end of the programmes.

In addition, as part of the case studies, 11 interviews were made during September-October 2005 with

- the scientific coordinators of both programmes
- the coordinators at the Academy of Finland who took part in the preparation of the programme and organised the administrative affairs during the programme (both programmes)
- representatives of the evaluation group of both programmes
- three project leaders/researchers in SVEFI
- two project leaders/researchers in SYREENI
- one project leader/researcher who took part in both research programmes.

## **Methods and methodological remarks**

In general, the gathering of the material was rather easy both as regards the research policy of the Finnish research council and the research programmes. Most of this material is public and much of the information on the programmes is even available on the internet. The Finnish research system is quite transparent in this sense. Additionally, all the people asked to be interviewed agreed and most were eager to talk about the issues. Especially the programme coordinators, project leaders and researchers had a lot to say about how the programme ran and what activities the individual projects were engaged in.

The interviewees were contacted by e-mail and telephone and asked for their consent. They were also asked to be quoted using their actual name, which all agreed to. The reason for asking this was that anonymity is hard to keep when describing clearly defined programmes, as is the case here. The interviewees were given the possibility to check their quotations before the final report. Two interviews were made face-to-face and nine interviews were made by telephone. All the interviews were recorded. Some additional information was exchanged by e-mail. The interviews lasted about one hour on average. The questions varied somewhat depending on whether they were presented to coordinators, project leaders, researchers in the projects or representatives of the evaluation group, but the following themes were addressed: the research policy of the Academy of Finland (in relation to interdisciplinarity); the background and start up of the research programme; activities during the programme; the composition and working modes of individual research projects; networking of the projects; evaluation processes and conclusions; the informants' own role during the programme/project; and views on interdisciplinarity. The case study material has been analysed thematically.

The project leaders and researchers in the programmes account for little more than half of the interviewees. Their number could have been bigger if we had wanted to examine closely how individual projects worked, but here projects are used more as examples of how the programme worked in general terms. The main focus has been on the research programmes of which the material is quite adequate in our judgement.

The policy documents of the Finnish Research Council were analysed with a focus on how multi- and interdisciplinarity is discussed and what kind of issues they are related to. In addition we analysed where multi- and interdisciplinarity are not mentioned.

## **2. Interdisciplinarity in the Finnish research funding system**

### **The research funding system in Finland**

Funding for research in Finland is allocated through the state budget as basic funding to universities, as competition-based funding through the Finnish Research Council (the Academy of Finland) and the National Technology Agency (Tekes), by the EU-framework programmes, by ministries and by private corporations (Keskinen and

Silius 2005a, 2005b). In the provision of external funding in the Social Sciences and Humanities the Finnish Research Council, the Academy of Finland, has a central role. In the Humanities more than half of the external funding in 2000 was provided by the Academy of Finland, whereas in the Social Sciences around 12 per cent of the external funding has been provided by the Academy of Finland in recent years (Hakala et al 2003a, 45-46). The Academy of Finland is a state-financed funding body which financed research totalling 184.4 million euros in 2003 (Academy of Finland Annual Report 2003, 9). Research programmes received 23.5 per cent (over 40 million euros); research projects 43 per cent; researcher training 14.5 per cent; research posts 11 per cent; and international cooperation 8 per cent of the total funding.

In the Academy of Finland the funding decisions are made by four committees, called research councils. The Research Council for Culture and Society covers the Humanities and the Social Sciences. The council members are academics from the universities and governmental research organisations. They are appointed for a three-year period. The appointments are made officially by the government, but based on a process in which universities, research institutes, scientific societies and other related bodies make proposals of persons with adequate scientific competence. The Board is the highest decision-making body in the Academy of Finland. It formulates the science policy of the institution and defines the amount of funding resources allocated to each of the four councils. The Board is chaired by the President of the Academy of Finland.

Most of the research in Finland is conducted in the universities by teacher-researchers employed at the departments and by researchers with external funding. In addition, governmental research institutes work mainly in the field of applied research (for a more detailed presentation of the Finnish research system, see Keskinen and Silius 2005a).

### **Interdisciplinarity in research policy documents**

The encouragement of multi- and interdisciplinary research is articulated as a goal in Finnish research policy. It is also presented as an objective for research programmes. This emphasis originates from the general policy to turn Finland into a knowledge based economy, which is competitive enough to survive in the hardening global economic competition. Multi- and interdisciplinarity are seen to promote innovativeness and novel solutions. The policy of a knowledge based economy and the emphasis on competitiveness bring along pressures to develop and adjust the research system to these needs. Thus, Finnish policies comply with European Union policies. In this section, the central strategic documents of the Finnish Research Council, the Academy of Finland, are analysed focusing on how interdisciplinarity is presented in them.

### ***The Academy of Finland's Forward Look 2000***

*The Academy of Finland's Forward Look 2000*<sup>1</sup> is a document which defines the challenges and guidelines for Finnish research policy in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is concerned with an adequate funding level for the research sector (especially for basic research), securing the quality of researchers, providing innovative research environments, international cooperation, and closer contacts between research and society. Multi- or interdisciplinarity are *not* explicitly mentioned in the document, but research programmes are discussed in detail. The document uses the term “creative environment” which is connected to innovativeness and competitiveness (ibid, 77-78). Creative research environments are seen to have a broad knowledge base and a diverse social and scientific structure, in order to bring together researchers in different career stages, to have effective networks and international contacts, and to participate in many kinds of projects (both basic research and applied research). It is also stated that creative research environments are “open spaces that encourage intensive horizontal interaction” and that “in a scientifically diverse environment such interaction leads to learning processes that enrich expertise”. Science policy should therefore encourage the establishment of creative research environments by means of financing and organising research programmes and centres of excellence. Research programmes are seen to provide a forum through which dispersed resources and different competences can be brought together.

Thus, the rhetoric used in the document emphasises aspects and meanings often connected to interdisciplinarity. It stresses interaction between different kinds of knowledge bases and types of research (e.g. basic and applied research). The rhetoric focuses on diversity, combination of different expertise and openness. Interdisciplinarity can easily be included in this kind of argumentation. However, it is worth notifying that no explicit discussion of multi- or interdisciplinarity is presented in the general guidelines for Finnish research policy.

### ***Research Programme Strategy***

The *Research Programme Strategy* (2003, 49) of the Academy of Finland, on the other hand, clearly states multi- and interdisciplinarity as an aim for its research programmes. The document outlines the Academy's research programme policy for 2003-2007. According to the text, the objectives of research programmes are:

- to develop research environments
- to coordinate scattered research capacities
- to promote multidisciplinary, interdisciplinarity and where possible transdisciplinarity
- to develop national and international cooperation between researchers, funding bodies and end-users of research results

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<sup>1</sup> The titles of reports, projects, organisations, etc. that we have used in this report are the actual ones used in officially published documents, which can be found in libraries, databases etc. Some titles may sound very non-English.

- to increase the international visibility of Finnish research through closer cooperation between researchers, research organisations and funding bodies
- to promote researcher training and professional careers in research

Thus, multi-, inter- and even transdisciplinarity are mentioned as the main objectives of research programmes. In the text these concepts are also defined in detail.

Multidisciplinarity takes place when “a given set of problems is analysed simultaneously from the vantage-point of several different disciplines”. Another criterion for multidisciplinarity is that only limited interaction exists between the disciplines. On its part, interdisciplinarity refers to “deeper integration: research will also borrow concepts, methods and perspectives from other disciplines”. In this case the interaction between researchers and disciplines is systematic. Transdisciplinarity is seen as a “shared and essentially novel theoretical frame of reference and conceptual unity that may lead to the emergence of a new discipline”. Another definition of transdisciplinarity is also mentioned: it may mean research in which end-users are involved from the beginning to the end of the research process.

In addition, when policy guidelines are discussed in more detail further on in the *Research Programme Strategy* (2003) multi- and interdisciplinarity are mentioned several times. For example, the document focuses on multi- and interdisciplinarity when it discusses national cooperation and enhancing the competitiveness of the Finnish research system. Cooperation between researchers, research funding bodies and end-users of the results is emphasised. This cooperation is seen as a way to promote, among other things, interaction between basic and applied research and to increase multi- and interdisciplinarity research (ibid, 51-52). As an example of success in this sense, a cluster programme connecting funding by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the Academy of Finland is mentioned. However, it is pointed out that the role of the Academy is, among other things, to take account of the interests of basic research and researcher training. The document also notes that building up cooperation in multi- and interdisciplinarity research takes a long time, thus requiring continued cooperation even after the programme is over – possibly accomplished by financial support from the Academy of Finland. Later in the text, the document emphasises the responsibility of the programme coordinator to encourage and facilitate the production of multi- and interdisciplinarity publications (ibid, 57). It is also stated that the research programme period should be extended from three to four years for proper research training, the development of multi- and interdisciplinarity research and international programme networking (ibid, 60).

To summarise, the research programme strategy formulates multi- and interdisciplinarity as an objective. It even discusses multi- and interdisciplinarity in more detail a couple of times. In these cases multi- and interdisciplinarity is connected to interaction between basic and applied research, and cooperation between funding bodies and with end-users. Some practical considerations also appear in which it is recognised that conducting multi- and interdisciplinarity research and contacts needs more time than monodisciplinary research. There seems to be no preference regarding multidisciplinarity or interdisciplinarity. Instead, they are discussed together. There are also strands of what we call “instrumental interdisciplinarity”. We find an emphasis on cooperation with end-users and other funding bodies and between basic research and applied research. However, since the role of the Academy of Finland is to fund basic research, the document also points out the need to ensure the position of basic research and researcher training. It is also noteworthy that the document defines

interdisciplinarity in a rather cognitive way, but this view of interdisciplinarity is not explored later in the text. Neither are the connections and possible contradictions of instrumental and cognitive interdisciplinarity discussed. Transdisciplinarity is not taken up after the initial definition and its role seems insignificant, since there is no further exploration of the issue.

### ***Academy of Finland International Strategy***

The document *Academy of Finland International Strategy* (2002) which defines the Academy's policy line for 2002-2007 only takes up interdisciplinarity when it discusses research programmes. Interdisciplinarity (without the additional multidisciplinary) is mentioned as the aim of the research programmes, but is not explored in greater detail.

### ***Scientific Research in Finland. A Review of Its Quality and Impact in the Early 2000s***

The document *Scientific Research in Finland. A Review of Its Quality and Impact in the Early 2000s* (Oksanen, Lehvo and Nuutinen 2003) differs from the previously analysed strategy papers, since it takes a look backwards at recent trends in the Finnish research system and makes suggestions on the basis of this review. It discusses multi- and interdisciplinarity on several occasions. Again, multi- and interdisciplinarity are connected to the research programmes. In the part evaluating the research programmes, it is stated that "research programmes have helped to promote multidisciplinary" (ibid, 71). Based on the evaluation reports of several research programmes, the authors conclude that research programmes have increased cooperation and networking among researchers from different disciplines and organisations. It is also noted that different vantage-points, concepts and traditions between disciplines provide difficulties for a deeper cooperation, therefore requiring time to be accomplished. The document points out that the structure of the programme, the choice of projects and coordination can affect the form cooperation takes. In the section written by the Research Council of Culture and Society, the growth of multidisciplinary is presented as one of the central trends in recent years. The description focuses on multidisciplinary research, but mentions also interdisciplinarity. In this section research programmes and centres of excellence are mentioned, as well as several new fields of research, such as Women's Studies and Regional Studies. The document points out that multidisciplinary research requires more flexibility of the research funding system, which also should be taken into account in evaluation practices. It also states that despite efforts by the Research Council of Culture and Society to pay attention to the position of multidisciplinary applications, the issue needs further action.

### **Summary**

On the basis of these documents, we conclude that multi- and interdisciplinarity are most clearly linked to research programmes. This connection is strong, since the promotion of multi- and interdisciplinarity is stated as a general aim of research programmes and is thus often mentioned when they are discussed. On the whole there

is little discussion of what multi- and interdisciplinarity mean and what it requires in research activities. Multidisciplinarity and interdisciplinarity are often discussed together, as a kind of “package”. It seems as if the need for interdisciplinarity is well acknowledged, its implications noted, but as if the means of implementation are missing.

Although the Academy of Finland is oriented towards funding basic research, there are strands of instrumental interdisciplinarity in the documents. Interdisciplinarity is defined in a cognitive way, but the emphasis on innovativeness, usefulness of research and interaction between basic and applied research bring elements of instrumentalism to the discussions. Transdisciplinarity seems to be more of a suggestion, since the meaning of it is not defined clearly and the term is not used after its introduction. The objective of promoting multi- and interdisciplinarity is motivated by the rhetoric of an economically competitive and innovative Finland.

### **Implementation of interdisciplinarity in Finnish research funding**

Although encouraging multi- and interdisciplinarity is stated as the objective of Finnish research policy, its practical implementation and the problems interdisciplinary research encounter have only started to be investigated. The evaluation report of the Academy of Finland produced by an international expert panel in 2004 indicated that several changes need to be made in order to support interdisciplinary research. The panel suggested for example changes in the review process regarding interdisciplinary projects. This evaluation has resulted in some action by the Academy of Finland.

In the review process for the general research grants in 2004, an experiment was made with interdisciplinary panels to enable more appropriate handling of interdisciplinary applications. One panel was set up to make assessments about environmental project applications. It consisted of experts from two research councils – the Research Council for Culture and Society and the Research Council for Biosciences and Environment. Another interdisciplinary panel was formed within the Research Council for Culture and Society. It made recommendations on applications with an interdisciplinary nature in the research area of History, Cultural Research, Political Science and Philosophy (for a detailed presentation see Keskinen and Silius 2005a, 18).

In order to get an overview of the current situation we interviewed scientific advisor Ms Raija Matikainen (2006) at the Academy of Finland, who explained that in the review of the general grants in 2005, an interdisciplinary panel combining experts from two research councils (the Research Council for Culture and Society and the Research Council for Biosciences and Environment) was organised for the second time. It focused mainly on applications in environmental research. The interdisciplinary panel within the Research Council for Culture and Society was not organised this time. It was difficult to set up in practice, since the same reviewers attended also more disciplinary based panels and timetables were hard to match. In addition, the amount of applications for this kind of panel is not very high, which means that it may not be reasonable to set up a separate panel. Instead, the research

council has tried to find experts with interdisciplinary and broad expertise for the evaluation panels. When experts are chosen to become reviewers, their expertise area is examined by the scientific advisors and the members of the research council, mainly focusing on their CVs and lists of publications. In this process attention is paid to how broad the expertise area of the person is and whether it includes interdisciplinary elements. The guidelines for the review process of the general research grants in 2006 are still under discussion, since the application period closed only very recently.

### **General Research Grants of the Academy of Finland**

Another consequence of the evaluation report of the Academy of Finland was that the Academy commissioned a study to investigate to what extent and how the Academy promoted interdisciplinary research in its General Research Grants, and to make suggestions on how to improve the situation. The study was published in a report called *Promoting Interdisciplinary Research: The Case of the Academy of Finland* (Bruun et al 2005). It examined in detail the funding of the General Research Grants in 1997, 2000 and 2004. The study analysed all research projects funded in 1997 and 2000 that the research group categorised as multi- or interdisciplinary on the basis of their research plans. In addition to a categorisation of the projects, a survey was directed among the leaders of these projects. For the funding in 2004, the study looked at both submitted and financed research project applications on basis of a random sample. The scientific advisors of the Academy of Finland were also interviewed about the evaluation process of the applications and the specificities of interdisciplinary applications. The study came to the conclusion that despite problems with disciplinary peer review, the position of interdisciplinary applications had been rather good. Of the 2004 sample 81 per cent of projects categorised as disciplinary were not funded, and 19 per cent were, whereas 79 per cent of projects categorised as interdisciplinary were not funded, and 21 per cent were (ibid, 131). However, the authors point out that the sample was small and if the results were to be generalised to all the successful proposals, the confidence interval is as high as +/- 11 per cent. Thus, in order to give general results on the issue, more extensive research would be needed.

The study made some interesting findings about the relationship between disciplinary and multi/interdisciplinary research, and forms of multi- and interdisciplinarity in the funded research proposals. According to the categorisation made by the research group, 42 per cent of the funded research projects in the Research Council for Culture and Society were disciplinary, whereas 58 per cent were multi/interdisciplinary (ibid, 101). Here it should be noted that the research group categorised applications as multi/interdisciplinary if the research plan combined approaches (empirical, methodological or theoretical) of different fields of knowledge (often connected to discipline, but not always), although the researchers could come from only one discipline. Thus the definition of multi/interdisciplinarity was very wide and some projects categorised as interdisciplinary disagreed with this definition themselves. It is apparent that the high percentage is partly due to this wide definition and the study may give a brighter picture than is justified.

The study also argued that interdisciplinarity is even more common within the financed project applications than multidisciplinary. For example 71 per cent of the multi/interdisciplinary applications to the Research Council for Culture and Society

(years 1997, 2000) were categorised as interdisciplinary and 29 per cent as multidisciplinary (ibid, 111). Theoretical and methodological interdisciplinarity were found to be the most common forms of interdisciplinarity. These results are rather contrary to the general opinion among researchers, but may also be a consequence of the very broad definition of the concepts.

Making interpretations of these findings requires caution, since they are based on research plans and the survey indicated differences in relation to actual research practices. Nevertheless, the results suggest that there exist possibilities for interdisciplinary research in the funding system of the Academy of Finland, despite the disciplinary peer review practice. An additional strength of the report is that it engages in thorough discussion of the disciplinary evaluation system and ways to improve it.

### **Research programmes of the Academy of Finland**

The Academy of Finland has initiated research to investigate how research programmes have managed to accomplish their tasks and about the experiences of organising research programmes. It commissioned a study based on a survey of project leaders and interviews with programme coordinators of 12 research programmes funded between 1994 and 2001 (Hakala et al 2003b). Among the research programmes investigated were programmes with a background in the Social Sciences and Humanities, as well as programmes with a background in Natural Sciences, Technology and Medicine. Thus, for the purpose of our study the scope is quite large and it is not possible to receive segregated information about the Social Sciences and Humanities. However, the results of the study provide some background and evidence for comparison with the case studies we analyse later in this report. One interesting result of the Academy research report was that 47 per cent of the research projects in the research programmes were monodisciplinary. Among the others, 27 per cent had representatives from two disciplines, 18 per cent had representatives from three disciplines and only 9 per cent had representatives from four or more disciplines (ibid, 22). Thus, nearly half of the projects in the programme consisted of representatives from only one discipline. On the other hand, when the project leaders were asked if the projects conducted multi- or interdisciplinary research, 54 per cent of them answered that they were doing significantly and 37 per cent to some extent, multi- or interdisciplinary research. Only 10 per cent said they were not engaged in multi- or interdisciplinary research at all (ibid, 32). This could mean that researchers consider themselves conducting multi- or interdisciplinary research despite a disciplinary base (or wished to present it in this way in the questionnaire). Just like the results of the report called *Promoting Interdisciplinary Research* this result highlights the need to pay attention to interdisciplinarity as a pattern of individual researchers' activities and to the possible diversity in different disciplines.

According to the study, most of the respondents thought that cooperation between different disciplines had increased a lot (24 per cent of the respondents) or to some extent (49 per cent) as a result of taking part in the research programme (ibid, 35). Especially consortiums were actively engaged in cooperation. When asked in detail about the cooperation it became clear that the most common forms of cooperation were exchanges of knowledge and experiences, and information/comparison of

results. Some cooperation also existed in the form of common publications and researcher training. Less cooperation existed in development of methods, theories and concepts (ibid, 41). However, cooperation in the development of methods and theories seemed to be longer-lasting. Respondents engaging in this kind of cooperation were more positive towards continuing it even after the research programme had finished than other respondents. On the whole, most of the respondents regarded research programmes as a good way to promote multi- and interdisciplinarity (ibid, 47).

The results of these studies show that research programmes do on average encourage cooperation which to some extent is multi- or interdisciplinary. Yet, most of it is not very intensive, but relies on presenting research results and experiences of doing research to each other. More intensive cooperation in the form of developing methods, theories or concepts together is not as common. When this kind of cooperation is established the participants, however, seem to have an interest in continuing it.

The findings of these studies highlight – in a somewhat contradictory way – the background of our case studies regarding the practices of multi- and interdisciplinarity in two specific research programmes. Before presenting the case studies, a short glance will be made at how research programmes are generally organised in Finland.

## **The organisation of research programmes in Finland**

In their present form research programmes started in Finland at the turn of 1990s, but even earlier funding had been focused on certain priority areas (Hakala et al 2003b, 7). The number and share of funding through research programmes has expanded steadily in recent years. Research programmes can be established on the basis of three kinds of research policy considerations (*The Academy of Finland's Forward Look 2000*, 78). (1) Programmes can be used to concentrate dispersed research capacity in order to support new approaches in basic research. (2) Research programmes can also be initiated on the basis of societal expectations for certain kinds of knowledge. (3) Research programmes can be established to raise new or undeveloped research areas to the level of international research. The initiative to establish a specific programme may come from the scientific community or result from a wider societal interest (or a combination of both). No matter what the origin, the Research Councils of the Academy of Finland play a crucial role in the process of establishing a programme. The final decision of starting a research programme is made by the Board of the Academy of Finland.

Research programmes have clearly defined aims and form a thematic entity. When the themes are decided on, workshops are usually organised to enable the contribution of researchers in the field. Earlier the funding period of research programmes was three years, but in 2003 the time was extended to four years. When the call for application is launched, the themes and aims are defined in a programme memorandum. The funded research projects are expected to be situated within the thematic field and to support the general aims of the research programme. The projects to be funded are usually chosen through a two-step application procedure. The first selection is made on the basis of project outlines (preliminary proposals). The research projects selected

for the second round are then requested to submit full-length research plans. The final decisions are made on the basis of peer reviews by the specific Research Council.

The Finnish research programmes commonly have a steering group and a scientific coordinator. The steering group defines the objectives and contents of the programme, presents a funding plan, makes the preparations for the programme call, follows up the programme, plans and organises the evaluation of the programme and promotes the dissemination of the research results (*Academy of Finland. Research Programme Strategy 2003*, 60). The scientific coordinator takes part in the planning of the programme, funding cooperation, organisation of the application process, follow-up of programme objectives, maintaining contact with researchers, and organisation of programme activities (*ibid*, 62). Scientific coordinators are employed on a full- or part-time basis. In addition to the scientific coordinator, the research programmes have an administrative coordinator at the Academy of Finland. Conferences and conferences are organised as part of the programme activities. The programmes are externally evaluated after they have been completed.

### **3. CASE STUDY 1: *Marginalisation, Inequality and Ethnic Relations in Finland (SYREENI)***

#### **Background and preparation of the research programme**

The start up of the programme *Marginalisation, Inequality and Ethnic Relations in Finland* was connected to questions around xenophobia and racism. During the 1990s, the immigrant population of Finland rapidly increased. Although Finland still has a low level of migrant population compared to other EU countries, the change has been considerable compared to the 1980s. At the same time Finland went through a severe economic recession. Finding employment was difficult for immigrants and, although the economic situation gradually improved after the mid-1990s, the unemployment rate has remained remarkably higher among the immigrant population than among the rest of the population. The 1990s also witnessed several racist attacks towards migrants, some of which were the result of organised racist activity. As a consequence, some political and NGO circles started to point out the need for research on these social phenomena. In the negotiations of results<sup>2</sup> between the Ministry of Education and the Academy of Finland it was agreed in 1997 that the Academy would pay special attention to research on racism and xenophobia.

Thereafter an overview was launched of the status of research on racism and xenophobia in Finland and the needs for developing it (Rantalaiho et al 2004, 9-10; <http://www.joensuu.fi/syreeni/ohjelmamuistio.html>) and an expert panel was arranged with the theme “Racism and Ethnic Relations”. A thematic change, however, occurred at the end of 1998. The Research Council for Culture and Society appointed a working group to consider a combination of the previously mentioned research

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<sup>2</sup> The yearly negotiations between the Ministry of Education and the institutions under its auspices (universities, Academy of Finland, etc.) where the budget of the institution is decided are called *negotiations of results*.

themes of racism and xenophobia with broader themes of multiculturalism and social inequality. The working group made a suggestion for a research programme on the subject of “Democracy, Marginalisation and Inequality” (Rantalaiho et al 2004, 10-11; [http://www.joensuu.fi/syreeni/index\\_f.html](http://www.joensuu.fi/syreeni/index_f.html)). Thus, the initial focus on racism and xenophobia was merged into a broader thematic field of marginalisation and inequality.

In spring 1999 the Research Council for Culture and Research decided to propose a research programme entitled “Marginalisation, Inequality and Ethnic Relations in Finland” to the Board of the Academy of Finland. According to scientific advisor Ms Launonen (2005), the attempt was to define a broad enough thematic area for a successful programme. The theme of racism and xenophobia was regarded as too narrow for a research programme and too few researchers were estimated to exist in the research field. This thematic framing had, however, long-standing consequences which were not always beneficial for research cooperation.

The turn in the focus of the programme was also partly due to diverse interests within the Academy of Finland, according to the Programme Manager Mr Puuronen (2005). An earlier research programme on the consequences of the economic recession of the 1990s (the so-called LAMA-programme) had focused on economic issues, whereas research on the social effects of the recession, poverty and marginalisation was missing. There was social pressure within the Academy to fund research focusing on the latter issues. The final shape adopted for the programme was thus a compromise between different interests and pressures.

The Board of the Academy of Finland decided to launch the programme and provided funding for three years (2001-2003). A preliminary preparation group was appointed to prepare the programme memorandum and the organisation of the application process until a steering group was to be nominated for the research programme. In November 1999 an exploratory workshop was organised with several international academics from the research fields as invited speakers. The objectives of the workshop were to discuss the themes of the programme from different angles and the thematic structure of the research programme (<http://www.joensuu.fi/syreeni/ohjelmamuistio>). At the end of 1999 a steering group and a scientific coordinator for the programme were appointed. In the following the name SYREENI which is an acronym for the Finnish title of the programme (*Syrjäytyminen, eriarvoisuus ja etniset suhteet Suomessa*) will be used for the programme.

The SYREENI programme was mainly funded by the Academy of Finland. The Academy provided 4.3 million euros, whereas ministries and other governmental institutions gave an additional sum of 0.5 million euros, in total 4.8 million euros (Rantalaiho et al 2004, 14). The programme funded 21 research projects, which were affiliated to several different disciplines and institutions. The disciplines represented in the projects were Anthropology, Art Education, Education, Ethnology, History, Law, Women’s Studies, Sociology, Social Policy, Social Work and Social Psychology (ibid, 13). Most researchers were located at universities, but some were based at research institutes, such as the Finnish Youth Research Network, the National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health (STAKES), the Rehabilitation Foundation, and the City of Helsinki Urban Facts Centre.

The programme employed a full-time scientific coordinator – called Programme Manager – Mr Vesa Puuronen, who was an established researcher in studies of racism and ethnic relations in Finland. The Programme Manager was based at the Karelian Institute at the University of Joensuu, which is a multidisciplinary research institute in the Eastern part of Finland. The Karelian Institute is well-known for its research on relations between Finland and Russia. In addition, the programme had an administrative coordinator, Ms Riitta Launonen, who is a science advisor at the Academy of Finland.

## **Selection of project proposals**

The research project applications were selected in a two-step process. In the *first round*, the steering group reviewed the project proposals. The steering group consisted of four academics and one representative from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health ([http://www.joensuu.fi/syreeni/index\\_f.html](http://www.joensuu.fi/syreeni/index_f.html)). The Ministry was represented in the steering group due to its role as one of the funders of the programme. The academics were members of the Research Council for Culture and Society. Two of them were experts in the research field of ethnic relations. The secretary of the steering group was the scientific coordinator of the programme. The steering group consisted of representatives of disciplines such as History (Mr Jokisalo), Social Policy (Ms Järvelä), Sociology (Mr Sandlund) and Law (Ms Utriainen). The group selected 37 out of a total of 73 applications for the second round. The final decision of the proposals to proceed to the second phase was made by the Research Council for Culture and Society on recommendations from the steering group.

The criteria used in the first selection followed the objectives stated in the programme memorandum, according to Programme Manager Mr Puuronen (2005). As promoting multi- and interdisciplinarity was one of the objectives, it was part of the evaluation.

Multidisciplinarity was one of the criteria already from the beginning... as far as I can remember... since the policy of the Academy [of Finland] is to promote multidisciplinary. [...] We used exactly the criteria stated in the programme memorandum... [...] In principle one could use two kinds of strategies: either to reduce as much as possible the amount of applications proceeding to the second round, which would have required strict criterias, or on the other hand, to select away the proposals which were clearly impossible. Which didn't fit the programme due to their theme or otherwise, or which were from the beginning so poorly designed that one could not consider them. And we followed mainly this second strategy, as far as I remember.

The scientific advisor Ms Launonen (2005) too emphasised the criterion of suitability for the research programme, when she spoke of the selection of project proposals in this phase:

The criterion used in the selection for the second round was suitability for the research programme. [...] In this phase the scientific quality was not so

decisive – since the external evaluation hadn't taken place yet – but more the suitability for the programme.

The project proposals that were selected to the *second round* were evaluated by a peer review panel with mainly international members. The panel consisted of experts from disciplines such as Social Psychology, Social Policy, Education, Sociology, Psychology and Religion Studies (Launonen 2005). All the members represented either the research field of ethnic relations or the field of marginalisation and, according to Programme Manager Mr Puuronen (2005), they were more representative of the substance area than of their disciplines. Each project proposal was read by two panellists, who prepared a draft review for the panel. The panel discussed and rated all the applications, giving a joint consensus review and final grade for each. The final decisions of which projects to fund were made by the Research Council for Culture and Society, based on the panel evaluations and the ranking of applications by the programme steering group.

The criteria used in the evaluations of the project proposals in this phase included the scientific quality of the proposal and its fit into the programme:

The primary criterion is the scientific level of the research plan... in this expert evaluation. The general evaluation criteria of the Academy [of Finland] are used in it... they are all taken into account. The evaluation focuses on the competence of the applicant and the research group, the realism of the presented aims... i.e. the ability to implement the research plan, national and international networks, and PhD training. These are the central issues. In the programme-evaluation attention is also paid to the objectives of the programme. How the projects follow them or fit with the objectives. It says here also that one should consider the construction of a programmatic whole. But in this case... that was perhaps a bit problematic. Also, the kind of whole that can be constructed depends on what kind of applications have been submitted... and it is possible that we receive no applications from some thematic areas presented in the programme memorandum, which means the area isn't covered in the programme. (Launonen 2005)

To summarize the two-step selection of project proposals: both the steering group and the evaluation panel consisted of representatives of several disciplines. When the evaluators were chosen attention was paid to their expertise either in the research area of ethnic relations or marginalisation, although to a minor degree in the case of the steering group. Even though the members of both groups were chosen from different disciplines and were expected to provide disciplinary expertise as well, it cannot be said that the evaluation was entirely disciplinary. It should also be noted that the research field of especially ethnic relations is broad and interdisciplinary. Thus, the expertise of one panellist might cross several disciplinary borders.

## **The focus and objectives of the programme**

The *programme memorandum* described the motives, objectives, themes and the application process of the research programme. Officially the programme

memorandum was written by the preliminary preparation group, but it seems that the Programme Manager did most of the writing.

The preliminary preparation group included five members from the Research Council for Culture and Society or experts from the research fields of the programme. The members represented disciplines such as Law, History, Women's Studies/Culture Studies and Sociology. The Programme Manager Mr Puuronen is a sociologist.

According to the programme memorandum the objectives of the research programme were:

- to promote research fields and raise the level of research
- to create a new kind of scientific tradition and strengthen the already existing traditions
- to develop PhD training especially in research on ethnic relations
- to produce knowledge on problem areas of national and/or international significance
- to bring together existing research capacities
- to promote multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research
- to improve cooperation between funders, researchers and end-users of the research results
- to give greater international visibility to Finnish research
- to produce results that have practical applicability

(<http://www.joensuu.fi/syreeni/ohjelmamuistio>; cf. Rantalaiho et al 2004, 10)

Thus, encouraging multi- and interdisciplinarity in research was stated as a general aim of the research programme. However, this objective is not discussed in more detail and it is not mentioned later in the programme memorandum either.

In the programme memorandum the themes of the programme were divided into two sections: 1) marginalisation and inequality, and 2) ethnic relations. Although some links were seen to exist between these two fields, there were also specific questions for each of the research field. Marginalisation and inequality were discussed in terms of economic, social and political marginalisation, marginalisation related to age, gender, language and communication skills, and regional marginalisation. It was mentioned that marginalisation can also be an accumulation of several of these factors. In addition, the programme focused on social and economic mechanisms that produce and reproduce marginalisation and inequality. Among these the information society process and unemployment were mentioned. All these factors were seen as relevant for research on ethnic groups and ethnic relations too, but additional questions related to this research field were also defined. They included racism, xenophobia and discrimination, discrimination against immigrants in the labour market, and immigrant groups with a specifically high risk of social exclusion (women, children and youth were named). In addition, the research themes of the programme included encounters between cultures, multicultural education and education for ethnic tolerance, analysis of the structures and processes of education, and school cultures in relation to marginalisation. Several themes related to law and legal practices regarding ethnic relations were also listed.

(<http://www.joensuu.fi/syreeni/ohjelmamuistio>; cf. [http://www.joensuu.fi/syreeni/index\\_e.html](http://www.joensuu.fi/syreeni/index_e.html).)

The introductory part before the presentation of the programme themes connected the two research fields together through a definition of Finland as a diversified and multicultural society in a changing global order and with its restructuration processes. This change was seen as economic, political and demographic. Attention was also paid to its historical roots.

Before the presentation of the themes the programme memorandum provided an overview of the background of the research programme. It concentrated on changes brought forth by the economic recession of 1990s in Finland and Finland joining the EU, immigration to Finland, the effects of the information society and equal rights as the basis of the legal system.

An analysis of the programme memorandum shows that, firstly, promoting multi- and interdisciplinarity is articulated as an objective, but not formulated into more concrete goals or forms of implementation. Secondly, the programme memorandum discusses two research fields and their respective thematics. Some attempts to connect research on marginalisation and inequality to research on ethnic relations were made, but mostly the themes of the two fields were presented separately. The framing and building of connections between the two research fields in the introductory part was quite general and empirical. The theoretical connection of these two research fields did not receive much space and was very general as well.

Looking at the programme memorandum one could be tempted to interpret the promotion of multi- and interdisciplinarity as vague and abstract, stated to suit the common objectives of research programmes as they are defined by the Academy of Finland. However, the Programme Manager Mr Puuronen emphasised that he himself was dedicated to the idea of multi- and interdisciplinary, and it was also a concrete aim of the programme. The implementation turned out to be difficult.

Multidisciplinarity was at least in my mind one of the central aims... as it is in my views of scientific work on the whole. One should understand that although the university system is divided into disciplines the world doesn't divide in this way. Which means that multidisciplinarity is a very good and welcome and necessary issue. And I tried to present this in the kick-off seminar through these initiatives... to encourage discussion, but it didn't work out. And after that I didn't care to bang my head against the wall, since I had enough work there anyway. (Puuronen 2005)

## **The programme in motion**

During the research programme three large conferences were organised. They were mainly directed at members of the research projects, but most of the conferences were also open for other participants. The kick-off conference of the programme was organised on February 26-28, 2001 at Mekrijärvi research station, near Joensuu in Eastern Finland. The second conference – the mid-term conference – took place a year later, on May 16-17, 2002, in Tampere. The final conference was organised on Aug. 28-29, 2003 in Helsinki. A follow-up conference took place on Oct. 19, 2004 in Helsinki, less than a year after the programme had ended.

The research projects also organised conferences which were open for researchers from other SYREENI-projects and – at least partly – funded by the SYREENI programme.

One common book was published at the end of the programme. The book with the title *New Challenges for the Welfare Society* consisted of articles written by participants in the research projects. The projects themselves also edited and published books. Some of the publications included chapters from representatives of different projects and disciplines.

### **The Mekrijärvi-conference: project leaders reject common methodological discussions**

The kick-off conference of the research programme gathered about 30 representatives from 15 of the funded research projects. Most of the participants were project leaders, but some researchers too took part in the conference. The programme consisted of presentations by each research project (30 minutes per project) and general discussions of the future activities of the programme. The aim of the conference was two-fold. The projects were given a chance to meet representatives of other research projects within the programme, to give and receive information about these, and to form a basis for cooperation between the projects. Secondly, the conference aimed at giving the projects a chance to present their ideas on how the programme activities should be organised. Several decisions were made about future conferences, publications, funding and organisation of smaller thematic conferences within the research programme, dissemination of the programme and the projects, and documents required for the evaluation (Puuronen 2001). Several themes were also suggested for smaller conferences which would gather SYREENI-researchers. These included for example narrative research, grounded theory, Russian-speaking people in Finland, and transformative pedagogics. The research projects also discussed how information about conferences organised by the research projects themselves could be spread within the research programme.

In relation to multi- and interdisciplinarity, however, the most important event at the Mekrijärvi-conference occurred when the Programme Manager suggested common methodological discussions within the programme. The project leaders clearly rejected the suggestions. This is how the Programme Manager himself recalls the event:

At the first seminar at Mekrijärvi I had this ambitious plan which I presented there. The aim of it was to organise a crossdisciplinary discussion within this programme. But it didn't work out. People were of the opinion that one can't present a common methodology for all participants in this kind of multidisciplinary group, since it's so different for everybody. Whereas my idea was that since all disciplines here are affiliated to the Social Sciences and Humanities, they have some common scientific starting points that can be discussed and perhaps we can learn something from each other. But it didn't succeed at all. That annoyed me most during the programme. But I wasn't able to present it in the right way. Because for me it was self-evident that it was

good to proceed this way, whereas for the rest of the people in the programme it wasn't at all self-evident. (Puuronen 2005)

When asked what the discrepancies in the discussion more exactly were about, Mr Puuronen referred to paradigmatic differences between what might be called positivism and social constructionism. In his view, the question was about constructing oppositions between quantitative and qualitative research, such as statistical research vs. discourse analytic research. He himself wanted to question such dichotomies, but his attempt was not successful.

My understanding of disciplines within the Humanities and Social Sciences and of their research focus is that they conduct research on roughly speaking the same issues. And since their focus is similar, it's not impossible to think that the methods and philosophical basis of the methods could be roughly speaking the same. Thus, for example dichotomies between quantitative and qualitative research, or statistical and discourse analytical research are completely... or it can be discussed whether they have any point. [...] And if one thinks about paradigms, the question was about social constructionist and positivist research... or something that is called positivist research. My idea was to discuss the starting points on a more general level, so that we might notice that the starting points aren't after all so different. (Puuronen 2005)

The scientific advisor Ms Launonen suggested that the idea of belonging to a research programme and taking part in its activities was somewhat alien to some of the project leaders and researchers. Not all of them were motivated to engage actively in broad cooperation, but were perhaps more focused on conducting the planned research within the given time.

For some project leaders even, but also for the researchers, it came as some kind of surprise that 'oh, what is this programme thing about... do we belong to some programme... we have received funding and now we'll start conducting our research'. I mean it wasn't clear what belonging to a research programme meant. And at that time the Programme Manager had different kinds of suggestions which he asked the participants to express their views on and to comment what the projects could do together... So in that phase it was reduced, rather streamlined, to one common seminar a year. In addition, projects organised their own seminars to which they invited other projects, but no other common seminars were organised within the programme... and no common PhD training for the programme either. It was reduced in that way... kind of democratically [laughs]. The Programme Manager didn't try to run the programme by force, when there was a bit of friction. (Launonen 2005)

The chair of the evaluation group, Prof. Liisa Rantalaiho further addressed the question of the autonomy of project leaders. In her view, it also became a question of knowing or not-knowing your own methods:

But I also got the impression that this became a question of autonomy. That the project leaders didn't like being scrutinised and... in a way they thought it meant that they couldn't conduct their research. That 'of course we know our

own methods' and so forth. So, it's not so simple to go and say that you need to create something common here now. (Rantalaaho 2005)

This is a valuable description of the problems of promoting multi- and interdisciplinary cooperation – as well as of any other cooperation within research programmes. It requires the participation of the project leaders and researchers which is not always easy to establish. The activities proposed by the coordinator may also be interpreted as attempts to dictate what the projects should do and what kind of cooperation they should engage in. Although the Programme Manager in this case gave several possibilities of how the activities could be organized and what speakers to invite, the project leaders were reluctant towards the suggestions.

The idea of common methodological discussions was thus banished. As the quote by Ms Launonen showed, the smaller thematic conferences agreed on at the Mekrijärvi-conference never took place. Some research projects organised their own conferences, but the programme activities concentrated on the three large conferences and producing publications. It seems that the decisions at Mekrijärvi were made to find some official agreement on the disputed issues, but in practice there was not enough interest to fulfil the task.

### **Successful cooperation later during the programme**

Despite the problems related to the methodological discussions the first conference also had some positive effects. The research projects became acquainted with each other and some networking started. During the two following conferences and activities initiated by research projects – especially in relation to publications and conferences – some cooperation was gradually established.

At the conference in Tampere during the second year of SYREENI there were two invited key-note speakers, Professor Peter Fitzpatrick from the School of Law at Birkbeck College, University of London, and Assistant Professor Denise Ferreira da Silva from the Department of Ethnic Studies, University of California. There were also working group meetings organised, several of which concentrated on working on a book project. One book was planned with the title *Puhetta marginaaleista – kohtaamisia, ristiriitoja ja mahdollisuuksia* [Speaking from the margins – encounters, discrepancies and possibilities], proposed by a Social Work project. The process regarding this book will be described in more detail later. Another book proposal was called *Lapset, lapsiperheet ja syrjäytymisen juuret* [Children, child families and the roots of marginalisation] and presented by a research project which had researchers from Education and Social Policy. At least one other book was prepared at this meeting and later published, although the editors did not present a call for papers at this conference.

The conference at Helsinki took place during the last year of the research programme. There was one key note speaker, Professor Philomena Essed from the University of Amsterdam. The conference programme included a lot of presentations by the research projects, since the aim was also to inform about the results of the programme. The media were invited to take part in the conference. In addition, the newly established Society for the Study of Ethnic Relations and Migration presented

itself at the meeting. Before the two-day conference, a meeting for the authors of the joint book for the research programme was organised. The meeting lasted one day and was used for discussions about the publishing of the book and on the presented papers.

The follow-up conference at Helsinki in August 2004 concentrated on the results and the evaluation of the programme. In this final conference the book *New Challenges for the Welfare Society* was launched. It was published by the Karelian Institute at the University of Joensuu.

Several of our interviewees mentioned that the interest for cooperation and multi/interdisciplinarity increased in the later part of the programme. At the time of the Helsinki-conference in 2003 the communication between different research projects was at a good speed, but at this time the programme was already approaching its end. This is how the Programme Manager Mr Puuronen commented on the possibilities for multi- and interdisciplinary discussions:

At the end of the programme there could have been more demand for that [...] Also, at the time when we discussed the editing of the common book in Helsinki... we had this one-day seminar around the editing of the book and participants from different disciplines were present... there we had discussions which were partly connected to different disciplinary approaches and concepts and these kinds of issues. (Puuronen 2005)

At the Mekrijärvi conference an idea was raised of a series of volumes based on the themes of the research programme (ethnic relations, marginalisation etc.). However, no Finnish publisher wanted to make a contract for a book series. The idea of thematic volumes was kept alive, but resulted in several books edited by different research projects. About 10 books, most of which were anthologies, were published by commercial publishers (Puuronen 2005). Many of these were published after the programme ended, but are the result of cooperation built at that time.

The research projects organised conferences which were open for researchers from other SYREENI-projects. Programme funding was used to co-fund them. For example a project called “Muslims and Religious Equality in Finland”, led by Dr. Tuula Sakaranaho from the Department of Comparative Religion at the University of Helsinki, organised a conference called “Contesting Religious Equality – Muslims in Global and Local Contexts” in September 2002. The conference addressed themes such as Islam and globalisation, Islam and gender, transnational networks and the Muslim diaspora, Muslim minorities in different generations, and Islam and politics. There were two foreign key note speakers and several presentations by the participants. Among the participants several disciplines were represented.

Some of these conferences were very successful in creating networks and cooperation between researchers, especially in the field of ethnic relations and racism. They also brought about conceptual and theoretical discussions. These interdisciplinary discussions occurred in smaller groups, which were thematically more focused than the whole research programme. The two-fold thematic field of the programme seemed unfavourable in this sense, but the projects found their own ways for focused cooperation.

The theoretical discussion on the other hand... if we think about the central concepts to use... that kind of discussions did exist to some extent. There were discussions for example on the concept of racism and so forth... the concept of discrimination... the concept of ethnic relations... in those groups where the problems of racism and ethnic relations were central. So the theoretical discussion succeeded better. [...] However, the issues weren't discussed across these thematic fields, but in smaller groups. For example in Tampere when the project by Ulla Vuorela organised a seminar, people engaged in discussions on racism and discrimination. And these issues have been discussed after that too, since a network of researchers of racism was established there. And then we have this Society for the Study of Ethnic Relations and Migration which has continued the discussion. The Society was established as a result of the SYREENI-programme and it may be that the discussion regarding multidisciplinary will develop within it. (Puuronen 2005)

Thus, the SYREENI programme enabled the establishment of two multi- or interdisciplinary networks which still today are influential in the research field of ethnic relations and racism. The network of racism-researchers (*Rasmus-tutkijat*) was started at a conference organized by the project "Beyond Marginalisation and Exclusion". The Society for the Study of Ethnic Relations and Migration too was initiated within the programme. These are not minor accomplishments, but have affected the research field on a wider scale.

Within the SYREENI-activities the Programme Manager organised an e-mail list for the project members. He also built up comprehensive web pages for the programme and kept in contact with the project leaders.

## **The Disciplinary basis of the funded research projects**

In the following the 21 research projects funded by the research programme are analysed according to how many disciplines were represented in them. We also explore how narrow or broad the multi/interdisciplinarity in the projects was. This analysis is based on information of the disciplinary background of the project leaders, the researchers and the project abstracts, as stated on the web pages of the SYREENI programme (<http://www.joensuu.fi/syreeni>). On the web pages all the projects and the researchers are presented.

Eight research projects consisted only of representatives of one discipline<sup>3</sup>. They included for example Education, Social Policy, Social Work and Economics. In one of these cases the disciplines of the project members are not mentioned, but judging by the work place and the abstract of the project they conducted statistical analysis from a similar sociological/social policy perspective.

The remaining 13 projects or consortiums were multi/interdisciplinary in some way. One of them consisted of researchers from Women's Studies only, but since this is an

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<sup>3</sup> A list of the projects is presented in Appendix 1.

interdisciplinary field itself we categorized it as such. Thus, five projects had researchers from two disciplines or fields of research (eg. Psychotherapy). Four projects included researchers from three disciplines. Two projects consisted of representatives of four disciplines and three projects/consortiums included five disciplines.

Thus, over half of the projects or consortiums had at least some kind of multidisciplinary in their structure. However, not many projects included several disciplines. In this case, multidisciplinary meant having two or three disciplines in the same project. The disciplines were often quite adjacent disciplines, such as Social Policy and Sociology. However, the range of combinations was also wide in several projects/consortiums and some crossed the boundaries between the Humanities and the Social Sciences. The projects combined for example Social Work with Arts; History, Economics and Social History; Education, Social Policy and Public Health; Social Policy/Social Work, Sociology, Linguistics, Communication and Social Psychology. It seems that both narrow and broad multi/interdisciplinarity was reflected in the structure of the projects/consortiums.

This does not, however, say much about how the projects worked together. Did the projects discuss central issues together or were many researchers doing research at their own departments along disciplinary lines? This kind of question cannot be answered through a structural analysis, but requires analysis of the practices and working modes of the projects. Since the project leaders knew that promoting multi- and interdisciplinarity is an aim of the Academy of Finland, and especially in its research programmes, it was also possible that the individual research projects of the programmes gather researchers from different disciplines to fit into the requirements of the funding body. In practice cooperation between the members of the project might be scarce.

## **Cooperation practices of individual projects**

In the following we present three examples of how the research projects worked in the programme and analyse the role of multi- and interdisciplinarity in their practices. The three projects all differ from each other. They should not be seen as representative of the whole group of projects in the programme. We also emphasise that our presentations are based on one interview with a single person from each research project and additional publicly available data. Therefore the description of the projects may be lacking in details. The aim of presentations is, however, to exemplify different ways of cooperating within and between research projects, as well as elements of multi- or interdisciplinarity in them – not to provide a detailed picture of the specific research projects.

### ***Project 1: Beyond Marginalisation and Exclusion. An Interdisciplinary Consortium***

The research consortium consisted of three sub-projects which were based at different universities. The leader, Prof. Ulla Vuorela, was affiliated with the Christina Institute for Women's Studies at the University of Helsinki. The Helsinki-group consisted of

three researchers among whom one came from Economics, one from Anthropology and one from Development Studies. Its research theme was “Enclaving Migrant Experiences in Helsinki”. It studied the life experiences of migrants and discussed to what extent these could be understood through the concept of ethnicity (<http://www.joensuu.fi/syreeni/enclaving.htm>). The group based at the University of Tampere included two researchers from Social Anthropology and one Sociologist. It focused on the theme “Identity, Culture and Transnationalism”. Its approach paid attention to how immigrant groups relate their everyday lives to the Finnish state and Finnish civil society on the one hand, and to transnational networks of personal relationships on the other. The tensions that arise when official immigration policies look at immigrants mainly in relation to their new country of settlement were analysed (<http://www.joensuu.fi/syreeni/Vuorelaeng.htm>). The third group was based at Åbo Akademi University. It included one Sociologist and one researcher from Social Policy. It focused on the theme “Employment, Networks and Transnationalism” highlighting strategies that immigrant and refugee communities in Finland use to achieve integration in the labour market (<http://www.joensuu.fi/syreeni/wahlber centE4ckeng.htm>).

Thus, the consortium consisted of eight researchers and one leader. Within the consortium there were representatives from several disciplines, although the Social Sciences formed the majority. Several researchers represented the field of Anthropology which often is located at the border of the Humanities and Social Sciences.

According to our interviewee, Dr. Östen Wahlbeck, who led the Åbo sub-project, the consortium worked tremendously well together. They organised meetings for the whole group about once every two months and engaged in lively discussions. In the beginning the discussions were focused on methods and methodological questions. Many of the researchers were using ethnographic methods and had common issues to discuss. The theoretical frames of the researchers too had a lot in common and many concepts were shared. Later on in the project meetings, the participants read and commented each others’ papers. They also edited a book together which was to be published in Finnish. The discussions during the preparation of this book were, according to Mr Wahlbeck (2005), very fruitful and gave him new ideas. Due to differences in timetables the researchers finally decided to publish their articles in other journals and anthologies. The idea of a common book was abandoned, but the process had been very rewarding.

As a member of the consortium Mr Wahlbeck also got to take part in many new networks. All three sub-projects brought along their own networks. Especially the consortium leader Ms Vuorela had large networks which the other consortium members could benefit from. Meetings were arranged between for example the consortium members and the Minna-project (an Academy of Finland research project also led by Prof. Vuorela). They also had the opportunity to take part in the meetings of a Nordic network which studied similar themes. During one of the conferences that the consortium organised in Tampere, the network for researchers in racism studies was organised (Rasmus-tutkijat). It included members from other SYREENI projects, as well as other researchers. The network was coordinated by one of the consortium members. The network has organised an e-mail list and conferences once a year since then.

The cooperation and exchange of ideas in the consortium was easy, according to Mr Wahlbeck. The multi- or interdisciplinarity in the group he recalls as a kind of “naturally” occurring phenomenon. It grew out of common theoretical and methodological views and produced no noteworthy problems. Yet in his view, there were some differences in the perspectives, which he interpreted as based on different disciplinary backgrounds.

Insofar as there was interdisciplinarity I think it was very natural. We had common research questions, common theories, common methods which we discussed together. Maybe somewhat different perspectives, depending on our disciplinary backgrounds. But despite that, in my view, the interdisciplinarity in our consortium was rather natural. (Wahlbeck 2005)

Although the consortium had the term interdisciplinarity in its title, it did not seem to be a central point of departure for the cooperation. As Mr Wahlbeck remembered, the name came more from the need to explain the combination of the research group:

I think it was more like... I don't think it was a big programmatic declaration, but it was more like we wanted to explain why we were different people with different backgrounds in the consortium. (Wahlbeck 2005)

He attended two of the large SYREENI conferences – the one in Tampere and the Helsinki conference at the end of the programme. In his view, the conferences were interesting, but he did not make many new contacts through them. This was partly due to the fact that he already knew many of the Finnish researchers in the field of ethnic relations; partly it was a question of some of the projects having quite different research questions than his own consortium. Perhaps the most important was, however, that the consortium was already a big group with wide networks. The interest turned into cooperation within the consortium and, on the other hand, with the networks of the different sub-projects. These were interesting and focused on similar research questions.

This is one example of why the cooperation in the SYREENI programme turned into smaller groups within the programme, instead of being channeled to the conferences and activities of the whole programme. The groups and networks conducting research on ethnic relations found more interest in activities that were directly focused on their themes. The interest and activity were mobilized by some projects and project leaders, who had considerable networks and possibilities to initiate broad cooperation. This may not become as clearly visible if one focuses the programme as a whole, but its importance should not be underestimated.

Mr Wahlbeck is a sociologist, whose research activities are concentrated in the field of ethnic relations. In his view, there are no tight boundaries in this research field, nor do disciplinary divisions play any major role. He presented even the border between the Humanities and the Social Sciences as quite fluid. Therefore the whole issue of multi- or interdisciplinarity was not very interesting for him.

Ethnicity research does have its own publication channels and conferences and its own scientific societies... So yes, it is there... an interdisciplinary research

field... without doubt... with its own discussions... But nevertheless, the whole field is... like not all kinds of disciplines have something to provide for this research... there are no Nuclearphysics or Biologists or something like that... basically it has a general Social Science orientation. [...] So, I don't really think this interdisciplinarity is anything in itself... it's no goal in itself. And actually, I don't even think it's a big question on the whole. [...] Because my experience of practical research is that this is very unproblematic... and cooperation across disciplinary borders. It occurs naturally based on the research questions one has. [...] You know, I have worked quite a lot with Ethnologists in Sweden and the whole anthropological field is located at the border of the Humanities. So I mean... I don't really think there is a strict border there at all. (Wahlbeck 2005)

The consortium as a whole is a good example of interdisciplinary cooperation and broad networking. The combination of disciplines in the consortium was quite broad, although the Social Sciences were clearly in the majority. In addition, the project was interdisciplinary in the sense that the researchers were united by common research questions and the research field of ethnic relations. It seems that the research field was more important for them than the disciplinary background. Therefore we categorize the cooperation of this consortium as interdisciplinary, not multidisciplinary – although it is possible that some elements of the latter were also present in its practices.

We suggest that in an interdisciplinary field such as research on ethnic relations, the meaning of disciplinary divisions and disciplinary differences may vanish from the thoughts and the research practices of the researchers. Such differences may not even appear as an issue, as is the case here. However, the disciplinary structures of the higher education and research system continue to have an impact. Since the provision of funding and other structural elements in many ways are built on a disciplinary basis, the position of interdisciplinary research needs further attention.

### ***Project 2: Ethno-cultural Otherness: Resource and Constraint***

The research project 'Ethno-cultural Otherness: Resource and Constraint' was based at the Karelian Institute at the University of Joensuu. The project leader, Docent Kaija Heikkinen, was affiliated to Cultural Anthropology. She later became Professor of Women's Studies at the University of Joensuu. The project included two PhD students – one from Folklore Studies and one from Sociology. A researcher from Human Geography (Urban Planning) attended the project meetings at the beginning of the research project, but he had other funding. In the research plan sent to the Academy of Finland the research team was quite wide, including also the researcher from Human Geography and another researcher from Religion Studies (Heikkinen 2005). The Academy of Finland, however, decided to fund only the two doctoral students. It is quite exceptional that the Academy makes such a decision and it seems that the funding body wanted to support studies conducted by researchers with an immigrant background. The researcher in Folklore Studies had migrated to Finland from Russia and the researcher in Sociology from Nigeria.

The research project focused on how immigrants in Finland (both Russian-speaking and others) produce strategies for everyday life, new identity and space. Ethno-cultural otherness was regarded as a resource and a constraint. Socio-cultural factors such as language, the control of symbols of everyday culture and religion were regarded as significant for this, as well as the physical and symbolic space (<http://www.joensuu.fi/syreeni/HeikkinenE.htm>). The methods used in the project were quantitative and qualitative.

According to Ms Heikkinen (2005), there was a lot of interest at the University of Joensuu when the SYREENI programme was launched. The project application was a combination of different interests and, due to this, not as coherent as it could have been. In Ms Heikkinen's view, this is what often happens in multidisciplinary project applications:

It occurred in the way I think the planning of such projects often happens... there is a call for the research programme and people become activated, but they don't necessarily have enough time to discuss it together. People are in a hurry and gather a kind of theoretical and methodological mix-up. I myself have read lots of these kinds of research plans too. Or another possibility is that the project leader her/himself writes the research plan, thus it has a clear logic. And then the other participants wonder what they are supposed to do. [...] Sometimes – but this was not the case in our project – the participants in the research group have cooperated earlier so much that they have a common idea or they can agree on (or have already agreed on) some theme and then they design the plan according to that. (Heikkinen 2005)

The two studies which received funding were in many ways connected to each other. Therefore the final form of the project was more coherent and thematically focused than the original plan.

The first part of working as a project was very successful. The project held meetings at least once a month. In addition to the project leader and the two PhD students, also the researcher from Human Geography took part in the meetings. The group discussed the collection of material and methods, such as designing survey questionnaires and questions related to interviews (especially with migrant interviewees) etc. They also engaged in more general discussions about methods and methodology. Here the different views especially in relation to Human Geography were of interest for Ms Heikkinen (2005). She sees that Human Geography, being a new discipline, is quite open towards ideas from other disciplines and traditions. For her it was interesting to engage in these methodological discussions. The other project members could also provide the human geographer with many new insights into the study of migrant groups which he was not familiar with.

After a while the cooperation became less intense. The researchers in the project proceeded in their work at a different speed. They had started at somewhat different times due to other work and as time passed, the differences in the schedule became larger. The geographer moved to another university and stopped attending the meetings. The other project members were also physically apart from each other. The project leader and the PhD student of Folklore Studies worked at the Karelian Institute, but the other PhD student worked at the Department of Sociology. The

contacts with the Sociologist became less frequent, and finally the project meetings consisted of only the project leader and the PhD student of Folklore Studies. When asked whether this was due to disciplinary differences and problems with multidisciplinaryity, Ms Heikkinen (2005) said that it was more a question of organizational issues and responsibilities regarding the supervision of the doctoral student. The main supervisor of the PhD student was a Professor of Sociology, who was a person outside the project. There were also some differences in the research orientations of the supervisor and the project leader. These can be related to differences between a quantitative and a qualitative approach. However, as Ms Heikkinen (2005) sees it, these differences could have been overcome if the organizational problems had not existed. In our view, these events were to some extent also connected to different epistemological orientations which could be called a positivist and a cultural research approach.

The cooperation between the project leader and the PhD student from Folklore Studies was intense even after this. They wrote articles together, discussed the research themes and traveled together to conferences. The PhD student was also very active herself and found her way to researcher training courses abroad and made contacts with other Finnish researchers. Both of the two PhD students also wrote and published several articles.

The project members took part in some of the SYREENI conferences. Although Ms Heikkinen was familiar with the perspectives of several other disciplines beforehand, she got some important new ideas from the encounters with representatives of other disciplines:

I think it was very interesting to hear about the other projects and especially important were the legal projects. This whole legal pattern was very interesting and important for me. I started to understand that migration and ethnicity are not only questions of identity or culture, but the law... especially immigration laws, organise the shape and definitions of ethnicity to a large extent. [...] The legal projects weren't multidisciplinary themselves, but the combination of projects within the SYREENI-programme was useful. I was already acquainted with this kind of social science or sociological discussions and then also... there were different kinds of cultural studies and linguistic research... I was familiar with them too, but this was something new for me. (Heikkinen 2005)

The research project also made contacts with the consortium "Beyond Marginalisation and Exclusion". The members took part in some of the meetings and conferences organised by the consortium. Thus, their networks extended beyond those of their own project.

Other contacts and possibilities to attend conferences were restricted because of lack of funding. The budget of the project had been cut compared to the application. In order to ensure funding for the researchers, costs for traveling and other expenses had to be reduced. Since Joensuu is located in Eastern Finland and quite far from many of the other universities in Finland, the expenses for traveling are higher compared to projects located in Southern Finland, where most conferences and meetings take place.

To conclude, this second research project is an example of multidisciplinary cooperation which succeeded to some extent, but also proved to be difficult. It seems that methodological and epistemological differences were of greater importance than disciplinary divisions. In addition, organizational and supervising difficulties were part of the problems. The programme provided some multi- and perhaps also interdisciplinary contacts for the project and some new ideas. However, the possibilities for cooperation were restricted, partly by inadequate funding.

### ***Project 3: At the Edge of the Helping Systems***

The project 'At the Edge of the Helping Systems' consisted of one post-doctoral researcher, four PhD students and the project leader. One MA student also wrote her thesis in the project. The project members were all affiliated with the Department of Social Policy and Social Work at the University of Tampere. The objective of the project was to examine life at the edge of welfare networks: how does one end up there, how are the various organizations attached to the lives of people who end up at the edge, and what future visions and opportunities do the clients have (<http://www.joensuu.fi/syreeni/juhilaeng.htm>). Thus, the project belonged to the research field of marginalisation and inequality. The researchers in the project employed several kinds of qualitative methods. Some of the data was collected together. The approach of the research project combined ideas from Social Work research with those of discursive Social Psychology and conversation analysis.

Since the project was located in one Department the members worked very intensively together (Kulmala 2006). They had meetings once or twice a month during the whole period. In addition, they discussed the research issues in informal situations, such as coffee breaks. Together they discussed questions related to the collection of material and methods, as well as the possibilities to interpret the empirical material (in data-sessions) and gave comments on each others' texts. The working modes of the project changed during the process depending on what was needed for it to proceed. In the beginning there was more emphasis on the data collection, whereas later the analysis and discussion of produced texts took over. During the meetings quite a lot of time was spent on discussing the work of the PhD students, according to Ms Anna Kulmala (2006), but also papers presented by the post-doctoral researcher and the project leader were commented on.

This third project is an example of a monodisciplinary research project in the sense that all the researchers and the project leader came from Social Work. The cooperation within the project was quite intense. However, the members also engaged in some multidisciplinary cooperation and networking. The whole project engaged in the writing and editing of a book called *Puhua vastaan ja vaieta. Neuvottelu kulttuurisista marginaaleista* [Talking back and keeping silent. Negotiating cultural margins]. The idea of the book came from the project and was based on the participants' theoretical and methodological interests. However, the members of the project wanted to invite some other authors to join them in the book, if they had similar interests. The call for abstracts was sent to the e-mail list of the SYREENI programme and a workshop at the Tampere-conference (the mid-term conference)

was organised around the idea. The relationship between ideas of the project members and ideas of the other writers of the book was negotiated during the book process.

A lot of time was spent on opening up what we meant with these concepts... especially with 'talking back'. Because the ideas and interests came from us... so we used, and also wanted to use, time to open up our ideas and to listen to how the others understood these issues and how the ideas could be applied to their studies. [...] In the introductory chapter we try to bring these together... we agreed that people could use their own concepts and in the introductory chapter we try to relate the concepts together. And I think it worked rather well. (Kulmala 2005)

At this point the book consisted of 10 preliminary chapters. Five of the chapters (and an introductory chapter) were written by the project members, whereas four were presented by researchers from other SYREENI-projects. Two of the authors later dropped out. One chapter was written by a researcher with an affiliation in education on migration and employment. She informed the editors – out of whom Ms Kulmala was one – that it was difficult to keep up with the timetables of the book. The other article which did not end up being published in the book was written by therapists at the Rehabilitation Foundation. The background of these authors was in Psychiatry and Psychotherapy. After some comments on a preliminary chapter the writers decided not to submit the final version for the book. Related to these events, Anna Kulmala (2005) remembers that the editors had asked the writers to make some changes in their piece, so that it would suit the book better. The idea was to share some common ideas in the book and make it a coherent whole. The authors of the two chapters that finally were published in the book were affiliated to Sociology/Social Anthropology and worked at the same university as the “At the Edge of the Helping Systems”-project members.

In the editing process all the writers read each others' texts and commented on them in a joint meeting. At this time the papers were already preliminary versions of chapters. When the writers continued to work on the papers, comments were sent by e-mail. The researchers located at the University of Tampere also met another time to discuss the texts. The articles were sent to referees, since a lot of the authors were PhD students who needed to be able to include the article in their dissertation. After the refereeing process, the editors read the articles again and commented on them (Kulmala 2005).

Ms Kulmala remembers that the group discussed differences in approaches and theories during the book process. According to her, it was refreshing and interesting to read about other ways to approach the issues. It should be noted that the questions discussed in the two chapters by the sociologists were connected to ethnicity and racism, whereas the chapters by this project focused on the welfare systems and clienthood in general.

They used for example the concept of 'the figure of the stranger' and we had something like 'identity-talk'... this kind of conceptual discussion. And I think it was very enriching and pleasurable to read the others' articles... Anna's and Laura's. It was interesting that we dealt with similar issues, but used some concepts differently. [...] I think Anna's and Laura's chapters went

very well with the others. We discussed the concept of ‘talking back’ rather a lot. And at some point it was also questioned... I’m thinking now about Mr Riikonen [leader of the project that dropped out] and also about Anna and Laura. They pointed out that ‘talking back’ can include a lot more than just speech... for example doing, acting and that kind of things. (Kulmala 2005)

It seems that the central concepts of the entire book were discussed thoroughly and different views were presented on the issues during the writing process. At least for the sociologists a common ground with the researchers from Social Work was rather easy to find, despite the differences in the research fields (marginalization and ethnicity/racism). It may be of some importance that the researchers came from the same university and knew each other at least to some extent earlier. Considering the chapters which dropped out from the book different disciplinary backgrounds may have had some impact. Ms Kulmala remembers that at least one chapter had got comments from the editors in which they wanted it to fit better with the basic ideas of the book. It is however not easy to say whether the differences were directly connected to the disciplines or just different approaches – especially since the chapter by the psychiatrists and therapists did not represent typical research in those fields, according to Ms Kulmala (2005).

The PhD students and the post-doctoral researcher of this specific project also took part in multidisciplinary conferences and networks. For example in 2002 they attended two international conferences (International Society for Cultural Research and Activity in Amsterdam and the 4<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Evaluation for Practice). They also took part in several Social Work work conferences both nationally and internationally. Ms Kulmala herself attended meetings of multidisciplinary methodological networks. She took part in the meetings of the national network of qualitative health research (LATE) and the national network for narrative studies (Kertonet). She also attended researcher training courses which were multidisciplinary and focused on different kinds of qualitative methods (Kulmala 2006).

This example shows that even a research project with a monodisciplinary structure can engage in multidisciplinary cooperation which the participants find enriching. Researchers may also take part in several multidisciplinary conferences and networks, as well as PhD training courses outside the research programme. It should be noted that these were clearly multidisciplinary activities, not interdisciplinary. The foothold in one discipline, Social Work, was steady in the project, but the researchers also had some exchanges of ideas and cooperation with representatives of other disciplines.

## **Interdisciplinarity in publications**

On the web pages of the SYREENI programme there is a list of publications of 15 projects/consortiums of the total 21 projects in the programme (<http://www.joensuu.fi/syreeni/julkaisut.html>). One of the projects listed was excluded from the analysis of this study, since the information of where the articles were published was missing. An analysis of the publication list shows that the projects

differed from each other depending on their publications strategies. With strategies we refer to practices that can be, but most likely are not articulated, by the projects.

The projects/consortiums can be categorised into three groups in relation to the publication forum<sup>4</sup>. *The first group* includes projects where the researchers published only or mainly in the journals and anthologies of their own discipline. There were four such projects. These included one research project with representatives mainly from Law; one project with representatives from Education; one project with representatives from Economics; and a project which had representatives from Education, Social Policy and Public Health.

*The second group* consisted of projects which published both in the journals and anthologies of their own discipline and in multidisciplinary channels. This group consisted of six projects. It included a project where all members came from Social Work (presented in the previous section); a project combining Social Sciences and Arts; a project with representatives from Social Policy, Social Psychology, Law, Sociology and Psychology; a project combining Social Policy, Sociology, Linguistics, Communication and Social Psychology; a project combining Law and Women's Studies; and a project with representatives from Psychiatry and Psychotherapy.

*The third group* consisted of four projects/consortiums which published only or mainly in multi/interdisciplinary journals or anthologies. Two came from the field of ethnic relations (both presented in the previous section), one was a combination of Youth Studies and Ethnicity Studies, and one project had a background in Women's Studies. Especially the three first mentioned produced a large number of publications which were mainly or entirely published through interdisciplinary channels.

The joint book published within the research programme, called *New Challenges for the Welfare State*, was an anthology which gathered the results from different research projects. It was not a thematic entity, but a collection of several thematic areas. It was divided into four sections: Rights and Minorities; Ethnicity, Identity, Immigration; Marginalization and Social Inequality; and Contesting Marginalization. As can be seen in the section titles, the research fields of marginalisation and ethnicity were quite separate even at this phase. The legal section at the beginning and the last section about contesting marginalisation somewhat mixed the two fields, but on the whole the division was clear.

To conclude, there seem to have been multi- and interdisciplinary efforts in the publishing practices of the projects. However, the list on the web pages is not complete as information on six projects is totally missing. Whether they did not publish by the time the list was made or did not provide information we have no knowledge of. The joint publication was a multidisciplinary book which collected articles by different projects.

### **Problems with a thematically heterogeneous programme but success in a sub-theme**

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<sup>4</sup> A list of projects and how they were categorized is presented in Appendix 2.

The evaluation report of the research programme was published less than a year after the programme ended. The results of the programme in promoting multi- and interdisciplinarity were evaluated as modest in the report (Rantalaïho et al 2004, 18). It was also stated that the achievements of the different projects in this respect varied a great deal. Some projects were regarded as quite successful, whereas most were evaluated to have performed modestly. The general conclusion regarding multi- and interdisciplinarity was stated as (ibid, 20):

The programme was not all that successful in promoting multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research but, on the other hand, the time may not yet be right for evaluating this. Since many of the junior researchers in the programme have now anyhow participated in multidisciplinary research during their so-called formative years, the effects of interdisciplinarity may be seen in the days to come.

The evaluation group consisted of three members and an expert secretary. The Finnish chair, Professor (emerita) Liisa Rantalaïho, has a background in Sociology, Women's Studies and Public Health. The other members of the evaluation group were Professor Ulf Hedetoft, Aalborg University, Denmark and Professor John Solomos from the City University in London, UK. Mr Hedetoft is an expert in the area of marginalisation and inequality, and Mr Solomos is an expert in ethnic relations. Mr Solomos had taken part in the evaluation of the project applications as well. The evaluation was made on the basis of the following material: the programme memorandum, the coordination plan of the programme, extended abstracts (i.e. yearly reports of activities) by the projects, an evaluation written by the Programme Manager, a list of publications of the projects, the manuscript of the common book of the programme, and programmes and memoranda of the three programme conferences. The evaluation group also heard the views of the Programme Manager and the administrative coordinator at the Academy of Finland.

The issues evaluated in the report were: 1) Academic and scientific quality of the research programme; 2) Success in implementing the goals and objectives of the research programme; 3) Contribution of the programme to researcher and expert training; 4) Collaboration and networking within the programme; 5) Relevance and applicability of research results; 6) Future recommendations. The issues to be evaluated were presented by the Academy of Finland when the group was given the task of the evaluation. The same issues are focused on in the evaluations of research programmes by the Academy of Finland in general.

The group read the material and discussed their views in one meeting. The evaluation process continued when the report was prepared and agreed on through e-mail exchanges. According to the chair, Prof. Rantalaïho, the group was rather united in their views regarding the evaluation. The differences were more in nuances: how strongly they should express or argue for certain interpretations. When asked how the group came to the conclusion regarding multi- and interdisciplinarity Prof. Rantalaïho said:

We came to that conclusion through many routes. [...] It was more a question of what was *not* visible than what was visible. For example it seemed rather much like every project was working by themselves. They didn't care so much

for the others. And we discussed quite a lot the fact that in the kick-off seminar where the participants became acquainted with each other, the scientific coordinator offered them... or he wanted to organise common methodological seminars for the programme. The participants didn't want this. They didn't want to use their time for such activities. There was not much communication between the projects... except for some projects. There were clear points of cooperation in which some projects engaged, but since there were 21 projects, one can say that the majority were like single spots... they worked at their own universities and were probably in contact with the coordinator, but not much cooperation with other projects existed. (Rantalaiho 2005)

The evaluation committee members found several reasons for this state of affairs during the research programme. They paid attention to the inadequate time span and funding for the programme (Rantalaiho et al 2004, 14-15; Rantalaiho 2005). The level of funding of the coordination was regarded as insufficient for promoting interdisciplinarity and international cooperation. In addition, nearly all of the projects got their budgets cut down compared to the application. The activities and the period of funding for each researcher thus had to be reduced. Researchers were employed for shorter periods or on part-time basis, which did not provide good opportunities for cooperation. The report also stated that the three-year period was too short for the accomplishment of the ambitious objectives of the programme – especially since the research field of ethnic relations had just started to take shape in Finland at the time.

The commitment of the project leaders to the objectives of the programme was seen as another problem. The steering group was not regarded as a sufficient resource of support for the Programme Manager, since it had only a few meetings and the members changed during the programme period. The evaluation committee suggested that a “programme board” should have been established to support the coordination, consisting of some project leaders. It was also stated that the steering group and the Programme Manager should have kept more contact with individual projects and organised discussions with them. Thus, for example the cooperation with other projects and between disciplines could have been strengthened during the programme.

Despite these problems, the report also noted positive signs. The programme had provided contacts for researchers within the national context. A new scholarly association, the Society for the Study of Ethnic Relations and Migration (ETMU), was established during the SYREENI programme. The programme had also contributed to research on ethnic relations on the national level. Some projects were evaluated as having performed excellently. The evaluation group regarded the objectives of the programme as overambitious compared to the provided resources. A combination of large thematic fields such as marginalization, inequality and ethnic relations was seen as a task more suitable for a well-funded centre of excellence.

The overall picture presented by the evaluation report is rather gloomy, especially in relation to the promotion of multi- and interdisciplinarity. However, the accomplishments of the programme can be interpreted in a less negative way too. *Although we agree with many of the analyses of the evaluation report, the material of our study does not support such a negative description.* In addition to different data (documents vs. interviews), it is also a question of interpretation: which events,

projects and processes are emphasized and which are seen as less important. In our view, the programme had problems in promoting multi- and interdisciplinarity, but there are also several successful innovative practices, processes and results, which we have highlighted earlier in this report. They were most often related to research on ethnic relations.

As we see it, *the biggest problem with the programme in relation to promoting multi- and interdisciplinarity was the two-fold thematic of the programme.* The two thematic areas – marginalisation and inequality on the one hand and ethnic relations on the other hand – were from the beginning distinct and remained as such during the programme, although some examples of cooperation exist. The research traditions of these two thematic fields were separate, most of the concepts and theories were different and the research questions were distinct. Not even the programme memorandum connected these two fields in a plausible way. A more focused theme on ethnic relations could have promoted multi- and interdisciplinarity within the programme in a more accurate way. This is also recognised in the evaluation report which in its future recommendations stated that the Academy of Finland should not expand the scope of research programmes too much. We find that the failure did not lie in the implementation of the programme, but was a result of the initial decisions by the Academy of Finland when the programme was established.

If we look at the implementation of multi- and interdisciplinarity during the programme it seems that the problems were especially connected to projects in the field of marginalisation and inequality. Yet, it should be noted that some projects in this field had cooperation with others. But, as the chair of the evaluation group, Prof. Rantalaiho, said, especially these projects were working in their own institutions and engaged less in cooperation with other projects:

Many fields and especially these that conducted research more generally on marginalisation and social exclusion and things like that... they weren't much in contact with each other. (Rantalaiho 2005)

*The research field of ethnic relations, on the other hand, does not look as detached.* There were many forms of multi- and interdisciplinary cooperation. Two important national networks were established during the programme for researchers in this field, both of which were multidisciplinary (the Society for the Study of Ethnic Relations and Migration, Racism-researchers). There were conceptual and theoretical discussions among the researchers of ethnic relations when they met at conferences and in networks. In addition, our analysis shows that publishing in this group was more channelled to multi- and interdisciplinary journals and anthologies than to disciplinary sources. The interest towards cooperation with other researchers in the field was larger than the funding of the project allowed to become true.

Since the research field of ethnic relations was only just beginning in Finland at the time of the SYREENI programme it is not surprising that the researchers in the field concentrated on cooperation and networking with each other. As one of our interviewees, Mr Wahlbeck (2005), said it would have been unreasonable to ask them to engage in cooperation with another research field on top of this. The SYREENI programme was a step forward for researchers in ethnic relations and their work has been of great importance, he stated. Based on our study we agree with this.

Within the whole programme there were clearly problems in establishing methodological discussions. *But it seems that the question was less related to disciplinary boundaries than to epistemological orientations.* These can be traced to a division between a positivist, quantitative approach and a social constructionist or culture studies research approach applying qualitative methods. These divisions can – and in practice did – exist within disciplinary boundaries. For example Sociology and Social Policy were mentioned in our interviews as disciplines in which these divisions became visible during the research programme. In practice they also became hindrances to cooperation.

Other common discussions succeeded better during the programme. According to the Programme Manager and some researchers/project leaders the theoretical and conceptual discussions succeeded rather well, at least among researchers in ethnic relations. The analysis of the third research project ('At the Edge of the Helping Systems') showed that some efforts to engage in discussions across thematic areas were also made. The analysis at the project level showed that individual researchers even in a monodisciplinary research project sometimes took part in multidisciplinary networks, conferences and PhD training (connected to methods and methodology etc.) outside the research programme. Although these were not effects of the programme activities, they were part of the project outcomes and resources for future research.

An additional problem became clear in our interviews, as well as in the notes taken in the first SYREENI conference at Mekrijärvi (Puuronen 2001). The resources provided for each research project and partly for the coordination of the programme too, were too scarce – a fact pointed out already in the evaluation report. It seems that the tight budget was especially a problem for the participation of researchers at universities outside Southern Finland, since their travel costs are higher due to long distances. The researchers were also aware of the short funding period and were under pressure to get their dissertation ready.

To conclude, the SYREENI programme formed a context both for successes and failures in relation to the implementation of multi- and interdisciplinarity. Our view of the programme is, however, not as negative as presented in the evaluation report. In our opinion, one has to make a clear separation between the two thematic areas and we suggest that the research field of ethnic relations was rather successful in creating spaces for interdisciplinarity. The two-fold thematic of the programme was a crucial source for the problems highlighted in this report.

## **4. CASE STUDY 2: *Interaction across the Gulf of Bothnia (SVEFI)***

### **Background and preparation of the research programme**

Finland and Sweden have close historical ties due to the fact that they formed one kingdom until 1809. Throughout the succeeding time contacts between the neighbouring countries have been active. Both also have remarkable minority

populations which speak the other language. The shared history, as well as the similarities and differences in the present position of the countries, formed the starting point of the research programme called “Interaction across the Gulf of Bothnia” (2000–2003). The name SVEFI which is an acronym of the Swedish name of the programme (*Svenskt i Finland, Finskt i Sverige*) will be used in the following.

The initiative to start the research programme was taken by the Society of Swedish Literature in Finland. According to the administrative coordinator of the programme at the Academy of Finland, Eili Ervelä-Myréen (2005) the idea was presented at a research conference organised by the Society of Swedish Literature in Finland. One of the participants of the conference, Mr Gustav Björkstrand, was also Chair of the Research Council for Culture and Society at the Academy of Finland. He suggested that the Society should consider proposing a research programme to be funded jointly with the Academy of Finland. After some consideration, the Society of Swedish Literature in Finland made a proposal for such a programme to the Academy of Finland in the autumn of 1997. By the time the Council discussed it the members of the Research Council for Culture and Society had changed (Gustav Björkstrand was no longer a member). The research council set up a working group to prepare a research programme according to the proposal. In June 1998 the Board of the Academy of Finland decided to start a Finnish-Swedish research programme called “Interaction across the Gulf of Bothnia” (Nenola 1999).

During the preparation of the programme in the Academy of Finland some unofficial inquiries were made to prospective Swedish funding bodies in order to examine their interest (Ervelä-Myréen 2005). The official contacts were, however, taken only after the Finnish decisions. The Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation and the Swedish Council for Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences (HSFR) decided to take part in the planning and funding of the programme. From Finland the Åbo Akademi University Foundation and the Foundation for Swedish Culture in Finland also decided to co-fund the research programme (Tarkiainen et al 2005, 13).

A working group was established with representatives of all the funding bodies involved. The group consisted of 14 members from both the Humanities and Social Sciences. The working group prepared the programme memorandum, which was approved by the funding organisations in January 1999. The call for applications was arranged in 1999. The three-year funding for the research projects started at the beginning of 2000.

The total budget of the research programme was 29 million FIM (approx. 4,9 million euros). Within the programme 17 projects were funded. All research projects included researchers both from Finland and Sweden, since the programme memorandum stated a preference for this. A steering group was nominated for the programme. It consisted of representatives from the different funding bodies (ibid, 13). A part-time scientific coordinator, Prof. Nils Erik Villstrand, was hired for the research programme. He is Professor of Nordic History at Åbo Akademi University and also acted as project leader in the programme. He was also the secretary of the steering group. The administrative coordinator at the Academy of Finland was Ms Eili Ervelä-Myréen.

## **Selection of projects proposals**

The selection of research project applications was conducted in two steps. The *first selection* was made on the basis of the project outlines. Out of 89 projects received, 41 were chosen to continue into the second phase. The evaluation was made by a group of representatives from the funding bodies. They were all, however, academics (Ervelä-Myréén 2005). Some were members of the Research Council for Culture and Society; some came from the other funding bodies. All group members got all the proposals, but every proposal was evaluated by two appointed reviewers. One day was used to discuss which proposals should proceed to the second phase. According to Ms Ervelä-Myréén (2005) the group consisted of representatives of several disciplines. The aim was to have every proposal evaluated by at least one reviewer representing the same discipline as the proposal. The criterion used in this evaluation was, primarily, how well the project fitted into the objectives of the research programme. The other criteria were: the degree of innovation of the project, the scientific level of the project, the scientific level of the research team, and the project's collaborative contacts (Tarkiainen et al 2005, 13).

*The second selection* was made on the basis of full-length applications. They were evaluated by four Nordic panels, two of which met in Sweden and two in Finland. The first panel evaluated applications from History; the second applications from Political Science and Economics; the third had proposals related to Languages including both Humanities and Social Science research; and the fourth panel took care of the other disciplines, such as Education, Sociology and Cultural Studies (Ervelä-Myréén 2005). No specific arrangements were made to take into account interdisciplinary project proposals. The criteria applied in this phase were: the scientific level of the research team and the research plan, collaborative contacts of the project and the financial plan (Tarkiainen et al 2005, 13). Out of the 41 proposals 17 were chosen to be funded.

Thus, the evaluation of the project proposals was both disciplinary and multidisciplinary. The panels which evaluated proposals from History, and Political Science and Economics were mainly disciplinary (as an exception the History panel included a reviewer affiliated with the Sociology of Literature). The panel focusing on Languages evaluated proposals across the boundaries of the Humanities and the Social Sciences – the reviewers were, however, affiliated only with the Humanities. The fourth panel both evaluated proposals from different disciplines and included reviewers from several disciplines (Education, Sociology, Ethnography). Interdisciplinary expertise was not explicitly sought, but the combination of the panels varied. Since the theme of the research programme was very wide, there could be no specific experts to represent this field of research.

## **The focus and objectives of the programme**

The *programme memorandum* defined the objectives of the research programme as:

- to study the interaction, cooperation, influences and tension between Sweden and Finland, covering both past and present
- to study the majority/minority problems within and between the two countries

- to study the social, psychological, pedagogical, linguistic and other processes arising from these problems
- to promote comparative studies of Finland and Sweden
- to promote cooperation between Finnish and Swedish researchers (<http://www.abo.fi/institut/fisve-svefi/english/research.html>)

The research programme was directed to research projects in the Humanities and Social Sciences. It was stated that both multidisciplinary and monodisciplinary studies could be carried out in the programme. Cooperation between Finland and Sweden was encouraged already at the point of formulating research projects.

The programme memorandum stated that projects could deal with historical, political-institutional, economic, legal, social, socio-demographic, religious, cultural and linguistic conditions. Some possible research areas were mentioned – such as the building of state and nation in Sweden and Finland, the attitude of the public sector towards minorities, migration between the countries, literary and cultural influences, linguistic switches and contacts, etc. – but the research programme was seen to cover a broad field in which individual research projects could define their research themes.

The background part of the programme memorandum paid attention to the common history of the countries, their similar social structure and set of values, as well as to similar challenges that the countries face in the future. This was seen to provide a good basis for research on the dependence, independence and interaction between the countries. Also differences were mentioned, for example in the choices the countries have made in the increased international integration. Thus, comparisons between the countries could provide important information also for future demands. Finnish-Swedish relations were also seen to provide an interesting example for contemporary Europe regarding issues of minority/majority relations.

Thus, the themes of the research programme were very broad. Several areas on society and culture were mentioned as research topics, and the time span included the past, the present and the future. Multi- or interdisciplinarity were not mentioned in the objectives of the research programme, but since it is a general aim of the research programmes funded by the Academy of Finland, it applies also to this research programme.

## **The programme in motion**

There were three conferences organised within the research programme. They were mainly directed at project leaders and researchers of the programme, but the closing conference of the programme also had a dissemination task and was announced to a wide audience. The first conference was held at the Finnish-Swedish cultural centre called Hanasaari in Espoo, Finland on May, 3-4, 2000. The mid-term conference was arranged in Helsinki, Finland on August, 23-24, 2001. The closing conference was organised in Uppsala, Sweden on November, 28-29, 2003.

In addition to these large conferences the project leaders and researchers met in smaller sub-groups. The projects were divided into three groups, which worked independently on editing books. Some projects also arranged meetings with each

other outside these sub-group meetings. The cooperation resulted in four thematic volumes, one of which is already published and others will follow.

### **The Hanasaari conference: resistance and discussion**

The kick-off conference in Hanasaari in May 2000 started the cooperation within the research programme, which proved to be fruitful in many ways. The scientific coordinator had been given the task by the steering group to divide the projects into sub-groups. The entire programme was considered to be too large and heterogeneous for developing cooperation. The division made by the scientific coordinator, Prof. Villstrand, was criticised at the conference, but after discussions the idea was eventually accepted. This is how the scientific coordinator remembers the discussions when the projects were divided into groups:

I divided the projects into suitable groups. And this was the phase when the three groups A, B, C took form. The groups were very influential for the activities especially during the first part of the programme. Everyone agreed that this was not the proper way to divide the projects and we discussed this quite a lot... until everyone came to the conclusion that we can't divide them in another way either. And they must be divided. So, the result was exactly the one I had proposed. The task of dividing the projects into groups was given to me when I started... sit down and read... what do these projects have in common... which belong together. Three groups... how do you divide them... time starts now [laughs]... A bit like that. I was also of the opinion that it was rather impossible... and there were projects who thought that place us anywhere else but not there... but as I said, it didn't change anything. I tried to say that this is just an instrument... it is not an end in itself that we work in three groups, but to enable some kind of communication in this large programme we need to divide the projects in some way. It's of no use for all 17 projects to try to meet all the time and communicate. (Villstrand 2005)

The administrative coordinator at the Academy of Finland, Ms Ervelä-Myréen, too recalled resistance from the project leaders at the first conference. She pointed out that this is quite common in research programmes at the beginning. In this specific programme it was especially the representatives of the Humanities that expressed doubts about cooperation, but as we have seen in the case of the SYREENI programme, resistance can just as well occur with representatives from the Social Sciences.

In the beginning there was some resistance... as there often is... when they think... especially the researchers from the Humanities [laughs], who are not used to cooperation. There had been more cooperation in the Social Sciences and they had had research programmes as well. But not many in the Humanities... and there seemed to be more resistance within these researchers. *SK: What kind of resistance was there?* Some people thought that 'who is this Villstrand to come and tell me what to do'. And that wasn't what he did either [laughs], he tried to give them carrots. I mean you can't force anyone. But it went very well, especially after they had already cooperated with each other to some extent. And then we had this mid-term seminar in

which the two evaluators, who followed the programme from the beginning to the end, and the steering group were present... after that the cooperation really got going. And these book projects were important... because there were researchers from several disciplines writing articles together. (Ervelä-Myrreen 2005)

After long discussions and pondering different options to divide the groups, the project leaders finally agreed to start the cooperation on the basis of the division presented by the scientific coordinator. When the practical work with the preparation of the books and getting acquainted with each others' research began, the resistance and the criticism ended. Some kind of resistance might be seen in the fact pointed out by the evaluation group that about 20 per cent of the researchers in the projects did not take part in any cooperation beyond one or two visits to the large conferences (Tarkiainen et al 2005, 21). Another reason might be that they were never offered the opportunity because the projects lacked travel money and only the project leaders were funded by the programme coordination (Silius 2006). There may also be several other reasons for not taking part in the cooperation, thus resistance being only one of them.

The idea to produce thematic volumes as a common result of the research programme was presented by the scientific coordinator Mr Villstrand. Thus, he constructed the main structures of cooperation, but he also managed to get the project leaders and researchers to actively participate in the cooperation.

### **Cooperation later during the programme**

At the mid-term conference in Helsinki in August 2001 the project leaders reported on the progress of their research projects and discussed issues related to this (Huss 2005). The final conference in Uppsala in November 2003 presented the results of the research programme to a wide audience. It also provided an opportunity for the project leaders and researchers to discuss their experiences of the programme and possible future contacts.

The main part of the work within the research programme was, however, conducted in the three sub-groups (A, B, C) set up at the first conference. The first group was given the theme "One Realm – Two Trusties" in the booklet on project abstracts. It consisted mainly of historians, but also representatives from Theology, Ethnology and the History of Law. The second group was given the name "Sweden and Finland: Mobility, Assimilation and Cultural Identities". A broad range of disciplines were represented in it. Researchers with a background in for example Sociolinguistics, History, Ethnology, Geography, Sociology, Journalism, Psychology, Gerontology, Administration and Women's Studies were represented in the projects of this group. The third group was given the name "Two Neighbour-countries in Contacts: Cooperation and Competition in Economy and Politics". It consisted of representatives from Economics, Social Policy, Political History and Social History.

The groups worked rather independently after the initial set-up. They organised meetings to discuss the planned thematic volumes and worked with papers. The three groups had somewhat different working modes, but usually all authors read all

chapters and commented on them either by e-mail or in meetings. Most of the work was still done by the editors. In some cases members from different research projects or different disciplines joined to write an article together. However, at least in the first volume which is already published most articles are written by one person or by representatives from the same discipline. The cooperation in connection with the thematic volumes was experienced as rewarding and giving new insights due to the multidisciplinary contacts it provided. We will discuss this more thoroughly in the section on individual projects.

The structure and objectives of the sub-groups also went through changes during the process. The planned three volumes turned into four volumes, since the third group decided to make two separate volumes – one on economics and politics, as was planned, and another focusing on language issues (Villstrand 2005). The projects could take part in more than one thematic volume, if they wanted. Thus, some projects joined several groups and wrote articles for more than one volume. The coordinator was also open for this kind of movement between and within groups. The scientific coordinator Mr Villstrand (2005) left it to the groups to decide how they would work and whether they wanted to change the forms of cooperation.

The research programme could also to some extent support conferences and meetings organised by the research projects. Some projects arranged to meet each other even outside the sub-groups.

The attitude and working modes of the scientific coordinator seem to have been successful. In the evaluation phase some criticism was expressed towards his work, but mostly the feedback was positive. He himself described his way of working in the following way:

I tried to... and also succeeded to organise it so that there was one in every group who took responsibility. And I was more in the background myself. [...] My task was to keep saying to them that... I don't know how it will be done, but somehow we need to do something together. [...] That was the trick in it... to be rather determined and say... this is the task, we must accomplish it, there is no other choice, but at the same time [laughs] to let it grow from below. That people are engaged and believe in this, think that this is what we should do. And it is difficult, but at the same time pleasurable when one sees that it succeeds. (Villstrand 2005)

In addition to the flexible attitude of the scientific coordinator it seems that the pragmatic approach which was taken was also of importance for the establishment of the cooperation. Difficult questions of, for example, an epistemological nature were not raised. Possible divisions were by-passed and the focus was set on common issues. The scientific coordinator Mr Villstrand sees this as the only solution in a situation where the combination of the research projects was already decided on and the themes of the programme were defined as very broad. In his view, the cooperation was multidisciplinary, not interdisciplinary.

I think we worked more than talked about multidisciplinary. I'm trying to remember... we did have a discussion at some conference about the meaning of it though. [...] But mainly it was, in my view, a question of us sitting in the

same boat, we have taken part in this programme community and the only way to get out of it is to do something that is more than the sum of each project. [...] Not so much to think about what it is, but to do it. And this can be criticised. It may not be reasonable. But it may also be, like I said, that as long as one doesn't think so much about it, it is possible to do. It can be discussed whether this should be called interdisciplinarity... maybe it should be called multidisciplinary instead. [...] A more eclectic approach... in which one looks at this as a buffet table... this looks good, that looks good, I'll take it [laughs]. (Villstrand 2005)

On the other hand, it may be discussed how deep the cooperation was and what kind of changes such cooperation can bring about in the disciplinary thinking and the disciplinary system. Mr Villstrand himself thought that, despite the eclecticism in the cooperation, the long period of working together resulted in changes in the views of many of the researchers involved.

## **The disciplinary basis of the research projects**

An analysis of the structure of the research projects was made on the basis of the information on the programme web site (<http://www.abo.fi/instut/fisve-svefi>) and the booklet with project abstracts. All the projects in the research programme were included in the analysis.

Our analysis shows that the largest group of the programme consisted of disciplinary projects. There were eight projects which only included researchers from one discipline<sup>5</sup>. These included for example projects from History, Social Policy, Economics and Theology. Four projects consisted of researchers from two disciplines. These included for example Geography and History; Ethnology and History. Two projects included researchers from three disciplines. These were Women's Studies, Sociology and History; Linguistics, Sociolinguistics and History. Two projects included researchers from at least four disciplines or research fields. These combined History, Linguistics, Ethnology and Area Studies; Social Psychology, Sociology, Studies on Ethnic Relations, Pedagogy and Journalism. In addition, one project consisted of researchers from an interdisciplinary field, Gerontology.

Thus, the majority of the projects consisted of representatives of one or two disciplines. The number of monodisciplinary projects was high. Some projects were multidisciplinary and only a few were interdisciplinary.

## **Cooperation practices of individual projects**

In the following two research projects will be presented in more detail. The focus is on their practices related to multidisciplinary and interdisciplinarity within the project and in their cooperation with other projects in the research programme.

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<sup>5</sup> A list of the projects according to the categorisation is presented in Appendix 1.

### ***Project 1: Language Emancipation in Finland and Sweden***

The research project “Language Emancipation in Finland and Sweden” included the project leader and five researchers from Sociolinguistics and Political History. The project leader, Docent Leena Huss, was affiliated to the Centre for Multiethnic Research at Uppsala University which is a multidisciplinary research institute. Her discipline of origin was Finno-Ugric Linguistics, but for several years her research field has been Sociolinguistics (Huss 2005). The research project studied the language shift within the Fennomanian movement in Finland during the nationalist period from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to 1917 (the year Finland gained its independence) and the language emancipation among Finns and Tornedalians in Sweden from the 1960s to 1999 (*Interaction across the Gulf of Bothnia* 2000, 11). The issues were studied at three levels: the individual level, the societal level, and the general level connected to nation building and the integration of minorities. The researchers were located at Uppsala University and Stockholm University in Sweden and at the University of Helsinki in Finland.

The research project was a result of cooperation between the project leader, Ms Huss, and a Finnish researcher, Ms Anna-Riitta Lindgren. They had earlier applied for funding with the same theme, but not succeeded that time. When the call for the research programme “Interaction across the Gulf of Bothnia” was launched, they could build on the earlier application. According to Ms Huss (2005) this was essential for the preparation of the application, since information about the programme appeared very late in Sweden. The rest of the project members were colleagues whom Ms Huss and Ms Lindgren knew from previous cooperation. The research plan was also written by Ms Huss and Ms Lindgren. They are both sociolinguists.

Once a year the project arranged meetings in which all researchers met (Huss 2005). The meetings lasted two days. On the first day a larger conference was organised in which other researchers could take part. The second day was used for a meeting of the project. In the meetings the project members discussed how the sub-projects had proceeded and made plans about future activities. In the first meeting the group discussed the designing of interviews and questionnaires to find links between the different sub-projects. The project meetings were also used to discuss what kind of material should be used in the sub-projects – for example if letters and fiction should be used as empirical material. Issues related to methods were also discussed, but mainly everyone was using her/his own methods – historical and sociolinguistic methods. The project members did not write papers for these large meetings, but outside the meetings they read each others’ texts and commented on them.

In addition, the project had smaller meetings in Sweden and Finland in which the researchers from the respective countries met. These were organised 2-4 times a year. The project leaders Ms Huss and Ms Anna-Riitta Lindgren also arranged meetings when they prepared joint publications. The cooperation was easy, according to Ms Huss (2005), since the researchers were familiar with each other from earlier cooperation. However, she pointed out that the project was rather homogenous. Most of the members were sociolinguists and had a rather similar approach. The historians were fewer, but at least to her knowledge they also regarded the cooperation as fruitful.

Outside the common meetings the sub-projects worked independently. Two of the sub-projects consisted of sociolinguists only. One sub-project included historians and one sociolinguist, who however only took part at the beginning of the project. As the project leader Ms Huss (2005) said, the sub-projects were separate studies. Recently the research project has been working on a volume which will collect the different sub-projects together and present a unified picture of the studied issues.

Most of the researchers in the project were experienced and had good possibilities to publish their research findings. The project leader Ms Huss, however, saw it as important that the different results also were gathered together into one publication. Therefore she and Ms Lindgren had taken the initiative to edit a volume on the findings of the project.

Although the sub-projects worked independently and the multidisciplinary cooperation between historians and sociolinguists mainly took place in the project meetings, it is worth remembering that sociolinguistics itself is an interdisciplinary research field. According to Ms Huss (2005) all the sociolinguists in the project conducted research at the boundaries of different disciplines. They combined approaches from Linguistics, Sociology and Psychology. According to her, studying bilinguality only from a linguistic perspective leaves out many interesting aspects and a broader approach enables a more multifaceted analysis.

The project members actively took part in the cooperation within the research programme. The project leader and 1-2 researchers usually attended the large conferences. According to the project leader Ms Huss (2005), the large meetings were useful, since she got acquainted with other project leaders and this led to new cooperation forms. The large conferences were also a forum for new ideas for Ms Huss:

When one hears other researchers talk about their studies, one gets these aha-experiences... 'this could suit my research too'... 'I haven't thought about that earlier, but it might affect these results too'. I had this feeling, especially when I listened to researchers in the large conferences who had very different disciplinary backgrounds compared to mine... that these very different studies could give associations which made my own research take a step ahead.[...] Many presentations and discussions that would have earlier seemed like they had nothing to do with my research were surprisingly rewarding. And I think quite a few had the similar feeling that... 'what a surprise, this is really interesting'. (Huss 2005)

The smaller working group meetings were useful too for making contacts with other projects of similar orientation and research interests. The cooperation was very intense with especially two other projects. One was a research project at a Finnish School of Economics with an orientation to linguistic studies. The researchers from both projects made visits to each others' universities. The cooperation has continued even after the programme ended. Three projects organised a meeting as late as January 2006 – three years after the programme officially ended. Ms Huss also points out that unfortunately such good contacts cannot take place often enough due to lack of funding after the programme ended.

The project members took part in the writing of the thematic volumes within the research programme. They submitted articles to three volumes. In the working groups the authors read each others' articles and commented on them either by e-mail or in meetings. The cooperation was intense especially in two of the work groups. Although the exchange of ideas was interesting, it was also sometimes tiresome.

Sometimes it was tiresome to read texts that were written in a very strange way. It was very difficult to say something about them... very difficult to comment. Whereas, when the writer was from the same research field it was easy to comment. It was a bit frustrating when one could only say that 'it sounds good' [laughs]. When you aren't familiar with the field, it's difficult to judge. So one usually gave comments like 'this is a bit hard to understand if one is not an expert of the field' [laughs]. (Huss 2005)

To conclude, the project included researchers from the interdisciplinary field of Sociolinguistics and from Political History. The sub-projects worked rather independently, but the meetings of the project provided space for multidisciplinary discussions. The project took part in the activities of the research programme and received many new ideas and contacts from these meetings. The project members were active in establishing contacts and made use of the possibilities opened up by the research programme. They engaged in multidisciplinary cooperation even outside their own project.

### ***Project 2: Gothenburg, "the biggest village in the municipality of Salla"<sup>6</sup>***

The research project "Gothenburg, the biggest village in the municipality of Salla" included a project leader and two researchers. The project leader and one of the researchers were ethnologists, whereas the other researcher was affiliated with Finnish and Scandinavian History. One of the researchers was based at Gothenburg University in Sweden. The project leader came from the University of Helsinki and the other researcher from the University of Oulu in Finland. The research project studied Finns who moved from Finnish Lapland to Gothenburg in Sweden from the 1950s onwards and the children of these migrants (*Interaction across the Gulf of Bothnia* 2000, 15). All three researchers conducted their own individual studies with a different focus. The project leader studied how the first and second-generation Finnish immigrants adapted themselves to the urban environment and factory work in Gothenburg. The researcher from Ethnology focused on the children of Finnish migrants, their identities and their relationship to media images of Finland and Finns. The researcher from History studied the frequencies and demographics of migrant Finns through material from archives and previous research.

According to the historian of the project, Ms Marianne Junila (2005), the combination of disciplines in the project was the result of the research theme. To enable solving research questions several disciplines were needed. The idea for the project came from the project leader, Docent Hanna Snellman, who thought that the ethnological perspective should be combined with an investigation of the historical background. Due to earlier contacts she knew Ms Junila and asked her to join the project. The two

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<sup>6</sup> Salla is a municipality in Finnish Lapland.

of them wrote the project application together. In a later phase the Swedish researcher joined the team.

The project arranged meetings regularly, about once in 4-5 months. The meetings were organised both in Finland and Sweden. At some of the meetings also larger conferences were organised. These were open for other researchers from the SVEFI programme, migration researchers and other interested researchers (Junila 2005). In the project meetings the members discussed each others' work and the collection of the empirical material. They also discussed methods and sometimes even engaged in debates about them. According to Ms Junila (2005) the difference between Ethnology and History is that ethnologists rely on single experiences and are not interested in generalizations, whereas historians look at the number of certain experiences and wish to put the phenomenon into its proportions. In the project this meant that there were two different approaches. On the one hand, the ethnological perspective focused on personal experiences, whereas the historical perspective provided the generalizing description of the phenomenon and its historical background.

The project was designed in such a way that each researcher had a separate research focus and everyone conducted her own part within specific disciplinary boundaries. However, the project members discussed methodological issues and how to interpret the findings together. They also aimed at one unified presentation of the studied phenomenon in which all parts would be connected.

Our project was a typical example of a project in which everyone stays strictly on their own lot, but discusses through the method and the analysis with another discipline. And the endproduct is still... the aim is to produce one common description of the phenomenon. When everything functions well and everyone finds her place, it can work very well. [...] Our project was a good example of what multidisciplinary can produce. And when everyone stays on their own field, it has the advantage that one doesn't make any methodological mistakes [laughs]... which is always a risk, if one isn't much familiarized with other fields and wants to try their methods. (Junila 2005)

Ms Junila also refers here to the safety of conducting multidisciplinary research. When everyone moves within her own disciplinary boundaries, the researchers know their field and their methods. There is no risk of making mistakes, as there might be if one crosses borders and makes experiments.

The project members took actively part in the conferences and other activities of the SVEFI programme. The project belonged to group B, but the meetings often included members from other groups as well. Ms Junila herself attended a meeting of group A once, when the conference had an interesting theme. It seems that cooperation within and between the work groups was active. The research project also made closer contacts with some other research projects. They were able to arrange meetings a few times with the funding provided by the research programme.

Group B had representatives from several disciplines. This also had an impact on the thematic volume the group produced together. Ms Junila is one of the editors of this volume; the other editor is a sociologist. The editorial work consisted of commenting on the chapters directly to the authors. Comments were also exchanged with the other

editor of the book. In addition, she attended meetings where all the editors of the volumes met to discuss publishing issues. As she herself said, perhaps she took part in cooperation more than the average researcher in the SVEFI programme. She made use of the possibilities that the programme opened up. In her view, its multidisciplinary influences have expanded her views.

To summarise, the project is a good example of multidisciplinary research. Each researcher had a clearly defined task which was conducted within disciplinary boundaries. The researchers engaged in discussions about methods and analysis. They also had a clear intention to construct a unified description of the studied phenomenon by putting the different parts together. There were different views on methods and epistemological questions, but no big difficulties or arguments. The cooperation in the meetings of the research programme functioned in the same way. Other disciplines provided new insights and ideas, but the disciplinary basis of the studies was not questioned. Cooperation was experienced as rewarding and rather uncontradictory.

### **List of publications and interdisciplinarity**

A list of the most important publications by the research projects is published at the end of the first common volume by the programme (Bladh and Kuvaja 2005). The following analysis of the publications has been made in relation to where the texts were published. Three groups can be distinguished according to the disciplinarity or multi/interdisciplinarity of the publication fora<sup>7</sup>. We call these publishing strategies, as was discussed in the section on the SYREENI programme.

*The first and largest group* consists of projects which published totally or mainly in disciplinary journals and anthologies. There were nine such research projects. Many of these projects consisted of only one discipline. They were for example History, Social Policy, Administration and Economics. However, some projects that had a multidisciplinary structure too belonged to this group, since the researchers only or mainly published in their respective disciplinary journals or anthologies.

*The second group* includes projects which published as often in disciplinary as in multi/interdisciplinary journals or anthologies. There were six such projects. They included projects with several disciplines or interdisciplinary fields of research, but also some monodisciplinary projects. Among these were for example projects from Gerontology; History and Political Science; as well as projects with representatives from only Theology or History of Law.

*The third group* consists of projects that only or mainly published in multidisciplinary journals or anthologies. There were two such projects (both described in the earlier section on individual projects).

Only one of the thematic volumes produced within the programme has yet been published. In this volume (Bladh and Kuvaja 2005) the writers are affiliated with History, Cultural Geography, Theology, Nordic Linguistics, Political History, Finnish

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<sup>7</sup> A list of the projects according to the categorisation is presented in Appendix 2.

Linguistics, and History of Law. Thus, the disciplinary background is broad, but mainly includes the Humanities. Of special interest are two chapters in the volume which are written by representatives of two disciplines. One chapter is written by a cultural geographer and a historian. It is the introductory chapter. Another chapter is written by a researcher affiliated to Political History and a researcher affiliated to Finnish Linguistics, or Sociolinguistics. These authors took part in the same research project (described earlier in our report). The other chapters are the result of one or two representatives of the same discipline.

To summarise, it seems that the disciplinary trend was also very apparent in terms of publication channels. However, many projects published both in disciplinary and multi/interdisciplinary journals and anthologies, and a few projects even mostly through multidisciplinary channels. It is of importance that some monodisciplinary projects published on a wide scale, but on the other hand some multidisciplinary projects were not in fact very multidisciplinary in their publishing strategies. The publication channels were mostly either disciplinary or multidisciplinary. Only a few examples of interdisciplinary publications were listed. The first thematic volume of the programme includes writers with a wide disciplinary background. The editing process has surely been an inspiration to them.

### **Success in cooperation and problems in interdisciplinarity**

The evaluation report of the research programme came to the conclusion that the programme encouraged multidisciplinary significantly. The report states that

One of the key objectives of the programme was to promote collaboration between researchers across national and scientific borders. In the opinion of the evaluation committee, the programme has succeeded very well in realizing this aim. (Tarkiainen et al 2005, 21)

The evaluation group consisted of four members. The Chair, Mr Kari Tarkiainen, was the former Director-General of the Finnish National Archives. Professor (emeritus) Olof Ruin was the chair of the Lars Hierta Professorship in Political Science at Stockholm University in Sweden. Senior Lecturer Anne Nesser came from the Finnish Language and Culture Centre at Mälardalen University in Sweden. The secretary of the evaluation group was Project Manager Torbjörn Eng from the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation.

When the evaluation task was given to the evaluation group a list of issues to be evaluated was provided. It included the same issues that were mentioned in the section on the SYREENI programme.

The evaluation was based on the following material: the self-evaluations by the project participants, documents concerning the history of the programme's origins, project outlines and full applications, the minutes of the steering group, continuous reports from the scientific coordinator regarding project activities, drafts for the four thematic volumes, project presentations, and the web site of the programme (Tarkiainen et al 2005, 10).

In relation to the promotion of multidisciplinary the evaluation report pays special attention to the work on the thematic volumes. The meetings on the volumes are regarded as having provided good opportunities for researchers from different countries and disciplinary backgrounds to gather, exchange experiences and discuss with each other (ibid, 19). It is also noted that the level of collaboration varied to a great extent between projects. Projects with a multidisciplinary structure seem to have been most active in building contacts and thus benefited most from cross-project cooperation (ibid, 21). It is also pointed out that about 20 per cent of the researchers only participated in occasional meetings of the programme. On the whole, the report states that one of the greatest strengths of the SVEFI programme was the cooperation between researchers across both national and scientific borders (ibid, 25).

The evaluation group also gave some recommendations on how similar research programmes could be developed in future. It paid attention to the short preparing time for applicants and the limited funding of the projects. The preparation time for the project applications was evaluated as too short for especially Swedish researchers, who learned about the programme initiative later than Finnish researchers. The budgets of most projects were cut down when funding decisions were made. The evaluation group considered that the number of projects could have been reduced without jeopardising the objectives of the programme. Some suggestions were also made on how to coordinate and organise communication within such a bilateral research programme. However, the evaluation group was satisfied with the work of the scientific coordinator and the working modes of the programme.

The interpretations of the evaluation group regarding multidisciplinary were mainly based on the self-evaluations made by project leaders and researchers in the projects (Eng 2005). No direct questions concerning multidisciplinary were posed in the evaluation questionnaire, but the views of the researchers and project leaders were interpreted on the basis of how they answered other questions. The secretary of the evaluation group, Mr Eng, however, regarded the information rather clear on this issue.

In the self-evaluations no concrete questions were asked about multidisciplinary cooperation, but views about it were expressed in connection with other kinds of questions. *SK: What kinds of questions for example?* Questions that dealt with cooperation on the whole, or the strong and weak sides of the programme. Also the question of how the researcher's own work had been affected by participation in the programme, could receive answers such as one has gotten new ideas and inspiration from researchers with different disciplinary backgrounds. So, views about multidisciplinary within the programme were a kind of indirect information, which one needed to interpret somewhat. But I still think it was rather clear. (Eng 2005)

According to the secretary of the evaluation group some respondents also stated directly that the cooperation with representatives from other disciplines was more rewarding than cooperation across the national borders.

*We agree with the interpretation of the evaluation group that the cooperation in the sub-groups and especially the practical work with the thematic volumes was important for the multidisciplinary brought about by the research programme. The*

sub-groups consisted of representatives from several disciplines and crossed also the borders of the Humanities and Social Sciences. The practical work of reading and commenting on texts written by researchers from other disciplines gave new insights to the participants. This was also confirmed by our interviewees. Even more important may have been the experiences of writing articles together which some of the participants engaged in. The working mode of dividing projects into multidisciplinary groups and engaging in intensive cooperation when editing thematic volumes together seems to have been very successful in promoting multidisciplinary.

*Another aspect that we wish to pay attention to is, however, that the starting point of the cooperation in the research programme was quite disciplinary.* Many projects consisted of representatives from only one discipline and the analysis of the publication strategies showed that disciplinary tendencies were high even among projects which included several disciplines. There was little experience of multidisciplinary cooperation within the projects from the Humanities. We suggest that this is one reason for the expressed enthusiasm regarding the cooperation during the research programme. The differences compared to the usual modes of conducting research within these disciplines were large, thus the multidisciplinary cooperation seemed particularly rewarding.

To summarise, *the programme is a good example of how multidisciplinary can be encouraged in a situation where many projects are monodisciplinary.* The orientation of the scientific coordinator seems to have been suitable for the situation and flexible enough. However, the cooperation was clearly multidisciplinary, not interdisciplinary. It was experienced by most participants as a success, but difficult questions of epistemological nature or other differences between the participants were not raised.

## **5. Comparison between the research programmes**

### **Start-up and objectives**

Among the similarities of the two case studies we found a broad thematic focus and a two-step selection process. The focus of the two programmes did, however, also differ. The first programme, on marginalisation and ethnic relations (SYREENI), had a two-fold thematic which proved to be a difficulty for cooperation during the programme. The second programme on Finnish-Swedish relations (SVEFI) had a broad and loosely defined thematic. The SYREENI- programme had also much more ambitious objectives, as it aimed for example at promoting the respective research fields, at creating new scientific traditions, at developing PhD training, at promoting multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research, and at improving cooperation between funders, researchers and end-users of the research results. The SVEFI programme focused more on comparative aspects of Finland and Sweden, the cooperation between the researchers and bilateral dissemination. We argue that the first programme had a partial aim of promoting a new research field, ethnic relations, while the second one brought together researchers in more established fields. In the first programme, SYREENI, however, the research field of ethnic relations was only

starting to establish itself in Finland. The themes of marginalisation, inequality and social exclusion were added to enhance the acceptance of the programme among funders. This political decision created problems within the programme. Its theme became too heterogeneous. But despite the problems, the programme did boost research and promote cooperation in one of its two research fields, in ethnic relations. Some projects in the second research field, marginality and inequality, also benefited from cooperation within the programme. In the second case study, the SVEFI programme, the aim of comparative research was successful as well as the integration of researchers in the two countries. Because all publications are not out, at this moment it is too early to evaluate the result of the dissemination objectives.

The two research programmes had a similar two-step procedure for applicants. First, project outlines were called for and among these, a smaller group of projects were asked to submit full-length proposals. The selection in the first phase was made by the steering group of the programme and the second by peer reviewers. In the SYREENI programme the selection of reviewers was made not only on basis of disciplinary background, but also related to their expertise in the research field. Thus, the evaluation was not entirely disciplinary. Also in the SVEFI programme the selection was a combination of disciplinary and multidisciplinary. Some panels included reviewers and/or evaluated proposals from different disciplines, even across the division of the Humanities and Social Sciences. There were, however, no specific arrangements to take into account the position of interdisciplinary project applications. In case study 1 (SYREENI), 37 out of 73 proposals were invited to the second phase. Of these, 21 were funded. In case study 2 (SVEFI), 41 out of 89 proposals were invited to the second phase among which 17 were funded. The success rate for SYREENI was 29 per cent and for SVEFI 19 per cent. Both programmes had almost identical budgets, on average between 230.000 and 290.000 euros per project for a 2-year period. We consider the projects on average small and the budgets quite low. It would be interesting to know what a doubling of budgets with subsequent cut of projects would have implied. It is likely that it was easier to choose more projects and cut budgets than to drop good proposals, both programmes having a broad scope.

Multidisciplinary and interdisciplinarity were mentioned in the programme memorandum of the first case study, the SYREENI programme. They were, however, not discussed in more detail. The programme memorandum of the second case study, the SVEFI programme, did not mention multi- or interdisciplinarity as an objective, but since it is stated in the research programme strategy of the Academy of Finland, it was also an objective for this programme.

### **The beginning: a critical phase for the cooperation**

Concerning cooperation within the programmes, problems rose at the beginning of both. In the first case, project leaders rejected the suggestions of the coordinator and in the second case they resisted the arbitrary way they were put into sub-groups by the coordinator. Cooperation per se was, however, not resisted.

It seems that the beginning of a research programme is a critical phase for the establishment of cooperation. The early events also have quite long-lasting effects. As the interviewed scientific advisors from the Academy of Finland pointed out, it is

often the case that there is resistance from the project leaders and researchers at the beginning of the research programmes. This should be taken more into consideration in future. Special attention needs to be paid to developing cooperation and finding ways to engage the projects in the activities of the programme.

The strategies of the scientific coordinators regarding fundamental differences within the programme (such as epistemological views) differed from each other. The coordinator of the SYREENI programme made an ambitious start and wished to overcome epistemological differences by discussion. The coordinator of the SVEFI programme focused on practical cooperation and by-passed epistemological standpoints and other possible differences. In this case, it seems that the second strategy was more successful. We suggest that epistemological differences can be overcome in multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary cooperation, but the focus needs to be on more specific themes or practical cooperation.

Of interest is also the fact that disciplinary divisions were not basically the problem in the cooperation, but epistemological standpoints that both cross disciplinary divisions and exist within disciplinary boundaries.

In both programmes, cooperation grew during the programme period. It also seems that in both programmes, individual projects lived their life almost untouched by conflicts at the overall programme level. They worked in their own networks (within and outside the programme) and took part actively in different multi/interdisciplinary conferences and PhD training courses.

### **Cooperation in the programme: multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary?**

The second case study, the SVEFI programme, was successful in creating multidisciplinary cooperation. The basis for this was a rather unquestioned disciplinarity. Even the multidisciplinary projects we analysed were built on a clear division of tasks between different disciplines. The researchers engaged in multidisciplinary cooperation and received many new fruitful ideas, but their own disciplinary basis remained to a large extent untouched. The multidisciplinary cooperation within the programme proceeded in much the same way. The participants heard about each other's research and engaged in interesting discussions. The disciplinary basis was, however, not questioned or scrutinised. The cooperation did not go that far and, thus, caused no big problems either. Due to this, cooperation was also experienced as fruitful and pleasant.

Our first case study, the SYREENI programme, included multidisciplinary cooperation too. But there was also interdisciplinary cooperation within the research field of ethnic relations. The participants discussed theoretical and methodological issues. They organised themselves into networks which to some extent also promoted interdisciplinarity. The disciplinary basis did not have a very large role in this kind of cooperation. Through theoretical and methodological discussions a common basis was found beyond disciplinary divisions.

As regards publishing, we found that the second case (SVEFI) was more successful in multidisciplinary publishing than the first case (SYREENI). This is due to the simple fact that SVEFI covered a broader range of disciplines than SYREENI, but also because the coordinator of SVEFI introduced a joint publishing plan for which he found a publisher. The working mode of writing and editing thematic volumes in working groups seems to be very beneficial for multidisciplinary cooperation. We suggest that it would also be useful when aiming at promoting interdisciplinary cooperation.

### **Practices of the projects: monodisciplinary, multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary**

In both programmes, quite a few research projects were monodisciplinary. This was especially so in the second case study, the SVEFI programme. Many projects in the field of marginalisation and inequality in the SYREENI programme belonged to this group. Our analysis of the publishing strategies of the projects also showed that many of these projects published in disciplinary journals and anthologies. Some projects which included researchers from two or more disciplines also published only or mainly through their respective disciplinary channels. Thus, at least some projects that had a multidisciplinary structure actually worked rather separately and along disciplinary lines.

Our case studies focused on research projects that engaged in multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary cooperation probably more than average projects in the programmes. Our analysis showed different forms of multidisciplinary and interdisciplinarity. The two projects in the SVEFI programme and one of the projects in the SYREENI programme represented multidisciplinary in which single researchers or sub-projects worked within disciplinary boundaries and had their own, clearly defined tasks. The projects engaged in lively discussions on the collection of material, methods and analysis. They also aimed at producing a unified description of their topic at the end of the project and at connecting the different parts together. One of the SVEFI-projects also included an interdisciplinary field.

The other SYREENI project analysed in this report was of an interdisciplinary character. It took part and organised actively multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary conferences and networks. The third SYREENI project presented here was an example of a monodisciplinary project which engaged in multidisciplinary cooperation by producing a multidisciplinary book. The researchers also took part in multidisciplinary PhD training. This shows that the division between monodisciplinary and multi/interdisciplinary research projects does not always need to be very strict.

## **6. Conclusions**

Finnish research policies encourage multi- and interdisciplinary research. This applies to competition-based funding provided by the national research councils as well to co-

funding with the National Technology Agency. For Humanities and Social Sciences the research council funding is, however, the most important funding agency outside the universities. Private foundations also play a minor role, and have recently introduced some interdisciplinary programmes in addition to individual grants.

This study has focused on the one hand on policies and on the other hand on research programmes of the Finnish research council, the Academy of Finland, in the field of Social Sciences and Humanities. However, the Academy of Finland directs only 23.5 per cent of its funding through research programmes. The largest part of funding is allocated to research projects in the call for general research grants (43 %). It seems that the evaluation procedure is more favourable for interdisciplinary applications in the research programmes than in the call for general research grants, since it is possible to select the peer reviewers from the thematic field of the research programme. Thus, the selection is not based only on disciplinary grounds. Disciplinary peer review is more of a problem in the selection of the general research grants. However, the Academy of Finland has made attempts to take this problem into account better. A recent study conducted by the Academy came to the conclusion that the position of multi- and interdisciplinary research projects is relatively good in the general grants, although the peer review system needs to be further developed.

In the case of research programmes there is a strong connection with multi- and interdisciplinarity, since the promotion of multi- and interdisciplinarity is stated as a general aim of research programmes. It is often mentioned when the programmes are described and evaluated. In general, there is little discussion of what multi- and interdisciplinarity mean and what they require in research activities.

Multidisciplinarity and interdisciplinarity are often discussed together, as a kind of “package”. It seems as if the need for interdisciplinarity is well acknowledged, its implications noted, but as if the means of full implementation are missing.

Although the Academy of Finland is oriented towards funding basic research, there are strands of instrumental interdisciplinarity in the policy documents.

Interdisciplinarity is defined in a cognitive way, but the emphasis on innovativeness, usefulness of research and interaction between basic and applied research brings elements of instrumentalism to the discussions. Transdisciplinarity seems to be more of a suggestion, since the meaning of it is not defined clearly.

*In sum, we find that interdisciplinarity at the policy level is well developed along European lines. However, programme calls and memoranda should elaborate further what is meant by interdisciplinarity. In the studied cases, we did not see this. Neither did the programme documents reveal how interdisciplinarity is thought to happen in practice. We found, however, that thematic research programmes are a very good way of promoting interdisciplinarity because they attract applicants from a multidisciplinary field and the programme activities may develop interdisciplinarity. We also argue that interdisciplinarity as a concept does not need a fixed meaning and therefore attention should be drawn to developing both content and forms.*

Because of the rather vague definitions of interdisciplinarity in the programme calls, it is not easy to assess whether the selected projects were the ones that were most interdisciplinary or if they, as a whole, had the highest level of interdisciplinarity. We suggest that peer reviewers are requested to pay special attention to interdisciplinarity.

In our analyses of the SYREENI programme on marginalisation, inequality and ethnic relations in Finland, and the SVEFI programme on Finnish-Swedish relations, we found that interdisciplinary cooperation was not unproblematic. Among the reasons for this we found the low level of funding, epistemological differences, a heterogeneous theme or a mix of non-compatible research teams, and a lack of suitable working modes. The first mentioned problem can be solved by selecting a smaller number of projects to be funded, while the second one is not easy to solve. The third problem, however, needs attention from the Academy of Finland if cooperation is to be successful. There is always a risk of non-cooperation if research teams are too distant from each other or the theme of the programme is too broad. Finally, one way of solving the last problem is to focus on interdisciplinary publishing. In large programmes, the idea to let sub-groups work independently seems to be a good solution both from a content and a financial point of view. In order to reach more than multidisciplinary, other modes of work in addition to conferences and joint publications need to be developed.

Our conclusions regarding multidisciplinary and interdisciplinarity in the two research programmes discussed here differed to some extent from those of the evaluation reports on these programmes. We suggest that this was a result of using other data and methods than the evaluation groups did. Our research was based on interviews in addition to documents, whereas the evaluation groups mainly relied on documents. We also analysed the structure of the projects and their publishing strategies which were not thoroughly examined in the evaluations. In addition, our specific focus on multi/interdisciplinarity may have made a difference. We made a distinction between multidisciplinary and interdisciplinarity highlighting their implementation in the programmes. The evaluation reports, on the other hand, discussed these phenomena together and among several other issues.

In sum, our case studies showed that

- Finnish research policies emphasise multi- and interdisciplinarity following European models
- Finland promotes multi- and interdisciplinary research in the Humanities and the Social Sciences, mainly through research programmes and centres of excellence
- The organisation of Finnish thematic research programmes is an example of good practice concerning preparation of the programme, selection process and programme activities
- Thematic research programmes seem useful for combination of dispersed research capacities and for promotion of new research fields, in addition to programmes for societal needs
- Bilateral research programmes are a good model for either joint interests or starting up European cooperation
- The individual research programmes of our study faced problems in the implementation of multi- and interdisciplinarity, due to several reasons among them a too heterogeneous theme
- The first programme was successful in establishing a new field of research (ethnic relations) and the second one in multidisciplinary publishing.

- The problems of implementing multi- and interdisciplinarity can be solved through development of additional programme activities and sufficient funding
- Special attention should be paid to the engagement of project leaders and researchers at the beginning of the programme

## **Collected material: Interviews were made with**

### **The SYREENI programme:**

*Vesa Puuronen*, professor (sociology), University of Lapland (scientific coordinator of the programme)

*Riitta Launonen*, science advisor, Academy of Finland (administrative coordinator of the programme)

*Liisa Rantalaiho*, emerita professor (sociology, women's studies, public health), University of Tampere (chair of the evaluation group)

*Kaija Heikkinen*, professor (culture studies, women's studies), University of Joensuu (research leader)

*Anna Kulmala*, researcher (social work), University of Tampere (researcher), in addition e-mail contacts (referred to as Kulmala 2006)

*Östen Wahlbeck*, senior lecturer (sociology), Åbo Akademi University (research leader)

### **The SVEFI programme:**

*Nils Erik Villstrand*, professor (history), Åbo Akademi University (scientific coordinator of the programme, project leader)

*Eili Ervelä-Myrén*, programme manager (at the time: scientific advisor), Academy of Finland (administrative coordinator of the programme)

*Torbjörn Eng*, project manager, the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation (secretary of the evaluation group)

*Leena Huss*, associate professor (linguistics, sociolinguistics), Centre for Multiethnic Research, Uppsala University, Sweden (project leader)

*Marianne Junila*, researcher (history), University of Oulu (researcher)

*Harriet Silius*, professor (women's studies), Åbo Akademi University (project leader)

*Östen Wahlbeck*, senior lecturer (sociology), Åbo Akademi University (researcher)

## The Academy of Finland

*Raija Matikainen*, science advisor, Academy of Finland

### Accessed web sites:

<http://www.joensuu.fi/syreeni/>

<http://www.abo.fi/instut/fisve-svefi/index.html>

<http://www.aka.fi/>

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## **Appendix 1. The disciplinary structure of research projects**

### **The SYREENI-programme:**

*Projects including one discipline:*

- Economic manifestations of inequality, poverty and social exclusion
- At the edge of the helping systems
- The competition, selection and social exclusion in the information society
- Transformative intercultural pedagogy as an intervention to counter marginalisation and inequality in schools and society
- The social potential of the periphery and regional inequality – A study on locality, nature policy and ethnic relations in the North

- Finnish slum? On the spatial accumulation of deprivation and ethnic minorities
- Circles of maladjustment – Criminal offending and racist victimization among immigrants
- Breaking the waves of mainstream through education: individual integration plans of immigrants

*Projects including two disciplines:*

- Including difference in legal subjecthood
- Ethnicity and marginalisation in twentieth century Finland
- Muslims and religious equality in Finland
- Arts of the margins – Imagination as a counterforce to oppressive and marginalising discourses
- Rethinking legal strategies & ethnic relations

*Projects including three disciplines:*

- Marginalised sexual cultures: the constructions and deconstructions of sexual otherness
- Origins of exclusion in early childhood
- Expressive artistic activities and self-understanding of children from immigrant and adverse social background

*Project including four disciplines:*

- Contested memberships: immigrant youth in Finland
- Ethno-cultural otherness – Resource and constraint

*Projects including five disciplines:*

- Beyond marginalization and exclusion. An interdisciplinary consortium
- Developing theory and methodology in the study of the effects of discrimination and marginalization
- Integration through work in a multicultural society

**The SVEFI-programme:**

*Projects including one discipline:*

- Crises, macroeconomic performance and economic policies in Finland and Sweden in the 1990s: A comparative approach
- Swedish-speaking Finns in Finland and Sweden: A geographical study of the changed identity and mobility of a minority
- Language group, citizenship and local welfare state
- Finnish, Swedish or English? Internal communications in recently merged Finnish-Swedish companies
- From model to threat: Continuities and discontinuities in political cultures in Finland and Sweden
- Land-use rights along the Torneälven river
- Interaction and identity: Church and religion in Finland and Sweden 1809-1999
- Parts of dialogue: Integrative and disintegrative powers and processes in Sweden and Finland (1720-1860)

*Projects including two disciplines:*

- Between control policy and integration policy – Finnish and Swedish strategies for internal security during the 1900s
- Gothenburg, “the biggest village in the municipality of Salla”
- Cooperation and competition: Economy, nation-state and Swedish-Finnish Interaction
- Forest Finns in Sweden – migration, colonization and assimilation

*Projects including three disciplines:*

- Ethnicity and gender: The construction of ethnic identity and gender in Swedish and Finnish contexts
- Language emancipation in Finland and Sweden

*Projects including at least four disciplines:*

- Affinity and asymmetry: Self-images and images of the other
- Cities and ideas – urban life in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and 18<sup>th</sup> century concepts today

*Project with one interdisciplinary research field:*

- Aging between two cultures: The life, health and identity of elderly Finnish immigrants in Sweden and in Finland following their return

## **Appendix 2. Publishing strategies of the research projects**

### **The SYREENI-programme:**

*Projects with only/mainly disciplinary publishing:*

- Origins of exclusion in early childhood
- Critical intercultural pedagogy as an intervention against marginalisation and inequality
- Rethinking legal strategies & ethnic relations
- Economic manifestations of inequality, poverty and social exclusion

*Projects with both disciplinary and multidisciplinary publishing:*

- Including difference in legal subjecthood
- Integration through work in a multicultural society
- At the edge of the helping systems
- Developing theory and methodology in the study of the effects of discrimination and marginalisation
- Expressive artistic activities and self-understanding of children from immigrant and adverse social background
- Art of the margins – Imagination as a counterforce to oppressive and marginalising discourses

*Projects with only or mainly multi/ interdisciplinary publishing:*

- Marginalised sexual cultures: The constructions and deconstructions of sexual Otherness
- Ethno-cultural Otherness: Resource and constraint
- Contested memberships – immigrant youth in Finland
- Beyond marginalisation and exclusion. An interdisciplinary consortium

### **The SVEFI-programme:**

#### *Projects with only/mainly disciplinary publishing:*

- Parts of dialogue: Integrative and disintegrative powers and processes in Sweden and Finland (1720-1860)
- Crises, macroeconomic performance and economic policies in Finland and Sweden in the 1990s: A comparative approach
- From model to threat: Continuities and discontinuities in political cultures in Finland and Sweden
- Language group, citizenship and local welfare state
- Finnish, Swedish or English? Internal communications in recently merged Finnish-Swedish companies
- Cities and ideas – urban life in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and 18<sup>th</sup> century concepts today
- Forest Finns in Sweden – migration, colonization and assimilation
- Between control policy and integration policy – Finnish and Swedish strategies for internal security during the 1900s
- Swedish-speaking Finns in Finland and Sweden: A geographical study of the changed identity and mobility of a minority

#### *Projects with both disciplinary and multidisciplinary publishing:*

- Affinity and asymmetry: Self-images and images of the other
- Interaction and identity: Church and religion in Finland and Sweden 1809-1999
- Land-use rights along the Torneälven river
- Cooperation and competition: Economy, nation-state and Swedish-Finnish Interaction
- Aging between two cultures: The life, health and identity of elderly Finnish immigrants in Sweden and in Finland following their return
- Ethnicity and gender: The construction of ethnic identity and gender in Swedish and Finnish contexts

#### *Projects with only/mainly multidisciplinary publishing:*

- Language emancipation in Finland and Sweden
- Gothenburg, “the biggest village in the municipality of Salla”