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Evaluation of media and communication projects at Södertörns högskola financed by the Baltic Sea and East European Studies Foundation

We have been invited to undertake a thematic evaluation of five concluded projects at Södertörns University (Södertörns högskola, SH) within the field of media and communication studies, funded by the Foundation for Baltic and East European Studies (Östersjöstiftelsen, ÖSS) (cf. letter from the Chair and the Research Director at ÖSS April 13, 2010). The projects all relate to Media and Communication Studies (Medie- och kommunikationsvetenskap, MKV) at SH.

This evaluation is based on the materials provided – the project applications, publications, and self-evaluations – as well as the meeting that took place with the project researchers and ÖSS staff on Wed. Oct. 27 at Södertörn.

The five projects are:

- *Variable Media Landscapes. A Research Program on Social, Cultural and Media Change in the Baltic Sea Area* (2002 - 2007)
  Project director: Göran Bolin

- *Digitala mediekulturer. Publiker, livsstilar och generationer i den digitala kommunikationens tidsålder* (2007 – 2009)
  Project director: Göran Bolin

- *Mediernas hus: ett projekt om medier, arkitektur och maktens centralisering* (2006 – 2008)
  Project directors: Staffan Ericson/Patrik Åker

- *Mediernas betydelse för identitet och demokrati* (2006 – 2008)
  Project director: Cecilia von Feilitzen

- *Mångfaldslinjer: Journalistisk produktion ur ett mångkulturellt perspektiv i Stockholm och Berlin* (2007 – 2009)
  Project director: Heike Graf

Table 1. Overview of projects, funding, and personell.

Project name (period) (director)	Funding from Östersjöstiftelsen (according to ÖSS)	Researchers funded by ÖSS (assistants not included)	Other related researchers to the project
Variable Media Landscapes. A Research Program on Social, Cultural and Media Change in the Baltic Sea Area (2002 - 2007) (Göran Bolin)	SEK 7.000.000 incl. overhead	Göran Bolin Stina Bengtsson Staffan Ericson Cecilie v. Feilitzen Heike Graf Lars Lundgren Peter Petrov Patrik Åker	
Digitala mediekulturer. Publiker, livsstilar och generationer i den digitala kommunikationens tidsålder (2007 - 2009) (Göran Bolin)	SEK 4.170.000 incl. 35% overhead	Göran Bolin Anna Maria Jönsson Peter Jakobsson	
Mediernas hus: ett projekt om medier, arkitektur och maktens centralisering (2006 – 2008) (Staffan Ericson/ Patrik Åker)	SEK 4.300.000 incl. 35% overhead	Staffan Ericson Helena Mattson Kristina Riegert S. O. Wallenstein Patrik Åker	Peter Jakobsson Shannon Mattern Fredrik Stiernstedt
Mediernas betydelse för identitet och demokrati (2006 – 2008) (Cecilia von Feilitzen)	SEK 4.170.000 incl. 35% overhead	Cecilia von Feilitzen Peter Petrov	Sofia Johansson Co-operating researchers in St. Petersburg and in Moscow
Mångfaldslinjer: Journalistisk produktion ur ett mångkulturellt perspektiv i Stockholm och Berlin (2007 – 2009) (Heike Graf)	SEK 4.170.000 incl. 35% overhead	Heike Graf Gunilla Hultén Jan Inge Jönhill Leonor Camauër	
Total	**SEK 23.810.000**		

The evaluated projects in the total portfolio of MKV-projects at SH

In order to better specify the research carried out through ÖSS funding, we call attention to the fact that some of the projects under evaluation have had additional funding from other sources. There are also related MKV-research projects at SH with other funding that may have been supporting the ÖSS-projects through the MKV research environment that has been built at SH. Finally, in the MKV research environment there are newer projects with ÖSS funding that are not included in this specific evaluation.

Professor Göran Bolin has upon our request provided an overview of MKV-research at Södertörns högskola 1999-2012 (where the five projects that are evaluated are marked in red text; see Table 2, below). The intention behind Table 2 is to show the thematic relationship between the five evaluated projects in the total portfolio of media and communication research at SH

Table 2. Overview of MKV-research at Södertörns högskola 1999-2012

Source: Göran Bolin

Note: The projects listed are those placed at MKV with a project head employed by the department. Michael Forsman, for example, participates in a project at another department, while Anna Maria Jönsson has participated in several projects where the head researcher works at the Dept. of Environmental Sciences.

Abbreviations	*Funding agencies:*
Project heads:	RJ = Riksbankens Jubileumsfond
GB = Göran Bolin	VR = Vetenskapsrådet
SE = Staffan Ericson	ÖSS = Östersjöstiftelsen
PÅ = Patrik Åker	Stiftelsen Etermedierna i Sverige is a private
HG = Heike Graf	foundation owned by
CvF = Cecilia von Feilitzen	SVT, SR, UR, TV4, and Terracom.

Criteria for the evaluation

We are submitting a joint evaluation report, for each project we comment upon:

1. *Funding:* Use of financial resources; how much financing was sought, how much was granted.

2. *Design:* How the project was structured and organized.

3. *Implementation:* How the research was carried out; if it followed the original plans or if modifications were made, and if so, how these were motivated; coordination within the research group.

4. *Content:* The focus of the research; its Baltic Sea orientation.

5. *Results:* The scientific findings – and other possible outcomes.

6. *Internal impact:* The consequences the project has for the milieu at SH, in scientific and pedagogic terms.

7. *Dissemination:* Reporting of findings; to what extent have the results been presented in scientific contexts – national and international contexts? Have suitable national and international publications forms been sought, and in which languages? Which stakeholders has one targeted, and have these groups been reached?

8. *Objectives:* Have the original aims of the project been achieved?

Our conclusion: Summary evaluation of the project.

Variable Media Landscapes. A Research Program on Social, Cultural and Media Change in the Baltic Sea Area (2002 - 2007)
Project director: Göran Bolin

This is, according to the director's self-evaluation, actually a research program rather than just a project. We regard it in the same way and find it as well to be a stepping-stone for the other four projects under evaluation.

1. *Funding*
    Total funding from Östersjöstiftelsen: 7 000 000 SEK included overhead. The project had an initial funding for 2002 of 1,5 mill SEK for the base quantitative study, as well as added funding for two years beyond the core project period 2003-2005. This was a relatively big project with approximately 1,5 mill SEK per year compared to the other projects in this overview with a funding of 0,5-1,0 mill SEK per year.

2. *Design*
   "Variable Media Landscapes" was planned to develop the theoretical understanding of media's signification in social and cultural change in regional development in the Baltic area. It was designed in three phases: First, a broad, explorative survey (the "base study") collecting quantitative data on media production, media structure and media use, with historical studies as well, in Estonia and the Södertörn region. Phase two had additional component studies in these two areas as well as in locations as Åland, Berlin, Tammerfors and Latvia (the "sub-studies"). Finally, the program intended to analyze the various links and articulations between the local and the global in these regions and localities, to fully grasp the heterogeneous character of these links.

   The design of the research program is solid. Some of the individual sub-projects may seem fairly narrow or specific in relation to the overall research problematic. However, several of them, e.g. the comparative study of youth and the popular media in Estonia and the Södertörn region have yielded a lot. It has provided insights on how cultural tastes relate to historical background, and also inspired further work. The project on "Media Houses" is also among those that has a root in a sub-project within "Variable Media Landscapes".

3. *Implementation*
   The research program covers an extensive period. It started with an initial phase 2002, the main application covers 2003-2005, the self-evaluation goes into 2006, while there also is reported activity for 2007.

   The initial plan seems to have been followed. However, this is a broad and theoretically ambitious research program where one could not cover all aspects within the given time and budget frames. The director easily admits this. He in particular points to the weak attention to various media network questions. The program has managed to flexibly include and capitalize on relevant cases that came up during the research, like the Estonian hosting of the European Song Contest.

   The co-operation within the research team seems to have been good, with a clear leadership from Göran Bolin and a dedicated group of team members. Co-operation was developed with highly experienced researchers colleagues at Tartu University in Estonia and the Hans Bredow Institute in Germany.

4. *Content*
   The three parts of the study have each their set of research questions:
   - Media landscapes in space and time
   - Media landscapes as text and symbolic environment
   These two parts summarize in the third:
   - Variable media landscapes: communicative articulations in space & time.

The program relates to the Baltic area through comparative studies and connects to research with an East European dimension undertaken in other countries. "Variable Media Landscapes" has added to the culture and identity aspects of this research.

5. *Results*

   The project director lists an impressive range of intellectual results. These include extensive empirical findings and theoretical advancements; these are mentioned in summary form in Göran Bolin's self-evaluation of the project. Along with the scientific results we also note the establishment of significant international networks that have been created with colleagues in media and cultural studies, especially in countries around the Baltic Sea. This is well documented.

6. *Internal effects*

   "Variable Media Landscapes" has contributed significantly to build a media and communication research environment at SH that encompasses most of the scientific staff at MKV. Besides the theory building through this research program "Variable Media Landscapes" has developed a teaching base for MKV and Journalism. Material from the research has been applied in student's thesis work as well as in methodology courses.

7. *Dissemination*

   "Variable Media Landscapes" has maintained a high activity level in dissemination and discussion of its findings and theoretical foundations. This has been done through participation in international conferences and by inviting internationally renowned scholars to SH. For a small university college this has, in our view, been a good strategy with high academic pay-off.

   "Variable Media Landscapes" has helped produce two doctoral dissertations (partly funded by the program) and eight other monographs as well as seven peer-reviewed articles and a long list of book chapters. The majority is in English and of high academic quality. We take the view that a strategy aimed at renowned publishing houses rather than just the SH series would have strengthened the dissemination of the project output (cf Overall Conclusion).

8. *The objectives*

   The aim was according to the application "to theoretically develop an understanding of media's significance for social and cultural change, based on empirically grounded analyses of the links between local, regional, national and global cultural flows, with a special focus on mediated processes." In our view, this aim has been met, within the limits that were set up for this research program. The weak attention to network structures admitted by the program director is not a serious objection given the broad coverage of this program.

The ambition according to the program plan was to publish the overarching theoretical conclusions in a comprehensive volume in English with an international publisher. In connection with this, the plan was also to publish a report evaluating the methodology that has been applied. None of these volumes have as yet appeared. However, international monographs are in the making. In regard to dissemination, we would still underscore the impressive production of books and articles from the project.

Our conclusion
The "Variable Media Landscapes" research has succeeded in laying a foundation for a decade of internationally recognized media cultural research at SH. It is a major and impressive first step in an ambitious research program. Not least we would underscore the importance of the Baltic contacts established by this effort.

In the discussions at the meeting, Göran Bolin remarked that the historical dimension (which we can note is often absent in media research) proved to be a valuable intellectual element for the work that followed. Also, the spatial metaphor of "landscape" functioned nicely to integrate much of this project and those that followed, without at the same time being too narrow or rigid.

Further, it was his goal to develop a project that would involve a good number of colleagues and that could serve as a sort of launching pad for the research environment at SH. That this project functioned in this manner, taking on the character of a program, signals a successful strategy. (Stina Bengtsson noted how valuable it was to do her doctoral dissertation within this milieu, where she together with Lars Lundgren made important experiences with a separate sub-project in "Variable Media Landscapes" before they finished their dissertations.)

Digitala mediekulturer. Publiker, livsstilar och generationer i den digitala kommunikationens tidsålder (2007 – 2009)
Project director: Göran Bolin

This project is a direct follow-up to "Variable Media Landscapes" although more limited in scope if not in research theme. The project director is the same.

1. *Funding*
   Total funding from ÖSS: 4 170 000 SEK incl. 35% overhead. This comes down to 1 mill. SEK per year included social costs. Remaining funds have been available for the project even in 2010 and will be into 2011.

2. *Design*
   This project has the same comparative focus on Estonia and the Södertörn region as in "Variable Media Landscapes" and could build on the bi-annual survey material gathered through this research program. The fourth survey in 2008 is part of this project. Compared to the previous broad program the research questions here turn towards the

implications of the ongoing digitalization of society and the specific digital media, like the mobile phone, that are introduced in everyday communication and social interaction. The comparison of the two contexts is done over time, observing changes between 2002 and 2008. The project has been organized in three sub-projects, each run by one of the three involved researchers; one is a doctoral student.

3. *Implementation*
The project has been executed according to plan with some delay due to parental leaves for two of the researchers. The doctoral study is not yet completed (expected 2011). The work within this project is less of a group effort than the program on "Variable Media Landscapes", with most of the research conducted by the separate teams/individually.

4. *Content*
"Digitale mediekulturer" looks for differentiation among people (in terms of variables such as class, generation, etc.) in their relations to "new" and "old" media in the ongoing era of digitalization. The key research focus is on whether this differentiation works to build or to fragment communities. The project studies how these patterns of uses and attitudes relate to historical, political and cultural factors in the Estonian and Södertörn regions. The doctoral work raises the very contemporary (and contested) questions of file sharing and pirate copying. "Digitale mediekulturer" uphelds the Baltic Sea orientation found in "Variable Media Landscapes". The concept "media culture" in the project title is used as a rubric in the project title; we note that it is never really quite clarified, as one would expect it to be.

5. *Results*
A final report on the results has not yet been produced, as the project is not fully completed. The project has so far in particular contributed to the understanding of cultural and social patterns of mobile phone uses and new forms of journalism as parts of new life styles with digital media.

6. *Internal effects*
The uses of this particular project in teaching and the internal research environment at SH are as yet not documented. We assume that "Digitale mediekulturer" will continue the fruitful applications manifested by "Variable Media Landscapes".

7. *Dissemination*
The project has had a very active presence in international conferences especially with papers by Göran Bolin. This follows in the admirable footsteps of "Variable Media Landscapes". Some of the publications from the two projects overlap. The list of publications from "Digitale mediekulturer" covers (so far) four articles and 11 book chapters. Seven of the publications are in English. Two of the articles are in refereed journals. Our impression is that this project maintains the high level of scientific quality established by its predecessor.

8. *Objectives*
   "Digitale mediekulturer" has a more limited scope than "Variable Media Landscapes". It is not yet completed but the project seems to deliver what it promised. The planned comprehensive monograph in English on mobility, communication and generations is said to be on its way.

Our conclusion
"Digitale mediekulturer" raises important questions in the contemporary changing media landscape; in particular it positions itself on one of the frontiers of media research, namely mobile media. As such this project is a necessary and welcome continuation of the prior research program. We note especially Göran Bolin's impressive productivity. However, it is possible that this project was not conducted with the same degree of intensity as the previous one, though this may well have to do with the parental leaves of the two key researchers. Along with the other publications, Peter Jacobsson's doctoral dissertation on file sharing should prove to be an important contribution once it is completed.

Mediernas hus: ett projekt om medier, arkitektur och maktens centralisering
(2006 – 2008)
Project directors: Staffan Ericson/Patrik Åker

This is a project within the program that breaks new analytic ground and develops in a different direction than most media research, incorporating architecture into its analytic frame.

1. *Funding*
   The financing of the project stretched over three years, 2006-2008. Total funding cf. overview from ÖSS was SEK 4.300.000 incl. 35% overhead. The project received some funding already in 2005 and actually lasted into 2010. Total used reported by the project: SEK 4 657 865 (ex. moms).

2. *Design*
   This is a conceptually innovative project, building on co-operation between media scholars and researchers in architecture. With a focus on physical "media houses" – i.e., the technical and/or administrative center of large media organizations – the research aims to analyze how these buildings, together with the structures and technologies of the media – give expression to the symbolic power of the media in society. The approach uses both media history and architectural attributes, and focuses specifically on a comparison of BBC Broadcasting House in London with the TV center Ostankino in Moscow. Later Beijing and Beijing were added. Each building in its own way makes claim to symbolize both the centrality of the media as core institutions of the nation, as well as its media ideology.

3. *Implementation*
   Having established links with colleagues in architecture, including a reference group, the researchers have pursued the research, with some changes in the original plans, i.e. some activities not carried out. Radiohuset in Stockholm was not incorporated into the research, while CCTV's tower in Beijing and Google's building in California were added.

4. *Content*
   The research highlights both architecture's medialization and the "spatial turn" in media studies. The concept of medialization is applied without discussion or explanation. The targeting of these well-known buildings gives the project an empirical concreteness, while the analyses and theoretical horizons are on a more impressively abstract level. The Baltic/East European perspective resides with the case from Moscow.

5. *Results*
   The texts supplied with the materials for evaluation give evidence of the high quality of the very interesting direction of this project. According to the self-evaluation, the completed project demonstrates that there is a clear relationship between media and architecture. However, it also shows that new political, architectural, technological and spatial contexts may become hindrances to a coherent thinking of the relationships between buildings, social spaces and the media they represent.

   This conclusion, it has to be said, is a bit abstract and may not be easily grasped by everyone, but the concrete studies in the publications from the project may make it more accessible. This work interfaces with some of the more innovative work being done on media and spaces, such as that by Nick Couldry in London.

   Research contacts – some on the international level – have been established between media researchers and scholars in architecture; this is an important development for the field.

6. *Internal effects*
   This is not explicated in the submitted material. However, the project directors explain how this project has played into the Teknokult initiative at SH and research on the materiality of media, into the doctoral student's environment and into courses on master's level.

7. *Dissemination*
   The key refereed publication from the project is the book *Media Houses: Architecture, Media and the Production of Centrality* (Peter Lang, New York, 2010) edited by Staffan Ericsson and Kristina Riegert. Another refereed book manuscript by the two project directors is not yet published. Besides these two books the number of publications from the participating media scholars at SH is limited (to one other book chapter). They have not published articles in refereed journals. The project participants from architecture theory have published several volumes,

underscoring links to the project. The research group has been actively presenting its findings at international conferences around the world; perhaps a few more publications can be derived from this material?

A television documentary was planned (and partly funded by ÖSS) following an initiative from a Norwegian producer. The project withdrew when it became clear that there was to be an agenda for the documentary that was quite different from that established by the project.

8. *Objectives*
   The aims of the project have evolved – mainly via an expansion, as the researchers make contact with other scholars doing work that is relevant for the project. Thus, a number of sites were added to the original two, as manifested in the anthology coming from Peter Laing publishers. More money has been sought to finance the co-operation (though the funding from FORMAS unfortunately did not come through).

Our conclusion
This ground-breaking project merits lots of attention; it opens and develops new compelling lines of inquiry. With the publication of the anthology by Staffan Ericsson and Kristina Riegert, this robustly intellectual work will be reaching an international audience. With the broadening of the project to include BBC's Bush House, Googleplex, the InerActiveCorp building in New York, and the CCTV Centre in Beijing, the project takes on a truly international profile. While the project geographically ranged far beyond the Baltic, the conceptual frame relied a great deal on the notions of place and the spatial, which are key analytic elements of the research program.

The discussions emphasized the importance of the cooperation with the architects – that this was in fact decisive for the project. We are very enthusiastic about such new directions, and tend to see the somewhat eclectic character of media and communication studies as a strength: it tends to allow an openness to other fields that is often not found in other disciplines.

During the meeting Staffan Ericson raised an issue that is becoming increasingly problematic for researchers, namely the use of copyright laws that prevent them from using certain materials in their publications – in this case, some images of the relevant buildings. This becomes yet another obstacle that researchers must be aware of; if there is any lesson to be learned here it is that it is always best to check very early what the legal parameters are (and explore alternative options, if necessary), to avoid an unpleasant surprise at the publication stage.

Mediernas betydelse för identitet och demokrati (2006 – 2008)
Project director: Cecilia von Feilitzen

This is a concrete comparative study examining media use patterns in Stockholm and St. Petersburg, linking these patterns to an array of socio-cultural variables,

among two age cohorts, 17-18 year olds and adults aged 45-55. The focus is to elucidate the media's significance for people's understanding of the social world, for their identity, experiences of democracy, and thus for their values and actions

1. *Funding*
   Total funding from Östersjöstiftelsen: 4 170 000 SEK included 35% overhead. This comes down to 1 mill. SEK per year included social costs.

2. *Design*
   The research begins with an inventory of existing materials, and then proceeds with its own comparative empirical studies with several components (survey interviews, depth interviews) using established research methods, while also developing new procedures for complex multivariate analyses of the assembled data base. Further, an analysis of media structures in the two cities is also included, with data on their organization, audiences and output. Interviews are conducted with prominent people in the media organizations. Content analysis of program listings of radio and TV, as well as the contours of foreign news coverage are also included.

3. *Implementation*
   The first steps were taken in 2006, with the setting up of a bilateral steering committee between Stockholm and St. Petersburg. That fall term the surveys were carried out. However, due to the unfortunate low quality of the data gathered in Russia, that round of survey work had to be repeated, adding to the already immense project workload taken on.

4. *Content*
   The content of this project follows the well-prepared design with the four categories to compare: young and middle-aged in Stockholm versus St. Petersburg. This comparison is explored along an extensive list of variables. The Baltic dimension is obvious with the comparison to St. Petersburg.

5. *Results*
   The primary results of the project are found in an anthology edited by Cecilia von Feilitzen and Peter Petrov, to be published at SH. Also, the project has resulted in the establishing of a database from the questionnaires; this should prove to be a very useful resource for future research. Overall, the project has succeeded in providing a data-rich set of findings and analyses.

6. *Internal effects*
   Data sets from the surveys have been applied for course work at B-level and the results have been discussed at a few seminars at SH.

7. *Dissemination*
   The forthcoming anthology is a fine manifestation of what the project has accomplished. Russian colleagues have also published some articles.

More publications are coming, for example a comparative analysis of the interviews with the media experts. A net-based discussion forum is under consideration. There have also been a number of conference- and seminar presentations, within each country and in international contexts. An interview with the researchers was available on the SH web for a while

8. *Objectives*
The project has achieved its intended research objectives. Actually, the researchers have done more than promised. They included interviews with media experts in both countries and even coded the qualitative interview material for possible further use. The researchers would like to make the survey data available on the Internet for researchers who wish to pursue further analyses.

Our conclusion
This project is a fine contribution to the program; it demonstrates the perennial need for solid empirical work in adding to our knowledge of the social world. In particular the comparative dimension yields many important insights about media and their use in the two cities. The methodological sophistication in the quantitative analysis is also most impressive.

Along with the concrete results and the analyses, soon to be published in the anthology, we would also laud the establishment of the database – which can provide materials for further research – as a kind of "living legacy" of this project.

Mångfaldslinjer: Journalistisk produktion ur ett mångkulturellt perspektiv i Stockholm och Berlin (2007 – 2009)
Project director: Heike Graf

This project takes as its focus the production processes of journalism in Stockholm and Berlin. The focus is on the internal editorial relationships and processes in regard to journalists with foreign background, with an emphasis on the perception of these journalists on their professional situation, as well as the broader issues of media representations and multicultural societies.

1. *Funding*
Total funding from Östersjöstiftelsen: 4 170 000 SEK included 35% overhead. This comes down to 1 mill. SEK per year included social costs.

2. *Design*
The project is organized as semi-structured interviews with journalists, free lancers, and editorial heads, plus analyses of commissioned studies, reports, and other documents.

3. *Implementation*
   The project ran for a three-year period – 2007-2009. Details of how it was actually implemented – i.e. beyond what was written in the proposal – are not provided. There is so far no self-evaluation as the project is not yet concluded.

4. *Content*
   The focus is on the experiences and perceptions of journalists with foreign background who are working at editorial rooms in Stockholm and Berlin. In particular the research illuminates how these journalists perceive their situation, the culture of the editorial desk, their career chances and their possibilities for impacting on the character of the news reporting.

5. *Results*
   The research shows quite a bit of similarity between the two countries, for example that the minority journalists in both countries say that there is a tendency to view journalists with foreign backgrounds as being less competent. At the same time, such backgrounds are not without certain perceived advantages, where management and colleagues can see such backgrounds as providing needed diversity of perspective and useful networks of contacts. Sweden seems to have come further in dealing with diversity issues in contexts like this, although genuine measures to enhance diversity need to be augmented; the journalists offer a rather discouraging picture of the situation. Likewise in Germany, there remain troubling mechanisms of exclusion.

6. *Internal effects*
   No self-evaluation is provided. Upon questions, we are informed about input from the project being used in some "C-uppsatser" and an evening course about diversity. More internal effects may be expected when the result are reported in full.

7. *Dissemination*
   There is an extensive list of publications and conference presentations; the key text is an anthology edited by Heike Graf, on news journalists in Sweden and Germany, soon to be published with Nordicom.

8. *The objectives*
   Based on the publications provided, we find that the results achieved in the project fit well with the expressed objectives.

Our conclusion
This is a well-executed project that specifically opens up the important terrain of ethnic minorities, mobility and cultural diversity of journalism within the research program. The work seems more framed by prevailing notions of globalization and migration rather than a more specific Baltic Sea perspective, but on its own merits this project offers useful and stimulating findings and analytic discussions. We also view with admiration the turn towards a theoretic

orientation less familiar among media researchers (that of Niklas Luhmann), and a self-conscious effort to enhance conceptual and theoretic stringency; this adds an innovative intellectual horizon.

Overall conclusions

The initial research "program" on "Variable Media Landscapes" laid a foundation for the four more specific projects in this thematic sequence of media and communication research projects to come, as well as for some research projects funded from other sources. "Variable Media Landscapes" contributed to theory development and the construction of a research and teaching environment that the following projects could benefit from. Professor Göran Bolin has been the key intellectual and strategic force in this build-up at Södertörns högskola, while the colleagues at SH have also contributed significantly to this strong development.

We concur with Göran Bolin's conclusion in the self-assessment that "Variable Media Landscapes" has "genom att fungerat forskningsinitierande bidragit till att göra MKV vid SH till en av de starkaste MKV-forskningsmiljöerna i landet, och till en av de miljöer som också placerar sig synligt på kartan såväl nordiskt som internationellt." We observe that in 2003 Bolin published his program for an "integrativ medievetenskap" (in Carlsson, ed., *Mångfald i medieforskningen.* Göteborg: Nordicom), in which the then planned "Variable Media Landscapes" and the following projects were not much more than a footnote. However, this program has now been very successfully achieved.

The output in terms of publications has been good (see the respective projects). However, of the 13 monographs, anthologies and reports submitted for this review only one is published as standard book by a regular publisher (Staffan Ericson and Kristina Riegert's anthology on *Media Houses* with Peter Lang in New York). One more is scheduled for publication by Nordicom, which by now must also be seen as an international publisher of good repute. The remaining volumes are all published by Södertörns högskola or as dissertations (two) at Göteborg and Stockholm universities. A majority of the volumes are in English. Six of them are rather small reports.

The international conference activity of this thematic program has given a broad scholarly attention to the MKV research. A lasting impact may require more publications in international journals and with international publishers. While we strongly encourage publication with renowned publishing houses, the project directors told us that when they have tried, the response has been that their research is too empirical and specific. A forthcoming book with Routledge will be published in 95 copies and then be available as print-on-demand, we were informed. While we can understand the frustration, we should also note that the academic publishing world is in transition, and it may well be that print-on-

demand from a reputable publisher will in the future convey a significantly higher status than it does today. But that's a different – and much larger – discussion. The understanding is that there is little international interest in Sweden and the Baltic region. This is undeniably a dilemma, and the solutions not always easy. One option might be to frame such monographs as largely theoretically driven, with empirical materials used sparsely, as illustrations and examples; such strategies may well also work with journal articles.

The emphasis on international publishing is not at all intended as any denigration of local or national publishing, even in the Swedish language. Such publishing is also important; in this genre authors can mobilize all the relevant empirical materials they want to present, and can assume that readers will find it relevant. This kind of publication allows for the full expression of the scientific results. It is really a matter of two different publishing tracks. Both are important, for different reasons. Undeniably, however, this also involves a double load in terms of the work devoted specifically to preparing publishable texts. With the new emphasis on internationalization (manifested in, for example, the Bologna model, assessment criteria for departments, for appointments, and for promotions), we may reach a point in which such "extra work" must be factored into the financing of research projects.

The coherence of this particular research program builds partly on a common theoretical horizon. Pierre Bourdieu's sociology of cultural taste and social fields has proved fruitful as a base for these media studies. However, it is significant that this established perspective is also in a sense challenged within this research environment. We observe how the project on the importance of the media for identity and democracy applies certain post-modern theorists to go along with Bourdieu's line of thinking. The team working with diversity in news rooms made use of Niklas Luhmann's sociology to explain processes of inclusion and exclusion. This is implicitly in opposition to the Bourdieu perspective, and it proved fruitful in their case. Thus, we laud the innovative theoretical character of these projects, in their efforts to chart new directions and incorporate other theoretical trajectories into media research.

It was also interesting to hear at the meeting that plans for the future projects are emerging gradually, almost organically. There is inevitably a certain degree of tactical thinking involved in applying for and obtaining research grants – not least due to how the Swedish university system functions regarding teaching obligations and the (limited) research opportunities. However, the general feeling these researchers expressed is that ultimately the drive for launching research must be based in curiosity about the world. A strictly strategic disposition is seen as neither desirable nor fruitful. We find it reassuring that this quite traditional viewpoint still prevails, and in our view it suggests that their experiences in this research have been quite positive. In the meantime, while new projects are under development, the networking, the new cooperation, the synergies from this work seem to carry on in a robust manner.

The quality of the work in this group of researchers – and especially in Göran Bolin's contribution – is theoretical sophisticated, broad ranging, and has an indisputable international status. We feel strongly that ÖSS can feel very satisfied with what their funding has helped to generate.

Possible future directions

What seems to be emerging in this program on "media landscapes" is an ambitious multi-perspective framework that analyses "media-socio-historical-cultural geography" in the Baltic region. This is an investigation into late modern de- and re-connections between space, time, experience, identities – and democratic and counter-democratic developments. SH, with the support from ÖSS, has a rare opportunity to explore and research contemporary changes and challenges through comparative studies across the Baltic Sea.

Could the notion of "media landscapes" be further developed as an analytic frame? Göran Bolin acknowledges various inspirational sources, while offering something that strikes us as quite fresh and fruitful. It could rest content as it is: a synthetic (and synthesizing) framework useful for dealing with the quite broad range of research questions and empirical materials in the program. Alternatively, could it be fine-honed and launched internationally as a new model for media analysis, suitable for the complex patterns and linkages that characterize the present historical situation?

Thinking across disciplines and fields, we may suggest that the research community evaluated here consider possible encounters between their general culturalist approach and new cognitive directions in research. The social and cultural sciences are challenged by nevro- and cognitive sciences. The University of Copenhagen, for example, has created a Department of Media, Cognition and Communication. Similarly, this may be a future path for ÖSS.

In any case, we suggest that Östersjöstiftelsen looks into funding frameworks for thematically linked projects – as here – by thinking in terms of larger programs, where there is time as well as funding to work out overarching, more theoretical publications in books and articles. This could sustain the contributions from SH in the ever more competitive international scholarly field.

We also encourage ÖSS in dialogue with SH to consider the present publication strategies, aiming at a more high-profile international contribution, in English.

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