CESIS
Electronic Working Paper Series

Paper No. 140

Getting Pole Position

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(SISTER)

May 2008

The Royal Institute of technology
Centre of Excellence for Science and Innovation Studies (CESIS)
http://www.cesis.se

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– PRE REFORM RESEARCH STRATEGIES IN THE HUMANITIES AT SWEDISH UNIVERSITIES

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Paper presented at the 21st CHER Annual Conference *"Excellence and Diversity in Higher Education. Meanings, Goals, and Instruments"* Università degli Studi di Pavia 11-13 September 2008

Introduction

Across Europe new forms of research funding and management arrangements are established. European higher education institutions (HEIs) are increasingly facing global competition and they are responsive to many stakeholders. As a consequence of more deregulated HE systems, performance based funding, strategic management and more extensive evaluation and follow up-systems have replaced the former state directed systems. Currently, also the Swedish HE sector is in a time of change. A number of state inquiries have reviewed the Swedish HE research landscape, including the resource allocation system and the academic career system. The implications of these inquiries have the potential to restructure the entire sector. Some of the issues will be presented in a government bill this fall, while other reforms are further ahead. The phase we study could thus be described as a pre-reform or policy formation phase.

This paper explores research strategies in the Humanities at a selection of Swedish HEIs.[1] The aim of the paper can be articulated in one straightforward question: in a period of pre-reform, which strategies are used by ten Swedish HEIs to increase research quality in the Humanities? The methodology used is primarily qualitative, including email enquiry, interviews and documentary studies on ten Swedish Universities[1] which are the main producers of Humanities research in Sweden. The email enquiry and interviews included the following themes:

- Overall principles for allocation of the faculty resources
- Criteria for performance based funding
- Follow-up systems and evaluations of research in humanities
- Prioritizing and balancing between strong and weak research environments
- Distinguishing features of a strong research environment
- Publication patterns
- Recruitment
- The relation between research and undergraduate education
- External funding
- Internationalisation

Eight out of ten HEIs responded to our enquiry whereas the other two (Gothenburg and Linköping) were analysed through official strategy documents only. The documents include both specific institutional documents, initiated by HEIs, and comprehensive reports primarily written for distribution to the Ministry of Education. Thus, the latter documents allow to some extent comparisons between HEIs from a written material with a similar purpose and origin. Semi-structured interviews have been conducted with five faculty leadership teams at three different institutions (Uppsala University, Stockholm University and Karlstad University). In the paper, we will give slightly more attention to these three universities.

[1] Uppsala University, Lund University, University of Gothenburg, Umeå University, Stockholm University, Linköping University, Växjö University, Örebro University, Karlstad University and University of Mid Sweden.

Universities, Strategy and Change

Modern HEIs can be described in terms of a number of tensions and contradictions all referring to their special characteristics and roles: a long history of collegial cultures (e.g. peer review), a close relation to the state and society, and while trying to maintain many of their traditions they are increasingly more like private enterprises acting in a global competitive market. These three aspects have been described by Clark (1983) as competing integrating forces, of *academics* bringing professional criteria and unity into academia*, the state* trying to create unity with the help of legislation and bureaucratic control and the *markets* which are based on a variety of exchange relationships and interactions taking place between institutions and individuals. In an international comparison, Sweden has a long tradition of state control (Lane 1990). However, as in many other countries, the Swedish sector has been decentralised and reformed according to the principles of new public management. A reform in 1993 was an important step in that direction (Bauer et al 1999. The current government has launched a commission whose task is to investigate how HEIs can be made more autonomous, possibly with a new legal status.

What we try to do in the following is to create a framework which can help us analyse and explain the current development at our ten HEIs. One important starting point is to acknowledge the fact that universities are conglomerates of different sets of beliefs and informal norms. Individuals are parts of complex series of relationships which constrains them to make fully free choices, as people are always influenced by their institutional attachments (March & Olsen 1984, Peters 1999). Becher and Trowler (2001) stress the relationship between cognitive and social organisation of scientific communities. Members of an academic discipline share a professional language, for instance regarding how scientific arguments are expressed and how other people's work is assessed. The unique language plays a central role regarding the shaping of a common cultural identity of the members. Membership in an academic culture does not only require mastering of discipline specific technical skills but also loyalty to collective norms, values and beliefs. The norms and values at different levels of an organisation are not identical but overlapping (Kekäle 1997, Välimaa 1998, Henkel 2005, Aasen & Stensaker 2007).

However, HEI complexity is not the whole picture (Larsen 2000). In addition, institutional action is more or less dependent on how other institutions will act (Rothstein 2003). Organisations do not exist in a vacuum, neither are they powerless and totally malleable according to external demands (Gornitzka 1999, Oliver 1991). And, according to the theory of resource dependency, organisational action is determined by the dependence on external resources (Slaughter & Leslie 1997). External pressure and demands, such as economical and political factors, restrain institutional action and choice. In this case, the institutions have to navigate between external demands from different stakeholders, such as the state, students and funding bodies but also manage the internal demands within the institution. An important question for the study is therefore in what way external actors affect the institution. Increasingly, funding bodies and government agencies act as strategic actors and represent a mix of bureaucratic and collegial values. We regard organisations, in this case universities, as interdependent and intertwined with funding bodies, government agencies and other HEIs (Gornitzka et al 2005).

The question what makes institutions change has been discussed more frequently during the last years. For example, it has been argued that change is generated by external chocks when a political

equilibrium is broken (change of government, economical crises). Institutional change can also occur more organically, as suggested by March and Olsen (1989), with an extracted and slow process in which the identity of an institution is affected by external changes. The process of learning from the institution's own history is here essential. Change has also been considered easier within younger institutions where norms and traditions are not deeply rooted. Another aspect is that external demands for change need to be in line with the institutional identity of the organisation (Gornitzka 1999).

The issue here is how a future policy on resources make HEIs act. Institutional strategies have to be related to the context in which the organisation operates (Gornitzka 1999, Askling & Stensaker 2002). Gornitzka (1999) claims that organisations are reactive and will change and adapt if its critical resources are threatened. Changing the equilibrium and the flows of resources will therefore induce organisational change, and therefore environmental transformation will lead to organisational change. Organisational response to external demands is related to resource dependency. To understand organisational change we have to study the way organisations perceive their environments and how they avoid dependency in order to maintain autonomy of action (Sporn 1999). With the combination of neo-institutional and resource dependency theory at hand, Gornitzka assumes that: a) organisational response to institutional change is shaped by internal factors (organisational leadership and power distribution, institutional values, identity and traditions) or b) actors within organisations act in order to shape and control external dependency relations. Their choice of action will range from more of a passive adjustment to an active resistance.

Christine Oliver (1991) has identified different strategic responses that organisations use when there is external pressure of change (see also Maassen 2000). Oliver states in her article that expectations and demands from external actors and society are met in different ways, depending on its content and the context in which the expectations are raised. She identifies five strategies, characterising the choice of action when dealing with external pressure:

- *Acquiescence*
  The strategy/response is to comply and follow non-questioned norms and institutional models, choosing to adjust, imitate and obey new given rules, norms and standards. This can sometimes be the case when organizational models and standards are very popular and spread fast within an area or when the changes are in line with institutional norms.
- *Compromise*
  Organisations might choose to compromise with the external demands by balancing multiple, and sometimes conflicting and inconsistent demands by bargain and negotiate with institutional stakeholders, internal as well as external.
- *Avoidance*
  Organisations can try to protect its activity by agreeing to loose institutional attachments but escaping from institutional rules and expectations by proceeding according to its own norms and values. Organisations can elaborate with institutional plans and requirements in order to hide that there is no intention to implement them. The organisation can reduce the extent to which it opens up for external evaluation or escape by changing goals, activities or domains.
- *Defiance*
  One strategy is not just to avoid external demands, but simply to ignore explicit norms or values or even more actively, trying to challenge or attack the content of the institutional processes and the actors behind it. The risk of getting caught might be small, or if the success for adjusting is too low.

- *Manipulate*
  Finally, an organisation can use the strategy to influence and shape values and norms, or dominate and control institutional processes. This strategy is pro-active since the organisation tries to influence the norms and values by which it later will be judged or transformed by. By setting the rules, an organisation can also complicate the establishment of new actors. Struggles for power underlie institutional processes.

Oliver also tries to understand *why* an organisation chooses a certain strategy. She says:

> The scope conditions under which organizations are able to conform are bounded by organizational capacity, conflict and awareness. Inadequate organizational resources or capacity to meet the requirements for conformity, conflicting institutional pressure that make unilateral conformity unachievable, and lack of recognition or awareness of institutional expectations limit the ability of organizations to conform to institutional requirements.

Hence, our point of departure is that public reforms are not implemented unexpectedly and entirely top-down. In most implementation processes stakeholders are informed, consulted and able to affect the upcoming reforms. The pre-reform or policy making stage is characterized by interaction and not simply a top down process (Maassen 2000). The element of internal structure is also important to study, of what determines the choice of action. Certain structural features affect the capability for collective action, especially when it comes to internal competing interests. Also, cultural identities and features are important. Often, following Burton Clark (1983), HEIs are described as 'bottom-heavy', the function of universities are best served in an environment of academic freedom. The scope for collective action is therefore small and the role for academic leaders has been described as weak (Gornitzka 1999, Czarniawska 2005, Melander 2006).

On the other hand, academic leadership and management have changed the last decades (Amaral et al 2004). This is also the case in Sweden where there are signs of a professionalisation of HE managers, although primarily with academic legitimacy as the most important criterion. Generally speaking, academic leadership can be described as in transition from the former *primus inter pares* ideal to professional managers, or manager-academics (Henkel 2000, Larsen & Stensaker 2003). HEIs are no longer organized anarchies, as proposed in the classical study by Cohen and March. Rather they have given way, as Shattock puts it, "to new forms of collegiality where academic and other staff are more willing to adjust their contributions to institutional goals providing they have been convinced by them" (Shattock 2003, p. 93). Universities, especially the entrepreneurial ones, have strengthened their steering core, to use another of Clark's notions (Clark 1998, Melander 2007). Increasingly the concepts strategy and strategic leadership influence HEIs (Marshall 2007). Some scholars argue for its crucial importance while others show a more sceptical view on the importance of strategic plans. The role research strategies have for academic practice has been questioned – some studies have showed very small differences between universities (Gornitzka et al 2001). Larsen & Langfeldt (2004) have studied four Norwegian universities, using the analytical concepts political, hierarchical, collegial and "garbage can" as different strategies. The Norwegian cases show a combination of the first three concepts but few signs of garbage can strategies. They also show significant differences between HEIs.

To sum up: our theoretical approach acknowledges the fact that HEIs are complex organisations with strong professional groups and different cultural identities. They are also in close relation to, and dependent of, other institutions in society. We have stressed the crucial role of resource dependency at HEIs, which affects external relations as for instance to funding bodies and the state.

Our approach is further that implementation processes include interaction along the way, and that institutions are intertwined. We have also briefly discussed the new roles taken by top HE leaders, e.g. vice chancellors, as increasingly professionalized and managerial.

The Swedish Higher Education Context

The Swedish higher education sector has expanded significantly during the post war era. At present there are 16 universities with the right to award doctoral degrees. During the last decade four university colleges have been promoted to university status. The number of students was three doubled in the 1960s and again doubled in the 1990s. Today, there are about 300 000 students and around 45 percent of an age cohort enter higher education. However, since 2003 the number of students has decreased, as well as the number of PhD students. This is especially significant for the Humanities in which academic staff numbers have increased during this period, many PhDs have graduated and the number of professors and senior lectures has increased by 21 and 24 per cent respectively. Thus, for the increased number of academic staff, there are less students and PhD students to teach, and since the allocation of funding for higher education is based on the number of student recruitment and throughput, it has a direct affect on the budget of HEIs (Geschwind & Larsson 2008).

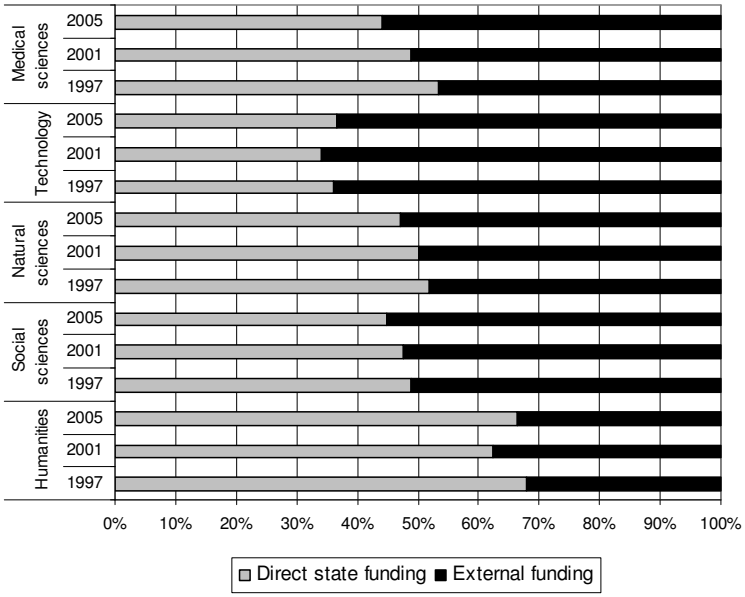
Table 1: Key figures from case study HEIs

1.	2. Established	3. Students	4. Doctoral Students	5. Employees
6. Uppsala University	7. 1477	8. 40 000	9. 2000	10. 6000
11. Lund University	12. 1666	13. 38 000	14. 2300	15. 5300
16. University of Gothenburg	17. 1954	18. 25 000	19. 2300	20. 2300
21. Umeå University	22. 1965	23. 28 000*	24. -	25. 3800
26. Stockholm University	27. 1960	28. 50 000	29. 1800	30. 5000
31. Linköping University	32. 1975	33. 25 000	34. 1300	35. 3500
36. Växjö University	37. 1999	38. 15 000	39. 300	40. 1100
41. Örebro University	42. 1999	43. 13 300	44. 400	45. 1100
46. Karlstad University	47. 1999	48. 10 000	49. 300	50. 1200
51. Mid Sweden University	52. 2005	53. 15 000	54. 200	55. 900

* Including doctoral students
Source: HEI websites August 2008

Research in the Humanities in Sweden relies heavily on direct state funding; about 65 percent derives from direct state funds. The dependence is far more pronounced than for other scientific fields. So far such funding has been unaffected by earlier research performances and mainly based on the number of researchers and PhD students. This has been criticized over the years. There is a consensus in the sector, across political parties, that research quality should increase, and one of the main policy tools would be performance based funding.

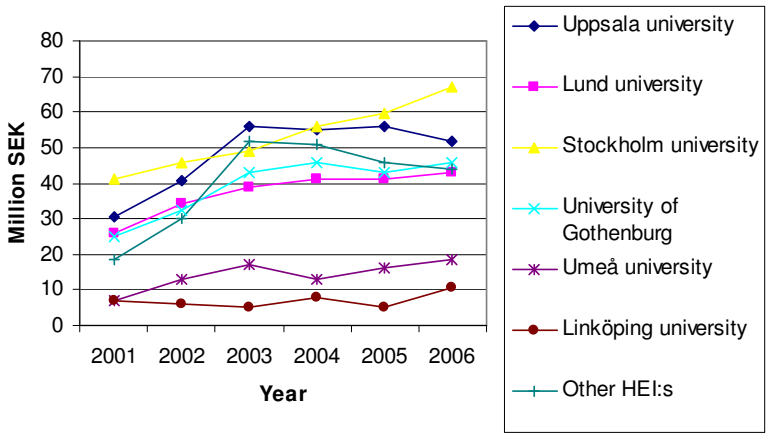
Figure 1: Direct state funding and external funding



Source: Statistics Sweden

One of the frequent myths in Sweden is that research funding is dispersed and spread thinly across the sector. However, as shown in figure 2, external funding is largely distributed to the old, comprehensive research intensive universities. The "big four" – Uppsala, Lund, Stockholm and Gothenburg – receive the bulk of peer reviewed funding from research councils and foundations.

Figure 2: External Funding from the Swedish Research Council 2001-2006



Source: Swedish Research Council, Annual reports 2003, 2005 & 2006

Research policy in Sweden is in a period of change. The expansion of the HEI sector has come to an end, at least for now, and the key words are quality and excellence. The ministry of education, government agencies and funding bodies seem to all agree that the HE sector should aim at, using the words of the former University Chancellor, professor Sigbrit Franke: concentration of resources, more collaboration and more distinct institutional profiles.

Several government committees have been launched, and the results of these might induce a major transformation of the sector. At the moment, there is an inquiry being conducted, aiming to increase the autonomy of the universities. There have also been proposals of a new career system and a new structure of research councils. The committees' reports have been distributed for consultation and the responses have varied. The committee with the task to look into the Swedish research council structure has received fierce criticism. The committee on the academic career structure has been quite positively met, especially the introduction of a tenure track system. Some actors though, as the Union of University Teachers, have identified a threat against academic freedom as the commission proposes abolition of the current peer review appointment system.

Of special interest for this study is the proposal of a new resource allocation system, which probably will result in a performance based funding system including a cyclic ex post evaluation programme, inspired by the British RAE. The so called Resource Inquiry (RI) proposed that funds should be allocated jointly to both research and education, but for a longer period (four years) than now and that part of it should be based on cyclical quality reviews. Research quality should be measured by publications, staff competence (including female professors) and external funding. The committee worked in an unusually transparent and interactive way, with a large number of meetings with stakeholders. The proposal has also been distributed for consultation and the HE reactions are overall positive to a quality based funding system, but there are many different views in which way assessment should be undertaken. Also the government has given air to some scepticism as regards the methods and criteria used by the RC. As a consequence, there has been room for negotiation and manipulation for HEIs. This sums up to an overall picture in which the Swedish HE sector is waiting for major reforms, including new basic funding principles.

Aiming for Excellence in the Humanities

In the following section we will examine how Swedish universities respond to increasing pressure on excellent research quality, both from outside and inside institutions. Many of the strategies are to be found at the institutional level, but the aim of the section is also to discuss special characteristics of the Humanities. Our analysis revolves around two broad themes, which are both related to quality issues.

- Recognize and reward research excellence
- Building research capacity

Recognize and Reward Research Excellence

Research quality and excellence are measured in relation to certain, often discipline specific standards. There are certain norms and informal rules to follow. On the other hand research sees no borders, which makes interaction, collaboration or competition with other researchers around the

world possible. Internationalisation is important part for the HE sector. It is the basis for ranking lists publication and citation analyses which make comparisons possible. In a future performance based funding system international recognition will be crucial, even more than today. It was not chosen as a criterion by the RC, but as integrated in the other criteria. Hence, it comes as no surprise that universities in our study have the ambition to reach an internationally high level. They have quite easily adjusted to the external demands on internationalisation: "International" has indeed a very positive connotation for all ten universities. All HEIs have mission statements like: "The University shall be an international environment for all students and staff" (Karlstad University, Faculty of Aesthetics and Philosophy, goal 2008-2010).

Frequently, internationalisation is related to quality issues in the strategy documents. As Uppsala University puts it: "Increased internationalisation could enhance quality" (Research Strategy). Or Lund University: "Internationalisation is a strategy for higher quality, not an end in itself." Internationalisation, however, has different meanings at different HEIs. The conducted research should aim at reaching internationally recognized levels. At Stockholm University the top team has been clear when it comes to publications: "A main concern is to make the University's research results more available and recognized internationally. Therefore, a higher degree of international publication is prioritized the coming years" (Nordin 2006). Also other HEIs have specific goals to increase the share of non Swedish publication, for instance Karlstad University aims to increase international publication with five percent annually during the period 2006-2009 (Working plan for Karlstad University 2006-2009).

Mission statements or long term visions as those exemplified above could quite far from reality. Some of the aspects of internationalisation have been more controversial in Sweden within certain disciplines in the Humanities, e.g. Swedish Literature and History. There have been debates on whether the pressure to publish internationally, mainly in English, will affect research quality in some disciplines. Several humanists have traditionally written monographs in Swedish, aimed at a Swedish audience. Professors have fought hard to convince institutional managers and policy makers that high class research could, and even should, be published in Swedish.

From our email enquiry and interviews with faculty leaders in the Humanities we can conclude that "internationally recognized is a more intricate issue at that level. One of the cornerstones in the Swedish Higher Education Act is the freedom to choose research problems and to choose how to publish the results. The faculty board at Stockholm University also stressed that researchers are free to publish in which way they want. However, the board also "gently encourages" a more visible publication which requires a "change in attitudes" in some disciplines. Almost the same wording was used by the faculty boards at Uppsala University. One of the deans described changing publication patterns as an irreversible process, where adaptation is the only way. Researchers are free to choose their own way to publish, but are strongly advised and encouraged to disseminate their results internationally. For many researchers, this is not a big deal or a dramatic change in working procedures. But some of the researchers, active in disciplines with strong traditions and norms, avoid a change in publication strategies. A more curious statement is to be found in the Stockholm Humanities faculty strategy: "Not all education can strive for international excellence. A large proportion of the faculty's research is on Swedish conditions and towards Swedish society; also that kind of research should however strive to be leading nationally, to be of good international standard and internationally recognised" (Humanities Faculty, Stockholm University, Strategy 2008-2011). The conclusion is that it is possible to be good but not excellent if research topics are Swedish.

Increased awareness of how publications count calls for more systematic knowledge regarding research production at the university level. Our findings show that in all institutions the follow up and evaluation systems are in focus. Which methods are used to recognise and reward research? Traditionally, research quality has been assessed individually or at the research group level. Still, most evaluation is done *ex ante*, as peers review applications for research projects or for academic posts. This study shows that this is changing. During the last decade, a number of *ex post* peer reviews have been undertaken at the faculty level, initiated by HEIs themselves. International review panels have assessed the research quality at for instance Gothenburg (Sörlin et al 2001) and Lund (Jonsson et al 2004). A common recommendation in those evaluations was that faculty management should be more active, make priorities and focus activities more. More intra-institutional collaboration and more elaborated incentive structures are other recommendations. However, as we have heard in interviews, these recommendations are rarely implemented as it has been difficult for faculty management to take a firm grip of resource allocation. The faculty boards have the responsibility for research allocation and quality issues, according to the Higher Education Ordinance. This might be changed in the future. The RC recommended that deans should no longer be responsible in the future. In fact, the faculty should no longer be mandatory as an organisational principle as today, rather HEIs should have the power to choose organisation themselves.

A new phenomenon is research assessments at the institutional level. This is the main strategy by the two oldest and broadest universities in Sweden. The first one, completed in 2007, was initiated by Uppsala University (Quality and Renewal 07). The aim was to assess all research at the University and provide recommendations for the future. However, differently from other Swedish peer reviews it is also the basis for the allocation of resources the following years. From having allocated funds on a "historical basis", funding will become more performance based. Environments with high scores could count on substantially increased funding. The assessment was based on self evaluations, international peer review panels and bibliometry. However, the Humanities were excluded from the latter because of the difficulties to measure research performance with metrics. Another all institutional assessment is currently under completion at Lund University (Research Quality Assurance 08). Again, the evaluation will be based on peer review, bibliometry and other measures. Currently at Lund, 50 percent of the public funding is distributed by the faculty board itself to budget items like rent expenditures, grants for PhD students and junior fellows, while the remaining 50 percent is distributed to departments. Most of the funds are distributed in respect to the amount of research personnel, but there is also a part (5 percent of the total faculty funding) that is allocated in relation to the share of received external funds.

The results from the ongoing assessment will also be used to identify strong areas, which will receive for funding the coming five years. The assessments will also be used for strategic recruitment of staff. It is probably no coincidence that institutional reviews are pioneered at the two oldest HEIs. These universities have strong collegial traditions and professorial power. The room for change at the faculty level is therefore limited. Another explanation might be the changing role of vice chancellors, and emphasis on the strengthened steering core in Sweden. The Uppsala VC has made the RAE the main mission of his rectorate. The assessments have also been recognised and publicly praised by government officials, as the state secretary.

The RC proposed that some of the research funding should be based on quantitative measures. Metrics and their relations to the Humanities have been widely discussed in many countries. Generally speaking though, Swedish Humanists have shown certain scepticism about the measurement of research quality with such methods. The traditional publication patterns in some of

the big disciplines in the Humanities are not easily captured by bibliometric methods. This is indeed an interesting strategic issue at different organisational levels. It is evident from strategy documents that all institutions in our study now put more emphasis on reporting and following up structures. Common for all HEIs is further development of publication databases, and increased pressure on researchers to register their publications. Some institutions have also hired their own bibliometric specialist, in order to be prepared for a future system where this is an important part. First in line were two of the biggest universities, Stockholm and Uppsala. At least in Stockholm, the metrics specialist was appointed with the special task to further develop tools for the Humanities. One of the first tasks was to make an analysis of the publication patterns, using the Norwegian assessment model. It showed, not surprisingly, that Philosophy was on top. This was also highlighted on the vice chancellors blog, and mentioned as a good example for the other subjects to follow (http://blogs.su.se/kbrem). Stockholm University has chosen not to undertake an institutional review, as Uppsala University and Lund University (and currently also KTH), but rather wait for government decisions, and in the meantime develop (less costly) quantitative measurement techniques. Bibliometric analyses will be undertaken at the department level (Research strategy).

This leads to another issue, how institutions (faculties) allocate their resources. Do the currently used systems also have consequences for funding decisions? Are they rewarded for showing excellence? The main conclusion is that a rather big share of the state funding, which is about 65 per cent of the total revenues within the Humanities, still is tied to financial support for PhD students and time for research for professors and lecturers. The latter issue obviously involves negotiations between the University teacher Union and each university. The space for strategic management at the faculty level has been correctly described as limited. However, things seem to change also in this respect. Our study shows that universities adjust and increase their share of performance based funding but there are big differences between HEIs how big emphasis is put on earlier performances. The goal at Karlstad University is that half of the funding should be based on earlier performances, while at the other end only five percent have been allocated on those premises until now at Lund University. There are a number of indicators in use among which the most common are: staff competence, number of PhD exams, amount of external funds and number of publications. The University of Gothenburg, for instance, uses 20 percent of the state funding for rewarding previous performances (9,3 million/45,3 million SEK) based on the following indicators:

- publications over four years40 percent
- PhD exams over six years 25 percent
- share external funding over three years 25 percent
- peer review assignments four years 10 percent

The majority of institutions adjust to the coming standards, as they show intentions to increase performance based funding. An interesting exception is Stockholm University, whose attitude is more avoiding and also more traditional. In the interview with the faculty leadership team, it was made clear that there should be a balance between strong and weak environments, as far as research funding is concerned: "Those who are excellent enough to raise funds from external funding bodies do not need more money from the institution". The overall principle is rather to have an even distribution to all active researchers, without consideration of previous performances.

Building Research Capacity

The next issue we will address is how to build excellent research environments in the Humanities. We asked the universities if there were any research areas more successful than others, and if so, what characterized those environments.

In the Swedish research policy debate "profiling" has been one of the most common concepts. Institutions should develop strong areas and focus their research rather than have a large number of disciplines, it has been argued, also by the RC. More focused research put pressure on HEIs to make priorities in their organisations. Most institutions in this study focus their research to certain areas, often interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary. The underlying idea is that more researchers imply enhanced research quality. The only way to reach international high level is to concentrate resources. The two oldest universities stand out when analysing the strategic plans. They clearly disagree with policy makers on this, and instead argue that their breadth is a precondition to become a world class university (Uppsala) or one of the top universities in Europe (Lund). As Uppsala puts it: "the broad provision will be kept and should be regarded as a quality factor as such" (Research strategy). This is a clear demarcation line between these two and the rest. It should be interpreted as an act of resistance, towards the policy makers. It is also a question of reputation building and branding. The Humanities faculty management teams in Uppsala and Stockholm both stressed in interviews that universities of their kind (medieval, capital) should take national responsibility for small and vulnerable subjects.

Big research groups have been common in other scientific areas, such as Medicine and Technology, but is there also a trend of collectivisation at Swedish Humanities Faculties? Other researchers (Neave 2002) have recognized an increased interest in centres of excellence as a policy idea. Fredrik Melander has recently showed, in a case study of Lund University, that research has become more entrepreneurial, more collective and dependent on research managers. This also includes the Humanities and the Social Sciences, traditionally highly individualised (Melander 2006). One important explanation is that some of the funding bodies have launched schemes for big inter- or multidisciplinary groups. The collectivisation of research is therefore fuelled by external funding bodies, for instance the Swedish Research Council and the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation. For universities, acquiescence is the result. Lund University was indeed very successful when the Swedish Research Council allocated their so called Linné programs. Identification and sponsoring of leading areas are commonplace at the HEIs included in the study.

As mentioned earlier, the research funds are indeed unevenly distributed in Sweden. There are differences between the younger and the older universities. Hence, the starting point for profiling work is very different. At Stockholm University, Uppsala University, Lund University or Gothenburg University, deans can to a high degree rely on groups who have already been recognized as excellent by for instance SRC or the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation. While older HEIs can rely on both individual and group funding, some of the younger HEIs act from a situation of crisis and have to adjust to what they believe other expect from them. The younger HEIs have to be more managerial and more proactive, and choose researchers with a predicted, rather than shown, ability to receive funds. That makes their work more difficult.

It is clear that all HEIs respond actively, acquiescence to talk with Oliver, to external pressure to focus research to profiled areas. The older universities, however, also emphasize their responsibility to provide education and research in small and vulnerable disciplines, sometimes represented by only

a few scholars. At the older universities, the disciplines are stressed as the basic unit of research production, whereas interdisciplinarity is more focused at younger HEIs, occasionally in order to make up for lack of staff competence at the discipline level. A critical remark in Uppsala assessment Quality and Renewal 07 (the Humanities panel) was lack of collaboration between researchers: "Traditionally, individual action has been much praised. Today, attention must also be paid to academic collaboration and research leadership, creating important informal structures within the department". Thus, not only policy makers but also fellow academics recommend concentration of research to a few strong areas. Uppsala is however very clear with the strategy to keep small and vulnerable subjects, most of them languages. This can be interpreted as an issue where three of the biggest HEIs, Lund University, Stockholm University and Uppsala University, show defiance and question the external pressure for bigger research environments. Rather, they make references to their positions as Capital University or comprehensive university with breadth as trademark (Research and education strategy). It is obviously important for universities, especially the older ones, to show academic integrity and non compliance.

The coming five years 38 percent of the professors within the Humanities will retire. Hence, we also experience a period of demographic change. A new generation will take over. In other countries, recruitment has been an increasingly important issue. Productive and successful researchers are attractive and headhunted almost as football players. Spectacular recruitment of star scientists has become more common. Has this also become the case among Swedish Humanities? In the research strategies many institutions stress the importance of staff recruitment, at least at the str level. Linköping University has for instance presented a recruitment policy, for all faculties, in which excellence is highlighted.

One of the more obvious results in our study is that external funding is crucial, both at the institutional level and for the individual researcher. As stated earlier, a considerable part of the revenues for research and development derives from public funding, about 65 percent in the Humanities which is 20 percent above average of all subject fields. Despite this, the importance of external resources is high and increasing, not only because of the resource income, but also as a quality label. The individual researcher is today more dependent on external funding, and on being successful when applying for funding. HEIs are also more dependent on the success of their researchers (Askling 2001). Thus, it is evident that they put more pressure on their professors to raise funds. At Umeå University, for instance, new conditions for professors are launched. Initially, they have a big proportion research time in their contracts, but this share decreases gradually and after nine years all research should be externally funded. The Linköping strategy mentioned above also stress the importance for professors to show a track record also as far as fund raising is concerned.

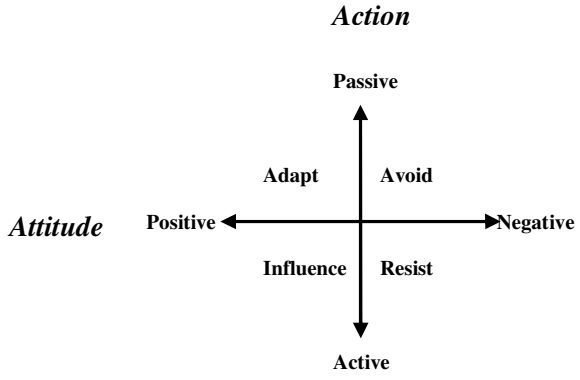
Conclusion

The aim of this paper has been to analyse Swedish Humanities research strategies in an era of pre reform. As a precondition for our study lie policy directives which point out the future direction of the higher education sector. The primary focus of the sector is increased quality in research. The expansion of HE has come to an end, now it is time to concentrate resources to the best, most profiled and internationally recognized research environments. Research funding should, to a higher degree than today, be based on quality assessments. The RC suggested a cyclical ex post evaluation system as the basis for resources. Strong actors in the system as the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education and the Swedish Research Council have basically agreed to such a systemic change.

The main result from our study is that the pre-reform stage involves activity rather than passivity. Universities try hard to respond in order to be in pole position when a new system is launched. There are many striking similarities between HEI strategies, at least at the institutional level. All ten universities have the ambition to be internationally competitive and recognised. Overall, there is a high degree of acquiescence or compliance. However, there are also some interesting differences, primarily based on institutional strength and organisational level. Universities have different possibilities to meet outside demands and changes which can be noticed in their choice of action. Lund University and Uppsala University not only sit and wait for a new system. They also want to influence and even manipulate. Their institutional assessments will have big consequences for funding principles. Starting from a low proportion of performance based funding; cyclic research assessments will be the main quality driver henceforth. At other HEIs the quantitative follow up systems are being further developed. Performance based funding is further strengthened at the majority of HEIs. This has increased pressure on researchers to attract external funding, and to publish in a visible, international way. For some Humanities disciplines this has been controversial. The enthusiasm shown for international publication at the university level is not met in the Humanities.

One proposed strategy from several strong actors has been to prioritise and focus research to certain areas. One effect of this has been a collectivisation of research in inter- or multidisciplinary groups. Again, this has been an issue in the Humanities, and again there are differences between the older and the younger HEIs. Uppsala and Lund make a point of having a broad spectrum of subjects, rather than a few focused scientific areas. One main conclusion is therefore that the stronger, richer and less dependent HEIs also have the ability to affect policy. Furthermore, while other universities have to adapt uncritically, the biggest HEIs have the integrity and the power to make critical remarks towards proposed policy solutions. We have used Oliver's analytical framework as a tool to categorize our empirical findings. Based on the strategies we have noticed, we would like to end this paper by suggesting the following model for further analyses of reform implementation:

Figure 3: University Responses to Proposed Research Policy Change



The two-dimensional model is influenced by Oliver's categories, but includes two axes: type of action and attitude. The main strategy to proposed changes regarding research funding by HEIs in our

study is adaptation, but the underlying attitude differ. While most universities are overall positive to a performance based funding system, some are critical to criteria or methodology. While the majority of HEIs are in the upper left field, adaptive, quite neutral ("there is no alternative"), the research intensive comprehensive universities are more active, and either try to influence a future performance based system (by initiating institutional research assessments) or resist external pressure on concentration of resources if that involves closing down small environments.

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[i] The paper is a further development of a report, funded by The Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities, The Swedish Foundation for International Cooperation in Research and Higher Education (STINT) and The Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation on the Humanities' structural conditions in the current and future Swedish research landscape. Some of the results were reported in a working paper spring 2008 (Geschwind & Larsson 2008).