

DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY, MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION

SELF-EVALUATION

Periodic Research Review

Brief summary

Established in 2013, the Department of Geography, Media and Communication is an (inter)nationally unique department and academic institution that fuses the disciplines of geography and media studies. The department GMC brings together the disciplines of Human Geography/Geography, Tourism Studies, as well as Media and Communications Studies. The institutional environment (milieu) offers fertile ground that nourishes cross-disciplinary and internationally recognised scientific work. In line with the strategic plan of Karlstad University, we strive to enhance the research environment, to conduct research of high quality in a national and international context, in collaborations with academic partners as well as with partners in society at large.

The department has a wide register of proficiencies with core expertise that straddle the space/place, mobility/tourism and media/communication fields, such as digital geographies; space, mobility and mediatisation, digital tourism studies; sustainable tourism mobilities, tourism media, place image and marketing; media and place making; and the digitalisation/mediatisation of work. The Geomedia research group, where much of the departmental research is taking place, is an organic outgrowth of the fusion of human geography and media at the department. It is also a testament to a successful and vibrant institutional research milieu.

During 2017–2019, the department consisted on average of 56 staff members, of which approximately 80 per cent have completed PhD degrees. Among the senior lecturers, the share of readers has increased from 10 per cent in 2017 to 25 per cent in 2019, and the department is actively working strategically to increase this share. During this period, we have produced 117 publications, of which 81 were peer reviewed publications.

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1 Long-term objectives and strategies

1.1 Goals and strategies for 2017–2019

For the period under evaluation, GMC was following the university's Strategic Plan for 2017–2019, which was also complemented by local goals and strategies. Regarding research, Karlstad University's Strategic Plan 2017–2019 focused on five strategic areas:

- Making sure Karlstad University is a vibrant research environment.
- All research at Karlstad University shall be of high scientific quality, and all artistic and creative development work shall be of high artistic quality.
- Karlstad University shall have nationally leading, and internationally prominent, research environments, as well as individual researchers.
- A substantial part of the research shall be conducted in close collaboration with the surrounding society.
- External funding shall broaden the base for research funding and develop the university.
- These overarching plans have been guiding work in the department for the period, and we will come back to them further down in the report.

1.2 The road ahead – GMC 2025

Looking forward, towards 2025, GMC strives to be a vital, curious, and intellectual environment that attracts competent and promising researchers, both on a national and an international level. We will continue to focus on cross-boundary research, with a plurality of perspectives and innovative methods.

Research is funded to a great extent through external research grants, with the quantitative goal of 50 per cent external funding. The department also strives to establish at least one long-term, and internationally renowned research programme and/or research group, with a substantial proportion of external funding.

Furthermore, GMC aims at becoming a department with equal opportunities for men and women, and that by 2025 we will have an equal composition of men and women in senior positions (e.g. readers and professors).

2 Organisation and management

With a unique constellation of the four¹ subjects of Human Geography, Tourism Studies, Geography, and Media and Communication Studies, the Department of Geography, Media and Communication (henceforth referred to as GMC) makes for a multidisciplinary, disciplinary transparent, and vibrant research environment, producing internationally recognised research, as well as attracting internationally renowned scholars and holding recurrent international conferences.

2.1 Organisation structure and leadership

GMC is part of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. A Head of Department, who is responsible for staff, budget and work-life environment for all staff members, leads GMC. A Deputy Head of Department and two Directors of Studies support the Head of department. In addition to this, each subject has a Head of Subject, who supports the Head of Department in issues such as recruitment and development, and who represents that subject within the university as well as externally. The Head of Subjects are also, when applicable, in charge of research education.

Since the formation of the department in 2013, all staff members are located in the same building, and we share the same coffee/lunchroom. The geographical proximity imparts a strong sense of place and professional identity, which is an important factor for the development of a successful social and professional environment. This has been beneficial for the research within the department and has amplified academic interactions and collaborations, leading among other things to successful research grants applications, research projects as well as undergraduate and post-graduate studies and programmes.

The department has four undergraduate programmes; Spatial and Social Planning, Tourism, Communication and Public Relations, and Media and Communication, with the specialisations in Visual Communication and Design, and Digital Media and Analysis. The Geography subject is also part of the lower secondary, secondary as well as upper secondary teacher programmes.

GMC is also home to the Master's programme in Geomedia Studies, and PhD programmes are offered in Media and Communication Studies and in Human Geography.

Research within the department is organised primarily in three larger research groups; Geomedia, NODE, and the Centre for Research on Societal Transformation (henceforth, CRS). These environments will be described in more detail below.

2.2 Financial resources

The turnover for the department, regarding research is, on average, a little more than SEK22 million, which is approximately 38 per cent of the total turnover of SEK58 million. The share of external funding has on average been 29 per cent (Background data, Table 3.1). There has been a slight increase in external research funding between 2017 and 2019.

As presented in Background data, Tables 3.21 and 3.22, GMC researchers are active in applying for external funding, and the overall success rate averages at 34 per cent. 2018 was a particularly successful year, with a success rate of 55.5 per cent, and grants of SEK28.6 million.

2.3 Competencies and capacity for renewal

The competencies of the department span a broad spectrum of areas which can be challenging. However, the department has been successful in recruiting, and retaining, the competences needed to

¹ Film Studies used to be part of the department, but the subject, and all the courses, was cancelled by the faculty board in 2019 (finalised after 20 June, 2020) due to a much too low interest among students to take courses in Film Studies.

meet the goals within research, as well as in education. As it is part of the vision and strategy for the department to attract highly qualified scholars who match our research profiles and areas, GMC has worked strategically with applying for external funding where research positions (e.g. postdocs, PhD) are part of the grants, as well as linking the advertisements to ongoing, and planned, research projects or profiles.

Furthermore, the department has had, and continues to have, guest professors (Geomedia), as well as visiting scholars and PhD students (e.g. affiliated to NODE, as well as GMC in general).

Moreover, the CRS research environment also offers an additional platform for renewal and staff exchange, as it gathers scholars from six different social science disciplines that share interest in studying sustainable societal transformation.

2.4 Research infrastructure

The research within GMC does not require any specific extra technical infrastructures for research. However, we have a continuous, longitudinal survey in place within the project *Measuring Medialisation*, which begins its second stage in 2021 (funding 2021–25). The project conducts a biannual national survey focusing on people's perceptions of media reliance as well as on various aspects of media use, allowing for a longitudinal dataset. A collaboration with the University of Gothenburg and the SOM-Institute has enabled access to data from a regional survey conducted in Värmland and access to comparative data from a national survey.

2.5 Research culture

In accordance with the Strategic Plan 2017–2019, the department aims to ensure that all staff members are actively engaged in research activities. The department as a whole has a well-developed research culture with several institutionalised research routines (departmental seminars, lectures, workshops, conferences, etc.), recurrent biannual research events and meet-ups (e.g. the Geomedia Day) and special programmes attuned to PhD students (Geomedia Conference, PhD students venue), unit specific seminars and activities tied to different stakeholders in society, which are all intended to further our research. The subjects, and the research centres that we are closely linked to, have their own research seminars, and, as of 2019, there is a joint human geography and media “work-in-progress seminar” held on a regular basis.

The research seminars focus mainly on lectures/presentations of research by external guests as well as PhD candidates' texts. Whereas the work-in-progress seminars focus on budding research ideas, proposals for research applications, conference papers, article manuscripts, and the like.

As noted previously, the respective subjects and research centres organise their own seminars. However, there are also common fora, an inclusive culture and openness for multidisciplinary ideas and work. The Geomedia research group (designated by the university as a strong research group in 2017) is a very good example of such fora and multidisciplinary research within the department.

The CRS is another example of a forum that gathers senior and junior researchers, as well as PhD students from the Region Building Graduate School. CRS is also a venue supporting early career researchers and organises social events for researchers such as breakfast meets, writing workshops, as well as joint research proposals and article writing retreats.

2.5.1 Support for research and research activities

In accordance with the terms of employment, the professors at the department have at least 51 per cent of their time allocated to research, research education, and tasks related to that. Senior lecturers have at least 20 per cent for professional development, which often includes research. At GMC, readers get an extra ten per cent, i.e. 30 per cent, for professional development, with strong focus on research, publishing and grant applications.

As a benchmark principle, the department has made provisions to enable that all researchers, and PhD students, can attend at least *one* international research conference per year, with the proviso that they have an abstract and/or a paper accepted. Many researchers also finance their participation through externally funded research projects.

The Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences works actively to support research, publishing and grant applications. This is done via, for example, seed money for research (e.g. for grant applications) and monetary support for extra research time. GMC also supports costs for proofreading, article and book-chapter translations, and costs for open access.

2.6 Internationalisation

Researchers at GMC participate in national and international research consortia and networks, and cooperate with external actors and stakeholders, thereby contributing to the fulfilment of the fourth strategic goal of the 2030 vision for Karlstad University: “We attain increased levels of internationalisation in our operations”.

Researchers at GMC also collaborate with international scholars on, for example, editing anthologies, co-authored book-writing projects, research proposal projects, conference panels, arranging conferences, and article projects. For 2017–2019, 11 per cent of the publications had an international co-author (Background Data, Figure 3), and the department is aiming to increase this in the future.

Furthermore, we have internationally renowned researchers visiting us for shorter and longer periods. For example, Gillian Rose, Thomas Hanitzsch, Paul C. Adams, and Barbie Zelizer have all been guest professors at the department (Ander Visiting Professor in Geomedia), and we have had visiting scholars within NODE, as well as in other projects. In addition to this, members of the department have been invited as visiting scholars, PhD students, etc., at universities around the world. We have also been active in the Erasmus teachers’ exchange, which includes visiting other European universities, as well as welcoming teachers to the department.

The exchanges have led to co-authored books, book chapters, articles and conference papers, as well as important international relations (see also section 4).

2.7 Gender equality

On the whole, GMC has an equal composition of men and women. However, there is a gender imbalance when it comes to lecturer (two thirds of the lecturers are women) and professors (only one of seven permanently employed professors is a woman). See Background data, Table 1.1 for more information on staff composition. Among the senior lecturers, 59 per cent are women, and 41 per cent are men. The department has worked strategically, for example, with allocation of resources (e.g. time and money), and with regular overviews of time for research, conference attendance, and the like. Through this, we have successfully increased the share of women in senior positions. Since the formation of the department in 2013, we have had seven senior lecturers promoted as readers, four men, and three women, and we are foreseeing at least four more in the coming two years (one man and three women).

3 Expertise profile

3.1 General competencies at GMC

GMC research staff are (broadly speaking) qualified in either Human Geography or Media and Communication. In addition, several staff members have competencies that cut across these subjects. In recent years, the share of staff members active in research has been stable. As seen in Background data, Table 1.1, there has been a slight increase in the amount of FTE research active staff in the department between 2017 and 2019 (from 26.6 to 28 FTE).

The share of teaching staff with PhD degrees has been constant at around 80 per cent between 2017 and 2019. There has been an increase in the share of readers, from 10 per cent of teaching staff in 2017 to 25 per cent in 2019 (Background data, Table 1.2). This increase is the result of strategic support for promotions among GMC staff (using strategic funding; formalised feedback on promotion application from senior colleagues; and in general maintaining a friendly and supportive environment).

The research proficiencies of GMC are not only broad but also specialised and in-depth. The core areas of research can be triangulated by space/place, media/communication and tourism/mobility vectors. The triad offers ample paths and opportunities to conduct cross-disciplinary research. Moreover, the space-media-mobility triad has served as a pointer of and guideline to research needs, permanent staff recruitment, and inviting visiting scholars to the department of GMC.

3.2 Academic collaborations, networks and engagements

We see academic collaborations, networks and engagements as falling within three broad categories:

- (1) the ongoing collaboration and networking that is part of what is generally called academic service, particularly outward-facing service; i.e. reviewing for scholarly journals and publishers; acting as external reviewers in recruitment and promotion processes²; reviewing grant proposals for grant-giving bodies; and taking part in various academic evaluation exercises.
- (2) the largely informal collaboration and networking that takes place between individual academics or small groups of academics within the same nation or across national boundaries.
- (3) the concrete and formal outputs that sometimes result from the aforementioned informal collaborations or organisation memberships, e.g. joint publications, joint grant applications and research projects, and other types of joint, formal academic collaborations (e.g. co-organised conferences, network meetings).

In terms of (1), researchers in the department are frequently called upon to review articles for major international journals, e.g., *Communication Theory*; *Digital Journalism*; *International Journal of Press/Politics*; *New Media & Society*; *Tourism Studies*; *Annals of Tourism Research*, *International Journal of Science Education* and *Urban Studies*, and manuscripts for international academic publishers, e.g. Columbia University Press; Polity; Routledge. Members of the department are likewise regularly called upon as external reviewers for recruitments and promotions as well as for grant-giving bodies (e.g., Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, and Swedish Research Council). In addition to doing such work for many Swedish universities and institutions, researchers in the department have also conducted promotion evaluations for, e.g., Edinburgh University; City University of London; Aarhus University; University of Kent, and evaluated grant applications for international foundations, e.g. the Austrian Science Fund, and the Israeli Science Foundation. Professors from GMC have also been involved in international committees evaluating entire research environments, e.g., at Erasmus University Rotterdam; Åbo Akademi University. These review assignments all indicate that researchers in the department are active and well-regarded

² In the Swedish academic system, all academic appointments/recruitments are subject to external review.

members of the international scientific community as well as general international networks of academic service.

In terms of (2), GMC is an Institutional Member of the FSMK, the Swedish Association for Media Research. Most members of staff are also members of one or more of the major international research associations (e.g. ICA, IAMCR, AAG, and RSA). Members of staff also regularly present at the conferences organised by these organisations (as well as other conferences). In the period 2017–19, members of staff have won multiple Top Paper Awards in different Divisions of the ICA; the ICA Journalism Studies Division Article of the Year Award (2019); the IAMCR Stuart Hall Prize (2018), and the biannual Best Swedish Media and Communication PhD Dissertation Award (2019). GMC is also a founding member of two key networks for PhD education (TRAIN, the National Network for PhD Education in Media and Communication; and the National PhD Academy for Human Geography/National Research School in Human Geography), and the National Network for Tourism Education, NATU. This all attests to the good standing and recognition of GMC members of staff in the national and international research community and international research networks. Scholars in the department also have well-established and ongoing collaborations with colleagues at, for example, the University of Umeå (Sweden), Uppsala University (Sweden) University of Stavanger (Norway); University of Santiago de Compostella (Spain); Nord University (Norway); University of Copenhagen (Denmark); University of Siegen (Germany); University of Leipzig (Germany); University of Texas (US), and University of the Arts, Berlin (Germany).

In terms of (3), some key examples of concrete national and international collaboration outputs are: two externally funded joint research projects Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences (MECO and MINS, total funding to GMC approximately EUR900,000); PhD workshops co-organised with the University of Siegen (2019); a joint EU COST Action application as well as co-authored publications with colleagues from several international universities, for example, University of Texas, University of Sunderland, University of Southern Denmark, the University of Stavanger, and two major collaborative book projects with Oxford University Press (the *Oxford Encyclopedia of Journalism Studies* with Professor Henrik Örnebring as Editor-in-Chief and *Disentangling: The Geographies of Digital Disconnection*, forthcoming, co-edited by Professor André Jansson and Professor Paul Adams at the University of Texas in Austin). The first two international Geomedia conferences (2015, 2017) resulted in the major international volume *Geomedia Studies* (Fast et al., Routledge 2018). Reader Richard Ek is editor of *Geografiska Annaler since 2017*. Dr Lena Grip is since 2019 the editor-in-chief of the internationally acclaimed journal *Gender, Place and Culture*. We would also like to highlight that in 2017–19 several of our PhD students published co-authored/collaborative articles in major international journals together with colleagues from (among other universities) Stanford University, Nanyang Technological University (Singapore) and the University of Groningen (The Netherlands). The department actively fosters seeking concrete collaboration outcomes from scholars at all career stages.

In short, GMC scholars are continuously engaged in international collaborations and networks that generate concrete results, outputs and recognition in terms of international publications, external funding, and international awards.

4 Research domains and results

In this section we focus on GMC research and results on a general level. We also present ongoing research projects, and, finally, comment on research output and impact.

4.1 Research areas within GMC, and some important results/findings

The research areas of GMC fall within one of the two main subject areas of the department (Human Geography and Media and Communication Studies), or in the intersection of these two areas (as in most of the research taking place in the Geomedia research group). In Media and Communication Studies, we have particular research specialisms in mediatisation studies, journalism studies, strategic communication, media industry studies, and digital media studies. In Human Geography we have particular research specialisms in subject theory; urban studies; postcolonial studies and feminist geography; geopolitics/political geography, migration and mobility studies; tourism geography, pilgrimage/religious tourism and destination development studies; surveillance studies; urban and regional planning, local and regional development; digital innovation; place and identity; and rural development, lifestyle mobility, counter-urbanisation, transformation for a sustainable society, as well as geography education and teachers training in school geography.

Questions about the impact of tourism on society, and how tourism in turn is impacted by societal development are put into focus. Our main areas of interest, which permeates all of our research, include sustainable development, mobilities, planning, collaboration, power relationships and inclusion. Our research is strongly connected to contemporary societal changes, such as economic fluctuations, the digitalisation of society, increasing mobility, and a range of current event, for example, terrorism and the spread of disease. We are involved in several research projects, among which a recent one, *Platsbaserade Digitala Upplevelser (Place-based Digital Experiences)*, is a good example of our close collaboration with society. The research that we conduct is multifaceted and its theoretical development has been partly dependent on a transdisciplinary perspective, including, for example, media and communication studies, human geography, economics, sociology and political science. However, the nucleus of tourism science at Karlstad University has been driven by human geographers and is thus rooted in the tradition of human geography.

Tourism research at the department has made novel and notable conceptual and theoretical contributions to and publications in the field, such as post-secular tourism, the home turn in tourism studies, female agency, subjectivities and pilgrimage tourism. Moreover, tourism researchers have published an article with novel theoretical perspectives on enclave tourism, published as a special issue by of the journal *Tourism Geographies* (2019).

A few examples of concrete outcomes during the period 2017–2019:

- The PDU project (see below) has generated a three-part process model for supporting digital innovation among local tourism entrepreneurs; the process is designed to take digital innovation projects from the brainstorming stage through to prototyping. The process model has so far been field tested in collaboration with local tourism SMEs and is thus a good example of applied research conducted together with local stakeholders (see also section 5).
- The study of experiences of unemployment and leaving the journalistic profession among local (ex-)journalists conducted within the framework of the Geomedia research group's research programme "In-Between Spaces" has contributed to both theoretical and empirical development within the growing sub-field of studies on unemployment/precarious employment in journalism. This study introduced the concept of "livelihood" (originally from the field of Development Studies) to this sub-field and found that leaving the journalistic profession was a highly gendered and place-bound experience (Örnebring & Möller 2018, 2020).

- The project *Measuring Mediatisation* has during its first stage (2016–2020) developed statistical indicators for measuring the mediatisation of everyday life through survey techniques. In this way, the project has advanced this largely theoretically driven and qualitatively oriented field of research. Surveys were conducted in 2016, 2017 and 2019, and funding has been granted for 2021–2025. The first stage of the project emanated in several conference papers (one award-winning ICA paper 2019) and articles in international journals, as well as a forthcoming book chapter.

4.2 Ongoing research projects

The following section presents currently ongoing research projects at GMC (i.e. not only projects that have been ongoing 2017–2019). This list does not include research projects where staff members of GMC are active but where the project is funded via research centres at the university.

4.2.1 Geomedia

The Geomedia research group was formed in 2013. The term Geomedia captures the fundamental role of media in organising and giving meaning to processes and activities in space. Geomedia also alludes to the geographical attributes of media, for example, flows of digital signals between particular places and the infrastructures carrying those flows. The rapid expansion of mobile media, location-based services, GIS and increasingly complex patterns of surveillance/interveillance has amplified the need for critical studies and theorisations of Geomedia. The research in Geomedia revolves around three main areas: (1) Mediatisation of space and culture, (2) Spaces of news production and consumption and (3) Tourism and mobility studies. Several of the below projects are associated with these tracks. Geomedia is since 2017 one of the university's prioritised strong research environments.

4.2.2 NODE

The Ander Centre for Research on News and Opinion in the Digital Era (NODE) is funded by the Anne-Marie and Gustaf Ander Foundation for Media Research, and focuses on how news and public opinion is changing when other institutions, forms of communication, and societal phenomena increasingly challenge the daily newspaper press as a central institution for both news diffusion and public opinion formation. Currently, NODE is tackling issues related to this overarching question within the framework of the research programme "Affect and the News: Emotion, Engagement and Community in the Digital Media Landscape". The programme studies the contradictions that appear when affect-driven phenomena like threats and harassment of journalists co-exist with media industry initiatives to encourage affective responses to the news.

4.2.3 MECO

The overall aim of MECO is, based on digitalised user experiences and place experiences, to study, innovate and optimise the music service ecosystems in the inner region of Scandinavia. The EU-funded Interreg Sweden-Norway project is conducted in collaboration with the Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences and Studentfrämjandet with financial support from Region Värmland County Council, Arvika Municipality and Hedmark County Council in Norway. MECO is part of the Academy of Smart Specialisation, a collaboration between Karlstad University and Region Värmland to renew the business and public sector in Värmland and research at Karlstad University. The main goal is to create long-term positive effects that will result in a more inclusive music and cultural scene, as well as increased growth and quality of life for the people in the region. The research in MECO focus on: (1) conducting an in-depth mapping of existing music service ecosystems in inner Scandinavia, (2) highlighting the role of users in the identified music service ecosystems, and (3) to contribute to innovation and optimisation of these ecosystems.

4.2.4 SWEGIG

In the past few years, Sweden has seen a rapid growth in the number of companies using web and mobile app platforms to match workers with casual jobs (e.g. Bonsai, Gigstr, Taskrunner, Yepstr). These companies position themselves as part of the “gig economy” (i.e. an economy based on payment for individual “gigs” rather than permanent employment contracts), promoting an ostensibly peer-to-peer model for organising working life. They crucially also function as media platforms: they create web pages, apps, and online content; they encourage users to create their own media content (e.g. “video CVs”); and they utilise social media features (e.g. user profiles, “likes”). Because of their media platforms, these companies are both an instance and a driver of the increasing mediatisation of working life. The SWEGIG project combines working life science with media studies in order to examine the consequences of this mediatisation through a case study of producers and users of these digital media platforms.

4.2.5 Bringing Climate Change to School: Theoretical Framing, Elaboration and Evaluation of Learning Opportunities for Climate Literacy - BriCCS

Climate change is one of the greatest socio-ecological challenges of this century. School education plays a key role in equipping the next generation with relevant climate knowledge. However, various studies show a weak link between school knowledge, informed decision-making and behaviour in the context of climate change. To promote responsible decisions on climate change, affective-emotional characteristics of a person is also essential. This combination of cognitive and affective aspects is referred to as climate literacy. The aim of the BriCCS project is to provide knowledge of climate literacy based on empirical findings to be used in teaching. Therefore, the project will start with a detailed analysis of the structure of climate literacy. For this purpose, a survey and qualitative studies are conducted. Second, to investigate factors affecting climate literacy development, we will develop learning opportunities for secondary students addressing either cognitive or affective-emotional characteristics, and evaluate these regarding their effect on climate literacy development. In this context, the project predominantly focuses on effects of risk perception since psychological research shows that risk perception plays a decisive role in the development of motivation and action regarding environmental challenges.

4.2.6 Measuring Mediatisation

The term “mediatisation” refers to long-term social changes (cor)responding to alterations in the media landscape. These types of changes have been studied in relation to a range of social realms and institutional sectors, especially since the mid-2000s, but largely without tools for *measuring* the mediatisation of everyday life. The first part of this project (funding 2016–20) developed such a tool for addressing people’s experiences of extended entanglements with and dependence on media (technologies, texts and institutions), to investigate claims pertaining to mediatisation. In other words, to what extent do people think that their social lives are more dependent on media today than five or ten years ago? What areas of everyday life are affected by mediatisation over time and in different groups? The tool was applied in three national surveys with representative samples. Funding is granted for the period 2021–25 to repeat the surveys and further elaborate key findings. The goal is to build an extended time-series and establish the project as a key infrastructure within Geomedia.

4.3 GMC’s research in relation to Karlstad University’s strategies

Research at the department is well in line with the strategic goals of Karlstad University. Among the six strategic goals, there are three goals in particular to emphasise:

First, as shown above, the GMC research environment is marked by a strong *international orientation*; researchers publish in international peer-reviewed journals, contribute to international conferences and networks, and are also actively involved in *establishing new* networks and platforms for academic exchange (as in the case of the Geomedia research group and the biannual Geomedia Conference that from 2021 will be an internationally rotating event).

New theories, concepts and perspectives on tourism, planning and urban studies as well as feminist geographies.

Second, GMC nurtures an environment marked by *high academic quality*, as is evidenced by the regular recognition of GMC researchers in various prestigious settings, ranging from conference paper awards, to membership of editorial boards of leading journals, and appointments in international committees and academies (e.g., Academy of Europe). These high standards are combined with an inclusive environment and close connections to students and teaching, not least through the international MA programme in Geomedia Studies launched in 2019.

Third, as reflected in projects like MECO and PDU (see above), a substantial share of the research carried out at GMC involves *external partners* and thus contributes directly to the furthering of growth and social innovation.

4.4 Research output and its impact

Throughout the period 2017–19, the efforts to increase research output and impact have multiplied, and several strategic measures have been taken to provide good opportunities for all researchers to grow their academic portfolios. While some of these efforts are tied to the research subjects (human geography and media and communication studies), additional investments have been made by the Geomedia research group to bring about cross-fertilisation between the subjects. Some of the most important activities to increase the volume, quality and impact of scientific production are the following:

- Regular work-in progress workshops where research applications, papers and publications are discussed. These workshops occur regularly and are open to all GMC staff members.
- Geomedia seed funding to organise, for example, workshops or exchanges to initiate research collaboration and applications.
- Geomedia career grants to complete research publications, notably monographs but also journal articles.
- Measures have been taken by the GMC department to enable periods of concentrated research and writing (i.e., “sabbatical”) among faculty members with external funding.
- Funding has been strategically allocated to organising conferences and other international events in order to foster collaborations with internationally renowned researchers and research groups.

In terms of *output*, these strategic measures (and others) have proven very successful. As shown by Background data, Table 4.1, researchers at GMC continuously publish in peer-review journals, produce book chapters, and participate in scientific conferences. GMC researchers have also edited several special issues of international journals, especially linked to the Geomedia research programme *In-Between Spaces*. These appeared in *Communication and the Public*; *Journalism: Practice, Theory, Criticism*, and *Media and Communication Studies*. Forthcoming special issues, initiated during the period, will appear in *New Media & Society* and *Space and Culture*. In addition, several international books were published by GMC researchers during the period (see Background data, Table 4.1), and several major book projects published in 2020 or in press were initiated (by Jansson, Ljungberg, Lynch, Karlsson, Örnebring, and Kingsepp). The double issue *Migrant Spaces of Exception* theme number to be published under the auspices *parallax* journal, with one of our colleagues, Tesfahuney, as co-editor was initiated in early 2019.

The *impact* of GMC research is difficult to estimate due to the short time-span of the evaluation (three years). Yet, given the continuous rise in academic standards and growing networks of GMC faculty, the academic impact is reasonably on the rise. Some important drivers and evidence of impact are particularly worth mentioning:

- Publications in high-impact journals such as *Theory, Culture & Society*, *New Media & Society*, *Digital Journalism*, *Annals of Tourism Research*, *Communication Theory*, *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, *Journalism Studies*, *Tourism Geographies*, and *Theory, Culture and Society*.

- The biannual Geomedia Conference, organised in Karlstad since 2015, has turned into a major success with 100+ international participants each time, including numerous international top-scholars. The event has sparked several forms of further collaborations (books, articles, applications, workshops, etc.) and most importantly contributed to the formation of an international arena for interdisciplinary research on media and communication geographies that has strengthened the reputation of GMC.
- High-profile publications (including award-winning papers and articles as well as the aforementioned Oxford Encyclopedia of Journalism) emanating from the NODE research centre combined with the centre's regular hosting of international visiting scholars have contributed significantly to the reputation of media and communication research at GMC.
- In the latest ARWU ranking, media and communication studies at GMC turned out among the 76–100 best departments in the world (no. 2 in Sweden; no. 4 among Nordic countries; no. 21 in Europe).
- The 6th NoRsa conference Regions in Transitions was arranged by the GMC and CRS in March 2017.

5 Collaboration and interaction with the surrounding community

At GMC, the aim is to meet the needs and ambitions of society. We are therefore constantly creating new, accessible channels for external relations. External parties, such as schools, county councils, municipalities, regions, organisations, and the business sector, should all be able to collaborate with us in straightforward ways that show results. That way, more research results become innovations, and more innovations are put to good use in society.

For most of the researchers and teachers at the department, external engagement is a natural part of work at the university. Much of the collaboration cuts in a special order between individual researchers and different clients. In that context, it is usually up to each individual researcher to decide when and how and to what extent external collaborations should take place. This may include participating in conferences for regional stakeholders, participating in public debates in regional and national media, and contributing with lectures and seminar participation for municipalities, regions and county administrative boards. Several of the department's staff are invited as experts in their respective fields every term.

Researchers from GMC are often involved in seminar activities arranged by the research centre formations to which the department is connected. Such seminar activities are in some cases aimed at officials outside of academia with an interest in the issues that the department deals with. Thus, seminar activities are about collaboration between different departments and research units within the university, but also between different actors outside the academic community. Such collaborations may include researchers from other disciplines such as political science, sociology, risk and environmental studies, environmental science, working life science, and business administration.

Karlstad University and Region Värmland collaborates through the Academy of Smart Specialisation to renew the regional industry, public sector, but also research at the university. The Academy of Smart Specialisation is a continuation of the agreement of intention that was made for the period 2010–2014 when ten new professorships were instituted at Karlstad University, of which one at the department. The Academy of Smart Specialisation involves research cooperation and will end in 2020. Several staff members participated in a significant way in developing the strategy, something that influenced the design in favour of the department. The Academy for Smart Specialisation aims to utilise research for the benefit of industry, the County Administration, the County Council, and the municipalities, and to strengthen the research environments at the university.

The concept of Smart Specialisation involves finding strong areas with the capacity to evolve into internationally competitive industries in the region. The Värmland Research and Innovation Strategy exhibits the following three (out of six) potential areas with relevance for the GMC department: Forest-based bioeconomy, Digitalisation of welfare service, and Digitalised experience of nature, culture and place.

The project Forests as Resources and Opportunities in Regional Development, which is part of the Academy of Smart Specialisation, aims to contribute to the strengthening of regional innovation systems in Värmland, in relation to the transition to a forest-based sustainable bioeconomy. The project explores what it means for a region to transit towards a bioeconomy, and the processes through which regional actors build and implement such transition. The project is carried out with the case study of three European regions where strategies of smart specialisation and regional innovation systems are set in place to promote a forest-based bioeconomy. Several of the department's staff members are involved in the project run by CRS.

The department also has formalised collaboration between staff and authorities and various interest groups. In such cases, it may be a matter of sitting on boards, participating in expert groups or committees. During the period 2017–2019, one professor at the department was a board member of Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth.

Popular science literature is published annually, not least in journals that address planners and geography teachers. Texts are published in journals such as *Plan* and *Geografiska notiser*.

Teachers and researchers related to community planning participate annually in network meetings with other universities that offer education in community planning.

GMC has high ambitions when it comes to external engagement and are constantly looking for new types of collaborations. This has resulted in municipal development initiatives and project activities, for example, Finnskogen Biosphere Reserve, destination development in Glaskogen nature reserve, business development in Region Jämtland Härjedalen, and place development in Region Västra Götaland.

The project Place-based Digital Experiences (PDU), part of the Academy of Smart Specialisation, has contributed to a development and innovation process, partnering companies in the tourism industry in Glaskogen to increase their competitiveness. The project also has led to an increase of local knowledge and the groundwork for further promoting place-related experiences through digital solutions.

6 Interaction between research and education

Research-active teachers are involved in all of the department's courses and programmes. Most of the teachers are senior lecturers, but there are also many readers and professors among the teaching staff. Doctoral students usually do not act as course co-ordinators. Several courses have a clear connection to the teachers' research interest and research experience. Some courses have been added as a result of the staff's research interest and research results, and there are often components included that relate to the teachers' current research.

Education at GMC can force a need for research to ensure that the connection between the teaching staff's expertise, course content and course objectives is maintained. This applies to both subject theoretical and empirical research, as well as educational research and method development. The department is constantly working to enhance the relationship between research and teaching. In line with this, reading lists are reviewed regularly and many of the courses include scientific texts, among them, books and articles written by GMC researchers. GMC has high ambitions regarding the teachers' skills and expertise, and discussions about the relationship between research and education are a natural part of the milieu at GMC.

In line with an increasing interest from students in issues related to global warming, there is an initiative from a team of GMC scholars (Van Couvering, Ryan Bengtsson, Karlsson) to launch a research programme in climate change communication in cooperation with manufacturing industries in Värmland. Just like previous research in crisis communication resulting in both a freestanding course and a course included in the Communication and PR programme, we envision that this initiative will result in including climate change communication in courses and study programmes.

Tourism and its role in society has during the latest decades become an increasingly central issue, not least as mobility has become all the more important for society's functions. Mobility and place attractiveness are central issues for the tourism sector. Researchers interested in tourism at Karlstad University have made novel and notable theoretical and conceptual contributions to the scientific knowledge about tourism, travel and societal development. Their activities relate to three fields; research, education, and collaboration with the local and regional tourism sector, – which together create meaningful synergies.

The scientific quality of our research is ensured through our seminar series, which involves our internal researcher group as well as invited guests from the national and international academic community, and through the peer-review process of published papers. Research collaboration and seminar activities also take place within the Geomedia research group and the Centre for Research on Societal Transformation (CRS), where tourism research is an active part and where the phenomena under study closely relate to tourism science.

7 Concluding reflections: strengths and areas for improvement

In this final section, we present concluding thoughts about our strengths and our areas for improvement.

Strengths

- Efficacy
- We perform very well given our structural position in the academic world (e.g. a small department, at a relatively new regional university, in a small country). Compared to comparable entities we have a more advantageous starting point.
- Versatility
Our combination of an eclectic mix of theoretical and methodological outlooks, a number of high-performing researchers, and an inclusive environment provides us with a platform to engage confidently with future challenges.
- Collaborations and networks
The close collaboration within the department between staff members with different networks inside the academic community, as well as the surrounding society, ensures an accessible and broad network of contacts for everyone.
- Momentum
The department is in a positive phase of developing research domain Geomedia, which has been well received nationally as well as internationally within the academic community and the surrounding society.

Areas for development

- Recruitment of researchers
With the exception of PhD positions and postdoc positions, all staff are recruited as teachers with the opportunity to conduct research, not as researchers with teaching duties. It can be challenging to find a good match between a candidate's teaching skills and the department's research profile.
- Research and education gap
There is, to some extent, a gap between undergraduate programmes and research. There is some discrepancy between the most popular undergraduate programmes (e.g. Communication and PR, Visual Communication, Spatial and Social Planning) and the most successful research. We are striving to substantially reduce the gap between research and education. Recent staff recruitments bode well in this regard.
- Continued high level of external funding
- Competition for external grants is ever increasing. Since many faculties are successful in receiving external funding, there will be a growing need for external funding in order to maintain continuity. To meet this challenge, we continuously ensure that the faculty is aware of the situation. We apply for seed money, teaming junior scholars with professors, and we work actively with grants in seminars.
- Critical mass in research education
We are in a situation with relatively few doctoral students in our research subjects to offer a competitive academic environment. In order to increase the number of doctoral students, our aim is to apply for more external funds that include financing of PhD positions. In order to increase the critical mass, we collaborate with research centres as well as national PhD programmes.
- Internationalisation
Internationalisation is part of GMC's activities. However, it is a challenge to implement internationalisation on a large scale, both in terms of sending staff abroad and receiving guest research fellows.





DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY, MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION

BACKGROUND DATA

Periodic Research Review

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the background data is to provide an overview of the evaluation unit, the Department of Geography, Media and Communication, regarding: staff, economy, research funding, internationalisation, bibliometrics, collaborations and utilization of research for the period of 2017-2019. Details regarding data source or possible deviation will be stated in the individual figure text.

STAFF

Table 1.1. Proportion teaching and research shown by full-time equivalents (FTE), divided by position and gender of the academic staff employed at the evaluation unit

2019

POSITION	GENDER	FTE	PROPORTION TEACHING	PROPORTION RESEARCH
Postdoc	F	0,08	0%	100%
Associate senior lecturer	M	0,96	63%	37%
Professor	F	0,12	100%	0%
Professor	M	4,87	35%	65%
Adjunct professor	M	0,05	0%	100%
Directly appointed professor	M	0,15	0%	100%
Lecturer	F	4,34	75%	25%
Lecturer	M	2,20	92%	8%
Senior lecturer	F	8,63	52%	48%
Senior lecturer	M	6,59	74%	26%
TOTALS		28,00	61%	39%

Source: The personal administrative system, Primula

2018

POSITION	GENDER	FTE	PROPORTION TEACHING	PROPORTION RESEARCH
Postdoc	F	0,2	0%	100%
Associate senior lecturer	F	0,06	89%	11%
Professor	F	0,08	37%	63%
Professor	M	5,03	0%	100%
Visiting professor	F	0,10	75%	25%
Lecturer	F	3,95	95%	5%
Lecturer	M	2,46	58%	42%
Senior lecturer	F	9,52	78%	22%
Senior lecturer	M	6,07	100%	0%
TOTALS		27,48	64%	36%

Source: The personal administrative system, Primula

2017

POSITION	GENDER	FTE	PROPORTION TEACHING	PROPORTION RESEARCH
Postdoc	F	0,67	22%	78%
Postdoc	M	0,13	0%	100%
Associate senior lecturer	F	0,16	100%	0%
Professor	F	0,25	28%	72%
Professor	M	4,87	34%	66%
Visiting professor	F	0,08	0%	100%
Visiting professor	M	0,15	0%	100%
Lecturer	F	4,53	83%	17%
Lecturer	M	1,21	94%	6%
Senior lecturer	F	8,42	50%	50%
Senior lecturer	M	6,14	78%	22%
TOTALS		26,60	60%	40%

Source: The personal administrative system, Primula

Table 1.2. Qualification levels of teachers, proportion of full-time equivalents

	PROPORTION TEACHERS WITH A COMPLETED PHD	PROPORTION OF READERS AMONG SENIOR LECTURERS
2019		
Female	73%	10%
Male	90%	46%
TOTAL	81%	25%
2018		
Female	73%	6%
Male	85%	26%
TOTAL	79%	15%
2017		
Female	73%	0%
Male	92%	23%
TOTAL	81%	10%

Source: The personal administrative system, Primula

THIRD-CYCLE EDUCATION

Table 2.1. Students in postgraduate education

ADMISSION SUBJECT	GENDER	YEAR OF ADMISSION	STUDY ACTIVITY AUTUMN TERM 2019	STUDY ACTIVITY AUTUMN TERM 2019
Human Geography	F	2017	69%	69%
	F	2018	62%	62%
	M	2019	54%	54%
Media and communication science	M	2019	50%	50%
	F	2018	50%	50%
	F	2016	80%	80%
	F	2017	78%	78%
	M	2014	45%	45%
	M	2016	69%	69%
	M	2014	44%	44%

(No industrial/external doctoral students with study activity selected term.) Source: Ladok

Table 2.2. Licentiate and doctoral degree per gender

DOCTORAL DEGREE	GENDER	2017	2018	2019
Student	M			1
Student	M			1
Student	M	1		
Student	M		1	
TOTAL SUM		1	1	2

Source: Ladok

FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Table 3.1 Income statement regarding the research

Amounts in SEK 1 000

DOCTORAL DEGREE	2017	2018	2019
REVENUE			
Direct government funding ¹	10 614	9 884	9 974
External funding ²	6 564	5 494	7 323
Inter-company revenue ³	6 027	5 959	5 368
REVENUE TOTAL	23 205	21 337	22 665
EXPENDITURE			
Staffing costs			
Salaries researchers and teachers	-14 069	-12 872	-13 285
Remunerations	-179	-174	-219
Salaries administration and technical staff	468	309	-241
Other Staff costs	-242	-155	-258
Staffing costs total⁴	-14 022	-12 892	-14 003
Other operating expenses			
Other operating expenses ⁵	-2 010	-1 976	-2 200
Inter-company costs and expenses			
Inter-company costs and expenses ⁶	-7 208	-6 801	-7 781
EXPENDITURE TOTAL	-23 240	-21 669	-23 984
TRANSFERS			
Funds for financing grants	131	605	147
Grants paid	-131	-605	-147
Transfers total	0	0	0
SUBTOTAL	-35	-332	-1 319

Source: Raintance

¹ Funding directly allocated to the university by the Swedish government.

² Includes revenue from fees, other reimbursements and funding. Funding which can include grants from Councils, other public research funding agencies, municipalities, regions and research foundations.

³ Inter-company transactions includes, for example, grants and/or or compensations from other parts of the university or from the relevant audit unit as well.

⁴ Staffing costs mainly refer to costs for personnel who receive salary from the relevant audit unit.

⁵ Other operating expenses can include, materials, costs for hired expertise, other consultants, travel costs, costs for premises off campus, depreciation, etc.

⁶ Includes, for example, inter-company staff costs, internal room rent for lecture halls, laboratories, offices and other inter-company expenses such as indirect costs for the faculty and university levels, printing and copying costs etc.

STATISTICS OF RESEARCH FUNDING APPLICATIONS

The table presents the success rate, the number of and the amount (SEK 1000) of submitted and granted applications by the Department of Geography, Media and Communication, year 2017–2019.

Table 3.21. Application statistics, Department of Geography, Media and Communication 2017-2019

YEAR	NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS	AMOUNT APPLIED, SEK 1000	AMOUNT GRANTED, SEK 1000	SUCCESS RATE %
2017	7	15 200	2 100	13,8
2018	12	51 500	28 600	55,5
2019	6	18 500	6 400	34,6

Source: Data of submitted applications are collected from the University's internal Form for external funding and later merged with data of granted applications.

Table 3.22. Amount granted per research project and year (SEK 1000)

The table shows granted amounts of ongoing research projects during 2017-2019, with granted amounts per year stated for the entire project periods.

The color of the cells shows the size of the amount granted, the darker the larger the amount.

FUNDER	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	TOTAL AMOUNT GRANTED
The Ander Foundation ¹	346	368	404	448	456							2 021
Riksbankens Jubileumsfond ²		150	150	120								420
Interreg Sweden-Norway programme ³			413	1 247	1 247	831						3 737
The Ander Foundation ⁴				1 240	1 240	1 240						3 720
The Ander Foundation ⁵				975								975
The R&D Fund of the Swedish Tourism & Hospitality Industry ⁶				300	130		100					530
Vinnova ⁷					253							253
Vinnova ⁸					80							80
The Ander Foundation ⁹						2 062						2 062
Interreg Sweden-Norway programme/Region Värmland ¹⁰						592	1 760		1 804	1 264		5 420
University of Stavanger ¹¹						100						100
Forte - Swedish Research Council for Health, Working Life and Welfare ¹²							1 000	1 000	1 030			3 030
The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth ¹³							40	198	158			397
The Ander Foundation ¹⁴							2 894	3 887	4 023	3 223	723	14 749
Region Värmland ¹⁵							40	198	158			397
University of Gothenburg ¹⁶							97					97
Taylor & Francis Group ¹⁷							34	149				182
TOTAL AMOUNT GRANTED /YEAR	346	518	967	4 329	3 407	4 825	5 964	5 432	7 173	4 487	723	38 170

Source: Raintance

Projects

¹ News on mobile platforms

² Geomedia

³ Music innovation network

⁴ Algorithm & media organisation

⁵ Measuring the Mediatization

⁶ Take the step towards digital placebased experience

⁷ XKRP Community experience data

⁸ Exposed - Virtual Reality

⁹ Ander visiting professor

¹⁰ Music Ecosystems Inner Scandinavia

¹¹ Hyperlinked news networking

¹² Platforms SWEIGIG

¹³ Placebased Digital Experiences (PDU)

¹⁴ Node 2

¹⁵ Placebased Digital Experiences (PDU)

¹⁶ Demographic challenges

¹⁷ Gender, Place & Culture

The table shows public and private partners formally involved in ongoing research projects at the Department of Geography, Media and Communication.

Table 3.3. Collaborative partners within ongoing research projects.

PRIVATE	PUBLIC
Studiefrämjandet	Dalarna University
Visit Värmland	Sunne municipality
Visit Dalarna	Arvika municipality
NIFA (cluster)	Kristinehamn municipality
Compare (cluster)	Universite Sorbonne Paris Nord, Laboratoire d'Excellence Industries Culturelles et Création Artistique (LabEx ICCA)
Sticky beat	Queensland University of Technology
Marilyn Production	Deezers forskningsavdelning

Source: Raindance

RESEARCH PRODUCTION (BIBLIOMETRIC DATA)

The data was obtained from Karlstad Universities repository DiVA (Digital Scientific Archive) by means of a search for all publications from GMK during the years 2017- 2019. Publication subtypes abstract and presentation were removed from the analysis.

Table 4.1. The table is a summary of GMK publications compiled by publication- and content type and covers the years 2017-2019

PUBLICATION TYPE	REFEREED	OTHER SCIENTIFIC MATERIAL	OTHER MATERIAL (E.G. POPULAR SCIENTIFIC, DEBATE ARTICLES...)	TOTAL
Article in journal	63	3	2	68
Article review	1			1
Book	2	2		4
Thesis, monograph		1		1
Thesis, comprehensive summary		1		1
Chapter in book	12	20	1	33
Conference article	3			3
Report		2	1	3
Collection, editor		1	1	2
Other		1		1
TOTAL	81	31	5	117

Source: DiVA

Table 4.2. Number of publications published with open access in Diva

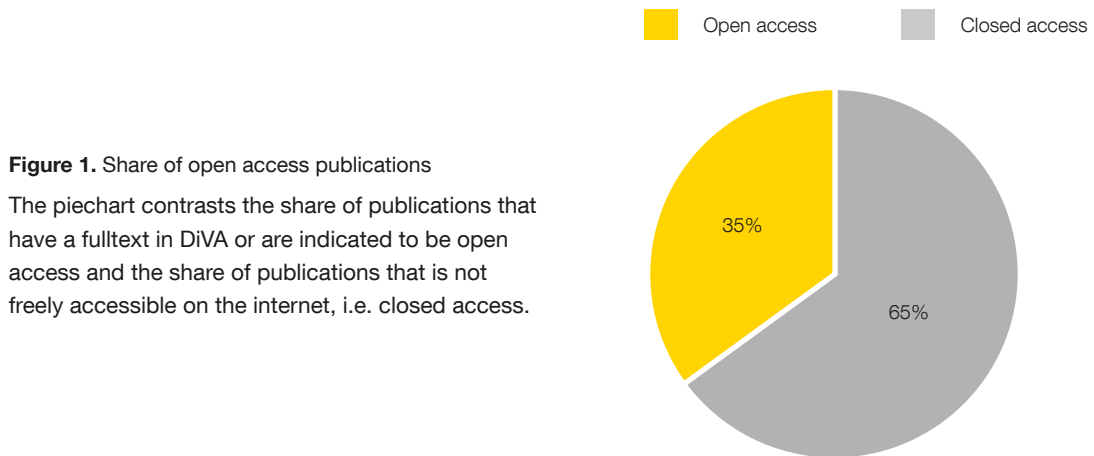


Figure 1. Share of open access publications

The piechart contrasts the share of publications that have a fulltext in DiVA or are indicated to be open access and the share of publications that is not freely accessible on the internet, i.e. closed access.

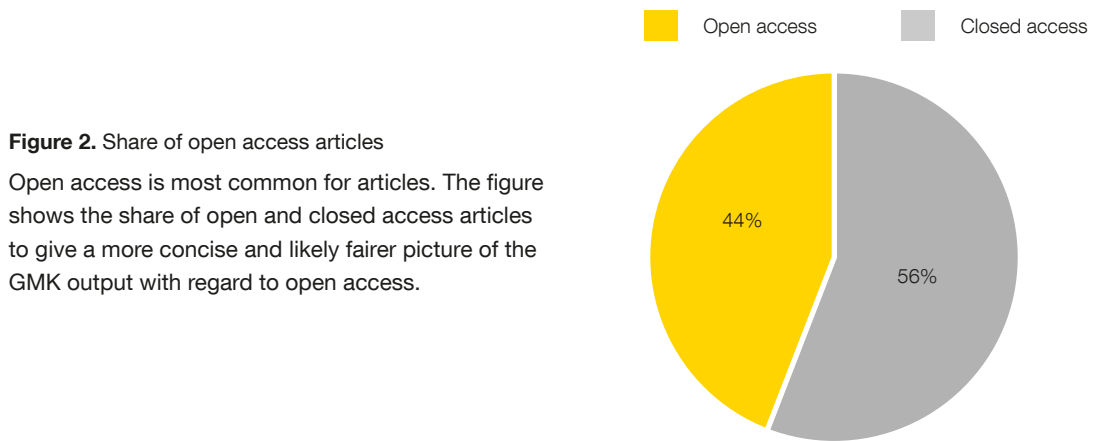


Figure 2. Share of open access articles

Open access is most common for articles. The figure shows the share of open and closed access articles to give a more concise and likely fairer picture of the GMK output with regard to open access.

INTERNATIONALISATION

Table 5.1. Co-publications with international researchers

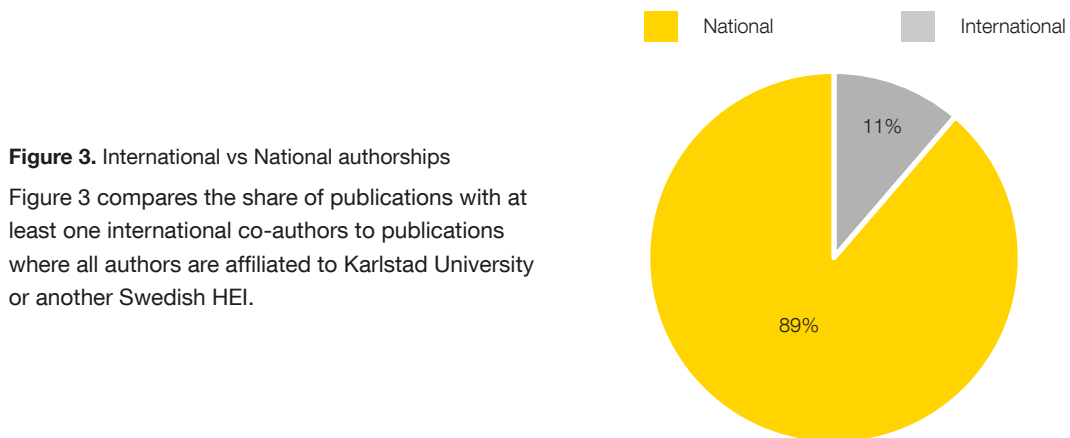


Figure 3. International vs National authorships

Figure 3 compares the share of publications with at least one international co-authors to publications where all authors are affiliated to Karlstad University or another Swedish HEI.

COLLABORATION AND APPLICATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

Number of evaluated innovative ideas per employee. Number of innovative ideas that have received funding for further developing. Number of intangible assets (patent, trademark, design).

There are no records of innovative ideas being evaluated or receiving funding for the evaluation unit for the period 2017-2019.

Note: The origin of data are based on the annual operations of the Innovation Office Fyrklöver. Innovative ideas could be a product, a method or a service that can be useful in the wider society in the form of start-up companies, licensing, etc.

Information on research collaboration is also partly reported in Table 2.1 (number of industry/external doctoral students in third-cycle education), in Table 3.3 (number of partners) and in the Self-reflection.

The Background data report is produced by the Periodic research review's administrative Support group; Sofia Andersson, Charlotte Månsson, Karin Brattfjord, Lotta Utterberg, Marit Askernäs, Nadja Neumann och Patrik Bångeri.

December 22, 2020

Assessment Report

Department of Geography, Media and Communication

Brief summary

The Department of Geography, Media and Communication is a vibrant multidisciplinary unit housing research and education in media and communication studies, human geography, tourism and geography for teachers. Despite its wide scope the department has found common ground not least in research where the research topic GeoMedia is proudly supported by researchers from all disciplines. Unfortunately, so far this successful cooperation is not transferred to education where disciplinary boundaries prevail. Research is regularly published in esteemed publication channels and there is a clear ambition to include all faculty and PhD-students into the production of high-quality research. Still, external research funding is somewhat limited and consists to a considerable degree of funding for regional development and collaboration with stakeholders in the region. This does not necessarily provide an optimal base for expanding the department and increasing the prominence of research. Recruitment is a challenge, too and although there is awareness of the importance of inclusion and gender balance, the current management set-up does little to mirror this. Thus, a more international orientation in education, research and recruitment could open up new horizons for the overall well performing department.

1. Research and scientific development

The evaluation unit, the Department of Geography, Media and Communication, had a positive development since the start of the evaluation period in 2017. In fact, the department is growing and also publishing activity is on the rise.

The Scopus bibliometric database and a SciVal-analysis reveals that research at the department centers on two core topics; 23 of 72 entries for 2017-19 are within the area of *Media, News, Journalism* and 14 publications are within the area *Tourism, Tourists, Destinations*. The remaining scientific output is distributed over a large range of topics. *Media, News, Journalism* holds the 5th place when it comes to output volume in Sweden, and among the top 10 research environments in the country, the Karlstad group is the one with the 3rd highest field-weighted citation impact. For *Tourism, Tourists, Destinations* an 8th place can be noted for both variables. For all areas the figures indicate good standards and high over average to average citation impact.

External research funding is increasing over time. However, funding is not least from a regional foundation and from various ERUF-programs. While this may finance important work, particularly the latter looks for application rather than contribution to global scientific knowledge. While this funding may be a good supplement, more efforts should be made to secure national and international funding.

Recently members of the department won prestigious research bids from Forte and VR. It was obvious that this even internally was considered a recognition for the research work performed and the competitiveness of the department.

Particularly scholars in the media and communication research areas are active and visible at national and international conferences and are publishing in top international journals in the field. Also researchers from the geography section of the department partake in the international scientific community through publications and presence at conferences. However, there are also members of the department that are focusing teaching and remain without any major contribution to the research of the department.

The Geomedia intellectual and research collaboration is innovative and promotes scholarship that intersects disciplinary boundaries in productive ways. The research on mediatisation, for example, has been influential and the scholars working in this intellectual space have been part of an ongoing international conversation on the ways digital media shapes our daily lives. The connection between communication and geography is clearly of added value in this work.

Open science plays a limited role in current research practices. Opportunities for open access publication are used, but open data and research data management do not seem to be high on the department's agenda.

2. The unit's composition and academic qualification

The department gathers a compilation of two previously independent units, i.e. Human Geography and Media and Communication studies respectively. Today still, it is obvious that

these disciplines are a core factor for the structures within the department. Hence, there are appointments as head of discipline, and we note that this structure seems to dictate teaching separate programs with seemingly little intellectual overlap. Academic cooperation seems more likely to be taking place in relation to research, where particularly the GeoMedia group, also supported by the university management, provides a platform for collaboration.

The faculty in the unit seem well-qualified. According to the background data, the department had five professors in 2019 (FTE). Among those there is one female professor seemingly part-time working with education only. The male professors spend two thirds of their time on research, which is a fair amount. The skewed gender balance at the professors' level is problematic. A recent part-time appointment of a female professor is a small but positive step underlying at least an awareness of the situation.

The department has an equivalent of 15 senior lecturers, of which a majority is female. For the male senior researchers research is only 26 percent of full time, while female researchers have 46 percent. This pattern is similar for lecturers, too; Male lecturers have 8 percent for research, while the figure for women is 25 percent. The background data does not reveal why this distribution has occurred and we did not address it during the interviews either. However, during the evaluation period the pattern varied quite a bit and it seems that an unstable inflow of external funding may explain this.

Obviously, the average qualification of the employed faculty has improved during the evaluation period. While the share of teachers with a PhD-degree is stable, the share of "readers" (docenter) among the senior lecturers has increased significantly from 10 to 25 percent. Most of those are male, which is somewhat surprising considering the small share of research reported for male senior lecturers. Still, overall the improving qualifications of the senior employees indicates a positive development.

The background data reveal that the department more or less lacks post-doctoral researchers. From a career development perspective this is somewhat problematic, but maybe to be explained by the reported challenges to secure sufficient external funding.

Similarly, the number of PhD-students is limited. Only 3 out of the 10 PhD-students are enrolled in geography. This is a critically small number, The enrolled students have only few potential role models and mutual learning opportunities are scarce. The number of PhD-students in media and communication is more in line with national standards. Altogether the current amount promises 2-3 PhD-examinations per year, which is an increase compared to the evaluated period. Still, it is also notable that the background data indicates rather low activity levels for all current PhD-students. Most PhD-students seem to work only part-time with their theses. Only one student reports 80 percent activity during autumn term 2019.

3. Organisation, leadership and management

The academic disciplines within the department are mirrored in the management. Hence, while the Head of Department oversees all units, there is a Deputy Head, and two Director of Studies, one from the Media and Communication program and the other from Geography. Although GeoMedia is reflected as a collaborative intellectual space that spans the disciplines, the management structure may reinforce the separateness of the two units.

We note from the self-report materials that all of the faculty share the same space. This is an important aspect that likely helps facilitate collaboration and consultation across the units to foster greater cohesion for the units. Shared space should continue to be supported by the University.

As we note elsewhere in the report, it is noteworthy that the leadership is comprised entirely of white men. Although a woman was recently hired into a leadership position, it was noted that she is “interim” director, and that she is only employed half time. Although several times there was discussion by the leadership of the need to “do more” to foster and promote women into leadership, there was not an articulation of a concrete plan of how to do so. This seems a critical problem for the organization that requires substantial effort and attention to remedy.

In the background material as well as in the interviews the leadership indicates a clear ambition to include all members of the department into research. Hence, there is an expectation that staff participates in research seminars, too. While PhD-students are obliged to be present and to present, there seem to be less rigid expectations toward faculty members. Obviously, this entails that not everybody is really actively involved. However, in order to improve the quality of research applications they need to be presented in a research seminar before they are submitted to a funding agency. Overall, the interviews provided the impression that there is a vivid seminar culture with regular events with a reasonable number of participants.

A challenge seems to be the inclusion of employees who are marginal in relation to the core research topics of the department. This applies for example for those employees involved in teacher education.

Another topic that was addressed during the interviews was recruitment. The department leadership expects employees to be in place in Karlstad, which is beneficial to the local research environment. However, we noted that the department does not provide any major benefits for newly recruited faculty, which could be problematic considering the mentioned stiff national and international competition for competent academic staff.

4. Collaboration and application of research findings

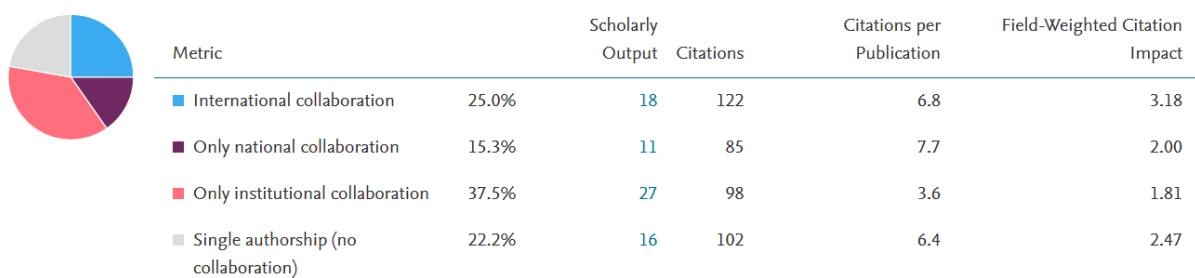
As mentioned above, ERUF funding is an important source of income for the department. This implies that quite a substantial share of activities are in collaboration with stakeholders outside the university. Particularly INTERREG-funding stimulating cooperation with Norwegian universities of applied sciences and regional stakeholders has been of importance during the evaluated period. It seems that not least researchers within geography have oriented toward this kind of funding. Even in the interviews it is noted at several occasions that there were ample opportunities to engage in regional development issues.

Another example mentioned in the interviews is the collaboration with Region Värmland through the “Academy of Smart Specialisation”. The aim of this project is to contribute to the regional smart specialisation strategy and its implementation. The engagement in this project has provided several assignments for researchers of the department and previously also entailed the appointment of a professor at the department.

While this is in line with overall expectations towards the role of universities for regional development in Sweden, it can be noted that this kind of funding not primarily aims at the production of high-quality research. Rather it sets development work and application of research findings in focus. This does not need to be a problem but requires an awareness that an engagement in development projects not automatically contributes to the production of global scientific knowledge, particularly since reporting is seldom peer-reviewed or disseminated in international journals or books. Obviously, it is particularly the geography section of the department that is engaged in this kind of collaboration, which also has been important for the financial wellbeing of the unit.

The interviews revealed that outside stakeholders requested the participation of researchers at the department in various collaborative undertakings frequently. Respondents complained about the fact that engagement in collaboration with external stakeholders was not rewarded in career systems. However, it was appreciated that the faculty contributed co-funding to enable participation in these projects.

A positive outcome of INTERREG-program participation is however the internationalization of research and publishing. Thus, a bibliometric perspective reveals that 25 percent of the research published between 2017 and 2019 are the result of international collaboration, while 60 percent of publications only involved researchers from the department.



5. Inclusive culture: internationalisation, gender equality and disciplinary transparency

It has been notable that the current management team of the department, at least as it was presented during the sessions, consists entirely of male academics. This is anachronistic, and substantial efforts should be made to include women also into more formal administrative assignments. This is not only about sharing power in relation to departmental education and research agendas. Inclusion creates role models and contributes in equal opportunities particularly for early career researchers.

In terms of internationalisation it seems that the department is rather national in its orientation. Most employees are Swedish speaking and also in terms of publications, only a relatively small share is published in international cooperation (11%). Considering the academic standing of the research environment, more should be possible. International recruitment should be a possibility, not least considering the reputation of the department and the amenities of the region. Obviously, first steps into this direction were taken, but internationalization could become a more outspoken strategy also affecting recruitment activities, e.g. advertising in international networks and web pages.

The interviews exemplified the solidaric atmosphere at the department: An interesting inclusive practice among faculty winning external bids share a part of their internal funding with colleagues. This means that external funding benefits all faculty in terms of access to time for research.

Following the Swedish tradition, PhD-students were considered as employees rather than students, which is also positive for fostering the next generation of researchers.

The faculty members emphasized the supportive and positive atmosphere, also when it comes to helping each other with grant proposals and discussing each other's work. This atmosphere should not be taken for granted and can be considered a key strength of the department. This is also a major achievement of the department's leadership which obviously managed to unite the disciplines within the department and bridge eventual gaps in a constructive way. Not least the establishment of the GeoMedia profile has been a good way to create common ground.

However, the wide range of disciplines within the department also brings challenges. It was not clear how the staff members involved in teacher education were represented in the department. The interviews gave at least an impression that this group is marginal in relation to department strategy but also to attention.

6. Connection between education and research

Overall 60% of work at the department is committed to teaching, while 40% is research. This mix allows at least in theory that all employees can combine a research and teaching career. Still the interviews revealed some problems concerning the connection between education and research.

Even though it was stated that more or less all faculty and PhD-students participated in seminars and other research activities, there was uncertainty regarding the thematically peripheral parts of the department, which resembled teacher education in geography.

The education programs at the department are offered in Swedish exclusively. Though this is understandable considering the regional importance of the university, it limits opportunities to recruit international faculty, and thus it hampers the development of the research environment, too. Here, it could be considered to accept and actively offer bilingual education programs, also to prepare students for international assignments and labor markets.

The interviews revealed a shared support for GeoMedia, also highlighting the uniqueness of the approach. However, it is somewhat remarkable that this profile is not transferred into education.

Certainly, a program in Geomedia on the undergraduate level may be difficult to market to potential students. However, on an advanced level, courses or an entire program could help to profile the education in geography and media and communication studies in comparison to other program offers available in Sweden and abroad. Graduate students should be able to see the advantages of combining two disciplines. Such an initiative would enable the researchers to pool resources and infuse their research excellence into education.

Furthermore, such joint efforts would provide an opportunity to foster the next generation of researchers and certainly improve the pool of candidates for PhD-student positions focusing on the GeoMedia field.

7. Concluding assessment and recommendations for continued development

Overall we note that the Department of Geography, Media and Communication is a well-functioning unit with considerable strengths. Despite the rather unusual combination of academic disciplines within one unit, management and staff quickly found common ground and embraced the idea of working together towards common goals and a unique scientific profile. This cannot be taken for granted and indeed, the interviews revealed that the financial support from the university for the GeoMedia research environment has been an important stimulus for the successful development.

Against this background we would like to provide the following recommendations:

- Increase efforts on the integration of communication and media on the one hand and geography in the other hand, in research, but also in teaching. Although the establishment of Geomedia has been a success so far, a continuation of university support may be required to consolidate the development of the young unit.
- Integration in education. A joint masters program could be a way to further support the creation of the unique academic profile at the department. It can build on the competence of the researchers at the department and also provide a recruitment base for the PhD-programs in Geography and Media and Communication, respectively.
- Increase efforts for internationalization in education. Since teaching is done in Swedish, recruitment of faculty becomes a challenge. For national recruitment the department has competitive disadvantages compared to more prestigious universities, while international researchers cannot be used in education. Shifting the language of instruction to English at least on the masters level would help to change this. Also, it would allow for attracting international students to the programs mirroring the department's innovative profile.
- Expand the scope of potential research funding. The department might be an interesting partner in consortia within the ERC Horizon framework. Here, a good relationship with the university wide grant support staff is of importance to overcome administrative hurdles. Furthermore, recent success in relation to prestigious national research funding agencies should be used as a learning opportunity to increase the overall funding rate of the department.
- Develop strategies for providing more doctoral and post-doctoral positions. Currently, the department has a limited number of early career positions, which in a longer perspective challenge the department's potential to recruit and to internationalize.
- Develop an action plan to increase the share of women in management and higher positions in general and make sure implementation is successful.

- Increase attention for open science, and not limit this to open access, but also consider open data practices, as well a structural approach to research data management.

The assessment committee

Prof. Dieter K. Müller (chair)
Department of Geography, Umeå University

Prof. Jennifer Stromer-Galley
School of Information Studies, Syracuse University

Prof. Rens Vliegenthart
Amsterdam School of Communication Research, University of Amsterdam

Comments in reference to the assessment report of the evaluation unit; The Department of Geography, Media and Communication

To the evaluation panel,

First, we would like to thank the group for an interesting discussion on the day of the virtual visit on February 9th, 2021. Secondly, we thank the group for many valuable comments in the report.

We have, however, noticed some factual errors and what can perhaps be seen as misunderstandings from the self-evaluation report and/or the virtual visit. We will go through them chronologically, i.e. as they occur in your report.

Page 3:

The faculty in the unit seem well-qualified. According to the background data, the department had five professors in 2019 (FTE). Among those there is one female professor seemingly part-time working with education only. The male professors spend two thirds of their time on research, which is a fair amount. The skewed gender balance at the professors' level is problematic. A recent part-time appointment of a female professor is a small but positive step underlying at least an awareness of the situation.

Clarification by GMC: Regarding the female professor working with education only, this can be referred to the measurement used by the university. The female professor is in fact doing almost 100 percent research (and research related) work at one of the research centers. This is, however, not measured as part of GMC, and the few percent the female professor is "booked" at GMC is for teaching. If one would look at the professor's plan of duties, one would see that teaching is in fact a very small portion of the total workload.

As for the recently appointed female professor, she is in fact appointed at 100 %, i.e. full-time. However, she has chosen to take a leave of absence at 50 %, in order to conclude research at another Swedish university.

Page 4:

As we note elsewhere in the report, it is noteworthy that the leadership is comprised entirely of white men. Although a woman was recently hired into a leadership position, it was noted that she is "interim" director, and that she is only employed half time. Although several times there was discussion by the leadership of the need to "do more" to foster and promote women into leadership, there was not an articulation of a concrete plan of how to do so. This seems a critical problem for the organization that requires substantial effort and attention to remedy.

And page 5

It has been notable that the current management team of the department, at least as it was presented during the sessions, and consists entirely of male academics.

Clarification by GMC: We think the statements above needs a clarification in the sense that it needs to clear what leadership is addressed.

- a) The leadership of the department in fact comprise 75 % women:
 - Head of department (male, PhD, associate professor/reader)
 - Deputy head of department (female, PhD, senior lecturer)
 - Director of studies, MCs (female, PhD, senior lecturer)
 - Director of studies, "Geography" (female, PhD, senior lecturer)
- a) As for Head of Subjects, the observation is correct as they are all white males.
- b) The research group Geomedia has had male professor as the director, but the steering group has had an even gender distribution.
- c) The research center where many of the researchers in Human Geography has done a substantial part of their research, CRS, has been led by a female professor.
- d) Several of the larger research projects (MINS, MECO, PDU) has been led by female senior lecturers.

This is not to say that the department does not have a challenge regarding gender distribution at leading/management positions, but the quotes above give, in our opinion, a somewhat erroneous description.

Page 6 (and in the recommendations):

The interviews revealed a shared support for GeoMedia, also highlighting the uniqueness of the approach. However, it is somewhat remarkable that this profile is not transferred into education.

Certainly, a program in Geomedia on the undergraduate level may be difficult to market to potential students. However, on an advanced level, courses or an entire program could help to profile the education in geography and media and communication studies in comparison to other program offers available in Sweden and abroad. Graduate students should be able to see the advantages of combining two disciplines.

Clarification by GMC: As stated on page 5 in the self-evaluation report, but it could have been clearer, the department does in fact have a joint masters program in Geomedia studies, since the fall 2019.

The Department of Geography, Media and Communication, April 8th, 2021