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In 1986, the facilities at Norrtullsgatan 2 were rebuilt and renovated. The Geo Library was moved from the Old Observatory and came to form an important hub for students and researchers alike. (Photo: Eva Wernlid)

Department of Human Geography

Mats Widgren

AMONG THE DIFFERENT factors that influence the character, the culture and the achievements of a university department, the intellectual and practical leadership is of course instrumental. During the first thirty years of the Department of Human Geography, it was a one-professor department. The professor most often also served as head of department. As geographers, we also believe that space and location matter. In the documentation from the early years, the obstacle that distance created is a current theme (Hannerberg 1965, Lundén 1970, Helmfrid & Sporrang n.d.). Economic geography has shown that easy access to face-to-face contacts enables creative development and is a force behind clustering and creative cities. For the Department of Human Geography, its locations over the last 50 years have offered qualitatively different possibilities for face-to-face contact within the Department, with colleagues in physical geography and with other departments in social science and the uni-

versity as a whole. During the first years (1956–1971), the Department was internally dispersed at several addresses. It shared one area of the city, Vasastan, with many other departments of social science (see map in Helmfrid 2001). Later on, we became internally concentrated but were left behind in the inner city (1971–1997). Most other disciplines moved to the Frescati campus. Our departmental premises were subject to a profound rebuilding and reorganisation in 1986–1987, coinciding in time with the appointment of a new professor. In the summer of 1997 we finally moved to Frescati and were co-localised with the geosciences and in convenient proximity to most other social sciences.

In the beginning of the spring term 1971, I lined up with other students in the stairways at Kungstensgatan 45 and registered as an undergraduate in human geography after having studied statistics, political science and economics. This semester was my only direct contact



Kungstensgatan 45, now used by Folkuniversitetet. (Photo: Mats Danielson)

with the first of the four phases I will describe below. In 1973, I was employed as an assistant and started my doctoral studies. From my doctoral defence in 1983 and onward, I have been employed in different positions at the Department. Thus, the position of this text's author moves from the curious investigator of what was prior to my own memories (pre-1971) to the perspective of the 1970s' post-graduate stu-

dent, the active member of a successful research group on historical landscapes in the 1980s and 1990s, and the professor (1999–) and head of department (2001–2007, 2013–2014). The following is based on my own memories, notes and reflections, a browsing through 50 years of university catalogues, some printed material on the history of the Department and a few archival documents. The history of the Department

until 1997, written by Helmfrid and Sporrang, also serves as a base for my account (Helmfrid & Sporrang n.d.). For the broader context of Swedish geography in the 20th century, the works by Helmfrid (1999) and Buttimer and Mels (2006) form a background. Staffan Helmfrid and Ulf Sporrang have read this manuscript at a preliminary stage and added important information and perspectives. A list of 78 dissertations published on the web provides an insight into the themes researched during this period. Much of the ongoing intellectual activity has not yet made a clear imprint in the form of an identifiable group of dissertations from a specific research group or school in this list.¹ There is usually a long delay between the establishment of a research group and the finalisation of an identifiable group of dissertations.

Positioning geography as social science

Kulturgeografi was part of *Samhällsvetenskapliga fakulteten* (the Faculty of Social Sciences) at Stockholm University from the birth of the Faculty. In 1956 David Hannerberg, then professor in Lund, had been summoned to Stockholm to take up a new position as professor of ‘*Geografi, särskilt kulturgeografi med ekonomisk geografi*’ and became a member of the Faculty of Humanities. This split of

the chairs in geography into physical and human geography had already started in the late 1940s at other Swedish universities. At the time of the split in Stockholm, the professor of geography in Stockholm, Gunnar Hoppe, chose to specialise in physical geography. The Institute of Geography (*Geografiska Institutet*) from then on had one professor in the Faculty of Mathematics and Science (Hoppe) and one in the Faculty of Humanities (Hannerberg). The two professors shared the directorship of the Institute. The formal split into two separate departments seems to have been made in 1965, one year after the establishment of the Faculty.

The reason I use Swedish above is because the term ‘*kulturgeografi*’ has been somewhat controversial in different periods of the intellectual development of human geography in Sweden. It is also not intuitively well understood but often mixed up with cultural history, cultural anthropology and, not least, with the English term cultural geography, which is the subfield of human geography that deals explicitly with culture (see Cosgrove 2000). Going through some documents and articles from the 1950s and 1960s, I have also realised that the term was seen as problematic already in the 1960s. In a debate with Hannerberg, William-Olsson wrote that the term was unfortunate, and could give rise to any kind of interpretation. William-Olsson claimed that when the professorships in Sweden were divided into

¹ <http://www.humangeo.su.se/publikationer/avhandlingar/avhandlingar-för-doktorsexamen>.

physical and human geography in the 1940s, most of those that had qualifications in human geography were specialised in the historical geography of the 16th century and hence specialised in what was then called *kulturgeografi* (William-Olsson 1962:152). In 1968, Sven Dahl (as always meticulous with terms) in his assessment of candidates for the successors of Hannerberg also considered the term unclear and discussed why the then current terms *Antropogeographie* (German) and human geography (English) were not more directly translated to Swedish (Dahl 1968, see also Dahl 1972).² But as Dahl also points out, the newer and wider sense of *kulturgeografi* has since then become synonymous with human geography. The issue concerning the naming of our discipline has come back now and then. Many human geographers today find the term ‘*samhällsgeografi*’ (lit. societal geography) more appropriate, as it clearly conveys the idea of geography as social science. Nevertheless, as will be shown below,

that term has also shifted meanings in the history of Swedish human geography.

A reason why I also use Swedish for the name of the Faculty – *Samhällsvetenskapliga fakulteten* – is that I want to point out the difference between ‘*vetenskap*’ and ‘science’. The difference between the German/Swedish *Wissenschaft/vetenskap* and the English *science* has namely played a central role in the debates within geography. “Wissenschaft for a German is any organized body of knowledge, not only what we call a science” wrote Fred K. Schaefer in 1953. Is geography a science? Yes, said Schaefer, geography should be a law-seeking science, where the speciality of the geographers were “the laws concerning spatial arrangements” (Schaefer 1953:228). His article was an early clarion call for positivism in geography and for the spatial paradigm that would then come to rule in geography for two decades or more, especially in Sweden and in the English-speaking countries. Schaefer’s article was formulated as a direct critique against previous conceptions of geography as mainly a descriptive discipline, where the ultimate goal was a synthesis in the form of a regional monograph. In present Euro-English, the distinction between ‘*Wissenschaft*’ and ‘science’ is becoming more and more blurred. At our university, the confusion is manifested in the fact that we (in English) have a Faculty of Science (*naturvetenskap*) and another one in Social Sciences (*samhällsvetenskap*).

2 “Formuleringen ‘*kulturgeografi med ekonomisk geografi*’ synes icke ha varit helt lyckad. Den klassiska tyska termen var ‘*Antropogeographie*’; på engelska har man ofta sagt ‘*human geography*’. Troligen av språkliga skäl har man i Sverige icke velat använda uttryck som *antropogeografi* eller *människogeografi*, än mindre *human* eller *humanistisk geografi*. Begreppet *kulturgeografi* vore å andra sidan utomordentligt svårt att definiera, om därmed skulle mena något annat än vad tyskarna avsett med uttrycket *antropogeografi*. Flertalet geografer torde numera uppfatta termen *kulturgeografi* som liktydig med *antropogeografi*. Formuleringen ‘*med ekonomisk geografi*’ gör emellertid att man måste bli tveksam om vad som egentligen i Sverige skall avses med termen *kulturgeografi*”. (Sven Dahl, sakkunnigutlåtande 26 sept. 1968, Stockholms universitets arkiv)



The artist Calle Drakenmark (1931-2009) studied geography under David Hannerberg. This painting was made for the latter's 60th birthday in 1960. It shows a typical field scene, where Hannerberg (in goggles and beret) delivers his interpretation of a cadastral map. Some of the students have been busy measuring fossil agricultural fields – the reason for the rod to the left and the field map to the right. (Photo: Mats Widgren)

Hannerberg was only active as a professor in Stockholm for twelve years. During these years he influenced the future development of the Department in a very profound way. He was a quantitative geographer with a deep knowledge of agrarian history, and had connections to ethnology, history, etc. At a time

when hypothetico-deductive approaches and quantitative methods were coming more and more into focus in social science generally, and especially in geography, his background as an undergraduate in mathematics and physics was an obvious strength. He also wrote the first textbooks on quantitative geography in

the Scandinavian languages (Hannerberg 1969, 1970). At the same time, his own research focussed on the historical geography of agrarian landscapes. Himself the son of a farmer, he brought a different perspective to agrarian and economic history, a perspective that challenged the then sometimes patronizing view of farming and peasants in history (Helmfrid 1982). He also succinctly developed arguments for geography as *socialvetenskap* and for the need to understand labour relations (Hannerberg 1944). Buttimer and Mels (2006) summarise (with reference to Helmfrid) the role of Hannerberg:

His quantitative inclination, unorthodox enthusiasm for novel methods, and his tendency towards spatial generalisations on a northern European scale, represented an explicit rapprochement between traditional landscape research and what would become the positivist turn in geography (Buttimer & Mels 2006:66–67).

It can be confidently stated that Hannerberg's unique combination of skills and interests had a decisive role for human geography at Stockholm University. When all other geographical departments in Sweden during the 1970s and 1980s focussed on the geography of contemporary Swedish society and on quantitative methods, the Stockholm geographers went against the grain. In a period of modernism

and the building of the welfare state, many of them focussed on basic research concerning past agrarian landscapes. Within that field, the Stockholm school of historical geography developed into a strong and internationally visible centre. This would hardly have been possible if Hannerberg was not at the same time respected as a modern geographer. As mentioned by Gerd Enequist in her assessment of Hannerberg for the post in Stockholm in 1956, he was the supervisor of both Sven Godlund and Torsten Hägerstrand. For Enequist this served to show that he was well acquainted with the latest developments in modern geography (Enequist n.d).

How did this, for his time, very modern geographer explain to his students what *kulturgeografi* was? I read his book *Att studera kulturgeografi* as an undergraduate in the early 1970s but do not remember much of it, perhaps just because it took such a pragmatic (and therefore not very interesting) position towards something that at this time was a much debated topic: What is (human) geography? In his book, Hannerberg defined *kulturgeografi* from the research projects that had been funded by the Swedish Council for Social Science Research, which he grouped under economic geography, social geography and geographical cultural landscape research. These three fields he considered to be separate branches (*vetenskapsgrenar*).

A common view, still alive in the 1950s, was that regional geography was at the core of geography and that the systematic branches of geography (e.g. social geography, historical geography, economic geography, biogeography, climatology, geomorphology, etc.) were there to serve that core. Hannerberg, somewhat surprisingly to me now, just lumped together the systematic geographies that had anything to do with humans under the heading of *kulturgeografi*. He denied that there was any core or that these systematic branches were integrated parts of a synthetic subject, geography. “It is a conception, which, according to my view, is unnecessary and leads to logical problems”³ (Hannerberg 1968b:24). His critique against the idea of a synthetic subject of geography was a position that was fully in line with the spatial and quantitative school that was dominant in the 1970s.

On the other hand, his pragmatic view, that each of these sub-branches of human geography had their own *objects* of research, was in sharp contrast to the then ruling paradigm of geography as spatial science. This paradigm presumed that geography, unlike e.g. zoology, astronomy, etc., did not have its own objects. Following the ideas of Immanuel Kant, geography and history were disciplines not defined by their objects but by their organising principles:

³ ”det är en uppfattning, som enligt min mening är onödigt och som leder till logiska svårigheter”

chorological (spatial) and chronological approaches, respectively. What the emerging spatial paradigm claimed, which was in fact in line with Kant, was that it was the spatial structures, not the objects as such, that defined geography.

At about the time of his retirement, Hannerberg reflected in an essay on the relations between objects, data and models very much in line with emerging quantitative and spatial geography. However, he again left the question of geography’s definition open: “A beautiful summer day, when waves are rolling in over shallow beaches, I feel comfortably far away from the rather sterile discussion about what human geography is”⁴ (Hannerberg 1968a:12). Hannerberg was evidently defending one of the textbook explanations of what geography is: Geography is what geographers do. This pragmatic view can be said to characterise much of the later developments at the Department. There have been contradictions and intellectual debates, but very few serious contests over what human geography is, neither have Stockholm human geographers been especially visible on the national and international arenas of discussion regarding the theoretical aspects of our discipline.

⁴ ”En vacker sommar dag när vågorna rullar in över långgrunda stränder känner jag mig behagligt fjärran från den ganska sterila diskussionen om vad kulturgeografien är.” (Hannerberg 1968a:12)

William-Olsson, then professor of economic geography at the Stockholm School of Economics (SSE), wrote a critical review of the first (1961) edition of Hannerberg's book '*Att studera kulturgeografi*'. He questioned Hannerberg's division of human geography into several sub-branches and instead defended the old view of geography (human + physical) as a synthesis. William-Olsson's review and Hannerberg's answer are a useful read to understand how geography was discussed at this time (William-Olsson 1962, Hannerberg 1962). As a young postgraduate in the 1970s, I often had to listen to William-Olsson's lamentations of where geography was heading. When he as an emeritus from SSE visited the Department, he could ask: "To where are you planning your next expedition?" Or he said "Somebody must study the relief of Africa. It is often erroneously conceived as just a large tableland". With his Stockholm studies, William-Olsson was the real pioneer of a true social scientific geography. It was always a conundrum to me why he spent so much of his later life and especially his emeritus years defending an old-fashioned view of what geography should be. His Stockholm studies were characterised by detailed research on the social inner differentiation of the city, and was focussed on causes and effects, explanation, and searching for the laws behind the inner differentiation (William-Olsson 1937). His doctoral thesis and his other studies

of Stockholm are often referred to when discussing Swedish early contributions to the development of international geography. The reader who wants a deeper understanding of this colourful and innovative geographer should read Helmfrid's analysis of William-Olsson's last uncompleted project on the geography of Europe (Helmfrid 2008).

1956–1971: Around the Old Observatory

The home of geography in Stockholm since the 1930s was the Old Observatory, and still so when the chair was divided between physical and human geography in the mid-1950s. As student numbers increased and research expanded, additional localities had to be sought elsewhere. In 1964, Hannerberg had his office in the Old Observatory. Societal geography (*samhällsgeografi*) was taught by Gunnar Törnqvist at Observatoriegatan 1. Population geography was taught by Nils Friberg at Observatoriegatan 2A. Teaching in general chorology took place at Observatoriegatan 11. Many of these addresses were in old residential apartments, in buildings earmarked for demolition.

In his reply to William-Olsson's book review in 1962, and in a special report about the Department in the journal *Ymer* in 1965, Hannerberg gives a vivid picture of teaching and research activities at the new department. The largest group was in *modern samhällsgeografi*

(modern societal geography) with economic geography and *sambällsplanering* (urban and regional planning). In this field, docent Godlund was in charge until he took up a position in Gothenburg in 1962. In 1963, Törnqvist defended his doctoral thesis on industrial location. He was after that in charge of teaching *sambällsgeografi*, until appointed professor in Lund in 1967 (where he is still active as emeritus). Other researchers that later came to play a role in the history of the Department mentioned by Hannerberg under *sambällsgeografi* were Bruno Johnsson (docent 1965), Torvald Gerger (docent 1970) and Gunilla Beckman (later Gunilla Andrae, PhD 1981, docent 1998).

The other main field he described was *allmän och historisk kulturgeografi* (general and historical human geography). The division between this field and that of *modern sambällsgeografi* seems somewhat arbitrary since Claes-Fredrik Claesson's spatial studies of cinema audiences are mentioned under *allmän och historisk kulturgeografi*. Hannerberg also admits that the boundaries are blurred ("*mycket oskarpa*"). It is interesting to note that Hannerberg already then emphasised that "in fact everything within *kulturgeografi* can be counted as *sambällsgeografi*". Seen in retrospect, the historical geography of agrarian landscapes was the field under this heading that came to influence future research at the Department in the most profound way.

A third field, that clearly interacted with the two mentioned above, was the research and development of quantitative spatial methods (*metodutveckling och korologisk teori*). None of the researchers mentioned under this heading came to play a role in the further development of research at the Department, but the legacy of this group survives in Hannerberg's own textbooks (Hannerberg 1969, 1970). More importantly, they do so in the development of computer cartography and geographic information systems, which since the visit of Duane Marble in Stockholm in 1969–70 has remained a core speciality of the Stockholm department. As emphasised by Helmfrid and Sporrang (n.d.), Hannerberg was heavily engaged in raising the funds to acquire the most recent technical equipment for enlarging and reducing maps, measuring areas on maps and making advanced statistical calculations. At the time of his report from the Department in 1965, this concerned machinery that often combined mechanical and optical parts with transistorised electromechanical calculators (for illustrations see photos in Hannerberg 1965). The Olivetti Programma 101 that I remember well from the early 1970s seems to have been a hybrid between an electromechanical calculator and a desktop computer.

An interesting question relating to this period is why historical geography came to dominate the research. I have mentioned Han-

nerberg's personal qualities as one explanation, but the question can also be asked from the other perspective. Why did Hannerberg's interest in quantitative methods, and the presence at Stockholm University of influential figures in quantitative and modern human geography such as Godlund and Törnqvist, not lead to the development of a spatial school of research focussing on contemporary planning? It is clear that this was a concern for Hannerberg. He was personally involved in planning issues and also worked towards the establishment of a separate chair for *Modern samhällsgeografi* at the Department (Hannerberg 1962:157). The anecdotic explanation for why modern societal geography never took off and recruited many successful doctoral students, which can be heard from older colleagues, is that a large number of participants in Godlund's and Törnqvist's seminars were soon recruited to the then growing government planning administration in the capital and at county boards, where regional planning was growing fast (see also Lundén 1970:35).

The flip side of the coin was that the research on the history of agrarian landscapes was of high quality and innovative for its time. Staffan Helmfrid had already started his studies in Östergötland, when Hannerberg was recruited. In 1962, Helmfrid published a thesis that introduced the morphogenetic approach on Swedish landscapes. It was highly influenced by the

dynamic development of this field in post-war Germany. With its problem formulation, it marked a sharp contrast to the regional monographs that had dominated historical geography until then. Hannerberg had also launched a programme for using field evidence to reach further back in time in the search for the origin of field patterns (Hannerberg 1963). It was in this context that Sven-Olof Lindquist was researching the remnants of Iron Age field boundaries and stone walls in Östergötland in cooperation with archaeologists from Stockholm University, which became the basis for his dissertation in 1968. The geographical approach to ancient fields, using a morphological approach inspired by geomorphology and with meticulous surveys in the field, was combined with the new possibilities for archaeological dating that the radiocarbon method offered. This led to a rapid development of new results and new questions on the prehistoric and early medieval agrarian landscapes. It laid the foundation for a close interdisciplinary cooperation with medieval history and archaeology in the years to come.

Towards the end of this period, the chair after Hannerberg was advertised, this time as 'Human Geography with Economic Geography' (*Kulturgeografi med ekonomisk geografi*). After a drawn-out process, Helmfrid was appointed in 1969. He has himself described the turbulent situation in the late 1960s and early 1970s,



The Old Observatory on the hill *Observatoriekullen*. (Photo: Mats Danielson)

when he took charge of the Department's leadership. More liberal university entrance requirements and a removal of the restrictions concerning the number of students admitted had caused an increase in student numbers from about eighty in the mid-1960s to over eight hundred four years later (Helmfrid & Sporrang n.d.). Many students did like I did in 1971, lining up on the street outside a popular department to register for courses a few days before they started. Regardless of all other planning problems, the question of premises for teaching and an increasing demand for

extra lecturers to take care of all the students became acute problems.

Already in 1965, a move to Frescati was discussed by Hannerberg but the plans were never realised. In the presentation of Human Geography in 1970, Thomas Lundén mentions that the activities of the Department still took place at four different addresses. One of them was even more distant from the central office than before, at Tulegatan, where the desktop computer and an optical pantograph were located. "The staff is forced to use a large part of their time to carry papers. Exchange of information is made more difficult and has to be formalised. Students are forced to make time-consuming searches for their supervisors" writes Lundén (1970, my translation).

1971–1987 Norrtullsgatan 2 – period 1

When most other social science departments moved to the new campus, there were still no concrete plans for the geography departments to be relocated. Instead, a new provisory solution was made possible, when the Faculty of Law moved to Frescati in the summer of 1971. For 26 years, the neo-classical 'temple' at Norrtullsgatan 2, originally built in 1925–27 to house the faculties of Humanities and Law, became the home of human geography (Program 1927, Strömdahl & Wählin 2001). This was a huge building with enormous halls and stairways, built to house



Norrtullsgatan 2, presently referred to as *Studentpalatset* (the Student Palace) and offering study places in the city centre for students. (Photo: Mats Danielson)

eight professors, administrative staff, libraries and several large lecture theatres. Internal communication within the Department became easier. Having to climb three flights of stairs or to wait for the slow two-person elevator, combined with competition between different research groups, however led to hat coffee was brewed on three different floors. Interaction with other social sciences at the new Frescati campus was severed by physical distance. For those of us who spent our first years as university employees at Norrtullsgatan, the distance to Frescati made us talk about the University (at Frescati) as something external to us.

Student numbers continued to increase. This also affected the PhD programme. A large number of postgraduates were admitted to the new type of PhD programme introduced in the early 1970s. My list of fellow students active during my first year as a PhD candidate (1973) contains 39 students admitted according to the new rules. Of these, only twelve graduated.

Internationally, the late 1960s and early 1970s was a period when the positivist paradigm came to influence geography heavily. The textbook answer taught to us advanced undergraduates was that the “distinctively geographical question is ‘why are spatial distributions structured the way they are?’” (Abler et al. 1972:56, Lundén 1970). Hempel’s book ‘*Vetenskapsteori*’ was recommended reading

on postgraduate courses. Nobody asked why the English title was ‘Philosophy of Natural Science’ and what the implications were for us human geographers studying humans in the past. Some of the answers to that question were to be found in David Harvey’s inspiring and reflexive book ‘*Explanation in Geography*’ (1969). Only a few years later, critique against positivism started to flow in geography. Gunnar Olsson returned to Sweden from the US. In early 1978 he gave lectures at the Stockholm School of Economics, which many of the human geography postgraduates from the University attended. In 1974, Olsson had attacked the basic premises of geography as science and especially the spatial paradigm (Olsson 1974). According to him, the impossibility of drawing inference from form to process was like a hit under the waterline of the whole ship of geography. Harvey developed his Marxist approaches to urban geography and showed, on the other hand, how space mattered for social justice. Perhaps more interesting for those of us who were studying farming, landscapes and resources, Harvey sharply stated that ‘resources’ is not a scientific but an ideological concept (Harvey 1974). The theoretical approaches to human geography changed rapidly at this time. For those who eagerly searched for the core of the discipline, the whole foundation of the spatial paradigm was shaking. Perhaps typical for Stockholm,

this did not shake the fundamentals of what we were doing.

During much of this period Helmfrid, the new professor, was increasingly drawn into services for the University at the faculty level. Between 1978 and 1988 he served as vice-chancellor of the University. As expressed by himself, the “scientific and administrative leadership of the Department was taken up by Torvald Gerger and Ulf Sporrøng, thus reflecting the natural division of the Department into two fields, the socio-scientific and the humanist” (Helmfrid & Sporrøng n.d.).

These two docents intermittently held posts as head of department and at the same time developed their own research groups. This interregnum was in many ways productive for the development of new research, but was not without tensions.

Within the group of historical geographers, docent Sven-Olof Lindquist continued his research on both historical and recent changes in agrarian landscapes and continued the exploration of ancient fields, especially on Gotland and in Västergötland. In 1977, he was appointed to one of the new posts as county antiquarian on Gotland. From then on, Sporrøng took academic leadership of the research on historical landscapes. One of the strengths that Helmfrid had brought to landscape research was his international network and his international overview, something pointed out already by

Hägerstrand in his assessment of Helmfrid for the professorship in 1968. Helmfrid’s inspiring lectures on the broader picture of the history of the European agrarian landscape since the medieval period made it possible for us to put our field work in different parts of Sweden into an international context. This was unique both in a Swedish and the rest of Scandinavia for this time, and was further developed during this period. A field symposium in Sweden with a group of UK historical geographers in September 1978 became instrumental in this respect for many of us. The international orientation and the connection to current debates in social science turned out to be an important strength, especially in relation to the emerging hunger in archaeology and history for models from social science and for international approaches. During this period, Hannerberg worked as an emeritus to finalise his grand synthesis on the connection between regularities in the physical layout of medieval fields and settlements, on the measurements used, and their relation to the administrative levels of early societies (Hannerberg 1976, 1977). Hannerberg’s research programme was special and is difficult to assess even today. The results, which came out of his ambitious programme to include the field evidence in the form of fossil field patterns, did not really fit into his model, but, as shown by dissertations in the 1970s and 1980s, opened up new lines of enquiry. In

1985, Sporrang synthesised his work in the Mälardalen area in a regional overview that, in a way, combined the strength of the old regional monograph – understanding the broader geographical context – with the detailed analyses of changes in field patterns and settlements as reflecting wider societal change from the late Iron Age to the 17th century (Sporrong 1985). The results from this active group of researchers were recognised nationally by historians and archaeologists and among the international community of historical geographers. One UK observer compared the achievements of this research programme with “the success of the recent Japanese industrial effort” (Whittington 1987:74).

At the same time, Gerger developed a research programme that drew on the excellent Swedish population sources on the 18th and 19th centuries, in combination with historical maps. The combination of these two types of sources, and others, made possible an early historical GIS database for a parish in Sweden. Gerger developed, together with Stefan Fogelvik, Göran Hoppe and Roger Miller, a number of investigations into the local social and spatial processes of change in the Swedish countryside. A series of doctoral dissertations and other monographs were published from this group between 1979 and 1992. The group had a clearly international orientation and were inspired by recent European social and economic

history. A major monograph by Göran Hoppe and John Langton on the development of capitalism in the countryside of Östergötland during the 19th century combined the general questions of a social historical geography with the rich Swedish sources from that period (Hoppe & Langton 1994). As a result, a second partly overlapping research group reinforced the dominance of historical geography at the Stockholm department. However, the two groups emphasised different time periods (1700s and earlier vs. 19th to early 20th century) and different objects of research (agrarian landscape change vs. broader societal change on the countryside).

Parallel to this, there has always been research on contemporary societal issues. Six of the fifteen dissertations from this period concerned modern social geography, but during this period these research interests hardly formed schools. As pointed out by many observers, the lack of research on urban issues is indeed a notable feature. “The situation is paradoxical: the city, a geographical play box surrounds the Department” wrote Lundén (Jonsson & Lundén 1984). As mentioned above, William-Olsson’s Stockholm studies from the 1930s provided early inspiration for urban geography internationally. In 1965, Hannerberg wrote about the emerging studies on the urban geography of Stockholm, and the university catalogue for 1967 even provided a telephone

number for “*Stadsbygdsprojektet / storstad-sprojektet*”. For unknown reasons this never developed much more than that. During the 1970s and 1980s urban geography was nevertheless one of the core themes in the undergraduate curriculum. Anyone who has followed lectures and excursions by Bertil Sannel, Kerstin Bodström and Lennart Tonell know about their capacity to connect local urban geography to wider research issues. In this period, however, the time for research for lecturers was minimal, so a research group never really developed. Their experience from urban development was nevertheless an important base for the undergraduate programme in ‘Urban and Regional Planning’ (*Samhällsplanering*) launched in 1977 in cooperation with other departments at the Faculties of Social Science and the Humanities (Bodström et al. 1978). In somewhat altered form, this programme remains today and draws a large group of students. A full review of academic staff and research interests for a representative year in this period can be found in Sporrøng (ed. 1978).

1987–1997 Norrtullsgatan 2 – period 2

In 1986, Helmfrid was given a personal chair after his service as vice-chancellor. Sporrøng was appointed to the thus open professorship in 1987, which was once again named ‘Geography, especially human geography’. He also became head of department. This coincided

with a major renovation and reorganisation of the house at Norrtullsgatan 2. The law library finally moved out and two of the large lecture theatres were converted into a library and map library, respectively. The Geo Library, which had until then been located in the Old Observatory, was moved in.

For research on historical landscapes, this was a period when the concept of cultural landscape had entered the general debate. Already in 1979, Staffan Helmfrid on behalf of the Royal Academy of Letters and Antiquities had organised a large conference in Folkets Hus called ‘*Människan, kulturlandskapet och framtiden*’. Three regionally focussed interdisciplinary projects based at the universities of Lund, Stockholm and Umeå were the outcome of this effort. By the late 1980s they had started to deliver results. Parallel to this, the general appreciation of the long term role of humans in shaping the landscape had increased among decision makers and in state agencies for cultural heritage, as well as in environmental conservation. The achievements of this research group, until then mainly curiosity-driven, therefore entered into a period of applied research with many contacts in planning, cultural heritage and environmental conservation.

During this time, Sporrøng made a huge contribution towards popularising the historical understanding of Swedish agricultural landscapes. He personally flew over large parts of



Entrance to Norrtullsgatan 2. (Photo: Mats Danielson)

In 1971, the Department of Human Geography moved in at Norrtullsgatan 2, built in 1925-27 to house the faculties of Humanities and Law, with large halls and stairways. (Photo: Eva Wernlid)



Sweden in a helicopter in order to gather first-hand knowledge of the status of the historical aspects of settlements and field patterns (Sporrong 1995). Parallel to this, Helmfrid led the large project concerning a new National Atlas of Sweden, which also synthesised the knowledge of the landscape history of Sweden (Helmfrid 1994).

Methods of recording historical features in the landscape, based on cadastral maps and on field surveys, were standardised and introduced in special courses for rescue archaeologists and planners, and the Department became a centre for applied work with the cadastral maps. A method for producing map overlays to compare the 17th and 18th century agrarian landscape was introduced. The new map library became a laboratory at the interface between basic and applied research. At this time, map overlays and rectification of maps were still made with pens, photocopiers and ink-pens. The laboratory also became a breeding ground for advanced students aspiring towards doctoral degrees. Many of the doctors in this field that would graduate in the next period were engaged in this applied work.

Parallel to this, a new programme for historical landscape research was formulated by Sporrong and Widgren. It emphasised the use of landscape evidence in the deciphering of historical property rights and social structures (Sporrong & Widgren 1988).

With few exceptions, most research up until this period had been focussed on the human geography of Sweden. In the early 1970s, Prime Minister Olof Palme had initiated a commission for the internationalisation of Swedish universities, led by the former leader of the main academic trade union, Bertil Östergren. Staffan Helmfrid and the physical geographer Anders Rapp worked for the commission. They developed a new curriculum in university geography, where resources should be guaranteed for undergraduate field courses in developing countries (Rapp 1974). Stockholm University was the only university to respond to this possibility, but this was sufficient to guarantee the provision of the necessary funds needed to start regular field courses in Kenya, and it was also the start of the building of a research capacity in development geography. Since then a non-European field course has been part of the geography curriculum common to physical and human geography.

In the early 1990s, a Sarec-sponsored project to strengthen links and research cooperation with the Institute of Resource Assessment in Tanzania and the University of Botswana opened up possibilities for PhD students from Tanzania and Botswana to study at Stockholm University, and also for a limited number of Swedish PhD students to be financed by the programme. This project was, on the Swedish side, run through a cooperation between Carl

Christianson at the Department of Physical Geography and Ulf Sporrøng at the Department of Human Geography. The Environment and Development Studies Unit (EDSU) was set up, based at the Department of Physical Geography. It focused on land use and land degradation. In the wake of the Sahel crisis in the 1970s, new frameworks had been developed. Political ecology provided a radical answer to Malthusian arguments, in which population increase and poor farmers' mismanagement of their lands were to blame for desertification and land degradation. Three doctoral dissertations were written in 1995–1996 on this theme, followed by several similar dissertations in the following period.

This project indicated the strength of an interdisciplinary cooperation between physical and human geography. A line of thought strongly developed by Sporrøng at this time was that the undivided subject of geography would be able to give significant contributions to the understanding of environment-society relations. With growing research on environment-society relations, geographers found their old capacity of dealing with such issues overrun by human ecology, systems ecology and new centres for interdisciplinary environmental studies. Again the Stockholm department, at least initially, went against the grain of development in human geography. At this time neither the modernist societal geographers nor

the radical human geographers favoured an integrated geography. Some of the radical geographers at that time were especially sharp in their opposition to the idea of geography as a synthesising discipline.

Starting in 1979, a series of meetings between Nordic critical geographers had been held, and in 1984 the journal '*Nordisk Samhällsgeografisk Tidskrift*' was launched by partly the same group. Stockholm was to large extent outside of this network, while post-graduate students and young lecturers from Uppsala, Roskilde, Oslo, etc. were more involved. I can only find three Stockholm geographers among the contributors to '*Nordisk Samhällsgeografisk Tidskrift*' during its entire lifetime (1984 to 2007): one undergraduate student, one doctoral student and one researcher, the latter two only contributing with book reviews. On the other hand, three later members of staff in Stockholm, who were then still in Uppsala, made one or several contributions to this journal (Gunnel Forsberg, Bo Malmberg and Brita Hermelin). The fact that Stockholm geographers were outsiders to this network is also reflected in the meagre representation of references to Stockholm-based research in the overviews of Nordic geography produced by this group (I can find *no* references to contemporaneous Stockholm researchers in Öhman & Asheim ed. 1994 and only a few in Öhman & Simonsen ed. 2003).

Among those critical geographers, the concept of '*samhällsgeografi*' had a meaning different from the one used by Hannerberg. While Hannerberg (1962, 1965) considered to a large degree '*samhällsgeografi*' as a geography in service of the state, the concept of '*samhällsgeografi*' among the critical geographers was often much more clearly associated with the critical strand: "Samhällsgeografi [...] refers here to Nordic critical human geography launched during the 1970s in connection to the radical leftist orientation among the students and younger university teachers" writes Lehtinen (2003).

As mentioned above, the tendency among many radical geographers in the 1980s was to oppose the idea that geography was a discipline able to transcend the nature-culture dichotomy. To understand why, we have to go back to the original split between human and physical geography. While this split had started in the 1940s in Sweden and was more or less completed with the establishment of a chair in Stockholm in 1955, the situation was different in other Nordic countries. In Norway, such a split was not yet fully achieved in the late 1980s. Only later did Norwegian geographers organise a separate organisation for human geographers. In Oslo human geography became a sub-section of sociology under the Faculty of Social Sciences. The idea of geography as a synthetic discipline was in Norway

associated with the idea of a natural science-dominated regional geography, and later with a systems oriented type of resource geography that did not take social science fully into account. This was seen as an obstacle for developing radical human geography as social science. A prolific voice for the radical Norwegian view was Björn Terje Asheim (Asheim 1987). A similar scepticism towards a rapprochement to physical geography and the idea of geography as an undivided discipline was often voiced by Uppsala geographers.

In 1997, an international evaluation of Swedish human geography was carried out by HSFR (Swedish Council for Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences). It noted the strong position in Sweden generally for the study of historical rural landscapes and commented upon its "well deserved international reputation" (Christiansen et al. 1999:65). Among the recommendations of the evaluators there are two themes I want to highlight. One was their recommendation of increased research on environmental issues and cooperation with physical geography. This led to the announcement of a six year research post, sponsored by the research council, which after competition was awarded to a candidate from Stockholm University. The other is their recommendations for increased mobility and for better postgraduate courses. Since then an organisation of national research courses has been established to secure



The Geo Building at Frescati, originally shared by human and natural geographers and geologists. (Photo: Mats Danielson)

cross fertilisation at the postgraduate level between departments.

1997 – The Geo Building, Frescati

In the summer of 1997, the Department finally moved to the Frescati campus. Face-to-face contact and cooperation were made easier at three spatial levels. Instead of sharing a voluminous building, the Department was gathered in two floors in one of the wings of the new geoscience building. Common coffee and lunch rooms for the whole Department guaranteed that none of three old coffee factions survived.

At the level of geosciences, contacts were also made easier. The building was shared with the then three departments of Physical Geography, Quaternary Geology and Geology, respectively. Moving in close to Physical Geography was a deliberate plan, where the Heads of Department Ulf Sporrang (human geography) and Leif Wastensson (physical geography) were instrumental. The Geo Library was preserved as a separate unit within the broader Stockholm University library and formed the core of the building. The move contrasted with the developments in Uppsala and Gothenburg, where

human and physical geography were now located at large distances from each other and where physical geography has become anonymous within the new large constellations of geosciences. It is only in Stockholm that the departments of geography share a building like this. The aim to establish a close cooperation between physical and human geography can still be read in the details of this building. The Stockholm Geoscience Building was planned according to the comb principle (cf. Beckman 2004), which presupposes a common front, but a sharp labour division between different disciplines behind this common front. In order to counteract this, a special bridge was built in the far end of one of the wings so that direct physical contact was established between landscape researchers in physical and human geography. This bridge remains today the physical manifestation of the idea of close cooperation between physical and human geography. This proximity has facilitated collaboration in GIS and remote sensing, in research on Swedish landscapes, and on past and present African environments, and not the least, made work for all those engaged in teaching the common courses in geography easier.

The final arrival of human geography at the Frescati campus also made contact with the other social sciences, the humanities and the university administration, much easier. The occasional contact on the long escalator from the under-

ground, during lunches at Lantis or at the Faculty Club, does indeed facilitate formal and informal contact. Many of us who were part of the move from Norrtullsgatan 2 to Campus Frescati in the autumn of 1997 felt that we had finally become part of the Faculty of Social Sciences.

When it comes to the academic staff in human geography, the late 1990s marked a definite end to the one-professor system. Already in 1994 at Norrtullsgatan a second chair in ‘Geography, especially Human Geography’ had been established with Bo Lenntorp as its first holder. Lenntorp had until then been docent in Lund, a student of Hågerstrand, and had specialised in time geography. He brought a different intellectual sphere closer to Stockholm. Being in charge of doctoral studies, he influenced theory and method in many dissertations. Moreover, in the late 1990s, a professorship in ‘Human Geography, especially Urban and Regional Planning’ was secured to Stockholm University as part of a governmental programme to increase the share of female professors. Gunnel Forsberg from Uppsala was appointed. She brought not only research competence on urban and regional planning to the Department, but was already then a central scholar in gender geography, with her application of the ‘gender contract’ concept to spatial issues. When the Department gathered for a kick-off on an archipelago island in August 1998, this new setup was clearly manifested

with Bo Lenntorp as head of department and the new professor Gunnel Forsberg giving the introductory talk on planning research. The teaching programme in 'Urban and Regional Planning' (*samhällsplanering*) did finally get a permanent research superstructure with an active research group. Hannerberg's old wishes for a second professorship in 'Modern Societal Geography' had come through by a wide margin, with Forsberg, Lenntorp and Sporrang representing different and complementary research interests: planning, gender, time-geography and landscapes. Since then, Sporrang has been succeeded by Mats Widgren (2002)

and Lenntorp by Bo Malmberg (population geographer from Uppsala, 2005). In 2012 Brita Hermelin (economic geography) was promoted to professor, but unfortunately left for Linköping University in 2013.

During the early period at Frescati, the breadth of the research was further developed by Docent Gunilla Andrae, who in the late 1990s set up a research programme on People, Provisioning and Place in African Cities (PPP) with funding from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). The programme focussed on the consequences of liberalisation and globalisation for access to



The central stairway of the Geo Building. (Photo: Mats Danielson)

the basic means of livelihood in African cities. No less than seven doctoral dissertations were published within this framework between 2002 and 2007. Besides the dominant historical geography group and the Gerger-Hoppe group (see above), this is the quantitatively clearest mark in the list of dissertations of a distinctive school of research at the Department. An external reviewer reviewed one of the theses from this research group but also commented on the other: “The PPP research group has developed quite a knack for combining what one expects of a quality dissertation—thorough, rich and original empirical research—with probing interrogations of cutting edge theory” (Myers 2007).

In the list of dissertations from this period a notable feature is the increased representation of research at the interface of urban geography and planning in Sweden and elsewhere in Europe. These dissertations represent approaches from ethnology, time-geography, environmental psychology, economic geography and gender studies. The previously often mentioned lack of urban geography and studies on Stockholm at the Department is no longer true, although no coherent school of urban studies can yet be identified in the list of theses.

During the period 1997–2014 dissertations on agrarian landscape history still represented a large share of the output but were no longer as dominating as in previous periods. Several of those theses published in the early 2000s are

the outcomes of the 1986 research programme on property and landscapes. Historical geography of rural landscapes remains a strong research group, especially among the senior researchers. In 2001, with support from Sida, a research environment for African landscape history was launched under the acronym PLATINA (People Land and Time in Africa). This reflected the continued close collaboration between physical and human geography established in the late 1990s and was led by Karin Holmgren and Mats Widgren (Holmgren et al. 2008). Research on the past and present of African farming environments is a growing field of research.

As mentioned above, the move to Frescati facilitated contact not only with physical geography, but also with the other social sciences. In 2007, an interdisciplinary master’s programme on ‘Globalisation, Environment and Social Change’ was launched in collaboration with the Department of Economic History and the Department of Physical Geography and Quaternary Geology. It has a close connection to research interests at the involved departments, with climate studies (physical geography), globalisation (economic history/international relations) and global urban environments (human geography) forming the core curriculum. At the BA level, the Department collaborates with the Departments of Social Anthropology, Economic History and Political Science

in a programme on 'Global Development'. The Department also participates in a graduate school of international studies that gathers doctoral students also from economic history, political science, media studies and law. Bo Malmberg's very active and visible research group in population geography and migration has a close collaboration with the Demography Unit at the Department of Sociology and forms part of one of the Faculty's appointed leading research areas.

Reflections

Hannerberg gave a picture of a great width of research interests in his overview from 1965. Yet, most of the research initiatives he mentioned then never developed very strongly during the following decades. Instead, the focus during this half century has very clearly been on the history of agrarian landscapes, which has formed a very strong school of research with documented international impact. Nevertheless, slightly more than half of the doctoral theses during this period were not in historical geography. These theses only seldom represented identifiable and coherent schools of research to the same extent as those in historical landscape research. Initiatives to strengthen other fields of human geography have been made over the years. A presentation of the Department from 1995 reflects the ambition to represent a truly broad span of branches in hu-

man geography (*Människan och landskapet*, 1995). Attempts were also made to establish an interdisciplinary centre for urban planning at about this period. Only with the establishment of a second and third professorship in 1994 and 1998 was the basis established for the breadth that is now represented both in teaching and research. We now have research groups that in different constellations focus on urban and regional planning, including global urbanism and gender geography, population geography with geographical information systems and remote sensing, as well as past and present farming landscapes in Sweden and Africa. A university department today must nonetheless balance on one hand the full width that teaching programmes motivate, and the need for optimally sized research groups that can establish international networks and be nationally and internationally visible on the other. It is unlikely that the research interests at the Department in the future will be much broader, but the themes and constellations will definitely change and reconfigure. Our present size with three professors, twelve lecturers (of which five have docent competence), and a few researchers on soft money makes possible a close interaction and creative innovations in the borderland between research groups. Thus, several research projects involve themes and researchers from more than one of the three main strands of research mentioned above.

Looking back at the roughly 40 years from which I have first-hand knowledge, this increase in the scope of teaching *and* research represents probably the most fundamental change at the Department, besides the increase in numbers of staff. It also goes hand in hand with – and has been supported by – the increased emphasis on research done by lecturers. During the coming academic year, half of the lecturers will spend substantial time on externally funded research projects. This comes in addition to the 30 percent research that is now funded from the University for each lecturer. This is a clear contrast to the situation in the 1970s to 1990s, when the heavy teaching loads led to a marked labour division between researchers and teachers.



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