Faculty of Social Sciences
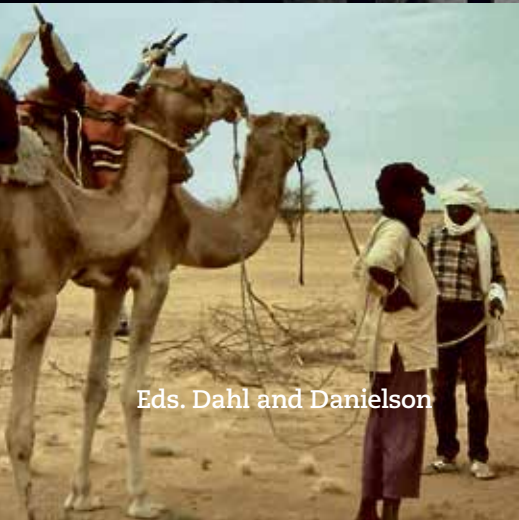# Stockholm University
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Eds. Dahl and Danielson

Stockholm
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Stockholm Centre for Organizational Research

Christina Garsten

IN TIMES OF marketization, privatization, Europeanization, and globalization – whither the Swedish public sector? This question has occupied social scientists across disciplines for decades now, and continues to do so. The public sector is far from an ossified, stable unit of analysis — on the contrary, it offers rich opportunities for discovery, bewilderment, and surprise. Moreover, it provides ample material for the empiricist to dive into, and is fertile ground around which to organize research.

In this chapter, I will first provide a brief sketch of the beginnings of Score, and then move on to reflect on the passion for 'organizing' that lies at the heart of the research activities of the centre, but I will also provide some thoughts on the organization of the research centre itself. The continuous balancing act of exploration and exploitation in research, and the evaluative ethos, will be discussed. Last but not least, I will dwell on the multidisciplinary composition of Score, which is the lead signature of

'the score' that makes up academic life at the research centre.

Zooming in on the public sector

The public sector, and its relation to the private sector and transnational influences, has been placed under the magnifying glass in Score's research ever since 1992, when the centre was first created. When the centre celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2012, we could look back on two decades of research concerning the transformation of the public sector. Score has now grown into an adult in the institutional landscape of the university, having been shaped by scholars at Stockholm University and the Stockholm School of Economics who have been engaged in the centre, and having made its mark on the academic community.

Score's mission is to conduct basic research on public sector management and change. The public sector in Sweden, as in many other coun-

tries, has been undergoing tremendous change over the last decades. The boundaries of the public sector itself have changed, with changing interfaces between the state, the market and the voluntary sector, and new forms of partnerships and collaboration appearing. This applies most visibly to the provision of welfare services, where the state is facing competition from a number of organizations, corporate or civil society based. The public sector has also been exposed to Europeanization and other transnational influences. A large part of the public sector is now intertwined, as regards practices as well as guiding ideas, with transnational organizations such as the European Union. Norms and rules for how the public sector should be organized have changed accordingly.

Research on the public sector must take these trends into account and should ideally include a range of issues wider than those directly relevant to the public sector in a specific nation-state at a given time. In Score's research it is emphasized that public sector development and design should be understood in relation to its history, to society in general, and to the development of other states and international organizations. The idea is that it is through a broadening of the scope that we can reach a better understanding of the public sector's changing forms of governance. This applies as well to the understanding of new and emerging forms of regulation, changing ways of welfare provision, new modes of evaluation, changing conditions for democracy, the forms of accountability required, and how and why relations between states, and between state and citizens, develop in a certain way.

Score emerged out of an initiative in connection with the 1989 research policy proposition (Prop. 1989/90: 90). The Social Democratic Government saw a need to stimulate knowledge around the new management, control and evaluation systems that were emerging in the wake of ongoing structural change and demands for the renewal of the public sector. Recognizing the regionally scattered and discipline-based research in this area, the need for a long-term programme of independent basic research on the public sector was acknowledged. The proposition was written in the context of a research policy debate on the advisability and feasibility of organizing research so that it, without sacrificing academic quality and long-term knowledge, could overcome the divisions that characterized existing research in the field in order to meet the needs for more integrated understanding of the public sector. A rising share of externally funded research at universities and colleges also raised the question of the balance between fixed and variable resources, and posed the question of how the provision of knowledge to policy and reform of the public sector could and should be catered to. Against this background, the government in May 1990

The Score building in *Kräftriket* was formerly part of the old Veterinary College, explaining the dogs as decorative elements on its wall. (Photo: Ingrid Nordling)

assigned a special investigator to prepare a proposal for the organization of a research programme on the public sector.

After a referral treatment, the government, now a conservative coalition, presented its proposal to the Parliament in the proposition 'Research on the public sector' (*Forskning om den offentliga sektorn*; Prop. 1991/92:16). The proposition was based on a combination of concentration and dispersion of efforts and a balance between fixed and variable resources. After approval by the Parliament, the government decided in December 1991 to make 17.5 million SEK available for the implementation of a research program on the public sector. It was suggested that resources be concentrated to the formation of two multidisciplinary centres, one (SCORE) at Stockholm University and Stockholm School of Economics, and the other at the University of Gothenburg (CEFOS). To com-

plement these, funds would also be allocated via the Swedish Research Council (*Vetenskapsrådet*) to major research programmes of national scope, which would allow researchers from universities across the country to participate in the development of knowledge in the field. Funds were also allocated to SCAS (Swedish Collegium for Advanced Sciences) with the aim of strengthening a research programme on the renewal of the public sector. The Swedish Research Council was given the mandate to evaluate the centres and the programmes after 12 years. It was hoped that this investment would contribute to create fertile conditions for long-term, innovative and internationally strong research on the public sector. This initiative, and the continued support from both Stockholm University and Stockholm School of Economics, provided a fertile basis on which to cultivate and nurture long-term, basic research on the organization of the public sector.[1]

Experimenting with 'organization'

At the core of Score's research activities is organization theory. Scholars at Score share a deep-seated curiosity about social organizing in the broadest sense. More specifically, researchers at the centre share a curiosity for the modes of organizing that characterize the state apparatus and its interfaces with private and civil society organizations. Score in itself resembles a laboratory of ideas, a place where new combinatory exercises are continuously tested out, not randomly, but informed by our disciplinary heritages, concepts, and methods. Historical institutionalism has a strong foothold here, as has Weberian organization theory and social constructionism. Most influential, however, has been the influx of 'new institutional theory,' in its Scandinavian version. This theoretical strand has had the capacity to hook on to established disciplinary theories in innovative ways, and to provide a common ground for discussion and interpretation. In a general sense, new institutional theory is attentive to the assemblages of ideas and norms in which organizing processes are embedded and recognizes the creative interplay between the organization and its environment. In the evaluation that the Swedish Research Council conducted of Score and other programmes in the original funding scheme of 1991, it was recognized that new institutional theory had come to characterize much of Score's research (*Vetenskapsrådet* 2003). To some extent, this theoretical strand has developed into the 'Score lingo' that practically all Score researchers recognize (but may not altogether align themselves with). This does not mean, however, that the different theo-

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1 The first director of Score was Björn Wittrock (1992–1994), followed by Kerstin Sahlin (1994–1998), Christina Garsten (1999–2003), Rune Premfors (2003–2009) and Staffan Furusten (since 2009). The first chair of the Executive Board of Score was Nils Brunsson (1992–2008), succeeded by Ulrika Mörth (2009–2011) and Christina Garsten (since 2011). The chair of the Score Advisory Board is Lars Engwall.

retical preferences have joined into a unified choir. On the contrary, the content of normative influences upon organizations, the extent of change, and the modalities of power are oftentimes hotly debated, by way of the optics provided by varying theoretical perspectives. Above all, Score remains a space for experimentation in and with organization theory, and how it may, or may not, interlink with other theoretical perspectives.

Whilst Score is a place in which to experiment with organization theory, its internal organization has also been experimented with. Over the years, the Score community of scholars has tried different ways of organizing research: in networks, research themes, and along research projects and programmes. In the first few years, the centre had a network-like organization, with looser constellations of researchers gathering around central research themes. Each network was coordinated by a research director, who took the lead in organizing seminars workshops, research funding applications, and the like. The early research directors, Göran Ahrne (sociology), Nils Brunsson (business administration, also the first Chair of the Executive Board of Score), Bengt Jacobsson (business administration), Rune Premfors (political science, also the holder of the then newly instigated professorship) and Kerstin Sahlin (business administration, also then the director of the centre), were vital to

the energetic start of Score, and for its continuation. Their curious spirit, verve, and complementarity have made a strong imprint on the centre.

As Score's research focus shifted along with that of scholars, it was decided in 1999 to organize it more tightly around research themes. The idea was that research themes would reflect central research foci, around which researchers would gather. Rather than clearly bounded groups, the idea was that they should be permeable and open to whoever wanted to partake. Even so, they provided a tighter form of organizing than did the looser network constellations, in that resources were allocated to themes and funding applications more directly linked to overarching themes.

Research themes are relatively long-lived, generally lasting for some five to seven years, or until it runs out of steam. Also, Score's research today is focused around core research themes; Organizing Knowledge; Organizing Markets; Democracy and Organization, and Rule Setting and Rule Following. Research themes have provided a degree of stability and long-term vision to research activities. Moreover, they have worked as 'communities' in the sense that a single scholar has most often been able to connect to one or more research themes, and to find a larger collective of interested colleagues in this context. For a dedicated scholar, the value of a likewise dedicated

Christina Garsten, Ulrika Mörth, Rune Premfors and Nils Brunsson receive Royal visitors to Score in 2012. (Photo: Ingrid Nordling)

group of colleagues is paramount. On the downside, research themes, while permeable and heterogeneous, nevertheless have a tendency to construct boundaries around themselves, and of contributing to 'groupthink' (Janis 1972). The flip side of groupthink is that innovation may get inhibited by tendencies to homogenization and isomorphism – processes of which organization scholars are well aware, at least in theory.

As every social scientist would know, there is an ever-present tendency to institutionalization and inertia in most social groupings – so also at Score. Organizations are havens for ritualistic practices, for the construction of taxonomic systems, and for the crafting of cosmologies in ways that make them amenable to analysis. Academia is, as we know, ripe with rituals and ceremonies. As richly described by Gerholm and Gerholm (1992), Ehn and Löf-

gren (2004) and Beecher (1989) among others, central ingredients of academic life are the ritualized patterns of interactions that provide continuity and predictability in the environment, and that confer key values onto its members. The research seminar, the peer review process, the doctoral defence, and the lecture, are examples of such rituals.

At Score, not only have scholars studied and written about the rituals of the Swedish Government Office, of the EU bureaucrats in Brussels, of auditors and evaluators, and of management consultants, but they have as well been prone to developing their own social rituals and organizational patterns. Rituals that have acquired a particular social value for Score are the weekly Thursday seminar, the coffee break, the Crayfish party, and perhaps most of all, the habit of bringing a piece of kitsch art to the (by now pretty impressive) kitsch collection. Thursdays, with the staff meeting and the seminar in the morning, and the coffee break in the afternoon, are 'Score-days,' when most of the associated scholars show up. Since many scholars share their affiliation at Score with a tenured or temporary teaching position in one of the 'mother departments' (i.e. departments/subjects represented at Score: business administration, political science, social anthropology, sociology, and economic history), the building is not always teeming with people. Nevertheless, on Thursdays, it is.

Since Score's early days, the research seminar has been the central node around which research discussions, debates, and reviewing have oscillated. This is also the space for contentions of disciplinary identities and boundary work (more on this below).

As Ehn and Löfgren point out (2004:96), the research seminar is not only a ritual, it is also an important academic arena, where people meet, discuss, project themselves, as well as observe and evaluate each other. The seminar has its particular dramaturgy and choreography. Score seminars tend to be lively, with shorter presentations of on-going and planned research, and scholars eagerly throwing themselves into the discussion. Most comments tend to be geared towards the constructive, with the aim of providing concrete advice as to how the paper, the book chapter draft, or the research project can be improved. Some comments, however, turn into lengthy digressions about how the topic has (after all) been treated in the discipline of the commentator, hence pointing to alternative (and explicitly or implicitly more fruitful) ways to treat the topic. But most of all, Score seminars are characterized by a genuine curiosity towards what one's colleagues are up to, and what appears to be coming out of it.

At the regular Thursday afternoon coffee break, new associates and visiting scholars are introduced, birthdays are celebrated, book releases are announced, and scholars leaving the centre are thanked. The seminar, the coffee break, and other social events constitute integrative rituals and arenas that provide a punctual and cyclical stability to the working week and the academic year. For an academic community that is partly dispersed, in this sense an 'imagined community' (Anderson 1983), these rituals fulfil important functions. Whilst scholars may be absent during parts of the week, working in their respective 'mother-departments', doing fieldwork, or attending meetings elsewhere, they do their best to show up on these occasions. It is partly through these rituals and arenas that a sense of community is manifested to the associated scholars themselves and to visitors. It is at these events that what is talked about as the 'Score spirit' (*Score-andan*) materializes.

Exploration, exploitation, and the evaluative ethos

One of the founding fathers of organization theory in its present shape, James G. March, has suggested that organizations oscillate between two kinds of activities: exploration and exploitation. Part of the appeal of that insight is that it addresses a key organizational challenge – deciding between how to prioritize between present and future. Pursuing exploitation activities implies a focus on the 'refinement and extension of existing competencies, technologies and paradigms,' while an explora-

tion focus indicates 'experimentation with new alternatives' (March 1991: 85). Exploitation is necessary for improving current activities and/or making the best out of what is at hand. Results are likely to be near-term and positive. Exploration, on the other hand, is more likely to yield the next breakthrough idea, product, or market, but returns on exploration are less certain and more distant in time.

As Carroll (2012) points out, although exploration and exploitation are both important to organizational performance, most organizations would like to be able to pursue each type of activity at the same time. Doing both simultaneously can, however, be difficult. For one thing, each approach can become self-reinforcing. Exploration, for example, is by its very nature variable and prone to failure. Research is by definition a risky enterprise. Most often, research applications fail, and when they succeed, one cannot guarantee that the project will yield substantially new or surprising results. This is the nature of research. The organization may fall prey to the 'failure trap' – always looking for the next great thing. In the case of a research centre such as Score, there is potentially a danger that one becomes overly alert to new priority areas as defined by research funding agencies, or prone to adapt tactically to university politics. Organizations eager to promote exploration before exploitation may pay the costs of experimentation

without gaining the benefits. Conversely, since an exploitation approach is more likely to yield early successes, these can reinforce the pursuit of similar efforts, creating a 'success trap.' While this promotes stability and continuity, it also keeps the organization from finding new opportunities. For research centres like Score, it might for example be comfortable to stay within established core research areas, to pay less attention to complexity, contradictions, and challenges in the field, or to stick to one's disciplinary habits.

Another challenge to pursuing both exploration and exploitation simultaneously is that resources may be, and often are, limited. Providing more resources in one area means that other areas become less well resourced. Especially in situations where the need for either exploration or exploitation seems more pressing, the lure of prioritizing one over the other may become too great to resist. Oftentimes, it is more secure to rest on one's laurels than to think anew. Prioritizing to invest in a new research theme is a 'costly' and risky endeavour. Who knows what may come out of it? Most probably, the primary value of the original governmental decision in 1991 to promote research in the area of the public sector was to allow and secure space for experimentation and exploration, to recognize that research is a long-term investment and, by its very nature, a risky endeavour.

The formation of Score has largely coincided with a formidable advancement of an 'evaluative ethos' and 'audit culture' in academia at large (see e.g. Strathern 2000). This ethos and culture has also rubbed off on the research activities of Score. The evaluative ethos transpires in the frustrations and joys connected to refusal or acceptance of external research funding, a journal publication, or a book contract, all the more so since Score's research and the engagement of scholars have been largely dependent on getting external research funding. Applying for research funding constitutes a major activity at Score, and engages practically all scholars and administrative staff. Drafts are aired in seminars and workshops, colleagues are asked to review them, and new constellations of scholars are tried out continuously. The bright side of this preoccupation is that it provides a continuous exercise in the craft of writing grant applications, in articulating project ideas, and in putting the various disciplinary theories and methodological toolkits to use. The darker side is that the future careers of younger, non-tenured researchers may be dependent on external funding, which feeds anxiety and promotes a short-term perspective. In the long-run, one might contend that Score scholars have become savvy in the art and craft of grant writing, and in making strategic use of the multidisciplinary platform. This, in itself, may promote exploration of new research questions, but conversely, it may also lead to exploitation of established knowledge.

Li Benich-Björkman writes in her book on innovative and stagnating research environments, 'Organising Innovative Research' (1997), that the advancement of management, control and evaluation in research policy risks undermining the local social processes of dialogue and communication that are so vital in the creation of well-functioning research environments. These processes build on trust and confidence, and such dimensions of social interaction are vulnerable to the evaluative ethos. A one-sided focus on evaluation and audit can easily hamper creativity and innovation by eliminating trust. As Stefan Svallfors poignantly points out in his book '*Kunskapens människa*' (2012: 99, my translation), "research policy may easily destroy environments, but not as easily create them". Svallfors, too, sees the promotion of an evaluative ethos in research policy as risking to enhance fragmentation of research activities and to undermine collegiality. For a research centre such as Score, that relies heavily on external funding and where temporary research positions are the norm, these risks are constantly lurking, mixing with the rewards of succeeding: in getting the grant, getting the article published, or being 'recognized' in some other way. Learning to balance the short-term continuous evaluative practice, and the ethos with long-term community building and investment in younger scholars, is crucial.

In today's research climate, 'excellence' has achieved a pivotal position as a goal for research. No policy programme would go against the promotion of excellence, in the sense of high academic productivity of internationally recognized research results. "'Excellence' is the holy grail of academic life", in Michèle Lamont's words (2009:1), and "mediocrity is tolerated only in practice", as Ehn and Löfgren have it (2004:142). Bennich-Björkman (1997) discovered that what characterizes departments that are considered innovative is their focus on collaboration, disciplined individualism and a collective sense of community. In addition, the leadership of such a department is clear and inspiring. There is a large scope for discussion and intense communication around research. This does not mean that conflicts do not exist, but they are not allowed to paralyze the activities of the department. In Bennich-Björkman's view, excellence takes long-term planning, a great portion of patience, and a tolerance for setbacks on the way. The built-in risks and uncertainties of research make predicted outputs difficult to calculate. Hence, a leap in the direction of exploration is the only way forward.

Besides academic tribes and territories: multidisciplinarity

Research policies have over the last forty years grappled with the challenge of striking a balance between the need to maintain depth by way of discipline-based research, and the need for collaborative and multidimensional attempts at grasping complex societal problems. The discipline-based notion of the ivory tower has been poised against the image of the university as a multidisciplinary agora. Since the early 1970s, however, trans- and multidisciplinary research has gradually been promoted as desired modes of doing research (Sturesson et al. 2002). In the government proposition of 1991/92 (Prop. 1991/92:16, my translation), it was stated that there is "a silent advance of institutionalized multidisciplinary research taking place". It is also maintained that "the development of multidisciplinarity constitutes an important part of the revitalization of universities". As is evident from calls for applications in the major research councils at national and European levels, a multidisciplinary approach is nowadays almost a necessity to be able to get funded by the larger funding schemes. In a general sense, multidisciplinarity has been seen as integral to the promotion of larger collaborative research collectives, and more specifically to the promotion of academic 'excellence'. The message of research policy is that by way of collaborative efforts among disciplines, research groups may enhance possibilities for grasping multifaceted problems, promote novelty, and contribute more distinctly to policy and industry development.

Score is itself largely an offspring of the promotion of multidisciplinarity, and as such an

interesting case with which to grasp some of the challenges and opportunities attached to it. As pointed out by Bailey (1977) and Beecher (1989), academia is populated with its own 'tribes', disciplines, which develop their particular 'folklore' and work to cultivate, articulate, and defend their 'territories' that are their own disciplinary knowledge and expertise. What are the relations between the academic cultures (the 'tribes') and their disciplinary knowledge (their 'territories') involved at Score? And what goes on besides the more clear-cut disciplinary tribes and their territories, in the realm of the multidisciplinary?

Multidisciplinarity can be a vital stimulus to new research insights, but it also provides a source of continuous contestation. The research seminar, as the backbone of departmental discussion and review practices, is a central arena where this contestation takes place. At Score, it took a long time to disentangle and sort out the meaning of terms like 'institution', 'organization' and 'norm', as they were understood in the various disciplines, and even longer to figure out a way to use them that could work across disciplinary talk. The taken-for-granted assumptions so common in established disciplines were (and are) are still in use, leaving colleagues from other disciplines confused or annoyed at the concepts, terms and phrasings used. Misunderstandings were ubiquitous. As taken-for-granted assumptions were lacking in

precise meaning, a presentation was, at times, left in contention (cf. Messer-Davidow et al. 1993:19). Occasionally, the unquestioned usage of concepts left a thin layer of unquestioned agreement, shadowing underlying conflicts around assumptions and meanings. On the other side, deconstruction and experimentation with the meanings of taken-for-granted and ossified notions have often opened up new perspectives on old problems, and as we know, even misunderstandings can be creative. More to the point, the multidisciplinary composition of Score has contributed to spur interest around central disciplinary concepts and perspectives, and pushed the representatives of each discipline to read up on theory and method and polish their arguments.

The hybridity of multidisciplinary areas of research is at once their strength and a continuing source of difficulty. Part of the difficulty stems from the impossibility of doing everything (cf. Thompson Klein 1996: 58). The multidimensional nature of the public sector, its many facets of activity, its continuous change, and the many ways in which it could, and should, be studied provide an ever-present source of frustration. Awareness about the theoretical strands available in adjacent disciplines, and knowledge about the possibilities of using alternative methods, may at times open up a Pandora's box of infinite possibilities, risking to lead nowhere. The response to this opening up of a pa-

To the left: Kristoffer Strandqvist, Liv Fries and Karolina Windell. To the right: Mattias Viktorin and Göran Sundström. (Photo: Ingrid Nordling)

lette of theoretical and methodological tools at times results in innovative ideas and approaches, but may also impede disciplinary rigour.

I believe what working in a multidisciplinary environment essentially does to the academic scholar is to encourage a sharpening of the ear, the voice and the argument. When this works, it provides a richer repertoire of skills to the academic role. In any case, it stimulates and forces a sharper articulation of what the specific disciplinary perspective on a particular problem might be, and what the value of using a particular method should be. How, for example, are we to understand, sociologically, the de- and re-regulation of the Swedish labour market? How are we to make political science sense of audit society, systems of ranking, voluntary standards for transnational corpora-

tions, or management models? What can anthropological perspectives and ethnographic research methods contribute to those of other social science approaches? And how can the discipline of management assist us in shedding light on management models in the public sector? In such cases, multidisciplinarity works as well as a disciplinary stimulus, encouraging disciplinary articulation through contestation. It evokes in the scholar a drive to describe, explain and argue for the relevance of his or her disciplinary basis, and to enquire into the advances and promises of others.

All of these processes take place at the interface of the disciplines – they are a form of boundary work. They work to articulate and question disciplinary boundaries at the same time as they strengthen them. Across boundaries, the particular 'Score spirit,' with its associated Score lingo, has developed. The Score lingo is composed of the recognition of particularly pertinent concepts, of relevant references to academic works, and a plethora of influential names. In this sense, an academic research centre resembles any kind of professional community in the development of a particular ethos and vocabulary (cf. Traweek 1992).

This promotion of multidisciplinarity is, however, not by definition conducive to the career advancement of younger scholars. Research careers, promotion procedures, and tenured academic positions are still, to a large extent, built on disciplinary bases, perhaps more so in Sweden than in many other European countries. Despite the ode to multidisciplinarity that is proclaimed in research policy, it is still the fact that a recently graduated PhD in political science, sociology, social anthropology, business administration, or whatever discipline that is relevant, needs to develop his or her disciplinary research excellence to be able to advance. This double message – with a unidisciplinary basis for the structural organization of research careers on the one hand and multidisciplinarity policy emphasis on the other – remains for many a puzzle, if not in terms of vision, then at least in terms of actual practice.

The rewards of working in a multidisciplinary environment are paired with the puzzle of how to advance one's academic career whilst working at Score. Over time, some general patterns can be discerned. In the evaluation of the entire research programme on the public sector made by the Swedish Research Council (*Vetenskapsrådet* 2003), Score has been recognized as playing an important role as a steppingstone and breeding ground for younger scholars with recent PhD degrees. This is made possible primarily by way of participation in externally funded research projects and by gaining experience that allows them to become project leaders and secure their own funding and research base. This opens up time for advancement in research and in publishing, and

Given the distance to the main University building, a bicycle has been handy for Score staff. (Photo: Ingrid Nordling)

also opens up a wide network of thematically linked scholars, nationally and internationally. Moreover, it opens up for extensive contacts with practitioners in the field of policy, in the public sector and more broadly. On the other hand, young scholars are also pressured by

dual belongings, to Score and to their mother department, doubling up of seminars and staff meetings, and jugging teaching with research. In most cases, scholars have learned how to deal with this situation in successful or reasonably decent ways. In some cases, scholars have chosen to concentrate their energies on their disciplinary milieus.

Multidisciplinarity is thus both a blessing and a curse, a springboard and an impasse – and for most people, somewhere in between. The rewards in terms of a broadening of perspectives and networks, the cross-fertilization of ideas, and the continuous learning exercise make it a worthwhile cause. The challenges of reconciling academic career development with multidisciplinary research engagement at the level of the individual academic have, however, not yet been entirely resolved.

Concluding note: Curious minds and moving research targets

As described above, Score emerged out of a governmental initiative to promote long-term, multidisciplinary research on the management, control and evaluation of the public sector. The seeds provided by this initiative have now grown into a relatively mature research environment with its own distinctive ethos, profile and contribution. The trajectory of Score mirrors to a large extent the major developments in Swedish research policy over the last couple

of decades. As such, Score provides, in a sense, a peephole into the fortunes and failures of some dimensions of contemporary research policy. Our experiences of working in a multidisciplinary environment may teach us something about its pitfalls and attainments.

As we know, research policy oriented to the promotion of large-scale research programmes, the tribute paid to multidisciplinarity, the search for 'excellence', or the elicitation of 'strategic profile areas' may well be important and fruitful in organizing research, but the outcomes are far from given. These depend to a large extent on practices at the local level, on the social processes that take place between people on the ground, as it were. New knowledge may be spurred by central initiatives, but it is gained, contested, and articulated at the level of practice. First of all, it takes a group of curious minds, a bundle of people sharing a curiosity for a particular phenomenon and open-minded enough to challenge, and be challenged by, other perspectives. It relies on the development and cultivation of relations of trust and confidence, and on a spirit of constructive criticism with collective responsibility that allows for exploration, boundary transgression, and risk-taking. The most fruitful research policy initiative is, in my view, the one that allows for the creation of a space for exploration. I believe this takes us back to the original idea of the university, as a place for the cultivation of the general powers of the mind.

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The Score building in *Kräftriket* close to the Stockholm Business School. (Photo: Mats Danielson)

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