

Strategy for research and doctoral education in Library and Information Science, 2024-2029

One-page summary (for the university board)

Library and information science is a social science field devoted to studying information in its broadest sense. The Swedish School of Library and Information Science (SSLIS), which celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2022, is a leading department in the Nordic region which regularly ranks high in international comparisons.

Major achievements 2020-2023:

1. ReSource: A VR financed national PhD-program with funding for 11 doctoral students (3 in Borås) with a total budget of 23 million SEK. ReSource explores the current “crisis of information” caused by the proliferation of misinformation and conspiracy ideologies, the commercialisation of the public information infrastructure, and the development of AI.
2. In addition to the funding of the PhD-program, we received major research and networking grants from the European Union, Vetenskapsrådet, Riksbankens Jubileumsfond, Formas, Mistra, and Energimyndigheten.
3. The impact and influence of research conducted at SSLIS are continuously visible both within academia and outside. SSLIS is constantly ranked as the leading department in the Nordic region, and it is among the top departments in Europe. The research conducted at SSLIS receives considerable attention both in Sweden and internationally.
4. The research centre *INCLUDE – Centre for Inclusive Studies* was established forming a strong multidisciplinary environment for critically examining cultural, historical, economic, social, and political values, actions and structures that lead to unequal treatment of members of society.

Aims for 2024-2029:

Our overarching aim for the coming five years is to develop relevant, groundbreaking research while at the same time ensuring a collegial and attractive working environment which attracts and retains talented and ambitious academics. Our environment strives to uphold “university qualities” not only in terms of concrete outputs and projects but also in how work in the research area is organised and structured. Collegial influence, academic citizenship, and a collaborative atmosphere is thus of key importance, and we hope that such values will be given greater importance also at the University of Borås at large. With this overarching ambition in mind we have identified five prioritised goals for the period:

1. An important goal is to ensure our PhD-program’s high quality and development in LIS. The recently funded research school, RESOURCE (Vetenskapsrådet) is an important part of this. We believe that continuous internal support of our PhD-program is crucial for the area. At the same time, we strive to attract external funding for recruitment and external (industry) PhDs.
2. A recurring goal for the area is to ensure an influx of external funding for developing our research. This involves working strategically with funding both in a national and international context.
3. An aim related to the one above is to support and promote researchers aiming to advance in their careers into positions as docents (associate professors) and professors. A range of different activities related to career advancements, as well as active recruitment are being planned, yet resources will be needed to realise this long- term strategy.
4. Similarly, mobility and internationalisation remain issues that we continuously work on at SSLIS. Several large EU projects (several of which we have led) and long-term collaborations in Sida projects for research exchange attest to these goals. There are also detailed plans – which had to be postponed due to financial restrictions – for launching an initiative in which we will host renowned scholars in the form of a guest research program.

1. PRIORITISED RESEARCH AREA

Library and Information Science

2. RESEARCH PROFILE

Library and information science considers issues concerning the mediation of information and/or culture stored in some form of document as its starting point. The subject area is focused on what could be described as information supply or the mediation of culture, as well as the institutions governing these processes, including libraries and other cultural document repositories. The field is closely connected to several different disciplines within the social sciences, the humanities and engineering. Traditionally, libraries, and the education of librarians have played an important role but the field of research is much broader today. This broadness in terms of theories, methods and perspectives has been a distinct advantage for research in the area. Hence, related and partly overlapping fields, such as digital humanities, sociology of literature, cultural policy, disability studies and bibliometrics/scientometrics, are central to the boundary crossing research currently pursued at SSLIS.

The Swedish School of Library and Information Science (SSLIS), which celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2022, has typically ranked highly in its field in various ranking systems (e.g., QS World University Rankings). It is active in several international networks and conferences, such as iSchools and ISIC (Information Seeking in Context), The Information Behaviour Conference), and publishes international journals (*Information Research* - IR, one of the core journals of the field, and the uniquely positioned *Nordisk Kulturpolitisk Tidskrift*). The publications of SSLIS researchers typically appear in highly respected peer-reviewed international journals and conferences.

3. RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT

The research staff (faculty) has been continuously strengthened in recent decades. This has to a large extent been accomplished through an active doctoral programme. In addition, staff has also been recruited from other universities, both Swedish (e.g. the universities in Lund, Uppsala, Umeå and Gothenburg) as well as international (e.g. Antwerp). The current tally of the research staff is:

- Three full-time professors, seven associate professor (docent and 'biträdande professor) and 32 senior lecturers. In addition, two senior professors are still employed on a part-time basis. We expect 2-4 senior lecturers to attain the associate professor level during 2024-2026. Similarly, we envision that 1-3 associate professors will be appointed as full professors in the coming years.
- At the time of writing, 18 active students were enrolled in the doctoral programme, three of whom had set dates for defending their theses. Most of the students were admitted within the year range 2017-2023.

The doctoral programme is the largest and oldest in the field in Sweden. Since 2023, the Swedish School of Library and Information Science has coordinated ReSource - a research school which includes all library and information studies departments at Swedish higher education institutions, funded by the Swedish Research Council (2023-2026). ReSource explores the current "crisis of information" caused by the proliferation of misinformation and conspiracy ideologies, the commercialisation of the public

information infrastructure, and the development of AI. This environment ensures a high-quality doctoral programme and a vibrant and supportive research environment with networking opportunities.

The three research groups at SSLIS are broad, and each encompasses several subareas. However, we consider ourselves as one research environment that is also highly integrated and characterised by the ambition to work together to strengthen our research. In addition to our research groups, we also have labs and centres which work horizontally across groups. Overall, this structure allows for both a stable configuration of research and dynamic and boundary-crossing constellations.

- **Research groups:**
- Culture, library and policy (KUBIK)
- Information Practices and Digital Cultures (IP)
- Knowledge Infrastructures (KIR)

- **Labs**
- Data as Impact Lab
- Haptic Lab

- **Centres**
- INCLUDE – Centre for Inclusive Studies
- The Centre for Cultural Policy Research (KPC)

We work with a shared responsibility leadership model where most research groups have two leaders. Each group meets regularly, usually once a month, but annual workshops are frequently arranged. The meetings consist of various activities based on the needs of its members, but often are project or work-in-progress discussed, with members and external guests. Sometimes the focus is on the reading of a particular text, or discussions on a specific theme.

Several internationally recognised researchers with strong profiles in their respective areas of expertise are active at SSLIS. At the same time, the research area is also characterised by a high degree of collegiality in decision-making and in forming strategies. The joint weekly SSLIS seminar is essential for organising vital, collegial exchange concerning both research and doctoral education. The seminar, which is well-known both nationally and internationally, is arranged every Monday afternoon. In conjunction with ReSource, an international seminar involving Australian and Canadian partners – primarily for doctoral students – arranged a couple of times per semester. Moreover, each year doctoral students and their supervisors participate in a national doctoral workshop, which is important for networking and collegial feedback on current projects. SSLIS is the organiser of this doctoral workshop every third year.

3.1 Description of the research equipment and infrastructure:

Haptic Lab is formed in relation to work conducted by SSLIS colleagues in projects such as SUITCEYES and MuseIT, as part of which research and development are ongoing in the area of haptic communication, development of methodologies and means of conveying semantic contents through haptic stimuli and multisensory representation of objects and sensations. The Haptic Lab has established strong collaborations with international researchers and actively organises related workshops and events. As an example, a recent two-day symposium (Haptic for Inclusion) organised by the lab brought together 77 participants from 17 different countries.

Data as Impact Lab performs analyses and offers an infrastructure for AI applications and digital humanities involving bibliometric methodology, semantic modelling, and visualisation. Some of its clients and partners include authorities, research organisations within and outside academia, libraries and private companies. The lab functions as a technical and infrastructural node in several departments

research activities and doctoral student projects.

Information Research is a leading international journal indexed in all major databases (including Web of Science) and ranked at level one in the Norwegian directory of journals. Recently, the journal went through a successful transition in terms of platform, and its future organisation in terms of leadership is currently being renewed. These changes are vital for the continuing success of the journal and have been conducted with very little financial support from the university.

Nordisk Kulturpolitisk Tidskrift has a unique profile in its focus on cultural policy, and its renowned editorial board includes members from all Nordic countries. It usually publishes two volumes each year, Open Access, and attracts contributions primarily from the Nordic region, but contributions from other parts of the world are not uncommon. A Nordic consortium currently finances the journal. The editorship ambulates between the members in the consortium, and in 2025–2029 SSLIS will hold the roles of editor-in-chief and editorial secretary.

3.2 Description of academic networks and collaborations

The Swedish Library and Information Science departments network, including those at the Linnaeus, Lund, Södertörn, Uppsala and Umeå universities, is an important setting for developing research and research education. As the largest and oldest department, SSLIS takes a central role in this network. The collaboration involves joint workshops, seminars, and doctoral courses, as well as collaboration in terms of funding and publication. The national network extends to neighbouring fields, such as digital humanities, sociology of literature, pedagogic work, environmental sciences, and sociology of science.

SSLIS is part of and a member of the iSchools network, which gathers information studies departments and schools worldwide. A testimony to the important part played by SSLIS is that we arranged the iConference in Borås (subsequently moved online due to the pandemic) in 2019.

Participation in various EU-funded projects has helped establish a strong and extensive network of contacts and collaborative efforts nationally and internationally. For example, SILVANUS comprises over 200 members active at 49 partner organisations situated in 18 countries (15 within EU as well as members from Australia, Brazil and Indonesia) (PI at SSLIS: Kayvan). MuseIT brings together around 70 members active at 12 organisations from 9 countries (7 within EU and two in the UK (Kings College London and X-Systems) and one in the US (Stanford University)). (Co-PI at SSLIS: Nasrine Olsson,)

The Centre for Cultural Policy Research is a central partner for the international and Nordic cultural policy studies networks through the biannual conferences NCCPR and ICCPR. Sofia Lindström Sol is a member of the scientific committee for the Nordic Conference on Cultural Policy Research (NCCPR), and Linnéa Lindsköld is a member of the scientific committee for the International Conference on Cultural Policy Research (ICCPR).

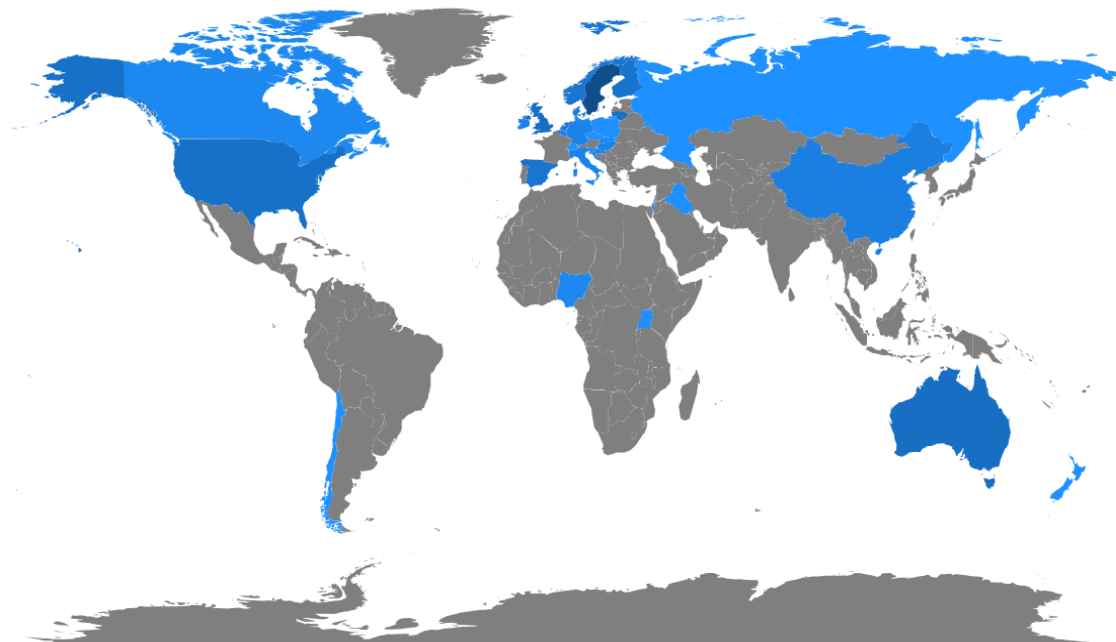
INCLUDE – Centre for Inclusive Studies has established close ties with national and international organisations, resource centres, agencies dealing with issues of accessibility and inclusion and researchers. Its 32 full members and 24 associated members represent resource centres such as MTM (the Swedish Agency for Accessible Media), Eikholt (the National Resource Centre for Dual Sensory Loss in Norway), Sense (a resource centre for people who live with complex disabilities), DBI (Deafblind International), SMEs developing accessible media (e.g., Ldqr – Led Doigts Qui Revent) or assistive technologies (e.g., Harpo), and different research centres (such as CERTH) and Universities (e.g., Leeds University, Stanford University, Eindhoven University of Technology) and more.

Through our SIDA collaborations – primarily geared towards PhD education – long-term networks have been developed with researchers in Africa, including Rwanda, Uganda and Mocambique as the primary collaboration partners.

SSLIS is a partner and node in the large digital humanities project *Huminfra* (2022-2024; 2025-2028, which received a second round of funding in 2023). The project involves developing and sharing digital resources, training, and a web portal at <https://www.huminfra.se/>. (Co-PI at SSLIS: Gustaf Nelhans). Moreover, SSLIS is a major partner in Mistra Environmental Communication, a large research programme which, after a successful evaluation of Phase 1, was awarded continued funding for Phase 2 until 2027. Both these programmes involve several researchers from our institution, and their scope and length are particularly useful for developing long-term research agendas concerning important areas such as digital research, sustainability, and environmental concerns. (Co-PI at SSLIS: Jutta Haider)

Smaller networks and project and authorship collaborations are too many to list in detail, but the map below illustrates the vast global network of SSLIS.

Fig 1. Co-authorship map based on publications indexed in Web of Science. The darker the colour, the more frequent collaboration is in the form of joint authorship. (from Nelhans and Hammarfelt 2023)



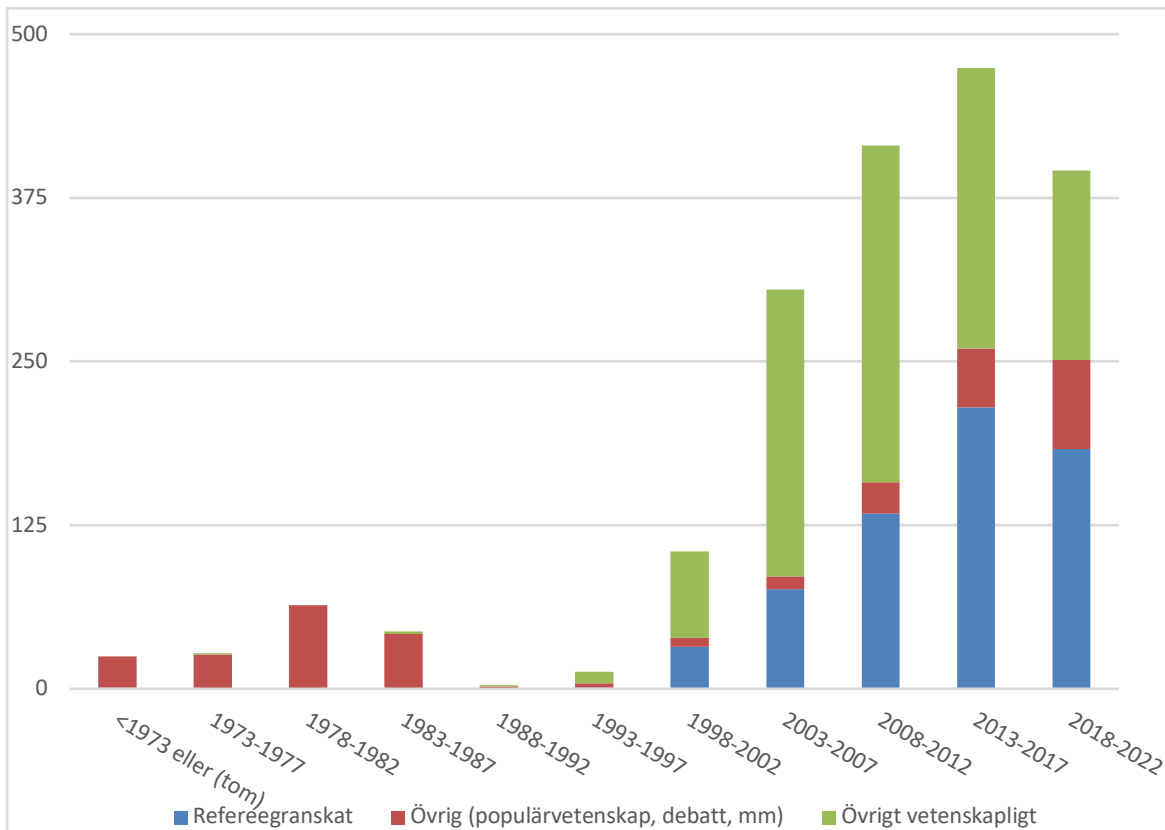
During the academic year 2023-2024, we have had several international researchers as guests (often presenting at our seminar); some of these are listed below:

Ole Olesen-Bagneux, University of Copenhagen
Fernando Bolaños Zarate, University of Chile
Antoine Clarnival, University of Namur
Madeleine Dutoit, Oslo Metropolitan University,
Dulce Faife, Mondlane University, Mozambique
Eglė Grėbliauskaitė, Vilnius University (visiting The Centre for Cultural Policy Research)
Maciej Liguzinski, Oslo Metropolitan University,
Manuel Luis Chenene, Eduardo Mondlane University, Mozambique
Valério Macandza, Mondlane University, Mozambique
Andrea Muzzarelli, University College Dublin
Ruth Müller, Technical University Munich
Paola Roja González, Universidad Iberoamericana, Mexico City
Ivar Ternsell Torgersen, SIKT, Kunnskapssektorens tjenesteleverandør, Norge
Søren Willer Hansen, Det Kgl. Bibliotek | Royal Danish Library, Danmark

4. PRODUCTIVITY AND IMPACT

The dissemination of research from SSLIS is done through various sources, with peer-reviewed articles being the main publication channel. However, book chapters, monographs, and reports of several types play an important role, not least in reaching professional and non-academic audiences. Moreover, as indicated above, the academic impact of research cannot always be easily separated from its societal relevance, and it is therefore tricky to sometimes draw a distinct boundary between different types of impact. The overview of publications (fig 2) does, however, depict the general publication pattern and its development over the last years. (Note that the decline in publications for the last period is due to a corona effect and a backlog of publications for 2022, which was not registered when the data was collected in the early autumn of 2022.)

Fig 2. Publication trends for SSLIS (from Nelhans and Hammarfelt, 2023)



External funding

Currently, we have several newly funded and ongoing projects at the department. The details of some major projects are listed below:

- EU, Silvanus (2021-2025) 6 million SEK (total budget 25 million EURO)
- EU, MuseIT (2022-2025), coordinated by HB, Full budget ca 4.5 million Euro, (HB's share ca

SEK 10.5)

- VR, Huminfra (2022-2024), National Infrastructure for Digital Humanities, (Total budget: 29 million SEK, University of Borås share 3,3 million SEK; 2025-2028: 28 million SEK, University of Borås share ~3 million SEK).
- VR, Mellan ljud och text (2024-2027), with Lund University, 4,6 million SEK
- Riksbankens Jubileumsfond (2023-2025), Det lilla livets läsning, with Uppsala University, 4,5 million SEK
- MISTRA Environmental communication phase 2 (2024-2027) with a consortium led by SLU (Total budget 60 Mio SEK). Work package 1 hosted by SSLIS. Formas (2023-2026) Meaning-making on the Climate Crisis with SLU (Total budget: 4 million SEK)
- Energimyndigheten, 2024-2026, The effects of research, (Total budget 5,5 million (HB share 3 million))

In addition to these grants, we have received funding from Kulturrådet, Riksbankens jubileumsfond, Norges forskningsråd, and various library organisations for smaller projects, as well as in collaboration with other universities. These projects are of great importance for our research, and about one to two million SEK is awarded through such funders each year.

5. EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT

External engagement is an integral part of the work conducted by researchers in the area, and SSLIS is highly visible and well-known in both national and international contexts. A search for “Bibliotekshögskolan” for the last four years yields more than 500 matches in the Swedish media database Retriever. Examples of influential interactions are, for example, debates about cultural policy around the election in 2022. Still, we also have considerable coverage of our research on reading, audiobooks, algorithms, and scholarly communication. On an international level, research on environmental information, as well as the work on inclusion and disabilities, have been highlighted. Testimony to the impact outside academia is, for example, Professor Jutta Haider receiving the “Det gyllene förstoringsglaset” (2023), which is a yearly national prize awarded by Internetstiftelsen and Källkritikbyrån and Elisa Tattersall Wallin receiving a very prestigious prize as first runner-up for the iSchools “Doctoral Dissertation Award (2023). SUITCEYES (2018-2021), another EU-funded project led by the department, was highlighted by the prestigious Innovation Radar Prize as one of the eight shortlisted most promising innovations in the health category. Moreover, researchers at SSLIS have important roles nationally; for example, Gustaf Nelhans (as elected chair 2022-23), Mats Dahlström and Julia Pennlert as members of the research board for the National Library of Sweden; Nelhans also serves as an appointed board member of the National Library of Sweden’s Advisory Council (Insynsråd), member of The Association of Swedish Higher Education Institutions’ workgroup on Bibliometrics, and was, during 2023–24 appointed as Reference Group member for the *National Library of Sweden’s* task of developing national guidelines for Open Science. Moreover, in 2021 Jenny Lindberg was elected as member of the national board for the Swedish Library Association.

Testimony to the considerable expertise at SSLIS is that many of the influential texts in “Digiteket” (Kulturrådet) directed efforts towards the promotion of reading (Läsflyftet) was commissioned to and

written by Linnea Lindsköld, Julia Pennlert, Ulrika Centerwall, Katarina Hagberg, Kristin Johansson, Elisa Tattersall Wallin, och Jenny Lindberg. Kulturrådet also financed a course – on the promotion of reading – for library leaders which is combined with directed research on the topic. Moreover, in 2023, Gustaf Nelhans wrote a commissioned report for the Swedish Research Council concerning future policies for publishing at the national level.

Finally, the research and education at SSLIS draws considerable national political interest. For example the environment recently hosted visits from the Minister for Culture, Parisa Liljestrand (autumn 2023) as well as the Minister for Schools, Lotta Edholm (spring 2024).

7. DEVELOPMENT AND STRATEGY

In 5-7 years, we envision that the research area of LIS at HB has strengthened its position both within academia and as an important actor in society. We will achieve this by developing our interdisciplinary work in reading, digital humanities, digital methods (including AI), cultural policy, and scholarly communication while strengthening core research areas such as information practices and library research. The strength of SSLIS has always been its diversity and dynamic structure, a legacy that we aim to preserve by adopting a coherent and overarching program for the future. On a shorter horizon (2025-2027), we identify the following strategies as necessary:

A key goal for 2025-2027 is to strengthen our PhD-programme. Partly, this involves working actively to ensure that sufficient resources are provided regarding supervision, seminars and courses. However, in the long term, we need continuous financial support for new doctoral students to maintain and develop a vibrant and attractive research environment. In this effort, we are currently pursuing three different options: 1) External funding of PhD-students through grants, 2) So-called industry (samverkansdoktorander) Phds financed by outside organisations (usually academic libraries), and 3) internal funding of PhDs. While all these are viable routes actively pursued, we want to emphasise the necessity of regular internally financed PhDs, which are vital for building a sustainable and cohesive research environment over time. Recruiting PhDs is also crucial for maintaining and strengthening SSLIS's position as a leading research environment globally.

An aim related to the one above is to support and promote researchers aiming to advance into positions as docents (associate professors) and professors. Our current tally of professors and associate professors is relatively low, especially compared to the number of lecturers and doctoral students. Increasing the number of senior staff, in terms of strategic recruitment of leading and promising researchers, is important in relation to funding and supervision, but also for the overarching goal of the University of Borås to achieve the status of "universitet". A range of different activities related to career advancements such as programmes, mentors and workshops, are being planned, yet resources will be needed to realise this long-term strategy.

A recurring goal for the area is to secure resources through external funding. This involves primarily funding for research projects but also for doctoral training (for example, through Marie Curie applications). A recent activity aimed at this is launching a "research application programme" which started in the autumn of 2023 (with funding from the vice-chancellor). Important in relation to the financing is to ensure that external grants can be used to strengthen

the coherence and long-term strategies of the department. For example, obtaining funding related to public libraries has been a continuous challenge. Hence, finding ways to ensure that external financing leads to a strong integrated research environment related to our educational programmes is an important goal moving forward.

A long-standing problem has been the realization of research projects that do not fit the narrow form of “announced funding” of research councils or are being commissioned for consultancy work. In the current model at the University of Borås these projects become too expensive” for the department to support which is especially worrisome for younger researchers while also limiting the possibilities of external engagement.

Similarly, mobility and internationalisation are issues that we continuously work with at SSLIS. Several large EU-projects, as well as long-term co-operations in the form of Sida projects for research exchange, attest to these goals. Moreover, there are detailed plans for launching an initiative in which we will host renowned (and promising) international scholars in the form of a guest research programme, with applications for such funds being formulated in 2021 and 2023, which unfortunately were not granted due to financial restrictions. Still, we aim for a future guest researchers’ programme involving longer and shorter stays, which aims for concrete collaborations in the form of publications and grant applications.