



Björkliden Manifesto 2010

Lund, 5/10 – 10

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This Manifesto is the result of the 2nd meeting of young researchers from different faculties in Björkliden, organised by the Pufendorf Institute and financed by the LMK-foundation. We found this meeting to be stimulating and inspiring and strongly endorse that annual meetings continue to be organised in this way (for additional suggestions modelled on this sort of arrangement see below).

Although from widely different research areas we found that we share many core values, not just with each other but also with the authors of the Björkliden Manifesto 2009. Most importantly, we recognise the importance of interdisciplinary research and collaborations and the creative outcomes this can produce. We strongly support the goals of the Pufendorf Institute, which are to stimulate innovation and advance understanding through the synthesis of knowledge. It is in order to promote such interdisciplinary research that we make our recommendations to the Pufendorf Institute and Lund University.

The manifesto has two parts. In the first part relating to activities at the Pufendorf Institute, we suggest a number of concrete ways in which we believe that both interdisciplinary research and meetings across disciplinary borders is best stimulated. In the second part relating to university level organisational changes, we firstly suggest how the University in some ways could provide organisational support to facilitate interdisciplinary meetings and collaborations and secondly, we critically examine the research environment and highlight what we believe to be very serious practical obstacles to achieving the University's and our shared goal of producing interesting and important interdisciplinary research. These obstacles are deeply embedded in the university system. We also propose potential solutions to these problems.

Part One

Ways to stimulate interdisciplinary research at Lund University in general and at the Pufendorf institute in particular.

The Pufendorf Institute's webpage states that it is "...a cross-disciplinary research institute, which aims to be an open and creative environment for academic study groups formed around current or emerging scientific and social issues and problems to explore their management or resolution." We have some concrete suggestions as to how this aim may be fulfilled.

Create the possibility for unexpected collaborations

It is of course trivially true that to get good interdisciplinary research, people from different disciplines must meet. This is however easier said than done. Predictably productive collaborations need little encouragement. But there will always be other,

potentially fruitful, important, and surprisingly rewarding meetings, the value of which is not as easy to predict. We would like the Pufendorf Institute to provide a platform for *these* kinds of meetings. Four of our suggestions address this issue and propose ways in which researchers from very different areas can meet to see what, if anything, happens.

1. *The organisation of “ideas fora”*

We recommend the organisation of regular meetings of young researchers from a variety of academic backgrounds to stimulate interaction and promote the development of interdisciplinary projects. Monthly *ideas fora* can be held at the Pufendorf Institute and would be structured around a brief introductory talk from each participant on their subject area, followed by informal discussions. Participants would be selected by the Pufendorf Institute based on suggestions from the young advisory board (point four below) and previously invited fora participants. We suggest that these *ideas fora* would provide fertile ground for the creation of new connections and interactions of researchers from very different backgrounds and expertise, and may spark the initial development of collaborative ideas.

2. *Resources for early idea development*

We also recommend that there is a ‘stepping stone’ process in place to facilitate the development and realisation of ideas generated at the *ideas fora*. This would involve allowing researchers with interdisciplinary ideas from the initial fora to spend some time developing the ideas to the stage at which a short proposal could be submitted to attract Pufendorf support for a pilot project. This intermediate stage could involve longer discussions and meetings at the Institute and also potentially the holding of seminars with invited speakers from outside Lund University.

3. *Open discussion groups*

We suggest that the Pufendorf Institute host open discussion groups with particular but broadly formulated themes (for suggestions, see the Appendix) which can be advertised to researchers across the University. We hope these discussions would promote interactions between disciplines, and provide researchers from disparate fields with the opportunity to develop ideas with interdisciplinary potential.

4. *Young Advisory Board*

We suggest that the Pufendorf Institute forms a ‘Young researcher advisory board’ for guidance and input from young academics with a shared passion for achieving their multidisciplinary research goals.

5. *Infrastructure open discussion groups*

We suggest that the Pufendorf Institute should offer to host open meetings where methodologies of potential interdisciplinary value are discussed and explained. That the institute is willing to host these meetings should be made known to potentially interested parties (e.g. the nodes in the research informa-

tion network suggested in Part Two). The initiative to organise meetings around themes of this kind should, however, come from the interested parties, which means that these would be meetings of a more irregular kind than the open discussion groups suggested above (point three).

Part Two

Get rid of unnecessary practical obstacles

It is well known that interdisciplinary meetings and collaborations are sometimes made more difficult by obstacles that are perhaps best (if not only) characterised as 'practical'. Below we make three suggestions aimed at removing some of these obstacles.

1. *Cross-faculty PhD courses in epistemology and philosophy of science*
In order to promote interactions between individuals from different disciplines and cross-disciplinary discussions from an early stage, we suggest that the University develops mandatory advanced training courses in epistemology and the philosophy of science for PhD students. The courses should be organised at a cross-faculty level, again allowing researchers from very different disciplines to meet. The courses would also serve the important interdisciplinary goal of providing different researchers with at least one common platform and vocabulary, thereby facilitating sometimes difficult communication.
2. *Research information networks*
We suggest that the University organise and fund 'research information networks', whereby within each department a specific individual has the role of being a node in a research information network. This individual would be the contact point for other researchers within Lund for any questions relating to that particular discipline. This may be in the form of questions about potential collaborators for projects, or more general questions about the research field.
3. *Research tool and methodology database*
We suggest that the University develops and funds a database aimed at sharing solutions to problems, for example analytical tools and methodologies, between researchers in different fields. In addition to a summary of shared infrastructure (hardware), information concerning developed software, novel methods, analytical/statistical tools etc. should be easily accessible. We suggest that the same (university-funded) individual that functions as a node of the research information network (point two) is also responsible for gathering and updating a list of keywords that can be used to identify machines, software, analysis programs etc. used by researchers within each discipline.

Research environment

It is important to acknowledge that while the potential gains of engaging in novel interdisciplinary research projects are indisputably high, moving to this type of research comes with a greatly increased risk for the individual researcher choosing to leave 'the beaten track'. In the later stages of a successful academic career, when a researcher often relies on more secure research funding with a permanent position, the calculated risk of suffering a temporary drop in publication rate is probably worth taking for a very promising groundbreaking project. However, this generally is not the case for the younger researcher, who typically is forced to work under much shorter project deadlines with smaller research grants and almost invariably without a permanent position. For these reasons, we think the University should also work towards building an internationally competitive and creative environment for its younger researchers.

The University would be in a unique position to recruit and keep the best young researchers on an international level, if the university creates a work situation that would allow young researchers to work with a longer project horizon and under safer employment conditions (for example including at least a minimum of social security in case of illness or the possibility of parental leave). As the current system is largely built upon temporary employments or stipend funding during the first ten years of postdoctoral research, we recognize that creating such an environment would require a substantial allocation of new resources. For these reasons, we believe that the University must allocate extra resources to improve the social situation of young scientists. We therefore suggest that, *'to stand among the very best of European universities'* Lund University must specifically allocate resources to improve research conditions for as large number of young investigators as possible with a proven track record. As a long-term goal, we envision that similar conditions can be extended to the entire group of young researchers at the University.

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Appendix: Themes

The following themes are thought of as suitable both for (possibly a series of) open discussion seminars in the sense suggested above (part one) and for either pilot studies or (eventually) more full-blown research projects, possibly funded and hosted by the Pufendorf Institute. Suggestions could be multiplied. Themes that have not been developed here, but that have been mentioned in discussion and which could prove fruitful include e.g.: Communication; The human being 2.0; Transport; Scaling; Networks; Information; Movement; Process; Ageing; etc.

The Social Individual

Contact person: Ulrika Andersson (Law)

An autonomous individual making free and rational choices is a crucial part of modernity, accordingly founding modern scientific and scholarly thinking. This theme will explore and problematize the individual of modernity, while focusing on the social individual, thus taking into account different aspects of power in a wide sense. Seminars with this theme can gather researchers from law, biology, cognitive science, history, economics, philosophy, sociology, gender studies etc.

Nature and culture

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Recent findings in the sciences have shown to have great impact on our cultural understanding of the human being. Genetics, evolutionary theory, cognitive science, etc., have changed our view of how humans are. The clear cut dichotomy between nature and culture has shown to be invalid. There are now new possibilities for a future, fruitful dialogue between the sciences and the humanities. Seminars with this theme can gather researchers from biology, genetics, medicine, ecology, cognitive science, philosophy, history, sociology, gender studies, etc.

Love

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Love, emotion, passion. Within many scientific disciplines, love has historically been a "non-question". In social science, if discussed at all, it has been deemed impossible or uncomfortable to study, or it has been translated into other terms, such as work or care. In other disciplines, it has been seen as "innate", related to biological processes or an effect of early childhood commitments (e.g., evolutionary biology, psychology). In gender studies, love – especially romantic love between men and women in couples and maternal love – has been the target of harsh criticism and deconstruction. However, recently there is a growing interest in looking at love as a topic to approach in its own terms, as a subject for serious social and political theory. Though love can never be seen as "pure" or isolated from other social relations and discourses (gender, care, commit-

ment, power etc.) there is a growing interest in looking at love as a particular transformative power in itself. Traditionally associated with intimate relations, love and emotions are increasingly emerging as important elements to consider in larger social phenomena, such as religion and politics. Also, there is a need to investigate the concept of love historically – change over time, the metaphorical use of love – and the social processes and consequences related to the concept, e.g., in policy, law, institutions, and lived social relations. This research theme will gather researchers from different disciplines. The recent interest in love as a social phenomenon with political implications will both challenge and be challenged by knowledge from disciplines with a longer history of interest in love (or related themes, e.g., Psychology, Literary Science, Biology (?)). History and Philosophy will be crucial in bringing the concept into context. Further, looking at the social, legal and political consequences of love in today's societies will necessitate the presence of researchers from Sociology, Political Science, Religious Studies and Law. Together, and in dialogue, these different perspectives will fertilize one another and thereby bring new and exciting knowledge to a field that – despite its apparent presence in many different aspects of the world – is meagrely researched.

Composition

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“Composition” can mean many things. In one of its meanings it refers to a logical fallacy – that of assuming that a whole has a property solely because its various parts have that property. That this is a fallacy is due to the interesting and potentially problematic properties of “composite wholes”. First, that they can have properties not shared by their parts and, second, that their parts may have properties not shared by them. Composite (or complex) entities exist in all areas. In linguistics, for instance, some combinations of words and particles give rise to something with meaning. In society, some combinations of (enough) individuals, physical objects, and actions, etc., gives rise to either a nation, a bank, a society, or some other social entity. In physical reality, the combination of enough fundamental particles in the right kind of relationships, gives rise to chairs and bicycles. In biological reality, moreover, such particles in the right kind of relationships give rise to life and thinking. Examples could be multiplied.

In philosophy, composition questions are much discussed. A common distinction here is that between a “General” and a “Special” composition question. The general question is this: What is the relationship between the whole and the parts which jointly compose it? The special question is this: What is the relationship between objects when they jointly compose a whole? How these questions are understood and answered has differed depending on the subject matter of the researcher. It is therefore hypothesized that the bringing together of researchers from widely different fields (such as e.g. philosophy, biology, physics, and the social sciences) to discuss these matters – leaving as much as possible of the particularities of each subject matter outside the discussion – might help to shed some light on their possible resolution(s). This theme would be suitable both for open discussion groups and for a more thorough research project, possibly funded and organized by the Pufendorf Institute.

Rationality and constraints in decision making

Contact person: Erik Wengström (erik.wengstrom@nek.lu.se)

Decision theory based on the notion of rationality has fundamentally shaped how researchers, across disparate fields such as Biology and Economics and Law, view and model decisions taken by individuals and groups. Assuming rationality does in many situations provide a tractable ground for further analysis of social, economic and biological phenomena. Yet, it is evident that the decision processes of humans and other species are not always guided by rationality. Consequently, there is a need for analyzing how decisions are affected by various constraints, both internal constraints of the decision maker and contextual constraints in the environment of the decision maker. The aim of the proposed study group is to bring together researchers interested in decision making to share ideas and findings from their respective fields. A goal is to provide an open forum for discussions between theorists and researchers doing applied work.