



Work programme

2011–2020

Programme
Cultural Conditions Underlying Social Change – SAMKUL

Work programme 2011–2020

**Programme on the Cultural Conditions
Underlying Social Change — SAMKUL**

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1 Summary

The *Programme on the Cultural Conditions Underlying Social Change* (SAMKUL) (2011-2020) is a new research programme that seeks to supplement and challenge existing knowledge regimes as well as contribute new perspectives on and insight into areas of particular relevance to society.

Societal development is today characterised by global trends and large-scale technological, demographic and cultural change. To better equip society to meet major societal challenges and the opportunities arising from them, an *expanded* knowledge base is needed: A broad interpretation, understanding and explanation of the *cultural conditions, or rather cultural prerequisites*, underlying societal development. This will generate important new insight and supplement the economic-instrumental and technical-natural science knowledge bases which today are largely considered to be the valid foundations for decision-making in society.

The complex challenges to society and the needs for knowledge should be addressed through inter- and multidisciplinary cooperation between humanities scholars, social scientists and researchers from other subject areas. The SAMKUL programme will promote research relating to groups with the power to influence the direction in which society moves. The programme also seeks to strengthen communication and dissemination across academic boundaries and sectors.

The thematic priority areas of the SAMKUL programme focus on the *interaction* between people and their surroundings. The relationship between people/society and the naturally and socially created environments give rise to research questions and challenges which humanities researchers in particular – in new constellations – can draw on to expand our understanding of societal development and social change, and thus also of the basis on which we act in the world.

The SAMKUL programme will explore this interaction within the following thematic priority areas:

- the natural environment
- the multicultural environment
- the religious environment
- the linguistic environment
- the mediated environment
- the economic environment
- the technological environment

2 Background

2.1 Strategic perspectives

New national thematic priority area of research

The Research Council of Norway's strategy for 2009-2012, *In the Vanguard of Research*, emphasises that:

“Better and more coordinated humanities and social science research on the *cultural prerequisites underlying societal development* will thus be needed to supplement the more instrumental-oriented thematic priority areas in Norwegian research”.

Because the thematic area of *cultural prerequisites underlying societal development* is so crucial, the Research Council has proposed that it be designated as a new national thematic priority area. The SAMKUL programme is a tool for realising this aspect of the strategy. The programme will also help to achieve the Research Council's objectives to strengthen long-term basic research activity and enhance the quality of Norwegian research. These objectives are also emphasised in the Government's white paper on research, *Climate for Research*.

Societal development is today characterised by global trends and large-scale technological, demographic and cultural change. To better equip society to meet major societal challenges and the opportunities arising from them, an *expanded* knowledge base is needed: A broad interpretation, understanding and explanation of the *cultural prerequisites* underlying societal development and social change. This will generate important new insight and supplement the economic-instrumental and technical-natural science knowledge bases, which today are largely considered to be the most valid foundations for decision-making in society. Knowledge about the social and cultural prerequisites underlying societal development provides tools for dealing with multi-faceted social spheres and research fields. In other words, knowledge *itself* is a major driving force in and prerequisite for societal development.

The various academic and knowledge regimes ask different types of questions about, and have different responses to, the major challenges to society. Humanities and social science research complements the knowledge and practices from other subject areas, in part by enhancing society's and people's self-understanding. A basic assumption of the SAMKUL programme is that the humanities in particular entail knowledge and perspectives that can enhance insight into societal development and its cultural prerequisites through studies of the interaction between people and their environments. At the same time, the complex challenges to society and needs for knowledge must to a greater degree be addressed through inter- and multidisciplinary cooperation between humanities scholars, social scientists and researchers from other subject areas. Therefore, the objective of the SAMKUL programme is to generate knowledge that can supplement and challenge existing knowledge regimes and contribute new perspectives on and insight into areas of special relevance to society.

International research context

The major challenges to society have different national and local ramifications. Societal challenges and change manifested at the local level are part of processes that are much broader in scope. Similarly, culture is not confined to national boundaries. International, transnational and comparative perspectives are needed to address the challenges to society. As a result, research under the SAMKUL programme may need to study cultural prerequisites for societal development in contexts other than national contexts.

Counterparts to the Research Council of Norway's focus on the cultural conditions underlying social change may be found in other initiatives launched at the international level. Both the EU and the European Science Foundation (ESF) have implemented initiatives to strengthen research on cultural dimensions. The EU Seventh Framework Programme provides funding for research on challenges to society in Europe related to culture, identity and language as part of thematically oriented calls for proposals under the "Cooperation" research programme. The ESF has introduced several initiatives to promote research on culture, language and understanding. Various activities designed to support the European Research Area (ERA) focus on research on creativity and innovation, cultural diversity and cultural encounters, such as through joint calls for proposals and the Joint Research Initiatives (JRI). Examples of this are projects on the themes of "Cultural Dynamics: Inheritance and Identity" and "Humanities as a Source of Creativity and Innovation" under HERA – Humanities in the European Research Area, one of the ERA-Nets, as well as the research programme on the "Re-emergence of Religion as a Social Force in Europe" under the NORFACE partnership. Like the SAMKUL programme, these international initiatives have emerged in recognition of the fact that an expanded knowledge base on language and culture is essential for addressing complex challenges to society.

Interested parties and users

The SAMKUL programme is relevant for humanities research as well as for some areas of the social sciences. Many of the issues addressed by the SAMKUL programme require a multi- and interdisciplinary approach, and the programme seeks projects in which humanities scholars and social scientists cooperate with natural scientists, technology and medical researchers, as well as other researchers across traditional faculty boundaries.

The SAMKUL programme entails the acquisition of basic knowledge in areas of importance for society and societal development. The knowledge gained under the programme will be relevant to and applicable for policy development as well as for the public administration, industry and working life, special interest organisations, the media, research policy, and the public at large. Dialogue and communication will be essential, especially in the start-up period. Long-term competence-building – based on knowledge of the cultural prerequisites underlying societal development – may prove to be just as relevant for the broad spheres of responsibility under the Ministry of Trade and Industry as for the narrower interest of the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Defence or the Ministry of Fisheries and Coastal Affairs. The size, scope and impact of the SAMKUL programme will be determined by the extent to which the various ministries view this type of knowledge to be vital to their own areas of activity.

Background

Since the end of 2008, the Research Council has been working to define the cultural prerequisites underlying societal development as an area of research. As part of this task, the Research Council provided input to the Ministry of Education and Research in connection with the preparation of the government white paper, *Climate for Research*, in 2009. The white paper supports the efforts to expand the knowledge base for addressing the major challenges to society. The document notes the need to know more in areas such as language, culture, religion and historical change, and emphasises the important role of the cultural basis of research. The SAMKUL programme's objective to expand the knowledge base for decision-making in society will also pave the way to relevant, beneficial insights into the major challenges to society identified in *Climate for Research* – such as changes to the environment, climate change and demographic developments.

The research area of cultural prerequisites underlying societal development has emerged in part from the national strategy for humanities research drawn up by the Research Council in 2008. The humanities strategy underscores that society is dependent on a broad knowledge base in the humanities, which can serve among other things as a tool for addressing major cultural changes:

Globalisation processes are not only economic and technological in nature, but also individual, social and cultural, as illustrated in the debate on multiculturalism in Norway. Knowledge about language, culture and history is therefore more important than ever because it enables us to understand and interpret these global processes.

The specification of this research area must also be viewed in connection with the midterm evaluation of the Large-scale Programme initiative under the Research Council.¹ The midterm evaluation documented an under-utilisation of humanities and social science research in the Large-scale Programmes, and recommended greater focus on interdisciplinarity and integration of the humanities and social sciences into these programmes. An important aim of the SAMKUL programme is to enter into a mutually beneficial dialogue with the Large-scale Programmes on a joint effort to address key challenges to society, partly through greater use and integration of perspectives from the humanities.

The SAMKUL *programme* will play a key role in the efforts to strengthen research in the broader *national thematic area* of the cultural prerequisites underlying societal development. In order to develop new and more targeted activities, the programme was given a narrower scope than the broader thematic area as a whole. As part of the preparatory work for the programme, the Research Council held a seminar with 30 invited researchers in June 2010. Partly on the basis of this seminar, as well as on an internal working process, the Research Council drew up a scientific platform for the SAMKUL programme. The platform was adopted by the Research Board of the Division for Science (DSV 76/2010) as the basis for the SAMKUL programme and thus for the preparation of a work programme. It was also decided to appoint a planning committee to prepare the work programme. The planning committee was appointed in February 2011 for the period up to June 2011.

¹ Large-scale research programmes established within the national priority areas outlined in the previous and current white papers on research, which encompass aquaculture, oil and energy, climate change, functional genomics, ICT and nanotechnology.

2.2 What is being done today?

In 2009 and 2010, the Research Council conducted an analysis of its own project portfolio in order to gain an overview of the extent of research that was relevant for the SAMKUL programme as a broad research area. The review showed that in 2008 and 2009, NOK 109 million and NOK 119 million, respectively, were allocated to research projects that had some relevance to the SAMKUL area. Some 20 per cent of these were assessed as very relevant. These projects were carried out under a number of different programmes and activities, the most important being the FRIPRO funding scheme for independent projects within the humanities and social sciences and research programmes in the areas of culture, migration and integration.

The analysis of the project portfolio shows that research in the SAMKUL area has not emerged within and with this programme. Internationally there is a growing interest in incorporating perspectives from the humanities into large-scale research programmes. By the same token, the portfolio analysis shows that very few research projects use cultural prerequisites underlying societal development as the *point of departure* for their studies and analyses. Many of the projects reviewed can help to develop a knowledge circle around the SAMKUL programme, but these projects cannot take the place of a SAMKUL programme which has as its main task to analyse the relationship between people and their historical, linguistic, religious, aesthetic and ethical surroundings.

3 Objectives of the programme

3.1 Primary objective

The SAMKUL programme seeks to generate research-based knowledge about the cultural prerequisites underlying the formation of society taking place today and societal development in the future. Research under the programme will strengthen and expand the knowledge base in order to improve society's ability to meet the major challenges of today and tomorrow.

To achieve this objective, the programme will promote and develop:

- long-term, basic research of high quality in the programme's thematic priority areas of research;
- research that expands the traditional objects of study;
- research that applies new perspectives with regard to inter- and multidisciplinary, theoretical framework and empirical methods;
- research that is internationally oriented and comparative in nature;
- research that promotes long-term knowledge building for decision-making in society;
- research that speaks to groups with the power to influence the direction in which society moves;
- arenas and meeting places for communication and cooperation among researchers and between researchers and users.

3.2 Secondary objectives and performance targets

The programme's primary objective of generating new perspectives on and insight into especially crucial areas of society will be operationalised as follows:

- provide support for sound research groups through the allocation of funding to well-integrated research projects with clearly defined research management, preferably multi- and interdisciplinary;
- increase the use of and debate about the research conducted under the programme;
- enhance communication with and between researchers from various subject areas, users and interested parties, including policymakers and the public administration, special interest organisations, industry and working life, and the media;
- promote internationalisation of the research agenda, including encouraging more international research cooperation;
- establish a framework for increased scientific publication from the research conducted in the SAMKUL area;
- strengthen perspectives from the humanities and social sciences in the national priority areas for research;
- promote humanities research that incorporates subject areas outside of the traditional research areas.

4 Priority research areas and tasks

4.1 Perspectives

Culture as a prerequisite

In the context of the SAMKUL programme, culture as a prerequisite is understood primarily as *the sphere within which various groups and individuals think, communicate and act*; a complex set of people's language, forms of expression, norms, values, ideas and behaviours. In this way, culture establishes parameters and boundaries for what may be thought, and thus for behaviour, and may serve as a *prerequisite* for the development and formation of society. This may be analysed in relational terms by focusing on people's interaction with their *surroundings*. By employing *concepts of time*, the analyses can focus on the future as well as on the present and past.

In a *diachronic* perspective – from a *longitudinal view* – cultural prerequisites must be understood historically and temporally. One prerequisite precedes another; they are factors in a “process of becoming”. The ways in which these historical factors affect societal development and social change – as causes, material or patterns – must be determined in each empirical case.

In a synchronic perspective – from a *cross-cutting view* – the cultural prerequisites do not exist prior to, but instead are integrated into, the phenomena, factors and processes which in total may be referred to as societal development. The synchronic perspective may reveal patterns, myths and structures that are an inherent part of the ongoing development of society.

Additionally, it is possible to speak of a *third time dimension*: Cultural prerequisites also have an impact on the future. A broader understanding of the diversity of history and ongoing cultural processes as framework conditions and guiding principles for *future* societal development will better equip members of society as well as decision-makers to think through *several* alternative desirable *and* undesirable futures. Knowledge about the cultural prerequisites underlying societal development will provide a basis for nuanced conceptions of the future and improve the ability to predict the consequences of specific choices made at various levels.

Change and continuity, breakdown and inertia

These different time perspectives underscore that it is possible to speak of *several* societal developments. Societies undergoing rapid, extensive and radical change also have cultural and social conditions characterised by inertia and continuity. Societal development is not a linear, uniform process that occurs everywhere simultaneously, at an even pace, in one direction. On the contrary, there are many different “times” or historical processes at work at the same time; some occur quickly, some slowly, some point to the future, some back to the past. Not least, the various directions, times and development processes vary between sectors and institutional fields or between cultural and geographical contexts, both within and between countries. This can in turn be linked to power and interests of different types and impact.

Societal development occurs within quite different timeframes, which can provide favourable conditions for here-and-now policymaking as a result of today's media headlines as well as for long-term perspectives with regard to issues such as the climate debate and the digitalisation of cultural heritage in a thousand-year perspective. The cultural prerequisites serve as thought and communication parameters; they influence how people view and understand the world around them, and they establish a framework for how people act and interact with their close and distant surroundings.

4.2 Thematic priority areas: The interaction between people and their surroundings

The following overall perspective is to be employed in studies of cultural prerequisites under the SAMKUL programme: Culture is to be analysed as a way of thinking and patterns of communication which through a perception of time serve as prerequisites for societal development. The framework underlying these research areas is *the interaction between people and their surroundings*.

People and society are inextricably linked to their surroundings through complex, interwoven relationships. The environments surrounding them may be both tangible and non-tangible. People create their own surroundings, and are simultaneously created by them, through processes of internalisation, externalisation and materialisation. The SAMKUL programme seeks to increase knowledge about this interaction. Common to all the environments selected for research under the SAMKUL programme is that they, in an interaction with human activity, comprise key conditions for how society develops. It is the cultural dimensions of this that the SAMKUL programme will investigate.

The environments to be addressed by the SAMKUL programme are components of the challenges to society previously mentioned. These environments – that is, the interactions that occur within and in connection with these – may be studied separately or in combination with each other; the interfaces are numerous. Power and interests, institutional players, structures and other collective dimensions are woven to varying degrees into these environments and the interactions involving them. In this manner they serve as contexts for the cultural prerequisites to be studied. Investigation of the interactive relationship between people and their surroundings may generate the need both for approaches across established disciplinary boundaries and for new theoretical and methodological orientations.

The natural environment

Major global and local challenges may be linked to the natural environment in several ways: The anthropogenic dimension of the climate crisis is often viewed as an indication that human activity is changing the earth in a negative way. A solution to the food crisis is being sought through more effective means of transforming the surroundings into food for human consumption. In both cases, “nature” is perceived as something separate from people.

The distinction between nature and society, or between nature and culture, has deep roots in the European mode of thought, and has influenced social institutions, scientific

organisations, value assessments and language as well. This distinction is so fundamental that we can hardly think about our surroundings without dividing them up into the “natural” and the “man-made”. It also forms the basis for the mode of thought employed in the natural sciences, and thus comprises a foundation for knowledge production in society.

By the same token, the boundaries between nature and society are continually being crossed, such as in modern medicine’s new fertilisation methods and natural science’s various genetic manipulations. New technology often plays a key role in challenging these boundaries, whether it concerns modern aquaculture, the cyborg or the body as an artistic medium. These topics are also addressed in philosophy and literature. However, exceeding the boundaries between nature and society is not in itself a new phenomenon, as the longstanding tradition of selective breeding of animals, for instance, so clearly shows.

In the context of the SAMKUL programme, it is relevant to study how cultural prerequisites linked to nature and the natural environment affect normative questions related to “mastery over” and “conservation of”. Research may also explore how people’s perceptions of nature-as-reality are formed through everyday metaphors, various linguistic and artistic expressions or numbers-related technology, such as statistics. What is the cultural basis for how society deals with issues concerning nature and technology and how does this vary in time and space? How can we understand the role of people, not only as a threat against nature but also as a co-creator of the complex interaction of which they are a part?

The multicultural environment

Globalisation involves the formation of individual and group identity across traditional relationships that engender a sense of belonging, such as the family, local community and nation state, and that are based to a greater extent on shared ideas, interests and values in formal and informal networks across national borders.

The modern movement of peoples – international migration – is a key factor in the development of multicultural societies. Today many people live side by side with others who have different preferences, values, and behaviour associated with language, ethnicity, sexuality, cultural expression, economic adaptation, religiosity and settlement patterns than themselves. At the same time, education, urbanisation, the media revolution and widespread international forms of expression arising from popular culture help to generate similarities across borders. Various forms of globalisation and notions about a multicultural society produce a diverse set of challenges in most of society’s sectors and spheres, as well as corresponding possibilities for social change.

In the context of the SAMKUL programme, a crucial issue is how globalisation and cultural complexity help to create new prerequisites for societal development and change. Related to this is the question of which national assumptions and distinctive cultural features and patterns foster integration and which counteract it.

The SAMKUL programme seeks greater insight into new cultural practices that are negotiated and developed within arenas such as art, sports, business and other meeting

places in daily life. It is also relevant to study how trust, belonging and support for social values are created, maintained and changed in culturally diverse societies.

The religious environment

Increasing religious pluralism is a feature of modern western societies, and leads to a revival and politicisation of religion. Religious issues are often part of debates and conflict related to i.e. gender roles, biotechnology and the relationship between collective and individual rights. Religion appears to have status as a promoter of personal formation and social cohesiveness on the one hand and as a destructive, conflictual, reactionary force that poses a barrier to integration, equality and development on the other. More knowledge is needed about the bearing of the religious sphere on political issues related to identity, including the construction of national identity, belonging and conceptions of the “enemy”.

From a SAMKUL programme perspective, it is relevant to explore the perceptions of reality that lie at the core of these phenomena. What kinds of guiding principles can these be said to impose on public debate, policy formulation and societal development? In a synchronic perspective, it is also relevant to study how various understandings of religion serve as the basis for daily as well as ritualised practice.

At a general level, there is a need for more nuanced views of contemporary religiosity and the potential implications of this for societal development. This applies to organised religious communities as well as to New Age trends and various alternative movements which appear to have large and varied group of followers. For instance, what does the extent of and support for these trends and movements say about our relationship to rationality and irrationality, to knowledge and science?

The linguistic environment

Language is essential for recognition, learning and action. Competency in and about language, language development and communication is a prerequisite for interaction and participation.

Globalisation is making new demands on people’s linguistic competence and communication skills, both written and oral. This applies to communication across societies and cultures, the internationalisation of working life, and the development of new worldwide, interactive media, among other things. Increasing migration leads to new challenges related to multilingualism and differing skill levels in the society’s main language. The programme is seeking more knowledge about how such development trends create a need for new types of language and communication skills. It is also important to investigate how linguistic diversity generates new opportunities for interaction.

Language is critical for understanding and defining the world. In the context of the SAMKUL programme, it is important to stimulate research on how language as rhetoric and recognition generates reality and thus knowledge hierarchies. The programme sees the need for research on how and why some forms of language and communication become widespread, while others do not.

Compared to previously, many people today have a completely different level of access to international cultural and linguistic expressions via the new media and popular culture – and a person can easily be an active participant in different societies across different borders. Language and reading skills – *literacy* – in a broad sense are key prerequisites for the development of modern societies and for continued societal development. Research groups in the field should be able to produce relevant knowledge about the role played by language, language acquisition and communication in the cultural prerequisites of societal development.

The mediated environment

The media are highly significant for the development of knowledge and for the population's norms, values and ideas. The media are conveyers of art and cultural expressions, and they are an important industry. An increasing proportion of the average day in a modern, complex society is mediated. Mediated communication is one way in which challenges to society are thematised.

The global development of media technology makes the world more similar with regard to art, popular culture, advertising, consumption and the market economy. At the same time, technological development makes it easier to cultivate distinctiveness, avant-gardism, individual identity and diversity. The development of different types of media and communication technologies may lead to different prerequisites for how we as human beings can communicate and convey information, perceive and think, and socialise with others. We create our surroundings – technology – which in turn create and affect us.

The SAMKUL programme is seeking more knowledge about which cultural prerequisites underlie the development and distribution of new media and forms of communication, and how these generate new conditions. Relevant research questions include how the media stimulate new cultural practices and forms of interaction, such as between players in working life, between the state and its citizens, and in daily life. Of what significance are the media (books, television, computers and cell phones) for what can be conveyed and understood or what is credible and convincing? Such technological prerequisites also re-activate key issues in humanities research about the relationship between form and content in human communication.

Art is a type of mediated communication. Artistic and literary expressions are often viewed as symptoms of the times of which they are a part. But art is not only a sign of the times in which it is created; it is linked to a tradition, a past which then “repeats” itself and points towards a future. Additionally, artistic work entails an existential question that extends beyond questions related to a particular point in time. The SAMKUL programme is seeking research that studies how art's exploration of the interaction between people and their surroundings foster a wider basis for interpretation and understanding of societal development than the existing knowledge bases have traditionally provided.

The economic environment

The economic aspects of societal development involve changes in the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services as well as economic prioritising. Originally the term “economic” (from the Greek *oikonomia*) was used to refer to the

distribution of tasks and administration in a household, whereas today it encompasses local as well as global conditions.

Various societies and cultures create different prerequisites for the development of trade and industry, working life, creativity, innovation, the state's involvement in economic and community life, welfare, etc. Principles for how assets should be managed often rest on a cultural foundation and assume different forms of expression, whether it comes to managing the assets derived from oil extraction through investments abroad (the Norwegian Government Pension Fund – Global), thereby “saving” for future generations, or the Muslim prohibition against accepting interest payments. These examples show the boundaries between state and market, between what can be owned/bought, and what is managed according to other principles are not absolute, but rather the object of negotiation and cultural variation.

In the wake of a number of major ethical crises in international business in recent decades, cultural and social researchers have investigated the basic assumptions and premises underlying economic organisation. In the context of the SAMKUL programme, it is relevant to study how the thesis that people are essentially rational, utility-maximising actors – *homo economicus* – is reproduced and guides societal development. Diachronic and synchronic comparative research on various modes of economic thinking can generate new perspectives on sustainable development. The SAMKUL programme is seeking research on the cultural prerequisites that have led to the dominant position of economic and market-related concepts in community planning and policy formulation.

The technological environment

The interaction between technological surroundings and the cultural prerequisites underlying societal development is complex. Technology is created within certain established social structures and cultural contexts – and is thus always influenced by its own times. However, technological innovations also entail the potential for “quantum leaps” through new opportunities for human practices. New technology in the area of medicine can alleviate pain and lengthen life, while new information and communication technology make it possible to establish simultaneity and closeness in relations which previously were characterised by distance in time and space. In this way, technology is both predictable and unpredictable, and the implications may be unexpected and present new challenges.

One example concerns issues of surveillance, security and control with regard to the storage of electronic information. Another example is biotechnology research and genetic engineering. A third example is the formation of spatial surroundings and sociality, which form and change the interactions between people and the created physical surroundings. How these are shaped is largely connected with culturally established conceptions and knowledge about aesthetics, form and function, materials, technology and tradition – and are of course significant for societal development.

The SAMKUL programme is seeking new insight into the cultural prerequisites underlying societal development as these play out in the interaction with the technological environment. The technological environment covers a wide area and encompasses everyday technology as well as advanced technological innovation, robust and stable physical formations, and innovations. In this context, research on cultural prerequisites

may entail studies of how the development of new technology in various fields is based in – and simultaneously challenges – societal formations and cultural practices. This area of research may involve analyses of practical as well as theoretical knowledge traditions related to technology, and natural science and the interaction between these and societal development. Another relevant area of research is related to how technology is delimited and defined as a contrast to, for example, nature or that which is human, and how such dividing lines are challenged, for instance through life sciences. It is also interesting to explore the ramifications that new technology has for understandings of the self, artistic expressions, architecture, community planning and social science.

4.3 Strategic priorities

Strategic body

The programme board will serve as the Research Council's strategic, executive body for the research area covered by the SAMKUL programme. The following section provides some reflections on the programme's strategic priorities and various tasks, c.f. the primary objective and secondary objectives in section 3. As the programme board works to realise this and other parts of the work programme, it must make choices and consider factors based on the limitations and potential resulting from the size of the programme's budget. Another strategic task of the programme board is to develop the cultural prerequisites underlying societal development as an area for Norwegian research.

Basic research – and relevance to society

The SAMKUL programme seeks to produce basic knowledge by studying the cultural prerequisites underlying societal development. The programme will be relevant to society in the sense that the fundamental understandings, interpretations and explanations of the cultural prerequisites generated will be beneficial to and useful for policy development in many different areas as well as for the public debate on decision-making in society. In other words, the SAMKUL programme wants to see humanities scholars and others utilise their expertise and apply perspectives, concepts and models from the subject area to contribute to an expanded knowledge base that will enhance the ability of society to deal with the major challenges facing society both now and in the future.

The SAMKUL programme does not want to overstate the distinction between basic, applied and policy-oriented research. There is no inherent opposition between the SAMKUL programme's long-term focus and prioritisation of high-quality research on the one hand, and the objectives to conduct research that is relevant and useful for decision-makers, policymakers and other users as well as for the public debate on the other. The programme board regards these as complementary objectives that promote high quality in research.

Applied humanities

The primary objective of the SAMKUL programme is to generate new knowledge about critical areas of society. The programme's thematic focus will create good opportunities for strengthening and developing humanities research in particular as well as some parts of social science research. The parameters established for the programme mean that the research communities must ask themselves how their expertise may be targeted towards

the issues related to societal development which the SAMKUL programme seeks to investigate. Moreover, the programme must contribute to the efforts already underway internationally and within the Research Council to enhance the integration of the humanities and social sciences into many of the large-scale research programmes.

Research activity – and meeting places

The funding allocated by the programme will mainly be used to stimulate new research activity within the programme's thematic priority areas as described above. Funding will be announced for researcher-driven projects, primarily using the Researcher Project application type. The programme board will decide how much importance will be attached to recruitment in the individual calls for proposals issued during the programme period. At a later time the programme board may consider using other forms of support and instruments which more directly involve and obligate users to participate in the development and implementation of projects. As a general rule, international cooperation and international orientation will be vital components of research conducted under the SAMKUL programme.

Many of the areas that the SAMKUL programme seeks to explore will require that researchers cooperate across traditional faculty boundaries and that the main target researcher groups – the humanities and parts of the social sciences – address new issues and questions. The programme will therefore allocate a substantial amount of funding for support for events and by other means encourage the establishment of meeting places, networks and other cooperative arenas. This will be especially crucial in the establishment and start-up phases of the programme. Given the SAMKUL programme's objective to conduct research relevant for society and the desire to contribute to research-based policy development, the programme will employ various means of facilitating communication and dissemination with players outside of the research system, both under its own auspices and under the auspices of research groups and others. In other words, the programme will utilise a wide array of funding instruments and forms of support.

Priorities

Based on the programme's objectives, research perspective and thematic priority areas, the programme has established the following strategic priorities as the basis for its activities:

- In general, the programme will give priority to high-quality projects that help to develop and strengthen good research groups, and in so doing build broad, competent knowledge bases in the SAMKUL area. To ensure that the research projects are of high quality, the application assessment process will be based on international peer review of the scientific merit of the projects, the programme board's assessment of the projects' relevance, and an overall assessment.
- The programme will promote projects which span different thematic priority areas and view them in relation to each other, and which involve cooperation between several research institutions. Inter- and multidisciplinary studies can shed light on thematic areas and research questions in innovative ways, and the programme will encourage projects of this nature.
- The programme will promote the establishment of meeting places and cooperative arenas between researchers from various subject areas, and between these and

relevant users and interested parties. One purpose of this is to foster cooperation and network-building, project development and enhanced dissemination and communication from and around the research activity.

- The programme will promote projects that address issues of significance for policymakers, the public administration and other key players, and in so doing contribute to policy development.
- The programme will give priority to research projects that incorporate relevant, realistic and genuine international cooperation. This may provide better opportunities to carry out good comparative studies.
- The programme will facilitate competence-building in the areas it covers so that these areas are well represented when young researchers take over in the upcoming generational shift in Norwegian research.
- Research activities conducted under the SAMKUL programme will take active steps to incorporate the gender dimension and other variables that characterise individuals and groups into the analyses when this is appropriate.
- Within the thematic priority areas described in the work programme, the programme board will have the opportunity to stipulate more specific priorities in the individual calls for proposals for research funding.
- The programme board will keep open the possibility that at a later time it may take proactive measures related to particular academic and research communities in order to ensure that the programme's objectives and priorities are met.

5 International cooperation

The Government's current white paper on research states that all Norwegian research activity must be seen as taking place in an international context. The Research Council's new Strategy on International Cooperation for 2010-2020 emphasises that internationalisation must be a regular, integrated part of all the activities conducted under the Research Council's initiatives and that the level of ambition must be adapted to the individual initiative. Increased internationalisation is essential for enhancing quality in Norwegian research, while high quality in turn increases the international profile and impact of the research activity.

Internationalisation encompasses person-oriented cooperation between researchers, stays at institutions abroad by Norwegian researchers, and stays at Norwegian institutions by visiting international researchers. Other vital internationalisation measures include formalised cooperation between research groups and institutions, participation in the European Research Area and international research programmes funded by the EU and European Science Foundation, and the Joint Research Initiatives (JRI).

The focus of the SAMKUL programme has counterparts in a number of international initiatives that study cultural dimensions, also with a view to generating basic knowledge for policy development. Several of these initiatives are discussed more thoroughly in section 2, and represent potential cooperative partners for the SAMKUL programme at both the programme and project levels.

Internationalisation also applies to the research activity itself. Many of the challenges to society are of a global nature, which calls for an international perspective. This means that the SAMKUL programme will also provide funding for comparative research and international empirical studies if the project will produce new, relevant knowledge about the cultural prerequisites underlying societal development – as this is defined in the work programme and calls for proposals.

5.1 Funding measures and instruments designed to support internationalisation

The programme will require funded projects to incorporate a component of internationalisation and international cooperation. As far as possible, and depending on a project's thematic area and focus, all projects should involve international cooperative partners, participate in international networks or include plans for a stay at a research institution abroad during the programme period. Key information about the project should also be made available in English. The programme will facilitate internationalisation in the projects by allocating research funding that supports the projects' international activities as well as through other means such as granting funding for researcher networks with international participation.

To promote internationalisation, the programme will provide support for the following measures:

- stays at research institutions abroad for the research fellows and researchers participating in SAMKUL projects;
- participation by visiting international researchers in the projects;
- participation by international personnel in the projects' networks and seminars with international participation;
- international publication;
- grants to participate in joint international projects or to prepare applications in response to international funding announcements which are not eligible for the Research Council's Project Establishment Support;²
- assess participation in international programmes relevant to the SAMKUL programme.

The programme as such may also enter into specific bilateral or multilateral cooperative agreements with international players. All key information on the programme's webpages will be translated into English.

Norway has signed agreements with many countries on bilateral research cooperation. The Research Council has several general measures and funding schemes related to this, including mobility grants, and the project participants should familiarise themselves with these, c.f. www.forskningsradet.no/internasjonalt.

² Project Establishment Support enables recipients to carry out the preparatory work involved in grant applications or project proposals targeted at European R&D programmes that are open to Norwegian participation.

6 Communication and dissemination activities

The SAMKUL programme will attach particular importance to developing meeting places and other forms of communication between researchers from various subject areas and between researchers and users outside of academia. This will be important for developing the research area, especially in the start-up phase. Although the researchers and research institutions have the primary responsibility for disseminating the results of their research, it is also crucial that the programme ensures that an adequate framework is in place for their efforts.

Dialogue is essential for achieving the scientific objectives of the SAMKUL programme and for ensuring that the programme is relevant for various user groups. The programme will test out new channels of communication to and from the programme. This will require the development of arenas where knowledge based on humanities research in particular can be conveyed to decision-makers at various levels, and thus generate a broader knowledge base for political decision-making within various sectors. The programme will maintain dialogue and cooperation with research groups and users, i.e. the ministries, with an eye to adding new research areas and questions, provided these fall within the main perspectives and thematic areas of the SAMKUL programme. In the future, projects may be required to incorporate more binding user involvement.

This aim also suggests that closer cooperation between the SAMKUL programme and other programmes and initiatives at the Research Council will be necessary. Establishing joint meeting places with the Large-scale Programmes will be especially beneficial. The SAMKUL programme should also be linked to existing meeting places when appropriate. A linkage of this type will be mutually enriching as it helps to develop the disciplines and foster interdisciplinarity. This will in turn generate new insight that is relevant for the public debate on societal development as well as for specific policy formulation within the ministries' broad-based sectoral responsibility.

6.1 General information and communication about the programme

The programme's webpages (www.forskingsradet.no/samkul) are a vital communication channel extending out to researchers and research groups, the public at large and relevant users. In addition to key documents, the webpages will contain contact information and other general information about the programme, as well as an overview of the research projects with abstracts and contact information for these. A list of seminars, conferences and other meeting places, as well as news articles about and from the programme and projects, will also be published on the webpages.

The SAMKUL programme will announce funding for the establishment of meeting places and cooperative arenas for researchers and for researchers and users together. This will be

especially important early in the programme period in order to ensure the further consolidation and strengthening of the programme within the research communities as well as among potential users, especially with regard to project development and multi- and interdisciplinary research. The programme may also organise informational meetings for applicants in connection with research funding announcements.

Communication and dialogue about the focus of the programme and the research projects may be viewed in an early phase as research dissemination that is carried out as part of the research process, e.g. research questions and issues may trigger discussions which in themselves provide useful insight. Beyond this, the SAMKUL programme will facilitate research dissemination activity in a more traditional sense.

6.2 Scientific dissemination activity

The most important form of scientific publication will be articles in scientific journals and publications by recognised academic publishing houses. This will safeguard and advance scientific quality and put Norwegian researchers in contact with their peers in other locations and in other areas. An important criterion in the application assessment process will be the project's plans to publish books and articles in various scientific genres and in different languages.

A high-quality scientific manuscript may be highly readable for those other than the authors' closest peers. The programme will lay a foundation so that researchers can both publish in relevant scientific channels *and* be active communicators.

6.3 Dissemination to users

The SAMKUL programme entails basic knowledge building in important areas of societal and political development in a broad sense, and should have many potential users and interested parties in addition to the research communities. Consequently, there is not one specific ministry or administrative body that has the main responsibility for the SAMKUL programme.

The individual projects funded under the programme will nonetheless have specific target user groups. The SAMKUL programme will encourage the projects to communicate actively with these groups and target their dissemination activities. Guidelines for this will be elaborated on in a separate communication and dissemination plan and in the calls for proposals. Just as important as dissemination of research results in the final phase of the projects are dialogue and interaction with relevant users throughout the programme period, such as with regard to research topics and discussions of preliminary findings, dissemination measures and the organisation of meeting places.

6.4 Public-oriented dissemination activities

The Research Council's programmes are obliged to provide the general public with research-based knowledge about important social issues. The general public is a diffuse yet vital user. As a channel to the population, the media and the public sphere as such are important users of research conducted under the SAMKUL programme, in part by shedding a critical light on the research activity itself. Components of both the user and public-oriented activity include updated webpages under the auspices of the programme and projects, a target group orientation in the projects, state-of-the-art reviews, syntheses

and summaries of new and existing research, adaptations for the projects' media profiles, and popular scientific activities in the form of books and articles, opinion pieces and participation in public debates.

7 Coordination with other related programmes and instruments at the Research Council

The SAMKUL programme encompasses a new area of research, and there are thus no programmes or other activities under the auspices of the Research Council that have had this area as their main focus of research. Nonetheless, the area is not entirely new, and the SAMKUL programme will share an interface with other activities and programmes. The portfolio analysis discussed above showed that research relevant to the SAMKUL programme has been conducted under many programmes. A key task is to improve the integration of the humanities and social sciences into many of the larger scale natural science programmes at the Research Council.

7.1 The SAMKUL programme and the Large-scale Programmes

The Research Council introduced the Large-scale Programme initiative to focus on the designated national priority research areas, in which the challenges to society – nationally and globally – are great and complex. The midterm evaluation of the Large-scale Programme initiative in 2009 noted that these programmes tend to lack perspectives from the humanities and social sciences, and interdisciplinarity in general. It should be possible to incorporate perspectives from the SAMKUL area into the Large-scale Programmes both by contributing specific knowledge and by problematising the technological and natural science-related knowledge hegemonies in these vital areas of society. This applies to the following programmes:

- Programme on Aquaculture – An Industry in Growth (HAVBRUK)
- Programme on Clean Energy for the Future (RENERGI)
- Programme on Climate Change and Impacts in Norway (NORKLIMA)
- Programme on Core Competence and Value Creation in ICT (VERDIKT)
- Programme on Functional Genomics (FUGE)
- Programme on the Optimal Management of Petroleum Resources (PETROMAKS)
- Programme on Nanotechnology and New Materials (NANOMAT)

The following programmes and areas are somewhat smaller, but they also address subject areas and challenges in which the thematic areas and perspectives from the SAMKUL programme and the humanities in general should be important:

- regional and urban research
- Programme on the Oceans and Coastal Areas (HAVKYST)
- Programme on Nature-based Industry (NATUROGNAERING)
- The Food Programme (MATPROGRAMMET)

The Programme on the Ethical, Legal and Social Aspects of Biotechnology, Nanotechnology and Neurotechnology (ELSA) has a special role to play in relation to the SAMKUL programme. This is a relatively small programme on a crucial research field which seeks to integrate perspectives and knowledge from the humanities and social sciences with natural science research in the area of technological development. Close

cooperation between the SAMKUL programme and the ELSA programme should generate positive synergy effects in the efforts to bolster the contribution and position of the humanities and social sciences in the Large-scale Programmes.³

The Large-scale Programmes and the SAMKUL perspectives are relevant for each other to varying degrees. The SAMKUL programme will develop cooperation with these programmes, as a supplier of both perspectives and knowledge – and vice versa. These programmes, as well as the other programmes that share an extensive interface with the SAMKUL programme, should also be able to provide research conducted under the SAMKUL programme with useful insight as well as empirical data and perspectives. This should also take place at the project level.

Cooperation between these programmes will also bring the SAMKUL programme closer to the Government's white paper on research and its priorities, which are linked to the major global challenges. The SAMKUL programme can contribute new knowledge for addressing the challenges in areas such as health, climate change, energy, the environment, the oceans and food safety. In so doing the programme will raise research questions that have beneficial interfaces with the Large-scale Programmes, such as:

- When the PETROMAKS programme generates new knowledge that enhances value creation through the sustainable utilisation of petroleum resources, research under the SAMKUL programme can supply knowledge about the cultural prerequisites underlying the establishment of key institutions, such as Statoil and the Norwegian Government Pension Fund – Global, or about how cultural prerequisites play a role in, for example, technology transfer, innovation, foreign investments, ethical guidelines and the Government's rule for use of the yield from the Government Pension Fund – Global and other use of Norway's petroleum wealth.
- When the objective of the VERDIKT programme is to conduct “research and development on new ICT solutions that can help to meet major challenges to society related to i.e. climate and environmental problems, energy needs, the elderly boom, health and welfare”, research under the SAMKUL programme can supply knowledge about the interaction between cultural change and scientific innovations, new forms of interaction and socialisation with others, and participation and democracy – including issues involving security, surveillance and control.
- When the NORKLIMA programme studies the “direct and indirect impacts of climate change on the natural environment and society as a basis for adaptive responses by society”, research conducted under the SAMKUL programme can supply knowledge about the modes of thought, values and behaviour patterns that underlie the way in which issues related to the relationship between nature and technology are being addressed in society.
- When the HAVBRUK programme seeks to acquire knowledge to achieve economically, environmentally and socially sustainable growth in Norwegian agriculture, research conducted under the SAMKUL programme can shed light on the

³ For more information on the Large-scale Programmes and other research programmes, please see www.forskningsradet.no/programmer for an alphabetical list of all the programmes and their webpages.

cultural prerequisites underlying marine domestication, regional development and innovation.

During the programme period, the SAMKUL programme board will devise strategies for the programme's links and cooperation with the Large-scale Programmes. The scope and nature of these activities will also depend on the ultimate size of the SAMKUL programme.

7.2 Thematic interface with other programmes

The SAMKUL programme will encompass research that shares a thematic interface with many other programmes and research areas, including:

- Programme on Welfare, Working Life and Migration (VAM)
- Programme on Gender Research (KJONNSFORSKNING)
- Programme on Assigning Cultural Values (KULVER)
- Programme on Norwegian Environmental Research towards 2015 (MILJO2015)
- Programme on the Ethical, Legal and Social Aspects of New Technologies (ELSA), c.f. above

The SAMKUL programme will also have some thematic overlap with certain areas of research within health and community medicine as well as with the Programme on Practice-based Educational Research (PRAKUT) and the Programme on Educational Research (UTDANNING2020).

It is important to note that the SAMKUL programme will not conduct research on the same topics as these other programmes. Their starting points are different. The SAMKUL programme asks fundamental questions about the cultural prerequisites underlying how society has become what it is and where we are heading. Nor is the SAMKUL programme tied to specific sectors or policy areas as several of the other programmes are. The SAMKUL programme must therefore establish cooperation with the other programmes, such as in the form of events or co-funding of research projects. This cooperation must be developed throughout the programme period.

The SAMKUL programme has no direct predecessor among the Research Council's programmes, even though several of the previous programmes on cultural research have touched on some of the issues that the SAMKUL programme will address. Several of them have also placed active research dissemination, the realisation of the humanities in new research areas and a focus on relevance to society high on the agenda.⁴

⁴ The programmes on cultural research at the Research Council: Programme on the Dissemination of Culture and Tradition (KULT I and II), especially the KULT II programme 1992-1997, Programme on Cultural Studies 1998-2002, Programme on Cultural Research 2003-2007, and Programme on Assigning Cultural Values 2008-2012.

8 Budget

The programme will be launched in 2011 with approved allocations from the Fund for Research and Innovation. NOK 10 million in 2011 and NOK 15 million in 2012 have been set aside, c.f. the Research Council's budget proposal for 2011 and the document entitled *Store satsinger 2011* ("Major Strategic Initiatives 2011"). It is expected that NOK 15 million annually from the fund will be allocated in subsequent years. Moreover, in the budget proposal for 2012 the Research Council has requested an increase in the programme's budget of NOK 20 million from various ministries, but approval of this depends on many factors. In order for the SAMKUL programme to achieve the desired significance and impact, it should have an annual budget framework of over NOK 30 million. This work programme opens up the possibility of studying many different research questions. Since the programme currently has a minimum amount of funding, the first calls for proposals will announce research funding for only some of the areas described in the work programme.

As a result, it will be important to work towards a gradual increase in funding for the programme, thereby opening up the capacity to cover the entire range of the programme's areas of research. Once the research projects are launched, they may strengthen the argument vis-à-vis potential funders. In other words, in the first phase of the programme it will be crucial that the Research Council gives priority to the programme in its budget proposal and actively communicates the relevance of the programme's areas of research for both scientific development and policy development.

The programme should result in an increase in the Research Council's funding of humanities research, which means that funding for the programme should primarily be achieved with new appropriations. In addition to funding from the Ministry of Education and Research and the Fund for Research and Innovation, the programme must work to create interest on the part of other ministries for new knowledge of relevance for their spheres of responsibility, such as research on multiculturalism/integration, the role of religion in society, transportation and planning, climate and environmental issues, and industrial development – to name a few.

It will take time to develop the SAMKUL programme, and the programme period is therefore planned to be executed in two five-year phases, i.e. 2011-2020.

9 Administration and organisation

9.1 The programme board

The overall responsibility for the programme lies with the Division for Science, which has also appointed the SAMKUL programme board. The programme is administered by the programme board, acting on behalf of the Research Council. The programme board reports to the Research Board of the Division for Science via the Director of the Department for Humanities and Social Science and the Executive Director of the division. The tasks of the programme board are primarily strategic in nature. The programme board is responsible for ensuring that the programme achieves its stipulated objectives and is implemented as efficiently as possible within the framework approved by the division research board. The Research Council programme administration is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the programme.

The programme board was appointed in mid-August 2011 by the Research Board for the Division for Science for the first half of the programme period up until 31 December 2015. The programme board consists of seven members and two deputies:

- Petter Aaslestad, Professor, Department of Scandinavian Studies and Comparative Literature, Norwegian University of Science and Technology (chair)
- Dag Elgesem, Professor, Department of Information Science and Media Studies, University of Bergen
- Christina Garsten, Professor, Department of Social Anthropology, Stockholm University
- Siv Ellen Kraft, Professor, Department of History and Religious Studies, University of Tromsø
- Roger Strand, Professor, Centre for the Study of the Sciences and Humanities, University of Bergen
- Bente Ailin Svendsen, Associate Professor, Department of Linguistics and Scandinavian Studies, University of Oslo
- Sverker Sörlin, Professor of Environmental History, KTH Royal Institute of Technology

Deputies:

- Mari Hvattum, Professor of Architectural History, Oslo School of Architecture and Design
- Kasper Lippert-Rasmussen, Professor, Department of Political Science, Aarhus University

9.2 Work programme

This work programme has been prepared by a planning committee which was appointed by the Research Board of the Division for Science in February 2011. The work programme was approved by the division research board on 15 June 2011. The planning committee consisted of the following members:

- Petter Aaslestad, Professor, Department of Scandinavian Studies and Comparative Literature, Norwegian University of Science and Technology (chair)
- Anne Kristine Børresen, Professor, Department of History and Classical Studies, Norwegian University of Science and Technology
- Jens Elmelund Kjeldsen, Department of Information Science and Media Studies, University of Bergen
- Siv Ellen Kraft, Professor, Department of History and Religious Studies, University of Tromsø
- Øyvind Kvalnes, Associate Professor, Department of Leadership and Organisational Behaviour, BI Norwegian Business School
- Marianne Lien, Professor, Department of Social Anthropology, University of Oslo
- Jan Svennevig, Professor, Department of Linguistics and Scandinavian Studies, University of Oslo

9.3 Programme administration

- Tor Lunde Larsen, Senior Adviser (Programme Coordinator)
- Nina Nordvik, Senior Adviser
- Silje Hjørungnes, Executive Officer

The programme's address

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