



Work programme

2016–2020

Programme
Cultural Conditions Underlying Social Change – SAMKUL

Work programme 2016–2020

**Programme on the Cultural Conditions Underlying Social Change
(SAMKUL)**

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Oslo, January 2016
ISBN 978-82-12-03470-9 (pdf)

The report can be ordered and downloaded at
www.forskningsradet.no/publikasjoner

English translation: Connie J. Stulz and Carol B. Eckmann
Cover Design: Design et cetera AS
Cover photo: Shutterstock

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1. Summary

The *Programme for Cultural Conditions Underlying Social Change* (SAMKUL) (2011–2020) 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 characterised by global change processes, for instance with regard to technology, demographics, culture and the environment. To better equip society to meet major societal challenges and the opportunities arising from them, an *expanded* knowledge base is needed. This also entails a broad understanding of the cultural conditions, or rather *cultural prerequisites*, underlying societal development. This will generate important new insight and supplement the economic, technological and natural science-related knowledge bases, which today are largely considered to be the valid foundations for decision-making in society. Herein lies one of the programme's important research policy tasks: To improve the integration of humanities and social science research into research on societal challenges.

In the period from 2016 to 2020, the SAMKUL programme will give priority to research on the historical, ethical, normative, linguistic, communicative, religious, and aesthetic dimensions of today's society and the cultural prerequisites underlying societal development, especially in areas related to Man and Nature; Technology and Material Environments; and Knowledge, Welfare and Economy. These are areas where humanities researchers in particular – in new constellations – can expand our understanding of societal development and social change, and thus also of the basis on which we act in the world.

There is a widespread need to analyse the complex challenges to society through inter- and multidisciplinary cooperation between humanities scholars, social scientists and researchers from other subject areas. The programme also seeks to strengthen communication and dissemination across academic boundaries and sectors.

The revised SAMKUL work programme for phase II, 2016–2020, continues to promote research on the cultural prerequisites underlying societal development. The programme will help to ensure that the humanities and social sciences are incorporated to a larger degree in the national research priority areas. In relation to the work programme for the period 2011–2015, this work programme contains revised objectives and theoretical perspectives, and the thematic priority areas have been modified and described in a different manner.

2. Background

2.1 Strategic perspectives

Societal development today is characterised by far-reaching, global change processes. To better equip society to meet major societal challenges and the opportunities arising from them, an *expanded* knowledge base is needed, including insight into the *cultural conditions* underlying societal development. Knowledge about these cultural prerequisites underlying societal development provides tools for dealing with important social spheres and research fields. In other words, knowledge *itself* is a major driving force in and prerequisite for societal development. At the same time, knowledge is developed in an interaction with cultural, social, material, political and economic factors.

The various academic and knowledge regimes ask different types of questions about, and have different responses to, the major challenges to society in the areas of nature, the environment and climate, food, energy, new technologies, migration, terrorism, war and conflict, social inequalities, democratic development, equality and diversity, welfare and health. Humanities and social science research complements the knowledge and practices of 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 have the potential to generate knowledge that can enhance insight into society and societal development. Analysis and understanding of the complex societal challenges must also be addressed through inter- and multidisciplinary research cooperation across faculty boundaries – when this is relevant and necessary for producing new knowledge. 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 critical areas of society.

Overall objectives

In general, the programme will help to achieve several of the Research Council's objectives as these are described in the new main strategy, [Research for Innovation and Sustainability](#), from 2015, but the SAMKUL programme will contribute in particular to achieving objectives 1 and 2:

- Increase investment in breakthrough research and innovation;
- Enhance research for sustainable solutions in society and the business sector.

High-quality, socially relevant research is also a key objective in the Government's white paper on research and the "Long-term plan for research and higher education". The SAMKUL programme's thematic priority areas also share an interface with several of the national priority areas for Norwegian research.

International research context

The major challenges to society have different national and local ramifications. Societal challenges and change manifested at the local level may be part of processes that are much broader in scope. Similarly, culture is not confined to national boundaries. International, transnational and comparative perspectives are often needed for understanding the

challenges to society. SAMKUL projects may therefore study cultural prerequisites underlying societal development in contexts other than national ones.

The Research Council of Norway's focus on the cultural conditions underlying social change is also seen in initiatives launched at the international level. In the EU framework programme, Horizon 2020, the humanities and social sciences are to be included in all initiatives targeted towards societal challenges, and not just those that are most closely associated with the disciplines' traditional research fields from the outset. There is a trend, also in the Nordic countries, towards cooperation between the humanities and other disciplinary traditions. This includes, among other things, a growing discussion of profound social change and how knowledge production within the "integrated humanities" can promote change in social institutions and lead to a more well-functioning society.

Like the SAMKUL programme, such international initiatives have emerged in recognition of the fact that an expanded knowledge base on the cultural dimensions is essential for addressing complex challenges to society.

Interested parties and users

Many of the issues addressed by the SAMKUL programme require a multi- and interdisciplinary approach, and the programme will seek projects in which humanities scholars cooperate with social scientists, legal scholars, natural scientists, technology and medical researchers, as well as other researchers across traditional disciplinary and 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 and civil society, schools and education, the media, research policy, and the public at large. Long-term competence-building on the cultural prerequisites underlying societal development applies to more than one sector of society or one policy area, and may prove to be just as relevant in the context of the broad sectoral responsibility of the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Fisheries as in the sectoral context of the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Defence. The wide-ranging relevance of the SAMKUL programme creates enormous potential, while at the same time it presents a challenge because no individual ministry or sector of society has responsibility for, or ownership of, SAMKUL-related research as such. This means that active, targeted dissemination of research, and its perspectives and results, will be a critical task during this programme period. The programme's impact will be determined by the degree to which various authorities view this type of knowledge to be vital to their own areas of activity and how extensively the research is disseminated and debated in the public sphere.

Background and history

SAMKUL as a research area was an outgrowth of the Research Council's overall strategy for 2009–2012, which called for a new national priority area of research based on the need to supplement the more instrumental-oriented research areas with knowledge from the humanities and social sciences. The midterm evaluation of the Large-scale Programme initiative in 2009 documented an under-utilisation of social science and – especially –

humanities research. Recent portfolio studies show that this is also true today, and the low level of humanities research in particular is true for many other thematically oriented research programmes as well. Another important element in the history of the SAMKUL programme was the [National strategy for research in the humanities](#) (Norwegian only) from 2008, which noted that a knowledge base in the humanities is a vital tool for addressing major social change.

SAMKUL research as a priority area as such has not been realised. In 2014, however, the Research Council provided NOK 215 million in funding for research related to “culture”, compared with NOK 160–170 million in previous years. This funding encompassed research that both thematically and in other ways is much broader than SAMKUL research, and this underscores the need for a targeted initiative on research on the cultural prerequisites underlying societal development and a general strengthening of such perspectives in other thematically oriented research.

A main outcome of the Research Council’s strategy on this point was the establishment of the SAMKUL *programme*, which was launched in autumn 2011 following a long preparatory phase. The programme was partly a continuation of the Research Council’s programmes on cultural research and partly a new programme with a clear agenda to strengthen humanities and social science research in critical areas of society.¹ The programme board was appointed in autumn 2011, and its main task was to realise the work programme drawn up earlier that same year by a planning committee. In addition to the strategic research tasks, the work programme sought research on the interaction between people and their environments in seven thematic priority areas: natural environments, multicultural environments, religious environments, linguistic environments, media environments, economic environments and technological environments.

As of autumn 2015, the programme has issued four calls for proposals and received 237 applications for research funding and 94 applications for networking grants, of which 23 and 36, respectively, were approved. As of November 2015, 24 research projects and 13 researcher networks are in progress.

2.2 Scientific perspectives

In its midterm report,² the outgoing programme board for the period 2011–2015 gave a thorough review of the SAMKUL programme’s activities and project portfolio as of August 2015. The report shows that research groups in the humanities have in large part responded positively to the programme’s challenges and that the humanities clearly dominate in the research projects and networks that have received funding. Most of the projects address research questions – and societal challenges – related to religion and diversity. In September 2015, the Research Board of the Division for Science gave its support to the outgoing

¹ For a thorough presentation of the SAMKUL programme’s background and predecessors, as well as an analysis of the priority area’s brief history, see Vidar Enebakk’s critical look at the SAMKUL programme, *Fra beredskap til redskap. Et kritisk blikk på SAMKUL*, from 2015. The publication (in Norwegian only) may be downloaded from the SAMKUL programme’s webpages: www.forskningradet.no/samkul.

² *Programstyrets midtveisrapport 2011-august 2015* (2015) (“The programme board’s midterm report 2011–August 2015”), available in Norwegian only, may be downloaded from www.forskningradet.no/samkul

programme board's assessment and recommendations for the programme period 2016–2020, including giving priority to research questions related to nature, technology and economy. Up to now, these areas have received limited attention in research under the SAMKUL programme, and the fact they involve major societal challenges is further justification for strengthening these research areas. Moreover, they form an integral part of the national priority areas, and humanities scholars and social scientists should be able to make a significant contribution in these areas. This has served as the backdrop for the committee's work in preparing the current work programme.

Many Norwegian research groups in the universities, university colleges and research institutes should be able to excel in the SAMKUL field. Grant applications submitted to the SAMKUL programme in the previous period show that the research groups have good capacity and the quality of the proposals is high. Only 10 per cent of all applications for research funding were approved, and even among those that received top marks for quality from the international referee panels (scores of 6 and 7), not more than four of 10 received funding. The programme board wishes to emphasise it is critical that Norwegian research groups contribute knowledge on the cultural prerequisites underlying societal development, also in an international context. SAMKUL research should be able to form the basis for project cooperation with international research, e.g. within the EU framework programme, where there appears to be increasing understanding of the need to strengthen the humanities and social sciences in research on key societal challenges.

Therefore, the programme board will put special emphasis on international research cooperation in the upcoming period as well. Projects under the SAMKUL programme must be internationally oriented and include participants and networks from international research groups. The programme's schemes for funding international cooperation and international project participation will be continued.

The SAMKUL programme will use most of its grant allocations to fund Researcher Projects. Both doctoral and post-doctoral research fellowships will be important components of these projects, although recruitment will not be a primary task. The programme board sees no significant challenges related to gender balance or research ethics, nor with regard to the environment or social responsibility. These comprise in part thematic areas within the research itself, and when selecting projects for funding in the future, the programme board will ensure that the gender balance among the project managers remains good and that the gender perspective is well-incorporated into research under the programme. Projects under the SAMKUL programme must also maintain a high ethical standard and be aware of environmental impacts when this is relevant.

3. Primary objective

The (SAMKUL) programme will fund research on the cultural prerequisites underlying the formation of today's society and societal development. Research under the programme will strengthen and expand the knowledge base in order to better equip society to address major challenges.

3.1 Programme objectives

The SAMKUL programme seeks to explain and understand the cultural prerequisites underlying societal development by analysing their historical, linguistic, communicative, religious, ethical, normative and aesthetic dimensions. In the period from 2016 to 2020, research under the programme will be targeted primarily towards shedding light on societal challenges in the following areas:

- Man and Nature
- Technology and Material Environments
- Knowledge, Welfare and Economy

The programme's objectives will be realised through the following means:

- provide funding and develop basic research of high quality in the programme's thematic priority areas of research;
- encourage humanities researchers in particular to apply their research perspectives outside the disciplines' traditional objects of study;
- support research that is internationally oriented and involves extensive international research cooperation;
- provide support for sound research groups by allocating funding to well-integrated research projects that have clearly defined research management, apply innovative theoretical and methodological perspectives, and preferably incorporate a multi- and interdisciplinary approach;
- strengthen perspectives from the humanities and social sciences in national priority areas for research;
- promote long-term knowledge building for decision-making in society;
- 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, the media and civil society;
- foster innovative thinking on the forms of humanities knowledge and the institutionalisation and organisation of research;

4. Priority research areas and tasks

4.1 The SAMKUL perspective

Culture as a prerequisite

The SAMKUL programme promotes research on critical societal challenges through analyses of their cultural conditions. Culture may be studied from a variety of viewpoints. The programme's point of departure is that societal development is characterised in large part by cultural conditions in which culture is understood as *the sphere within which various groups and individuals think, communicate and act*. This entails people's language, forms of expression, norms, values, ideas and behaviours, and in this way culture establishes parameters and creates opportunities for what may be thought and how one acts in the world. Thus, culture can function as a *prerequisite* for the formation of today's society and societal development. At the same time, culture is recreated and changed through the very societal development for which it lays the foundation.

The SAMKUL programme's overall research perspective is that culture is analysed as a way of thinking, patterns of communication and practices that serve as conditions for societal development. The study of cultural conditions will require analyses of how culture is created through various practices – individual, social and corporeal – while these are simultaneously shaped through processes of internalisation, externalisation and materialisation. Both the tangible and non-tangible aspects of culture are vital for the study of conditions underlying societal development.

Analyses of cultural conditions can focus on the present, as well as on the past and future, which indicates it is possible to speak of *multiple* societal developments. Societies undergoing rapid, extensive change also have many cultural and social conditions characterised by inertia and continuity. Societal development is not a linear, uniform process that occurs everywhere equally at an even pace. Not least, the various directions, temporalities and development processes vary between sectors and institutional fields or between cultural and geographical contexts. Power and interests, institutions, economic structures, gender and ethnicity are key aspects of, and help to shape, the cultural prerequisites – and must be included in analyses of them. Individuals, groups and collectives affect and are affected by the relations, structures and environments in which they are located. The SAMKUL programme seeks to increase knowledge about this interaction by giving priority to research on the broad areas of society Man and Nature; Technology and Material Environments; and Knowledge, Welfare and Economy.

4.2 Thematic priority areas

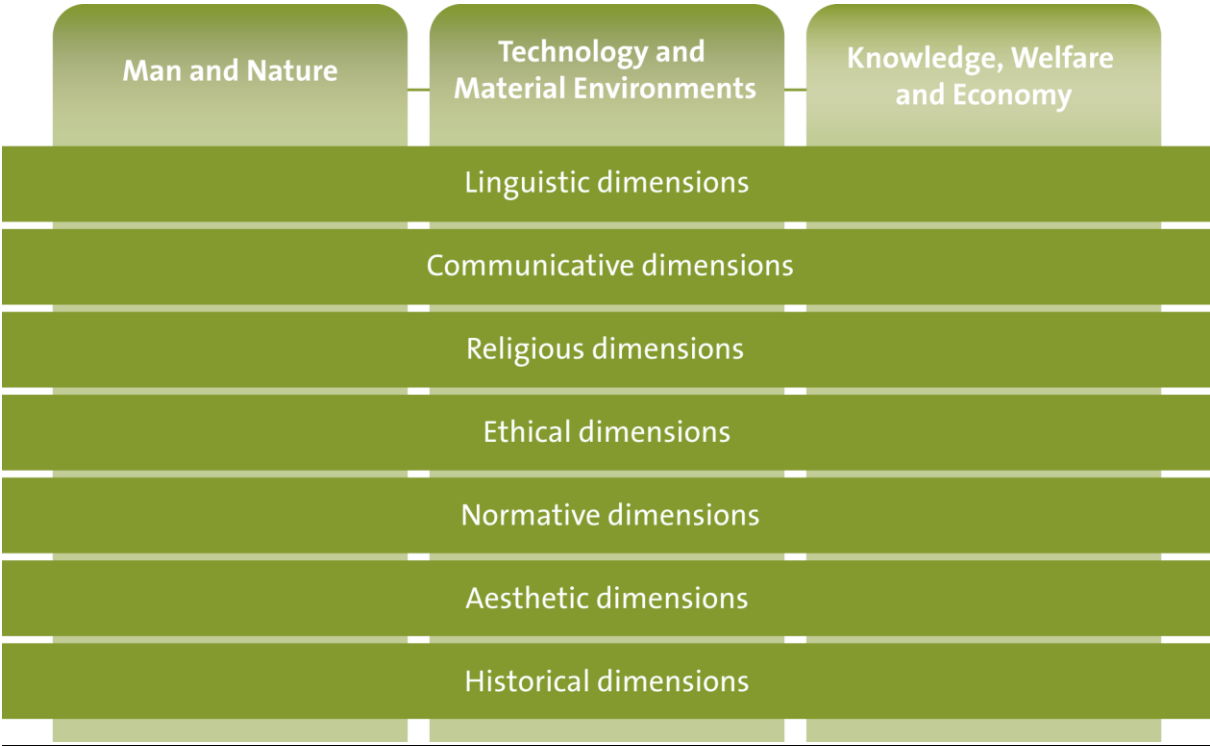
The SAMKUL programme is a challenge-driven research programme that seeks to promote research that provides us with better tools for explaining and understanding the cultural conditions related to challenges that we as individuals and as a society are facing. Critical societal challenges in today's world include man's relationship to nature, to the role of technology and to the development of the knowledge and welfare society and the economy. These thematic areas represent research fields that share an interface with, or are a component of, the national research priority areas. Expanded SAMKUL research, in which

humanities researchers in particular apply their research perspectives outside the disciplines’ traditional objects of study, will help to ensure that this research is relevant for the general knowledge base and for social, value-oriented and political decision-making related to critical societal challenges.

Cross-cutting dimensions

Man and Nature; Technology and Material Environments; and Knowledge, Welfare and Economy are all critical areas for societal development that are associated with major societal challenges. The SAMKUL programme will help to explain and understand the cultural conditions for the development and challenges by analysing their historical, linguistic, communicative, religious, ethical, normative and aesthetic dimensions. All of these cross-cutting dimensions may form the basis for SAMKUL projects, regardless of thematic orientation. Accordingly, the projects should incorporate one or more of these dimensions. The specific formulation will of course vary depending on the individual project’s research topics, questions and design.

The relationship between the programme’s three thematic priority areas and the cross-cutting dimensions may be illustrated as follows:



4.2.1 Man and Nature

The conditions for human life are closely associated with our relationship to nature, both the landscape and the natural world around us and our own nature. Our relationship to nature is a story about limitation and excess, about how changes in nature – both man-made and those outside of our control – change the conditions for what it means to be human.

Today we are facing numerous challenges related to changes in our natural framework conditions. This applies, for example, to risks connected with the global and local impacts of anthropogenic climate change, unsustainable use of biological and physical resources, and reduced biodiversity. Other challenges are linked to population growth, poverty and resource distribution, urbanisation and changes in the natural environment and landscape. The great advancements in medicine are raising new ethical, value-oriented, legal and political questions, generating new perspectives on human nature, and changing our relationship to health, the body and aging.

To understand the cultural conditions underlying the changes in our relationship to nature in a broad sense, research is needed on the cultural significance of the long-term, anthropogenic changes the earth is undergoing, the historical conditions for decision-making related to the utilisation of nature, and the moral questions raised by various decisions. This applies, among other things, to the “green transition”. More research is also needed about the cultural conditions underlying our handling of mental and physical illness, our perceptions of health and the body, and our assessment of quality of life, dignity and death. The cultural conditions for our relationship to both human and non-human nature come to light through religious beliefs and practices, and they are manifested in language, communication and other aesthetic forms of expression. The way in which nature is treated in literature, the media, film, art, music, science and philosophy provides various portals into insight about different aspects of human experiences of as well as feelings and thoughts about the natural world. There are existing research traditions for many of these issues, including within the fields of medical humanities and environmental humanities, and the SAMKUL programme may help to further develop these.

4.2.2 Technology and Material Environments

We are living in a time when we experience the world to a large extent through technology, in which technology structures our lives, and solutions to problems are sought in technology. Technological development has resulted in major advancements and improvements in society, but it has also presented new challenges by generating opportunities for, parameters around and limitations on human behaviour. There is a need for more research on the role of technology related to issues such as surveillance and control, powerlessness and alienation. This is relevant not least in connection with a greater focus on societal security. Technological development creates changes in our material environments, which in turn are important aspects of the cultural prerequisites underlying societal development.

There are many challenges related to how the results of technological development have been dealt with up to today, and to the choices regarding future technological development, which involve values and norms, power and powerlessness. Challenges emerge in connection with developments within technologies such as gene technology, information and media technology, modern experimental biomedicine and nanotechnology, for example, with regard to responsible and socially robust research and innovation. Use of technology in the care sector raises new questions about the effect of technology in human relations, and large segments of working life are undergoing continual change as a result of increasing automatisisation arising from expanding digitalisation. In the extensive urbanisation we are witnessing, building and transport technologies are essential, and new questions may be raised regarding the conditions underlying fair, socially inclusive cities and residential

environments. New media technology is setting the premises for the development of the public sphere, democratic participation and inclusion, for daily life, interaction and social relations. Technological development is also creating new opportunities for new methods in humanities and social science research, exemplified through digital humanities.

The challenges related to technological development require research that leads to better understanding of both the cultural significance of the role of technology and the cultural conditions underlying development in the area. This entails studies of the historical, religious, normative, ethical, linguistic, aesthetic and communicative dimensions of technological development. The aesthetic dimension of technology, and how technology is thematised in art, literature and architecture may also shed light on the cultural significance of technology.

4.2.3 Knowledge, Welfare and Economy

It is important to have a better understanding of the cultural conditions underlying development of the knowledge society, for the role of schools and for the relationship between personal formation and education. New media platforms and digital technology create a different framework and opportunities for the production, storage and circulation of knowledge. This paves the way for new cultural “archives” and alternative cultural canons. Changed management regimes, e.g. related to management by objectives, a bottom-line focus and reporting, also influence research and education as well as the valuation and perception of the role of research and education in society. In addition, knowledge and knowledge institutions are crucial in the development of the welfare society and in new lines of thinking about the basis for the economy and the business sector. Critical studies of knowledge regimes and hegemonies in various subjects and areas of society are also vital research areas under the SAMKUL programme.

The economic aspects of societal development involve change in the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services and forms of economic prioritising. In the wake of crises in the international economy in recent decades, economists and cultural researchers have noted the need for a better understanding of the cultural conditions underlying economic development. This includes the role of confidence in the markets, the cultural conditions underlying corruption and other economic behaviour that is harmful to society, the importance of fairness considerations in economic decisions, how people understand economic connections, and the role of myths and stories about value creation and wealth.

The social and economic sustainability of the welfare society – and the welfare *state* – is an ongoing topic of discussion, in light of immigration and the growing proportion of elderly among the population, for instance – and not least, the beginning of the end of the oil age. The Nordic model is being challenged by changes in working life and trade and industry, inclusion and exclusion, poverty and greater differences. Society is becoming increasingly diverse with regard to values, religion, forms of interaction, public spheres, economic resources and demographics. It is important to understand the ramifications of diversity for social belonging and participation, support for the welfare society’s schemes and confidence in society’s institutions. More knowledge is also needed about the cultural significance of societal security and risk, and conditions underlying radicalisation and extremism. The cultural conditions for politics, the state and democracy can and should be investigated, e.g.

how religion, ethics, norms, the media and forms of communication affect the understanding of democracy, politics and society.

The conditions in Norwegian society are closely linked to developments in Europe and other parts of the world, and it is relevant to incorporate a global context in studies of the cultural conditions underlying challenges to the welfare society. This applies in particular to the cultural conditions for how we as a society handle the reception of refugees and the understanding of our global responsibility in a world characterised by poverty, war and conflict.

Overlapping areas

The three thematic priority areas are not mutually exclusive, but can and should be viewed in relation to each other when this is meaningful for the relevant phenomenon to be studied. An obvious example is research in the health and welfare field, where new technological solutions are presented almost every day, either with regard to various types of advanced medical treatment or technology and equipment used in elderly care. The programme board wishes to point out that it is relevant to incorporate gender perspectives in studies within all three thematic priority areas.

Multi- and interdisciplinarity

An important dimension in research under the SAMKUL programme will be multi- and interdisciplinarity. In many cases, multi- and interdisciplinary research will be beneficial within the programme's thematic priority areas, as will a variety of theoretical and methodological perspectives. By the same token, this is not a requirement for all research projects. Interdisciplinarity is required to the extent it is relevant for the research questions being asked and the empirical field being studied, and if it promotes research quality and relevance. In addition, the programme board wishes to mention globalisation and internationalisation – both as a perspective and in the form of good connections to international research and international environments in the relevant field.

Relationship to the previous work programme

The previous work programme set out seven thematic priority areas – described as “environments” – within which researchers could study human interaction. It is worth emphasising that the new thematic priority areas presented above do not mean that the SAMKUL programme will no longer fund research on e.g. diversity or the media. Many challenges, research questions and components from the previous thematic priority areas may be employed in research on nature, technology, welfare and economy, or will comprise crucial dimensions for the programme's efforts in these areas – since there is a clear principle in the thematic prioritisation that SAMKUL projects in the period from 2016 to 2020 must shed light on challenges in one or more of these areas.

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. 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 implicit in the programme's overall resources.

Basic research – and relevance to society

The SAMKUL programme seeks to produce basic knowledge of high quality by studying the cultural prerequisites underlying societal development. The programme will be relevant to society in the sense that the understandings, interpretations and explanations generated will be beneficial to and useful for societal and policy development, as well as for the public debate on various decisions. In other words, the SAMKUL programme wants to see humanities scholars and others utilise their expertise and apply perspectives, concepts and models from their subject areas 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 see any clear distinction between basic, applied and policy-oriented research. There is no 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 interested parties as well as for the public debate on the other. These are regarded as complementary objectives that promote high quality in research.

Apply the humanities

The programme's focus will create good opportunities for strengthening and developing humanities research as well as social science research. The SAMKUL programme's profile and thematic framework mean that the research communities must ask themselves how to target their expertise to shed light on the societal challenges about which the SAMKUL programme is seeking new knowledge. 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 research within national priority areas, where subject areas and disciplines such as natural science, medicine, technology and economics have dominated.

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 individual calls for proposals may have different priorities with regard to thematic focus, recruitment, possible user involvement and the like.

Exploration of the cultural prerequisites underlying societal development may create a need to develop new forms of knowledge production. The SAMKUL programme also aims to establish new collaborative constellations and work methods in the research conducted. This will strengthen the role of research as a supplier of knowledge to society today and in the future.

Many of the areas that the SAMKUL programme seeks to explore will require cooperation across traditional faculty boundaries and that the main researcher target groups within the

humanities and social sciences are qualified to address new issues and questions. The programme will therefore through various means encourage the establishment of meeting places, networks and other cooperative arenas. 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 also facilitate communication and dissemination with actors 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.

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

- 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 new ways.
- The programme will seek to achieve good gender balance among project managers and participants in the projects funded and ensure that the gender perspective is well incorporated into the research conducted.
- Within the thematic priority areas and objectives 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.

5. International cooperation

International research cooperation is essential for enhancing quality in Norwegian research and for ensuring that Norway has access to – and contributes to – international knowledge production. International cooperation will also help to address global challenges. Major societal challenges require an international perspective, and therefore the SAMKUL program will generally encourage the use of empirical data from other countries, as well as comparative research when this is beneficial for the analyses.

The EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, Horizon 2020, and other international collaborative measures such as the Joint Programme Initiatives (JPI) and the ERA-NET scheme have focus areas that are relevant for SAMKUL research, and the programme wishes to encourage SAMKUL projects to participate in these arenas.

The SAMKUL programme will encourage researchers to cooperate with non-Nordic, non-European researchers and research groups, and in particular to focus on the Research Council's priority countries outside the EU/EA, i.e. the BRICS countries,³ as well as Japan, the US and Canada.

5.1. Instruments and measures

To strengthen international cooperation within SAMKUL research, projects funded under the programme will be required to meet the following requirements:

- They must have drawn up specific plans for international cooperation.
- They must have international partners and participate in international networks.
- Doctoral and post-doctoral research fellows should conduct a stay at a research institution abroad during the project period, and senior-level researchers will preferably do the same.

The SAMKUL programme will lay a foundation for international cooperation in the research projects funded under the programme by providing funding for and/or facilitating:

- overseas research grants for research fellows and researchers;
- visiting researcher grants for international researchers who wish to conduct a stay in Norway;
- participation in international researcher networks;
- participation in joint international projects;
- organisation of international seminars and conferences in Norway;
- pre-projects/preparation of grant applications for Horizon 2020 and other international calls for proposals not covered by the Research Council's other schemes;
- international publication by providing funding for publishing and dissemination.

³ Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

To implement some of these measures, the programme will issue open-ended calls for proposals targeted specifically towards projects funded under the programme, while other measures may be addressed with special calls or other schemes.

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, cf. www.forskningsradet.no/en/International. This webpage also includes links to information about Horizon 2020 and the Research Council's project establishment support for the preparation of grant applications to the EU programme. The programme as such may also enter into specific cooperative agreements with international actors.

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, users and interested parties outside of academia. Although the researchers and research institutions have the primary responsibility for disseminating the results of their research, it is also crucial the programme ensures that an adequate framework is in place for their efforts. Creative, concrete, ambitious and realistic plans for dissemination is one of the criteria used in the application assessment process.

Dialogue and dissemination are essential for achieving scientific objectives and for ensuring the programme is relevant to society. The programme will put emphasis on communication to the public administration and decision-makers, and thus generate a broader knowledge base for political decision-making. An objective of the programme is that the research will have relevance and make an impact beyond the research itself. Contact with the research groups as well as with interested parties, such as the ministries, will provide critical input for priority setting during the programme period.

Ambitions of this type may also lead to closer cooperation between the SAMKUL programme and other programmes and initiatives at the Research Council by linking SAMKUL research of relevance to various social arenas to other programmes' meeting places and communication about these. This will expand the knowledge base and enhance the public debate and policy development within the broad sectoral responsibilities of the various ministries.

The SAMKUL programme wishes to ensure that the projects have adequate resources so they can satisfy both the requirements regarding increased (international) scientific publication and the requirements regarding communication and dissemination of research results and processes to users and the general public. One means of doing this is to set aside funding for SAMKUL projects that wish to make an extra effort in the area of dissemination, including with regard to the time needed to carry out such activity. Depending on the topic and general focus of the specific projects, this means that the relationship between research and dissemination must not necessarily be viewed as completely separate from each other or as two consecutive phases. Research activity and dialogue with the general public may be closely integrated in various ways and take place throughout the entire project period.

6.1 General information and communication about the programme

The programme's webpages www.forskningsradet.no/samkul/Home_eng 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, news articles, an overview of seminars, conferences and other meeting places, and information about the research projects. The programme will also publish a newsletter.

The programme's communication and dissemination activity will be specified in-depth in a separate communication plan.

6.2 Scientific dissemination activity

The most important form of scientific publication will be articles in scientific journals and other 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 selection criterion will be the project's concrete, realistic plans to publish books and articles in various scientific genres and in different languages.

6.3 Dissemination to interested parties and decision-makers

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. For example, there is not one specific ministry or administrative body that has the main responsibility for thematic areas under the SAMKUL programme and that would therefore seek – and utilise – SAMKUL research.

The individual SAMKUL projects will nonetheless have specific target groups among the interested parties. The SAMKUL programme will encourage the projects to communicate actively with these groups and target their dissemination activities. Interaction with relevant target groups throughout the programme period, for instance with regard to research topics and discussions of preliminary findings, dissemination measures and the organisation of meeting places, is just as important as dissemination in the final phase of the projects.

6.4 Public-oriented dissemination activities

The Research Council's programmes are obliged to provide the general public with research on important social issues. As a channel to the population, the media and the public sphere are important users of research conducted under the SAMKUL programme, in part by shedding a critical light on the research activity itself. The school and education field is another important target group for humanities and social science knowledge, and the programme aims to strengthen dissemination in this area. 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.

6.5 Funding for dissemination and communication activity in SAMKUL projects

During the programme period, the programme board will continue to set aside a substantial amount of funding for communication and dissemination activity and continue issuing open-ended calls for proposals for such activity – and for publication – targeted towards the SAMKUL projects. Projects may seek funding for larger measures that extend beyond those for which funding is already allocated and that are described in the dissemination plan – or in some other way have a broader reach than the dissemination activity to be expected from the projects and host institutions, given that these are where the main responsibility for

dissemination lies. The programme board invites the research projects to design creative, ambitious measures, in cooperation with academic and other publishing houses, various media channels and producers, public institutions and the public administration, special interest organisations, museums, galleries and other parties, when this would be expeditious.

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

The Research Council has long been concerned with how perspectives from the humanities and social sciences can be better integrated into research addressing major societal challenges. A key strategic task for the SAMKUL programme is to facilitate this effort through dialogue and cooperation with other thematic initiatives at the Research Council.

It should be possible to incorporate SAMKUL research into the thematically oriented 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 several of the initiatives under the Research Council's Division for Energy, Resources and the Environment, the Division for Society and Health, and the Division for Innovation. Not least, the SAMKUL programme should be able to contribute to research in the Research Council's Large-scale Programmes, such as the Large-scale Programme on Aquaculture – An Industry in Growth (HAVBRUK), the Large-scale Programme for Petroleum Research (PETROMAKS2), the Large-scale Programme for Energy Research (ENERGIX), the Large-scale Programme on Climate Research (KLIMAFORSK), the Large-scale Programme on Biotechnology for Innovation (BIOTEK2021) and the Large-scale Programme on Nanotechnology and Advanced Materials (NANO2021). Previous evaluations have noted that humanities perspectives in particular, as well as the social sciences and interdisciplinarity in general, are largely missing from these programmes. There are also a large number of other thematic initiatives at the Research Council that share an interface with the SAMKUL programme and that are relevant for research perspectives from the humanities and social sciences, especially within welfare, health, migration, societal security, education, technological development and nature management.⁴

The SAMKUL programme asks fundamental questions about the cultural prerequisites underlying how society has become what it is and where we are heading. This is also the programme's distinctive contribution to shedding light on societal challenges. The SAMKUL programme is not tied to specific sectors or policy areas as several of the other programmes are.

Closer cooperation

The SAMKUL programme will develop cooperation with the other thematically oriented programmes, as a supplier of both perspectives and knowledge – and vice versa. These programmes, which share some degree of thematic interface with the SAMKUL programme, will also be able to provide useful insight as well as empirical data and perspectives to research under SAMKUL. This should also take place at the project level. Cooperation between these programmes will also bring the SAMKUL programme closer to the Government's "Long-term plan for research and higher education" and the Research Council's new main strategy, "Research for Innovation and Sustainability", which emphasise the importance of research on societal challenges. Moreover, this may help to bolster

⁴ For more information about the Large-scale Programmes and other research programmes, see www.forskningsradet.no/en/Programme_webpages for an alphabetical list of all programmes and their webpages.

change processes at the Research Council, where there is a shift towards viewing research areas and research activity in a more cohesive manner and targeted towards broader thematic areas, with less focus on the individual research programme.

At the programme level, a crucial instrument for enhancing the integration of humanities and social science research in thematically oriented initiatives will be to take part in co-funding calls for proposals for research funding across programmes in which a SAMKUL perspective and other humanities and social science research may increase the quality and relevance of research. Another measure may be to use the SAMKUL programme (the programme board, administration and associated researchers) as a critical, constructive contributor to the development of programmes and initiatives at the Research Council and in other organisations.

Delimitations

Although the SAMKUL programme works to achieve closer cooperation with other programmes, it is reasonable to have a certain division of tasks between the programmes. The various initiatives have different priorities and tasks. The SAMKUL programme cannot participate everywhere, but must focus its efforts and resources in areas that support its various programme objectives in the best possible manner. It is also critical that the SAMKUL programme's activities in fields that share an interface with other programmes' areas – for example, nature, technology, welfare and health – serve to strengthen those programmes' own efforts to integrate the humanities and social sciences into their areas, priorities and calls for proposals – and not simply take over responsibility for this.

8. Budget

The SAMKUL programme has a medium-sized budget compared with other programmes at the Research Council. In 2015, the programme had a budget of NOK 47 million (NOK 390 million for the 10-year period 2011–2020). Roughly NOK 150 million of this amount has not been allocated as of November 2015.

The programme's thematic priority areas for the period 2016–2020 are partly interrelated, and this is one reason there is little point in dividing the budget among the thematic areas. For the same reason, any future changes in the budget will generally not affect the distribution of resources in the three areas.

Overall, the remaining funding for the upcoming period, approximately NOK 150 million, is sufficient to launch new, exciting research in all three thematic priority areas: Man and Nature; Technology and Material Environments; and Welfare, Knowledge and Economy. However, the planning committee wishes to point out that the work programme has a broad and ambitious scope, and experience from the SAMKUL programme 2011–2015 indicates that there will be a general need for a budget increase, in order to play a larger role in joint calls for proposals at the Research Council, among other things.

Ministry of Education and Research – strategic initiative

The programme receives most of its funding from the Ministry of Education and Research, which in 2015 funded 85 per cent of the programme's budget (NOK 40 million of about NOK 47 million). On recommendation from the Research Council, the programme's allocation from the ministry will be taken from chapter 285, item 53 "strategic initiatives" (previously "overall research policy priorities") and no longer from the ministry's general allocation to the Research Council (item 52). This is taken as a sign that the SAMKUL programme is being viewed as a long-term programme with important research policy and strategic tasks. This should give the incoming programme board good grounds to work to increase allocations to the programme – if the stated objectives are achieved and the programme delivers high-quality, relevant knowledge on critical social issues.

Ministries in other sectors

Since 2013, the SAMKUL programme has received almost NOK 5.5 million in funding from the Ministry of Culture. For many years this ministry has been involved in funding the Research Council's cultural research programmes as part of its broad sectoral responsibility. Parts of the project portfolio are clearly relevant for many of the ministry's policy areas. In addition, the SAMKUL programme receives about NOK 1.5 million per year from the Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation. This funding is earmarked for research on national minorities, an issue which falls administratively under that ministry. Responsibility for this research was previously assigned to the cultural research programmes at the Research Council. There is an ongoing project with a project period of 2013–2016 on the linguistic history of the Romani people in Norway, and some NOK 8 million in funding still remains for new research on the national minorities. This funding should be put into circulation early in the upcoming programme period.

Research under the SAMKUL programme is relevant for many policy areas, and the programme aims to increase knowledge about the research results within the political sphere and public administration. An outcome of greater awareness – and use – of SAMKUL research may be that ministries other than the Ministry of Education and Research and the Ministry of Culture will view the SAMKUL programme as an initiative they can take part in funding.

Open-ended programme

In autumn 2015, the Research Council decided that the SAMKUL programme would be designated as an *open-ended programme*. This means that the programme will not conclude after the 10-year programme period in 2020, but will also continue its activities into the future. The reason for designating the SAMKUL programme as an open-ended programme is that the programme has a long-term perspective and a history of cultural research programmes that dates as far back as the 1980s, and that it is crucial for the formulation of research policy – the latter based in part on the task of strengthening the humanities (in particular) and the social sciences in research on major societal challenges. In areas where the Research Council will “always” have specific initiatives, open-ended programmes will also result in steadier budgeting, thus avoiding large transfers of unused allocations at the beginning of the programme period.

For the SAMKUL programme, the definition as an open-ended programme means that there will be new programme periods from 2021 and onward, possibly with other thematic areas and priorities than those described in this work programme. Funding from the sectoral ministries to the programme is more uncertain, and therefore, the budget as of November 2015 does not show such allocations for the years subsequent to 2020.

Allocations to the SAMKUL programme in 2016–2024, assuming zero growth. NOK million.

Funder	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
KD	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40
KUD	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5				
KMD	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5				

KD: Ministry of Education and Research

KUD: Ministry of Culture

KMD: Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation

9. Evaluation and summary

New portfolio analysis and summary in 2018/2020

An important basis for this work programme is the previous programme board's midterm report, which provides a thorough summary of the activities and project portfolio for 2011–2015. It will be natural to carry out a similar self-evaluation at the end of 2018 – at the expiry of the next programme board's term. This may also be postponed until 2020, prior to a potential revision of the work programme for 2020 and beyond. In addition to summarising and assessing the programme's strategic activities and general activities, the main evaluation criteria will be the project portfolio's:

- disciplines and research groups, which ones apply for funding, which are awarded funding;
- quality-related requirements, selection;
- coverage of thematic priority areas and societal challenges, inclusion of gender perspectives;
- research fellows and recruitment, gender balance;
- international cooperation;
- dissemination and communication activities.

This is in light of the programme's objectives as these are described in chapter 3 of the work programme.

Because the SAMKUL programme is defined as an open-ended programme and by 2020 will have been active for almost 10 years, there is much to suggest that the programme should be evaluated by an external evaluator. A new self-evaluation, perhaps an international evaluation, could be beneficial and important with regard to priority-setting in the SAMKUL programme in the years following 2020. The scope of the evaluation and the summary must nonetheless be adapted to the programme's size. There may be a need for partial summaries and assessments of activities in specific focus areas.

Summary and evaluation during the programme

Progress reports and final reports provide ongoing information about the status of the projects. This information is compiled and assessed in the programme's annual reports, among other things, and developments in, for example, publication and dissemination activity are indicators of scientific merit and relevance to society. Given the SAMKUL programme's emphasis on expanding the knowledge base for use in political decision-making and the public debate, the programme will gather information about the projects' activities related to communication and dialogue with interested parties, decision-makers and other stakeholders in society. The Research Council's databases can generate statistics which show, among other things, developments with regard to:

- developments in the Research Council's activities in the broad cultural sphere;
- an increase in the proportion of the Research Council's funding that goes to the humanities and social sciences, not least with regard to research in the Large-scale Programmes and other thematically oriented programmes.

The programme may further specify secondary objectives and performance indicators, target groups, types of evaluations and the like in the two-year action plans.

10. Administration and organisation

Research board and 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 Sciences 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 administration is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the programme.

The SAMKUL programme board for the period from 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2018 consists of the following persons:

- Dag Elgesem, Professor, Department of Information Science and Media Studies, University of Bergen (chair)
- Ellen Krefting, Professor, Department of Philosophy, Classics, History of Art and Ideas, University of Oslo
- Sune Lægaard, Associate Professor, Department of Culture and Identity, Roskilde University
- Inger-Lise Saglie, Professor, Department of Landscape Architecture and Spatial Planning, Norwegian University of Life Sciences
- Bente Ailin Svendsen, Professor, Department of Linguistics and Scandinavian Studies, University of Oslo
- Sverker Sörlin, Professor, Division of History of Science, Technology and Environment, KTH Royal Institute of Technology
- Aksel Tjora, Professor, Department of Sociology and Political Science, Norwegian University of Science and Technology
- Kristofer Hansson, Associate Professor, Department of Arts and Cultural Sciences, Lund University, (first deputy)
- Liv Ingeborg Lied, Professor, Norwegian School of Theology (second deputy)

Work programme 2016–2020

In autumn 2015, the current work programme was drawn up by a planning committee comprised of the same nine individuals appointed by the division research board to serve on the programme board beginning on 1 January 2016.

The key background documents were the [work programme from 2011](#), the midterm report by the outgoing programme board, and the report *Fra beredskap til redskap. Et kritisk blikk på SAMKUL* – a critical look at SAMKUL. A draft of the work programme was published on the SAMKUL programme's webpages in November 2015 to give the research groups an opportunity to provide input and submit comments. The work programme was approved by the Research Board of the Division for Science on 10 December 2015.

Programme administration as of December 2015

- Tor Lunde Larsen, Special Adviser (Programme Coordinator)
- Johannes Waage Løvhaug, Senior Adviser
- Solbjørg Rauset, Senior Adviser
- Siri Tønseth, Special Adviser
- Elisabeth Westphal, Senior Executive Officer

The programme's address

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Cover design: Design et cetera AS
Cover photo: Shutterstock

Oslo, January 2016

ISBN 978-82-12-03470-9 (pdf)

This publication may be downloaded from
www.forskningsradet.no/publikasjoner