

Evaluation of NTNU Strategic Area, Globalization

Strategic Areas: The Idea, Concept and Selection Process (Globalization)

The overall *vision* of the NTNU in setting up and supporting areas of strength is both exciting and appropriate to producing a university of global standing. We also believe that the choice of the area of Globalization is strongly justified on at least three grounds:

1. The potential to enhance University profile
Properly developed, this area can contribute to a successful identification and projection (branding) of NTNU, especially in the Scandinavian context.
2. The possibilities for interdisciplinary research
Because it represents a complex manifold of relations, globalization is a crucial area for building substantial and working connections between technology studies and natural sciences on the one hand and the social sciences and the humanities on the other. Various new measures, however, could be undertaken to enhance this process of building connections—for example, having social scientists studying the implications for globalization of their colleagues attempting technology exports, innovative processes, etc.
3. The nature and importance of the area
The contemporary intensification of globalization, and its implications for practices of production, communication, exchange, organization and enquiry, has made it one of the dominant metaphors of our time. We do think that the area of globalization is a very good choice, in part because it is an emerging subject in Nordic universities, and there are a great many questions related to globalization that can be seen as specific to this geographic region. Moreover, it is an emerging and burgeoning area of scholarly enquiry that is remaking other areas of enquiry across the world. Responding to the processes of globalization is one key challenges of our time.

The potential strength of the Strategic Areas in our view depends upon the following important factors:

- concentrating on key strategic areas, chosen to distinguish the NTNU from other universities in Norway and in Scandinavia
- developing those strategic areas in a way that:
 1. crosses the science/social science/humanities divides.
 2. recognizes the importance of interdisciplinary research for innovation and significance, but retains a basis in the disciplines and the teaching departments. (This has been described internally as a 'schism', but it can be managed by an appropriate structure of governance, by appointing the right people to leadership positions, and by providing adequate financial support to the Areas—see below for concrete suggestions).
 3. links those Strategic Areas to problems of global and national significance.
 4. treats the process as a *long-term* engagement with basic themes.
 5. relates the research to the work of industry, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), International Organizations (IOs) and governments.

6. relates the research to postgraduate training. (This highlights the importance of the new MA program starting August 2007 in 'Global Technology Management' and 'Global Politics and Culture' and the designation of PhD positions to the Area.)
7. avoids being too narrowly focussed on industry outcomes (The importance of this is redoubled in a university of technology, as testified by the way in which other universities with international standing such as MIT (Mass.) and RMIT (Melbourne) approach the social sciences and humanities.)
8. draws upon existing areas of excellence within the University.
9. develops an inter-relationship between the different projects so that 'whole is greater than the sum of the parts'.

Most of what the Strategic Area of Globalization is doing this looks good in theory—that is as outlined in 1–8 above—but it is unclear how it is operating in practice, and therefore whether or not the 9th principle has been achieved. We think that it is too early to judge given that the Program has only been going for such a short time. However, we have concrete suggestions concerning the operationalization of the stated goals. Before that, we want to evaluate the goals as such.

Appropriateness of Strategic Areas as means to achieve the goals and vice versa

We are in basic agreement with other evaluators in considering that two of the University goals are unrealistic—that is, being in the top 1 per cent in the world, and one of the top ten universities in Europe is hyperbolic rather than realistic. Such goals have the potential of becoming sources of frustration, distractions, or empty hopes not taken seriously. The more realistic goal for the University is that it should aim to achieve *international excellence in key areas* and in the leading group of universities in a number of those areas. Consequently, we suggest that the University needed to choose a limited number of areas in which it is truly excellent or have realistic possibilities of becoming so soon. This has been done, but it is not clear that the decision has been accompanied either by the allocation of appropriate resources or by the decision-making structure to carry through the vision. There remains a need for clear incentives for scholars and departments collaborating in striving towards those goals. Barriers to active engagement need to be removed, or at least diminished.

In summary, we strongly agree with the building of strategic areas, and we commend the choice of the field of globalization studies as one of those areas. The continuing and real issue is the need now for the development of an operation plan that goes beyond visionary statements and attends to details of organization and resource provision. Before we move to this issue, we have some comments concerning the topics and the foci chosen by the Strategic Area of Globalization.

Specific Comments for the Strategic Area of Globalization

The general aim of research in the Area is to provide 'globalization knowledge'. The question arose, is this to be a knowledge *for globalization* or *about globalization*? We think that it should be both, and that this should be explicitly stated. Of course, such knowledge is immense, so the Strategic Area needs to find a niche and narrow its research focus. One suggestion is to take the overall theme of 'Globalization and its Impact'. There needs to be some overbracing research questions that are named and the projects should be directed towards answering those questions. If the present focus areas are maintained, they could consider an appropriate positioning within this theme. Here are some suggestions:

The Global Production group is very successful in making straight-forward connections with the strategic direction of the University and its focus on technology, science and industry, as reflected in its successful research applications. They fit well the current interests of industry and research foundations. By the same token, they are pursued by many other researchers. The group needs to locate its specificity. For example would it be possible to designate regional foci? Is it possible to choose and name provocative angles on well-known topics?

The prospectus for War, Conflict and Migration is wonderful. They take a key area of concern in global studies and approaches it with much verve and focus. In the Annual Report (2005-06, p. 9) the theme is described thus: 'In difficult conflict transformation processes, certain crucial moments emerged as particularly significant; turning points where patterns of thought and feeling changed from conflict-escalating to conflict-transformation and peace building. How can one nurture such turning points? ... What are the important preconditions for turning points? ... An important aspect of this work will be the development of innovative participative methodologies, guidelines and procedures aimed at improving conflict transformation processes.' Such a research program is both demanding and exciting. Nevertheless, the question arises, 'What is actually being done to achieve this end?' We ask this question because if it was actually followed up it would make for a pathbreaking way of focusing the work of more than just this research group. While the theme of globalization is a strong way of connecting the researchers in the Focus Area, however, one impression is that it remains a loose grouping of research projects. The projects remain thematically connected rather than mutually driven by research problematiques or questions. In establishing a distinct approach to the issues of War, Conflict and Migration, one of the overarching themes of enquiry might be 'How best can we deal with reconstruction after crises?'

The Global Communication Focus Area has also interests and foci that are appealing to technology departments at the University and to the industry. Additionally, their chosen area of theoretical interest—construction and enactment of markets in the domains previously free of commercial arrangements—is highly topical in social sciences. The most obvious collaborators are the University of Edinburgh, Ecole des Mines in Paris and Stockholm School of Economics. Appropriate collaborations should be developed.

The Global Translations Focus Area offers an array of exciting projects, but the general description of the area sounds conventional and vague. Perhaps it is only natural that the linguists put least emphasis on rhetorics, but the matters of representation—internally and externally—are of crucial importance for Strategic Areas (we will return to organizational solutions later on).

The Strategic Area of Globalization shares with other areas the dilemma of interdisciplinarity versus multidisciplinary, but it is very likely that solutions must be tailored separately in each Area. As we see it, the existing Areas are already interdisciplinary, and they have developed a kind of common language due to their history of co-operation. The integration among the Areas requires further attempts at translation and dialogue. Without underestimating the difficulties related to it, we nevertheless think that it is worth trying.

Processes and Measures of Implementation

It may have been that the University began with an appropriate series of implementation stages. It is difficult for us to judge that question. It takes internal knowledge of a university's research culture at any one time to assess such processes of implementation, but we are

unconvinced that the present operational form is sustainable. As we see it, the University has created a complicated bureaucratic structure with the following characteristics:

1. that does not afford the Strategic Areas either the authority or the resources to act as independent entities, nor does it sufficiently tie them into the overall University structure to properly act as a cross-cutting matrix in relation to the faculties and departments;
2. that when taken seriously by the individual academics working in the Strategic Areas means doubling the workload for those people who are most intensely involved;
3. that collides with existing operational structures, sometimes creating conflicts of interest (for example, the role of Deans as Directors means that they are divided between the needs of departments and research programs;
4. that lacks substantial positive incentives for involvement in the Strategic Areas, apart from minor seed granting. At present is based on spontaneous enthusiasm, a sentiment that cannot be sustained over the long-term.

We can point to the following dimensions of the governance structure with reference to the Globalization Program:

1. There is a Board with an external Chair (Professor Helge Hveen from the University of Oslo) and six other external members. It is important to have an external board, and the mandate as currently listed is comprehensive and suitable to such a research enterprise, however we have concerns about whether the Board as currently constituted meets all the needs of such a Program.
2. The Dean of the Faculty of Arts is Director of the Program (originally Peter Aaslestad and now Kathrine Skretting, both active and involved scholars). This brings the research Program into the centre of University administration, which is crucial for giving the Program weight, however it also leads to the Director not have enough dedicated time, and secondly to the interests of the Director being stretched between conflicting considerations.
3. The four Co-Directors of the four research themes in Globalization come from the three participating Faculties:
 - Faculty of Social Sciences and Technology Management
 - Faculty of Information Technology, Mathematics and Electrical Engineering
 - Faculty of Arts

Having key persons directing the research themes is fundamental to having them work, and for making the Program more than just a funding mechanism for a series of discrete projects, but they do not have sufficient time for optimal development of the Area.

4. Each of the Co-Directors works with a cross-faculty management group and is allocated (2007) NOK 400,000 and one PhD place per annum. Given the voluntary-co-operative style of the Program it is important that the Co-Directors have such discretionary money to develop projects, but the current allocation is minimal.
5. There is a .5 Co-ordinator's position (Nina Sindre, resigned 1 June 2007). The time fraction of the administrator and finance manager is not sufficient at the present level of 50 per cent of a full-time position. The importance of this person should not be under-estimated for holding the Program together. The position needs to be at a high level, with an incumbent with a range of skills in finance, marketing, and public relations, commensurate with the complexity of the position.

We see two different but viable ways of addressing those limitations:

Viable Option 1: a minimal approach which rewards individual and group excellence without setting up a administrative infrastructure beyond that of collecting data and representing/projecting the work of the groups in each Area to the University, to Norway and to the world. In this version, the Strategic Area Globalization would operate roughly as follows:

- The Strategic Area would consist of Project Leaders and Advisers who consider themselves working within the broad field of Globalization. They would meet regularly, and have a rotating position of a Co-ordinator (appointed at the level of Professor or Associate Professor) who is also responsible for Research Forum (see below). They would co-ordinate regular activities of the Program but also come up with ad hoc initiatives (conferences etc.) and apply to the Rectorate for funding those activities.

Viable Option 2: a committed approach that actively strengthens and consolidates the research capacity of each of the Areas (and the research culture of the University as a whole) by enhancing the recruitment process, the operational and financing process, and the governance structure.

- That the Areas be upgraded and constituted as Research Institutes. This should be done not as a restructuring of the University, but rather to consolidate the current strength of the strategic areas or programs. (Such double structure allows researchers to move in and out and between departments and institutes as for example is the case in Sweden)
- That the Institutes should be governed by directors who are full-time research professor dedicated to the position. This means that the Dean would step down as Director of the Area, and that an overall Research Director is appointed as a full-time position to oversee the Area.
- That the position of Co-Director in charge of each of the four themes be called 'Associate Directors', and made as fractional appointments (that is, a fraction of teaching-time taken away) for a period of at least two years. This is done with the expectation that these researchers enhance the standing and outputs of the Program theme, and continue to productive researchers themselves.

Beyond these two options, there are some limitations that we both feel need addressing. We suggest:

1. That the current position of the Co-ordinator become a full-time position directed to communication, marketing, report writing:
 - maintaining and developing the Website, containing, among other things, a regular news bulletin
 - preparing the Annual Report
 - co-ordinating contact between the Strategic Area and the Rectorate (one of the five Rectors should be given responsibility for the SA Global; alt. You can create a new vice rector position in charge of all SAs.
 - maintaining regular contact with the media
 - circulating information within the Strategic Area and across the University.
 - co-ordinating of events such as conferences

2. That the Strategic Area would continue to run the already-existing M.Sc. in Globalization, and additionally should offer a semester-long PhD course in Globalization. All Strategic Area participants would potentially contribute to the course, but with one person responsible and compensated for running the course.
3. That the Strategic Area have a regular Research Forum and the Forum Convenor (rotating position) is remunerated for his/her job during the mandate (1 year?) Forum invites internationally renown globalization specialists but also presents internal research (a practice of joining the two has already been experimnted with success).
4. That the Strategic Area should have an annual or biannual international conference (see 5 below).
5. That the Board be extended to include members from outside Norway. The current Board only has Norwegian members. This could be changed by appointing a small number of external scholars to the Board (though without the expectation that such members attend meetings more than once a year). As one possible configuration, there should be two Board member from other Scandanavian countries, two members from Europe (including Russia) and two members from elsewhere in the world. These persons should be 1. leading international scholars in the field of globalization studies, and, 2. involved in centres or institutes of excellence with which the NTNU wants to establish strategic relations. Their attendance at an annual meeting could coincide with an annual conference in which they become keynote speakers, adding to both the profile, the research culture and the research training of the University
6. That the Strategic Area develop a strategic plan for international collaboration. Because of its concentration on technical universities, the University central management has been unable to facilitate the collaborative connection of the Program to other Institutes and Centres across the globe. This means that the Program needs to set up a systematic way of organizing collaborative links globally. See Recommendation 5 above, but this needs to be organized in relation to the overall University strategic plan on global linkages.

As a development of Point 6 we can also add that while the connections to Oslo and Bergen are being formed, getting significant funding from Norwegian funding sources often depends upon cross-university collaborations. The connections to other institutions across Scandanavia, Europe and the rest of the globe still needs to be significantly developed. A connection to the Globalization and Regionalization Centre at Warwick University. There is a need for the Strategic Area to make some strategic decisions about how the draw on existing networks and build a Strategic Area-level network. Each of the areas within Globalization have developed their own networks of association, but these have not been drawn into any strategic alignment. The Global Production group, for example, have concentrated on corporate or industrial linkages related to some specific case studies.

We have also more general suggestions concerning the processes and measures of implementation:

1. Hiring policy

Advertising positions and recruitment need to be tuned to the need of Strategic Areas.

2. Strategic Process

See above

3. Resource allocation

See above

4. Leadership

See above.

5. Graduate structures

Relating the research to postgraduate training is crucial for any university. In this sense the new MA program starting August 2007 in 'Global Technology Management' and 'Global Politics and Culture' is very important. The PhD program needs to be strengthened with more commitment from the faculties in relation to focussing the content areas of dissertations. All of the PhD students that we talked to were enthusiastic and positive about the Program. In some areas and groups such as the research being conducted in Sri Lanka the international PhD students are connected to the key geographical foci of the Program, but in others they remain as isolated individuals.

- That the research student intake be linked more closely to the strategic direction of the overall Program. This is occurring within some of the projects within the Program.
- There is a need to develop a stronger cohort of PhD students across the Program. This could be done by various mechanisms such as:
 - a postgraduate seminar series
 - a student conference
 - two alternative common analytical or methodological (social science and/or history and theory of science and technology) courses taught in a way that is relevant to the theme of globalization as part of the PhD

7. Measuring progress

In the Strategic Area of Globalization we have positive responses to the current reporting of results. As we understand it, Globalization was the only one of the Strategic Areas that delivered more or less comprehensive information. Nevertheless, we suggest that the reporting needs to be done more systematically. For example, we suggest that more attention needs put into reporting publications both by category or publications and numbers of publications. Numbers and simple statistics also speak of quality. For example, the impression of achievement is diminished by reporting books together with chapters and articles: a proper scholarly monograph equals roughly five articles.

(There are examples in the Strategic Area of high-level publications: Jonathan Moses, *International Migration: Globalization's Last Frontier*, Zed Books, 2006, and Indra de Soysa, *Foreign Direct Investment, Democracy and Development*, Routledge, London, 2003. These are major books. However, while NTNU has some very good staff, it does not have any globally recognized high-profile scholars of globalization *per se*. While the existing staff are active, the publications record of the staff is not significant in international terms. There are not enough publications in journals of global standing nor enough book publications.)

The kind of book—textbooks and popular books are also important inputs—needs to be specified. Further, it is better not to report on a multi-authored article as many times as there are the authors—it creates an impression that the numbers are being inflated, which you are sure you are not. In sum, we cannot emphasize enough the importance of reporting what you have done for the purpose of self-reflection and improvement, for documenting your achievements, and for propagating them.

Are the resources going to the best researchers or those researchers doing the most directed work within the Strategic Area? Our sense that the resources are going to the most productive researchers, but there is a need for a more transparent set of qualitative and quantitative criteria (organized and agreed upon within each Program according to the particular understandings of excellence that each discipline believes are criteria of excellence in their area). In other words there is a need for a more systematic approach to the disbursement of money. This is complicated because we do not the assessment of who the money should go to should be overwhelmed by metrics, but clearly some of the senior administrators in the Globalization area such as heads of departments were not clear how these decisions were made.

Institutional Culture and Capacity for Institutional Change

Capacity to identify emerging areas and relate institutional change to these trends

Capacity to go outside of national framework

There is a question of profile within the University. Globalization is a key theme of general discussion, but not necessarily properly recognized in the University as a *research* focus. Groups within the Globalization Program have reached out across departments and faculties and it has been productive for individual researchers in helping them to rethink the scope of their work, but it has not necessarily resulted in collective outcomes. There are cross-faculty study groups, for example. The split between the campuses, associated with a separation between the sciences and technology studies/social sciences and humanities is an issue.

—one of the possibilities is to think about globalization research on processes of technological and scientific globalization (including activities that are being conducted by science-technology colleagues).

While the Area has significant Norwegian presence, the importance of Scandinavian and global projection cannot be under-estimated. Some of the projects and individuals have a significant profile, but the Globalization Program as a whole is not well known in Scandinavia. In this area, conferences have been important to the projection of the Program:

- The international conference 'Navigating Globalization: Stability, Fluidity and Friction' (2005) included a high-quality and diverse group of keynote speakers including Thomas Hylland Eriksen, Barry Gills, Roland Robertson and Gayatri Spivak.
- The conference on Translation (2006)

Ironically it has a stronger global presence in relation to institutes and centres of globalization elsewhere across the world. Through Helge Hveem and his involvement in the Globalization Studies Network, the Program has developed a presence that outweighs its short history. The Program has been well represented, particularly at the GSN conferences in Warwick in 2005.

The University itself has done very little to project the Globalization Program as central to the University vision.

We also want to comment **on** the Area's collaboration with other *Strategic Areas*. Globalization was identified as the last of the six *strategic areas* (working group 2003; established 2004), and, while the process of setting up a working group was entirely appropriate, by coming after the establishment of the other areas, the crossovers of Globalization into each of the other areas seemed to be limited. While we do want to change or even qualify the current foci of the Globalization Strategic Area, we do want to suggest that more intersections could be made with the other strategic areas. For example, the one of the great challenges of globalizing human impact is global climate-change mitigation, a theme that relates strongly to the 'Energy and Environment' area. If questions of climate-change adaptation are added to that brief then further connections are drawn to 'Marine and Maritime', 'Materials' and 'Information and Communication Technologies'. Perhaps this was a function of the Commission Report (2004) which concluded that NTNU's focus on globalization should be through just two themes: 'Production Systems in a Globalized World' and 'Cultural and Social Expressions of Globalization' (p. 12) As we understand it, the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Technology suggested climate change as a possible theme in the globalization area. We are interested to know what has eventuated in that possible collaboration. When the relevance of globalization to the other themes is taken into account—

'Materials'

'Energy and Environment'

'Medical Technologies'

'Marine and Maritime'

'Information and Communication Technology'

The question then arises, 'How much has the theme of globalization been mainstreamed as one of their cross-cutting emphases, or are they just interested in the techniques and technologies of their particular areas?' The Commission Report (2004) suggested that the links should have been very strong with many cross-cutting research projects. My impression is that the links are being drawn in one direction only; that is, from the Globalization Program outwards rather than from the other programs into Globalization.

Interchange within the University is often positive, sometimes mixed, but while there was an acknowledged tendency towards increasing passivity of engagement with the Program, researchers express their involvement in terms of positive engagement. For the heads of departments, the Program represents no more than a compilation of what they are already doing. This may be so, but the researchers tended to say that, while they were doing what they might have been doing anyway, it had given them different priorities with the broad areas of their research. Researchers described themselves as benefitting greatly from the developing collegiality and critical sharing of ideas.