Since we received finance for the project "Film and the Swedish Welfare State" in 2006, research has been conducted for several years; the project ended in March 2011. Participants were professor Erik Hedling (project leader), assistant professor Mats Jönsson, associate professor Ann-Kristin Wallengren, all employees at Lund university. Also, it contained contributions from associate professor Anders Åberg, Linneaus university, Växjö. A doctoral student, financed by the Wahlgren foundation, Elisabet Björklund, MA, was also connected to the project, with Erik Hedling acting as her supervisor.

The project ran officially for three years, 2007-2009. However, since Anders Åberg was chair of department in 2007 he did not start work on the project until 2008 and the project was extended to include also 2010. A final presentation by project participants in New Orleans made us able to use finance from the project until March 2011.

The aim of the project was to map how film related to modern Swedish history, particularly to the gradual emergence of the welfare state from the 1930s until the beginning of the 1980s. The general question was: how have Swedish films of different kinds represented the ideological, social, cultural, and economic debate in Sweden? How have Swedish films, for example, depicted historical processes such as the aftermath of the emigration to the USA, domestic and foreign policy considerations during the Second World War, the fierce discussions about religion in the 1950s, the governmental programmes for the construction of huge housing estates in the 1960s and the emergence of the women’s movement in the 1970s?

One study (Hedling) focussed on the films of Ingmar Bergman and how they related to the post war society in which they were conceived, made and received. Another (Wallengren) took a closer look at the concept of Sweden in Swedish-American culture as well as the Swedish view of the Swedish-American. One project (Jönsson) concerned the representation of contemporary politics in documentary films, before, during and after the Second World War. A final analysis looked upon Swedish children’s movies as a way of bringing up children. The planned doctoral thesis (Björklund) is aimed at Swedish sex education films during the welfare period (to be finished in 2012). In this project on the cultural history of Sweden we have studied the ideological, cultural and economic contemporary parameters that has in one way or another made an imprint on the films.

Wallengren’s study concerns the ways in which the Swedish America emigrant and the returning Swedish-American have been represented in national film culture in between 1910 and 1980. It also deals with the films chosen by the Swedish immigrants in the USA for distribution and how the films were received in the press. This shows which images of the old country that one wished to remember and identify with and how a transnational Swedish-American identity was created. The project thus deals with
ideology, conceptions of Swedishness and how the films portrayed the emigrants and how the Swedish-Americans regarded their Swedish origins. A final part analyses how the Swedish-American woman has been depicted in American cinema, something that becomes interesting not least in comparison with the construction of the emigrant woman in Swedish film. To both film cultures concepts like cross dressing, nationality and ideals become important. The overall aim of the project was to try to understand the role of Swedish film for the construction of identities at different levels as well as the production of ideology regarding ethnicity and the identification of the “Other”. Jönsson's analysis limits itself to the years surrounding the Second World War. Central to the study is the notion of “visual education” and the ambition has been to show who performed the visual education and who was to be educated by it, and why this visual education was administered at all. Besides specific information regarding particular images and relations, the research has also managed to isolate new contextual facts regarding this previously well-researched period in Swedish history. In all, the results comprise particular and general structures in society as well as details and messages in specific images. It also provides an insight into how pragmatic wartime Sweden related to the contemporary development and its use of images and how openly this fact was acknowledged. The analyses of the success of visual culture confirm that behind all controlling, advisory and executive agencies there was a consensus pertaining to party, class and generation borders that can be described as a submission towards the state in general and towards its visual education in particular. But the visual education was not only pragmatically implemented by the state; the citizens also pragmatically received it. This pragmatism was in many cases more economically and socially motivated than ideologically and politically, a fact that has been made obvious by the analyses. It was, however, never coincidental or unconscious. On the contrary, the pragmatism and its visual expression acted and reacted according to a governmental scheme regarding the visual culture of war that was carefully staged, supervised and publically implemented. The final point is therefore that the intense visual education of wartime paved the way for political imagery in welfare state Sweden also during the following decades.

Åberg has studied children’s films as tools for social conditioning, particularly regarding films and nationality, that is, how Swedish children’s movies have represented and reproduced notions, values and feelings pertaining to nationality. The study has shown a concern regarding Swedish-ness (a problematic entity), which has been obvious, both in early discussion of children’s film and in the children’s films themselves during the 1940s. This is an important tendency of children’s films until the 21st century. In the films of the 1940s Swedish-ness was a means of transcending (or hide) class barriers. During the 1950s and -60s Sweden is often depicted as an idyllic world. During the 1970s other themes are dominant, but during the 1980s and -90s a part of Swedish children’s films were characterized by nostalgic reflection on the cultural heritage. Some films were deeply influenced by romantic aesthetics whereas others nostalgically showed the welfare society of the post-war years as a period permeated by a strong national community. This latter phenomenon is finally connected to the popular notion of the nostalgic people’s home.

Hedling’s study focussed the films of Ingmar Bergman. In opposition to traditional Bergman research, where aesthetic questions have been predominant, the films were
related to the historical development in Sweden during the time in which Bergman was active as a film director, 1945-1983 (that is, films distributed in the cinemas). Bergman is the apostate. While film as a whole often put itself in the service of the official welfare ideology, Bergman created a complex counter-image. The concerns of the collective here became transformed into the eternal suffering of the individual. Modernity itself – industrialisation, organisation, urbanisation, secularisation and cultural diversity – was rejected, and instead an idyllic past was projected. Over his career, Bergman would fluctuate in between different ideological poles. The fundamental pessimism regarding the state of man would, however, remain a constant in his art.

The three most important insights generated by the project could be:

1. The knowledge that the on-going modernisation of Sweden to a thoroughly organised welfare state often was represented in the films, not seldom in the shape of ideological support for the public policies. Swedish children’s movies, for example, took on the ambitions of the state regarding the bringing up of the coming generation.

2. The theory that Ingmar Bergman was an exception in this regard. His films instead expressed a critical vision of Swedish post-war society in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. Modernity itself was rejected in favour of more conservative flashbacks. The torments of the soul were more important than material prosperity. It should be noted that Bergman’s films often came to mix rebellious and reactionary ideologies.

3. The individual projects all express originality and innovation regarding Swedish film history. One can here choose to put forward the study of the representation of America and the Swedish-American in films, a hitherto unexplored territory within Film Studies. The project as a whole also raises several questions. How did film, the most popular medium in the 20th century, affect, for example, the socioeconomic development of the Swedish welfare state? Did film work as a propaganda weapon for socialdemocratic policies? How did the “nationalisation” of film come to be in the shape of the film agreement of 1963?

The project has generated a lot of publications, mostly in the shape of academic articles in English or Swedish, but also many anthologies and monographs. Here, we choose to emphasise two joint publications as the most important ones, namely Välfärdsbilder: svensk film utanför biografen (2008), ed. Erik and Mats Jönsson och Regional Aesthetics: Locating Swedish Media, red. Erik Hedling, Olof Hedling and Mats Jönsson (2010). Here, project participants as well as other scholars addressed central questions to the research project as a whole. The first of these anthologies was given some attention in the Swedish press and television; the second one was written in English. The project has also had an international part in the shape of many invited lectures and conference attendances (for example, Erik Hedling 31, Mats Jönsson 26). All lectures and other activities are listed on the project homepage at http://project.sol.lu.se/mowis. Also, the project group has organized multiple workshops, visiting lectures and a large conference in Lund with 250 papers.
Publications

Björklund, Elisabet, Sexual Education on Film in Sweden (kommande 2012)


Hedling, Erik, guest editor. Film International, vol. 6, no. 5, "Swedish Cinema: New Wave or Just a Ripple" (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2009)

Hedling, Erik, Olof Hedling och Mats Jönsson, red. Regional Aesthetics: Locating Swedish Media, Stockholm: Kungliga biblioteket, 2010

Hedling, Erik och Mats Jönsson, guest editors, Special Feature Issue: Film and History, Scandia: Tidskrift för historisk forskning, Årgång 2010, band 76, häfte 2

Hedling, Erik, Ingmar Bergman and the Swedish Model Welfare State (kommande)


Mats Jönsson och Patrik Lundell, red. Media and Monarchy in Sweden, Göteborg: Nordicom, 2009


Åberg, Anders, Svensk barnfilm (kommande)

Erik Hedling: Bokkapitel och uppsatser i referee-granskade tidskrifter (Book chapters and articles in refereed journals)

"Ingmar Bergman and the Welfare State", Film International, vol. 4, no. 1, s. 50-59 (före projekttiden men genererad av ansökan till RJ)


"Inledning: välfärdstecken i tiden" (tillsammans med Mats Jönsson), Välfärdsbilder: svensk film utanför biografen, red. Erik Hedling och Mats Jönsson, Stockholm: SLBA, 2008, s. 7-29 (Introduction: Contemporary Signs of Welfare)


"Shame: Ingmar Bergman's Vietnam War", Nordicom Review: Journal from the Nordic Information Centre for Media and Communication Research 29 (2008) 2, s. 245-259

"The Arn Franchise: Launching a Small Country Blockbuster", Film International, vol.6, no. 5, s. 60-67


"Breaking the Swedish Sex Barrier: Painful Lustfulness in Ingmar Bergman's The Silence", Film International, vol. 6, no. 6, s. 17-27
"Om filmtolkningens mysterier – Ingmar Bergman och Vietnam-rörelsen", Nordicom-Information 31:1 (2009), s. 113-127 (On the Mysteries of Film Interpretation – Ingmar Bergman and the Vietnam Movement"


"Folkhemmets förnedrare: Om socialassistenter och läkare i Bergmans filmer" (tillsammans med Anna Meeuwisse), Motsträviga synsätt: Om rörliga bilder som bjuder motstånd, red. Margareta Rönnberg och Karolina Westling, Göteborg: Filmförlaget, 2010, s.7-22 (Welfare State Humiliation: On Social Workers and Doctors in Bergman’s Films"

"Meet the Pioneers: Early Lindsay Anderson’", Shadows of Progress: Documentary Film in Post-War Britain, ed. Patrick Russell and James Piers Taylor, Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010, s. 313-327. (Jämförande studie av den brittiske filmregissören Lindsay Anderson och bl a Ingmar Bergman)

Mats Jönsson: Bokkapitel och uppsatser i referee-granskade tidskrifter (Book chapters and articles in refereed journals)


"Inledning: välfärdstecken i tiden" (med Erik Hedling), Välfařsbilder: svensk film utanför biografen, red. Erik Hedling och Mats Jönsson, Stockholm: Statens ljud- och bildarkiv, 2008 s. 8-29 (Introduction: Contemporary Signs of Welfare)


"Marcimainstream? History in Two Contemporary Swedish TV-series", Film International, vol.6, no. 5, s. 36-41


"Introduction: Film and History", (med Erik Hedling), Scandia: Tidskrift för historisk forskning, Temanummer "Film and History", band 76, häfte 2, 2010, red. Erik Hedling och Mats Jönsson.


Ann-Kristin Wallengren: Bokkapitel och uppsatser i referee-granskade tidskrifter (Book chapters and articles in refereed journals)


"Hollywood in Sweden: Cinematic References Imagining America" i Film International vol 6., no 5, s. 42-49


"Småland-Amerika tur och retur: Filmen och smålänningen”. Inger Littberger Caisou-Rousseau, Maria Nilsson och Carina Sjöholm, red. Speglingar av Småland, Hestra: Isaberg förlag, 2009, s. 249-269 (Småland-America There and Back: People from Småland in Film)

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"Vacanza all'isola dei gabbiani: La creazione e la diffusione di un paradiso estivo svedese". Infanzia. 2009, 409-413 (Holiday on the Island of Seagulls: The Creation and Distribution of a Swedish Summer Paradise)


Elisabet Björklund: Uppsatser i refereegranskade tidskrifter (Articles in refereed journals)

"Cinematic Sex Education in the Twenty-first Century: Narration, Reflexivity, and Sexuality in Kärlekens språk" (2004), Film International vol. 6, no. 5, s. 27-35