

ACSIS – Annual Report 2016



General Information

The Advanced Cultural Studies Institute of Sweden (ACSIS) is an open platform for cultural researchers in Sweden. It is a coordinating and dynamic resource for Swedish cultural researchers, serving as a bridge-builder between institutions, disciplines and perspectives and linking to the transnational field of cultural studies. The activities of ACSIS are continually structured by the director, the research coordinator, the national board and the researchers, lecturers and doctoral students taking part in courses, seminars, conferences or other events.

ACSIS fulfils its aim by a biannual conference, courses for graduate students, network activities and co-ownership of Culture Unbound Journal for Cultural Research. The activities support interdisciplinary and socially relevant research that is consistent with a changing world in which media, art forms and forms of expression are increasingly encroaching upon one another, with new interplays between cultural, social, political, economic and technical factors, and in which different social groups interact and create both communities and differences that link up to or run counter to traditional structures.

ACSIS was established early in 2002 as an independent unit within Linköping University. The centre is administratively connected to the Department for Studies of Social Change and Culture (ISAK). The national character of ACSIS is guaranteed by a board with members chosen by all Swedish universities, and a chair appointed by the Vice-Chancellor of Linköping University.

ACSIS concentrates its activities around yearly themes decided upon by the board. The theme for 2015 was mediatization, realized in ACSIS biennial conference 2015, a doctoral course and the initiation of the network project “The Everyday Life of Research in the Mediatization Era” involving the Advanced Cultural Studies Institute of Sweden (ACSIS) and Tema Q at Linköping University, the Amsterdam School of Cultural Analysis (ASCA) and the Institute for Culture and Society (ICS) at Western Sydney University.

Board, administration and staff

ACSIS board is elected for a three-year period, the current board is elected for 2016-2018 ACSIS board convened twice in 2016, and have the following members:

- *Chair*: Professor emeritus Orvar Löfgren (2013–).
- *Göteborg University*: Professor of Gender Studies Lena Martinsson (2013–).
- *Karlstad University*: Professor of Media and Communication Studies André Jansson (2009–). Deputy member professor in English literature (2016-)
- *Linköping University*: Professor of Child Studies Anna Sparrman (2013–). Deputy member professor of Ethnicity and migration studies Stefan Jonsson (2013–).
- *Lund University*: Docent Robert Willim, the Department of Arts and Cultural Sciences (2016-). Deputy member Professor at the Department of Arts and Cultural Sciences Tom O’Dell (2009–).
- *Mid Sweden University*: Professor of English Anders Olsson (2006–). Deputy member Anders Johansson English literature (2016-).

Stockholm University: Associate professor in Art history Anna Dahlgren (2014–). Deputy member Thomas Götselius Department of Literature and History of Ideas (2016–).

- *Umeå University*: Pelle Snickars professor of Media and Communication (2016–).

Uppsala University: Professor of Ethnology Birgitta Meurling (2006–). Deputy Member Orsi Husz department of economic history (2016–).

- *Linnaeus University*: Professor of Archaeology Cornelius Holtorf (2013–). Johan Höglund Department of languages, Ursula Geiser Department of Music and Art (2016–)-

- *Örebro University*: Henrik Bagerius Department of history (2016–). Deputy member Jenny Bonnevier Department of English (2016–).

- *Additional member*: Professor Lotten Gustafsson Reinius Nordiska Museet (2009–). Ulrika Thorell Nordiska museet (2016–).

Associate professor Bodil Axelsson was acting director of ACSIS, employed by ACSIS on 10 % January - June and 40% July - December. Johanna Sjöberg was employed as resarc coordinator on 25% January – June. Johanna Dahlin held a position as editor for *Culture Unbound* on 20 % throughout the year.

Finances

For 2014 the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at Linköping University contributed an annual amount of 602 000 SEK to ACSIS, this also included the editorial work for the journal *Culture Unbound*. In addition, four universities represented in ACSIS board contributed with the total amount of 200 000 SEK (Linnaeus University 50 000; Lund University 50 000; Karlstad University 50 000; and Uppsala University 50 000).

AC SIS received a grant from Riksbankens Jubileumsfond on 150 000 SEK for the network “The Everyday Life of Research in the Mediatization Era”.

Conference

Every other year since 2005 ACSIS has organized a broad-based cultural studies conference. In 2017 at the time of our 7th biannual conference, ACSIS takes the initiative to re-think and re-conceptualize what cultural research means in the digital and global present. Today cultural research is challenged to respond to global complexities in the form of human displacements, geopolitical restructurings, climate change and digital media. It must also answer to the performativity of numbers presented by digital humanities to investigate big data sets and the demands for producing knowledge with a measurable impact in society and the academic community. **Scholars are invited** to submit abstracts of individual papers for open sessions. The deadlines are January 15 2017 for sessions and February 1 2017 for papers.

Network activities: The Everyday Life of Research in the Mediatization Era

In 2015 ACSIS received a three year network grant from Riksbankens Jubileumsfond’s sector committee Meditatisation of Everyday Life. This network aims to develop interdisciplinary and geographical perspectives on the mediatization of research through a series of workshops with junior and senior researchers over a three-year period. It involves ACSIS and Tema Q at Linköping University, the Amsterdam School of Cultural Analysis (ASCA) and the Sydney-based Institute for Culture and Society (ICS). Sydney, Amsterdam and Norrköping will take it in turns to conduct the network’s activities.

The activities will evolve around one topic of focus every year: 2015 – ‘Mobility: The Travelling Researcher’; 2016 – ‘Methods Undergoing Change’; 2017 – ‘Publishing and Mediatization’.

network's activities are designed so that each activity deals with issues of general importance to researchers affiliated to the national centre ACSIS and Tema Q. An important partner in this context is the now well-established journal *Culture Unbound*, yet another resource for participating partners. The activities of the network will result in a thematic issue of *Culture Unbound* to be published in the end of the three-year project. Here we will utilise the opportunity afforded by electronic publishing and make the thematic issue a cumulative collection of articles and reports, which together form an expanding and changing roadmap of the project's development.

The 20th of January ACSIS and Tema Q organised a seminar so as to follow up the Mobile Research / Researching Mobility seminar that was held at the University of Western Sydney November 25, 2015.

The 21-22th November ACSIS and Tema Q organized the workshop Changing Methods: Conducting research in the age of mediatization at the University of Amsterdam. The first day gathered presentations on the theme (Ex)Changing Methods: From mines to cultural labour: from participatory observations to netnographies. The second day of the workshop focused on the publication of a special issue of the journal *Culture Unbound* based on this network project.

Participants: Bodil Axelsson, Linköpings Universitet; Johanna Dahlin, Linköpings Universitet; Martin Fredriksson, Linköpings Universitet; Mattis Karlsson, Linköpings Universitet; Jesper Olsson, Linköpings Universitet; Tsvetelina Hristova, Western Sydney University; Pryor Placino, Western Sydney University; Eloë Kingma, University of Amsterdam; Patricia Pisters, University of Amsterdam; Karin Christof, University of Amsterdam; Marga van Mechelen, University of Amsterdam; Sophie Berrebi, University of Amsterdam.

Doctoral student course

Since the autumn of 2003, ACSIS has been organizing a programme for individual doctoral courses in partnership with other departments at Linköping University. These courses are open to doctoral students from across Sweden specializing in interdisciplinary cultural studies.

December 15 is the starting point for *Critical and reflexive approaches to methods and representations, 15 hp*. The course finishes June 19 to 21 2017.

This course problematizes the consequences of method in producing knowledge. The aim of the course is to develop critical-reflexive approach to the diversity of cultural scientific methods used in cultural research on contemporary and historical material.

Exchange of higher degree research students

The exchange program for higher degree research students between the Advanced Cultural Studies Institute of Sweden (AC SIS) at Linköping University, and the Institute of Culture and Society (ICS) at Western Sydney University, that was initiated 2004 continued in 2016. In December two graduate scholars, Tsvetelina Hristova and Pryor Placino, from ICS visited ACSIS.

Workshops

So as to spread ACSIS' activities around Swedish universities ACSIS supported five workshops on the challenges and possibilities of cultural research. Under the heading Leaving the comfort-zone: a critical look at cultural research, contemporary challenges and possibilities the following workshops were organized:

Making it Matter: Publics and practitioners In cultural research on the arts

Linneus University, Växjö September 23, 2016

Organisers: Alison Gerber, Uppsala University & Anna Lund, Linnaeus University.

This workshop was organized by researchers with a cultural sociological perspective who see research on the arts as a particularly fruitful place to work out both empirical and theoretical issues in cultural studies generally and to simultaneously investigate the conditions and possibilities of their own practices and presuppositions. In Scandinavia, the arts and cultural policy have specific positions within the welfare state – artists and initiatives are explicitly expected to create change, engage democratically with publics, represent less-visible perspectives, and – of course – simultaneously fulfill the demands of the fine art world, many of which are in conflict with both an action orientation and an interest in wide and diverse publics. Academic researchers, too, face divergent demands: on the one hand, we aim to fulfill requirements that we engage with publics, collaborate with practitioners, and – especially – engage in projects that have the capacity to create positive social change; at the same time, we hope to meet narrow disciplinary demands of incremental theoretical progress and the need to communicate via ever more obscure channels of communication. In both the arts and academia, growing demands on the practices, effects, and outcomes of one's work seem to be in conflict with traditional practice and professional autonomy.

Participants: Torun Elsrud, Linnaeus University; Alison Gerber, Uppsala University; Erik Hannerz, Lund University; Håkon Larsen, Oslo University; Johannes Lang Danish Institute for International Studies; Anna Lund Linnaeus University; Lisa McCormick University of Edinburgh; Åsa Trulsson Linnaeus University; Ian Woodward University of Southern Denmark.

Aesthetics and the Arts in Cultural Research: Methodological Limitations and Possibilities

Lund University October 18-19

Organisers: Max Liljefors & Robert Willim.

This symposium discussed how cultural research may be combined (or not?) with aesthetic studies and/or artistic research? First, at many Scandinavian universities, disciplines that study the arts and aesthetics have recently been incorporated into new, larger Departments with a focus on culture. In Lund, for instance, Art History and Musicology both now belong to the Department of Arts and Cultural Sciences (NB: in Swedish, "Institutionen för kulturvetenskaper"). Secondly, art itself has taken on a more research-like character, with art academies offering PhD programs and artists working similar to ethnologists, journalists or philosophers.

Participants: Vendela Grundell, Stockholms universitet; Hans Stenudd, Linneuniversitetet; Johanna Rosenqvist, Konstfack; Karin Johansson, Malmö musikhögskola; Stine Hasse, Köpenhamns Universitet; Maria Hellström-Reimer, Malmö högskola; Ann Pontén, arkitekt och design, Lunds tekniska högskola; Gunnar Sandin, arkitekt och design, Lunds tekniska högskola; Thomas Olsson, Lunds universitet.

Interpreting instruments and instrumentality in measuring

Stockholm University, the Swedish School of Sport and Health Sciences. October 24-25

Åsa Bäckström & Håkan Larsson, Stockholm university.

At the Swedish School of Sport and Health Sciences (GIH) knowing bodies and movement is at the core of the interdisciplinary field of sport and fitness sciences. The new technologies pinpoint the crevasse between the evidence based positivistic natural science and the post-realistic social science and humanities. Cultural research exists in this chasm between interpreting instruments correctly and the instrumentality in measuring. Scrutinizing measuring and knowing is important onto-epistemologically far beyond sport and fitness sciences. For cultural studies, developing a research-

based convincing argumentation on the importance of context, practice and reason is of utmost importance in a time where the standards of assessment are implemented in all sectors of society. It may even be argued that it is one of the most urgent challenges for contemporary cultural studies. The aim of this workshop is to expand such an argumentation focusing on knowing in/by/of/through emplaced bodies. Also including an open lecture with Sarah Pink.

Participants: Sarah Pink; Martin Berg; Vaike Fors; Mikael Quennerstedt; Ninitha Maivorsdotter; Gunn Nyberg and Tom O'Dell.

The role of art and humanities in environmental crisis: a walking workshop

Vårdsnäs Stiftsgård, September

Organiser: Anna Kaijser, Linköping university.

Participants in this workshop were invited to reflect upon what it means to be human in times of environmental and climate crisis, through conversations in close engagement with nature. Each participant will be asked to bring a question, incited by their own work, regarding the role of art, literature and humanist research for environmental matters. Using these questions as a point of departure, a principal activity will be 'walking seminars', in which the participants discuss the questions while they walk together in smaller groups in the nature areas around Vårdsnäs. At the end of the walks, the group will gather to share their insights. The walks are intended to accentuate aspects of embodiment and movement and a sense of the own body's place in nature.

Walking as a method is inspired by similar initiatives taken as part of research and learning in Sweden and abroad. Notably, Professor Annemarie Mol at the University of Amsterdam has successfully arranged monthly walking seminars with her colleagues and students since 2010 (<http://walkingseminar.blogspot.se>).

Walking workshop participants: Imri Sandström; Eva Lövbrand; Åsa Ståhl; Kristina Lindström; Lisa Färnström; Martin Hultman; Sebastian Dahlqvist; Eva La Cour; and Karina Sarkissova Karin Auran Frankenstein.

Information and Publications

Linköping University is reorganizing its website. This means that ACSIS's webpage also must be adapted to the new system. This is a process that has started during 2015. Until the new website is launched the previous website is managed as usual. To inform about ACSIS work the webpage is complemented with Facebook and Twitter. At Facebook ACSIS has 511 followers and at Twitter 141 followers. ACSIS homepage directs the attention to ACSIS mailing list Kulturstudier, which currently have 451 members and serves as an important forum for a great variety of upcoming events in Sweden and beyond, and the journal *Culture Unbound*.

The journal *Culture Unbound*

Since its inception in 2009, *Culture Unbound* has published innovative cultural research in volumes made up of thematic sections and independent articles. In 2016, the journal started to structure the volumes in issues, with a normal publication rate of three issues per year. Issue 1 contained the thematic section Rupture and Exile: Permanent Liminality in Spaces for Movement and Abandonment edited by Harmony Sigamoria and Frank G. Karioris, issue 2 was made up of four independent articles, and issue 3 contained the thematic section "The performative power of cultural products in the making and remaking of figurations of gender and sexuality, within and by way of transnational communities" edited by Pia Laskar, Erika Alm and Cathrine Wasshede.

The high level of interest in CU:s webpage was sustained in 2016 with 7500 visits per month, an increase with 15 % compared to 2015. Several of the early thematic sections published by Culture Unbound, most notably 'City of Signs/Signs of the City' from 2009, remains among the most read confirms that while Culture Unbound constantly attracts new readers, old publications have a long life span, which contributes to a steady and long-term growth. Most visitors in 2016 came from China, USA, Sweden, Germany and UK.

With the transition to issues, Culture Unbound has started to make new research available through Advance Access. This gets fresh articles online without delay. The articles made available through Advance Access will appear in upcoming issues of the journal. As part of Culture Unbound's endeavor to broaden the range of formats, a pilot episode of "Unbound Conversations", a podcast series that we hope to make a regular feature of Culture Unbound in the future, was produced in spring 2016.

Eva Hemmungs Wirtén remains as editor in chief and is joined by James Meese as associate editor and Johanna Dahlin as executive editor. The editorial team is based on different continents, but did manage to meet in March 2016. During this meeting, we set out new directions for the future, and we are convinced that the coming years will be exciting for the journal.

In 2016 Culture Unbound received financial support from Vetenskapsrådet (VR), Nordiska Samarbetsnämnden för humanistisk och samhällsvetenskaplig forskning (NOS-HS) and the faculty of Arts and Sciences at Linköping University. Culture Unbound also received funding from the Seed-Box for the collaborative project "A Topology of Conceptual Climate Change" together with the Open Humanities Press.