

# ACSIS – Annual Report 2018



## *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 biennial 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 general Swedish universities, and a chair appointed by the Vice-Chancellor of Linköping University.

## *Board, administration and staff*

ACSIS board is elected for a three-year period, the current board is elected for 2016-2018. In 2018, ACSIS board convened twice. It had the following members:

- *Chair*: Professor emeritus Orvar Löfgren (2013–).
- *Acting Chair*: Docent Anders Olsson (2006–).
- *Göteborg University*: Professor Lena Martinsson (2013–), Deputy member: Mikela Lundahl Hero 2017
- *Karlstad University*: Professor André Jansson (2009–). Deputy member professor Magnus Ullén (2016–)
- *Linköping University*: Professor Anna Sparrman (2013–). Deputy member Professor Stefan Jonsson (2013).
- *Lund University*: Docent Robert Willim (2016–). Deputy member Professor Tom O'Dell (2009–).
- *Mid Sweden University*: Deputy member Anders Johansson (2016–).
- *Stockholm University*: Professor Anna Dahlgren (2014–). Deputy member Professor Thomas Götselius Department of Literature and History of Ideas (2016–).
- *Umeå University*: Professor Pelle Snickars (2016–).
- *Uppsala University*: Professor Birgitta Meurling (2006–). Deputy Member Orsi Husz (2016–).
- *Linnaeus University*: Professor Cornelius Holtorf (2013–). Johan Höglund, Ursula Geiser (2016–).
- *Örebro University*: Henrik Bagerius (2016–). Deputy member Jenny Bonnevier 2016–.

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

Associate professor Bodil Axelsson is acting director of ACSIS. Kristin Wagrell acted as editor for Culture Unbound on 40% January-August. Johanna Dahlin acts as editor September-December on 20%.

### *Finances*

For 2014 the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at Linköping University contributed an annual amount of 243 000 SEK to ACSIS and 100 000 to Culture Unbound.

ACISIS administers a research grant from Riksbankens Jubileumsfond for the project In Orbit: Distributed Curatorial Agency when Museum Objects and Knowledge go Online: Bodil Axelsson has been acting as principal researcher on 50%. Visiting professors Fiona Cameron and Sheenagh Pietrobruno were fulltime employed January to June and project assistant Rab Nawaz Jan Sher worked 50% September to December.

### *Seminars*

May 30-31 Tema Q and ACSIS organised (Trans)National Cultural Fields: A Swedish-Australian Workshop in Two Parts in Norrköping. This workshop reflected research on the changing national fields of heritage, art, media and sport undertaken at the Department for Studies of Culture and Social Change (ISAK), Linköping University, and the Institute for Culture and Society (ICS), Western Sydney University. The workshop took as its starting point the Australian participants' research project Australian Cultural Fields: National and Transnational Dynamics, a project that takes a Bourdieu-inspired perspective on how different cultural fields are changed and shaped by national and transnational dynamics such as migration, new media technologies and globalisation.

Participants: Emeritus Professor David Rowe (ICS); Professor Deborah Stevenson, (ICS), Associate Professor Emma Waterton (ICS), Dr. Martin Fredriksson (ISAK) Postdoc David Ekholm (ISAK); Postdoc Sofia Lindström, University of Borås; Associate Professor Bodil Axelsson (ISAK) and Associate Professor Malin Thor Tureby (ISAK).

### *Network activities*

Visiting professors Fiona Cameron and Sheenagh Pietrobruno have represented ACSIS on the following occasions:

Fiona Cameron, Museum collections as more-than-human things: The case of the green plastic bucket, seminar at Seedbox, Linköping University, May 15, 2018.

Fiona Cameron, Invited international expert at the Collecting Contemporary Photo workshop, Nordic Museum, March 2018.

Sheenagh Pietrobruno, YouTube and UNESCO's Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage: Intersections Between Digital Heritage and International Communication, Geomedia Speaker Series. Karlstad University, Karlstad, March 21, 2018.

Bodil Axelsson, Fiona Cameron and Sheenagh Pietrobruno visited University of Oslo for a workshop with the project Museums: A culture of Copies, June 19, 2018.

### *Research activities*

The project *In Orbit: Distributed Curatorial Agency when Museum Objects and Knowledge go Online* explore the museums' authority and the public's agency when curatorial operations such as selection, organization, synthesis and exhibition of meaningful pasts are distributed between people and technology. It is a collaboration between ACSIS and the Swedish History Museum, and focuses empirically on the circulation of objects at the Swedish History Museum and knowledge production on social media platforms.

Project participants have presented papers and organised sessions at *Heritage Across Borders*, Association of Critical Heritage Studies, 4th Biennial Conference, 1-6th September, 2018, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China; *Digital Cultures: Knowledge/ Culture/ Technology*, Lüneburg, Leuphana, September 19-22, 2018, *Museum: A Culture of Digital Copies*, Köpenhamns Universitet, 15-16 November 2018.

### *Doctoral student course*

In May 2018 project participants organized the PhD course *Cultural Institutions, Online Collections and Digital Media: Critical Perspectives, Theories and Methods*, 3 ECT for ACSIS in Norrköping. The course provided a critical exploration of digital heritage and online collections. It investigated concepts and theories in regard to the relations between material collections and digitizations as well as the cultural, social, technological, economic and ecological ramifications of the presence of cultural institutions and online collections in global search engines and social media. To do this the presenters drew on approaches from material political economy, theories and concepts relating to global ecosystems of social media, issues of ownership and copyright, emerging forms of curatorial agency in networked structures constantly transforming through interactions between human users and algorithms and their impact on museum work. Critical theories and questions on methodology were highlighted, addressing in particular dilemmas and difficulties that researchers confront when approaching computer automated networked structures.

Besides students from Utrecht University Uppsala University and Gothenburg University, two PhD students from the project's home department took the course and several researchers from the department went to lectures. The PhD course was also part of networking and internationalisation.

Course Directors: Associate Professor Bodil Axelsson, Visiting Professor Fiona Cameron, Visiting Professor Sheenagh Pietrobruno, Linköping University, Katherine Hauptman, Swedish History Museum.

Additional lecturers: Merima Bruncevic Lecturer Department of Law, Gothenburg University, Ann Werner Associate Professor Linneus University, Marta Severo Associate Professor University of Paris Nanterre (DICEN-idf). The course also included a seminar with professor Pelle Snickars on Spotify and digital methods arranged by the Institute for Analytical Sociology, LiU, as well as an optional seminar with Mathew Fuller, professor of Cultural Studies Goldsmith University, at Campus Valla, Linköping.

## *The journal Culture Unbound*

In 2018 the role as executive editor for *Culture Unbound* was filled by Kristin Wagrell for the first half of the year as Johanna Dahlin was on maternity leave. She returned as executive editor for the second half of the year. The journal maintained its ordinary publication rate in 2018, releasing four issues over the year, with the final 2018 issue consisting of a double-issue. *Culture Unbound's* annual volume for 2018 consisted of the following four thematic issues: 'The Unbound Brain' edited by Peter Bengtsen and Kristoffer Hansson; 'Critical Future Studies' edited by Michael Godhe and Luke Goode, 'Media Modernities of South Asia' edited by Per Ståhlberg, Britta Ohm and Vibodh Parthasarathi, and 'Narrating the City: Contesting Trajectories of Memories and Futures in Urban Space' edited by Pål Brunnström. Several of the issues also contained independent articles.

In 2018 the journal has published a total of 30 articles, four thematic introductions and one editorial. The high level of interest in *Culture Unbound's* webpage was sustained with an annual total of 165.236 unique visitors. The top tier articles in terms of visits was Henry Krips, "The Politics of the Gaze: Foucault, Lacan and Žižek," (2:2010, 91–102) with 17718 visits; Christian Fuchs, 'Karl Marx and the Study of Media and Culture Today' (6: 2014, 39–76) with 8885 visits; and Jim McGuigan, 'The Neoliberal Self' (6: 2014, 223–240) with 6794 visits. Most visitors in 2018 came from USA, China, Sweden, UK and Germany.

In 2018 *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.

## *Reforming ACSIS*

Since 2017, the board has discussed the future of ACSIS in meetings due to the fact that Linköping University's Vice-chancellor in December 2016 (Dnr LIU-2016-01082) decided that ACSIS status as a LiU center ends in 2018. In 2018 the status of the organization with Linköping University has become even less transparent because of plans for the reorganization of the university. It is now evident that the university has decided to stop the funding of ACSIS as a national network organization for the benefit of a platform of collaboration between LiU-based researchers within the field of humanities.

The support from, and location at, one Swedish university has been vital to pursue ACSIS activities – conferences, courses, seminars, and the co-ownership of *Culture Unbound*. At present, there is no other university to take that function. For economic reasons it is therefore necessary to reform the present format of ACSIS. It was the decision at the board meeting on December 10, 2018, that the present organization of ACSIS disappears on December 31, 2018, but that the publication of *Culture Unbound* will continue at Linköping University.

ACISIS started in 2002. The network and the board with representatives from all general Swedish universities have been important for the identification and development of cultural studies in Sweden. The biennial conferences have provided venues for encounters between researchers across the national, international, and disciplinary fields. Topics for conferences, seminars, and courses have become instrumental for the investigation and formation of cultural studies.

Since 2002, there has also been a movement among researchers to form a number of other interdisciplinary movements, among them eco-humanities and digital humanities. Such groupings

may mean that there is now less attention to cultural studies as a formation for humanities and social sciences. For reasons of funding, recent movements rather take place at individual universities and not across institutional boundaries. To maintain openness and cooperation, the networking of which ACSIS is an example is therefore important in the academic landscape. The interdisciplinarity of the ACSIS arenas provide successful opportunities to further develop academic research across boundaries.