

Advancing
Cultural
Studies
In
Sweden

-An Infrastructural Initiative

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A

February 2001

National Institute for Working Life
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Norrköping Sweden

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PREFACE

Societal changes make culture increasingly central but also problematise it. New perspectives are needed to meet these challenges. The international field of cultural studies is a promising effort to answer these challenges and vitalise cultural research. Sweden may make a significant and indeed unique contribution to this effort, but important steps remain to be taken with this purpose. One such step would be to install a new national-international research institute on a higher level, in order to connect disciplines, universities and regions, and push innovative developments forward.

Against such a background, this report leads up to an outline of a proposed new *Advanced Cultural Studies Institute of Sweden* (ACSIS). This is yet only a proposal, written at a time when ACSIS yet only exists as an imaginary utopia – though living with an extraordinary vitality in the minds of a wide intellectual network of committed scholars. Funding is presently being sought for, but it is not yet decided in what exact manner the ideas presented here will eventually be made real. The formulation of tasks, organisation and budget is thus yet a hypothetical model.

Still, this bold adventure has reached a long way since its first inception. The ACSIS has long been an attractive dream for me and for many of my colleagues among cultural researchers. It is a very great pleasure to see the plans crystallised thus far, as the journey towards an ACSIS has reached its last and decisive phase.

The report results from a committee work funded by the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation (Riksbankens jubileumsfond), and the Swedish Council for Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences (Humanistisk-samhällsvetenskapliga forskningsrådet). I had the great pleasure to work together with Svante Beckman, Ulf Hannerz, Lisbeth Larsson, Britta Lundgren, Orvar Löfgren, Ove Sernhede and Ulf Lindberg, and was reliably assisted by Åsa Bäckström. The group started working in January 2000, with a series of working meetings. Each member of the group has also had intense discussions of the basic ideas with other Swedish and international scholars, in meetings and by personal communication.

Many therefore deserve warm thanks for making this report possible. The material and mental support by the two research funding bodies was essential, as was the generous and always stimulating collaboration in the committee. Linköping University and the City of Norrköping have been overwhelmingly supportive towards this unique proposal, further strengthening our faith in its potential. We are also grateful to all those many Swedish and foreign researchers with whom these ideas have been

discussed. The National Institute for Working Life programme for Work and Culture in Norrköping was a most hospitable host for this whole planning project.

Norrköping 14 February 2001 Johan Fornäs

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AN ACSIS FOR CULTURAL STUDIES

In most outlines of the emergent society of tomorrow, by concepts like 'the new economy', 'the Internet society' or 'the mediated world', the *culturalisation* of economy, politics and identity is strikingly insistent. Societal transformations of the natural sciences, technologies, economic structures, political institutions and social relations create new forms of production, communication, socialisation, community and human identity. All these processes drastically transform symbolic forms and problematise their traditional meanings, while making them more central. The actual extent and meaning of these processes is not evident, but it is clear that they put new and high demands on cultural research to be able to offer useful understandings of the ways in which cultural processes are interlaced with the economic, political and social ones. Just like technical, natural and medical sciences are restructured to meet these challenges, the humanities and social sciences are also in need of new analytical perspectives and empirical insights, in order better to understand new types of meaning constructions. There is a need for interdisciplinary and critical work to update old academic structures, connect previously isolated sub-fields, and start dealing with issues that tend to fall between chairs and thus to be under-researched.

This is a proposal for a powerful initiative to decisively push cultural research forward and widen its interdisciplinary and transnational exchanges. Installing an *Advanced Cultural Studies Institute of Sweden* (AC SIS) would have enormously vitalising effects both in our country and abroad. This report outlines the general backgrounds to this idea, and explains a possible model for the organisation and activities of such a new institute.

The field of *cultural studies* is an expansive interdisciplinary field for studies of far-reaching transformations of identities and cultural forms. This field forms a global intellectual movement, where Sweden has very promising but yet internationally under-exploited assets. The idea is to create a new node that connects the different local and disciplinary efforts in this area, working as a national resource well connected to the international field, making the new scholarly experiments that cannot be done elsewhere. Its aim is to advance innovative cultural research, build bridges between areas and regions in order to seriously grapple with new and pressing issues of late modern social and cultural life, and serve as a vital two-way interface between Swedish and international cultural studies. A firm initiative on the most advanced scholarly level will develop and attract resources of great use not only to the general academic community but also to the cultural and political sectors as well as to the general public sphere.

Preliminary ideas for a new infrastructural initiative were discussed at the international Advancing Cultural Studies workshop in February 1999 and published in the *Advancing Cultural Studies* report in April that year. With renewed research council funding, a dedicated committee for *Advancing Cultural Studies in Sweden* then started planning for a higher, interdisciplinary and internationally oriented national

research institute in this field. The planning committee was based at the National Institute for Working Life (Arbetslivsinstitutet) program for Work & Culture in Norrköping, where the head of the committee, Johan Fornäs, is professor of the research area Cultural Production and Cultural Work. The committee further consisted of professors *Svante Beckman* (at the new department for cultural heritage and production 'Tema Q' at Campus Norrköping of Linköping University; also at the National Institute for Working Life program for Work & Culture), *Ulf Hannerz* (Social Anthropology at Stockholm University), *Lisbeth Larsson* (Literature at Göteborg University), *Britta Lundgren* (ethnologist at the Department of Culture and Media, Umeå University), *Orvar Löfgren* (Ethnology at Lund University) and *Ove Sernhede* (Social Work and Cultural Studies, Göteborg University), and was later joined by *Ulf Lindberg* (living in Lund but working at the Department of Scandinavian Studies, Aarhus University). This highly qualified group was administratively assisted by *Åsa Bäckström* (Stockholm Institute of Education). The planning work reported in this text has incorporated results of discussions with a series of other domestic and international researchers, at conferences, seminars, meetings and through individual contacts – in the Americas, Australia, East Asia, Europe and South Africa as well as in many Nordic and most Swedish universities.

Linköping University and the *City of Norrköping* have guaranteed generous material and moral support for the ACSIS, covering a substantial part of the calculated total costs by providing premises as well as basic administrative and technical resources. It is hoped that the remaining main costs for the activities will be covered by those national research funding bodies that supported the 1999 workshop and the subsequent committee work. Applications with that intent have therefore been submitted to the *Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation* (Riksbankens Jubileumsfond RJ) and the *Science Council* (Vetenskapsrådet).¹

BACKGROUND MOTIVES

There are many roads leading to ACSIS: many ways to approach this proposed new initiative. It is motivated by tendencies and processes both in cultural life and cultural politics generally, in the international field of cultural studies and in Swedish cultural research – and the three are mutually dependent.

1. Late modern culture

Late modernity in general has pushed forward three strong tendencies that together form new demands on cultural research. These processes have made *culture*, *communication* and *critique* keywords for this research. They have certainly always been rele-

¹ Vetenskapsrådet is a new state council launched in 2001 and incorporating the former Swedish Council for Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences (Humanistisk-samhällsvetenskapliga forskningsrådet HSFR), which funded (with RJ) the ACS workshop and the ACSIS committee.

vant, but it may be argued that their relevance is increasing in the late modern period.

A. Aesthetics and culture

Culture is today an omnipresent keyword. The expansion of culture and a series of new developments in the cultural sphere have combined to make cultural research more important while also imposing new demands on it. The cultural field expands, and its traditional borders are destabilised. There is much talk of a rapid *aestheticisation* of everyday life, politics, economy, science and technology. Externally, large new sectors are drawn into the cultural sphere, for instance design, sports, games, digital media, tourism and a whole set of experience industries. Old borders between art and entertainment on one hand and news, information, science, economics or politics on the other become blurred by emergent genres of edu- and infotainment. Internally, borders between aesthetic genres are also blurred by recent hybrid formats. The intensified traffic between high art and low entertainment as well as between local and global, domestic and foreign cultural flows also necessitates a rethinking of the concept of culture itself.

Aesthetic production and the cultural industries today belong to the most rapidly growing economic sectors in Swedish society, and cultural processes are increasingly understood as crucial to people's sense of identity and community. They have also given rise to a series of new and difficult crises and conflicts in society. Ethnic or generational symbols, rituals and traditions have become the focus of movements, clashes and even civil wars. Borders between nationality/ethnicity, local/global, image/reality, fiction/fact, high/low or different art forms are repeatedly crossed and problematised. This is connected to accelerating late modern changes in the relations between state, market and civil society, transformations of socialisation forms, intensified global communication and migration, emergent hybrid aesthetic genres and new digital multimedia.

A combination of late modern societal transformations has made the cultural field wider and more central, but also more problematic. As a result, interdisciplinary cultural research is becoming both more important and more difficult. It seems evident that culture has become more important both as a resource and as a conflict area, but it is also less evident what constitutes this field of culture. Culture is expanding as a separate economic sector and as a key aspect within all other sectors. This very expansion makes it increasingly difficult to define its own identity. When its limits are blurred, as culture intrudes upon all other spheres, it becomes hard to distinguish it from economics, politics or technology. If culture is really in focus almost everywhere, what is then this culture – and what is not culture? And even though aesthetic aspects are emphasised in increasingly many spheres of activity, core areas of aesthetic production – both in the professional arts and among amateurs – suffer badly from a growing lack of resources in a time of welfare state restructuring. The late triumph of culture thus also entails a kind of identity crisis. This first and basic trend towards *aestheticisation* or *culturalisation* thus makes culture grow, step into the centre

of increasingly many spheres, and have its internal and external borders problematised.

B. Media and communication

A related late modern trend is towards increasing *mediatisation*. Rapidly expanding means of physical and symbolic *communication* have made culture much more fluid and mobile. Trends of compression and convergence in new digital media introduce an intense interplay between media technologies and genres. Accelerating flows of people, goods and symbols have made issues of globalisation and heterogeneous hybridity urgent issues for a cultural research that also needs to become more communicative, by bridging gaps and opening up *transdisciplinary dialogues*. When people, texts and symbols from previously separate contexts collide in globalised flows and arenas, problems of interpretation multiply. Culture thereby becomes a field and tool of conflict between groups, as well as a resource for finding means to resolve such conflicts. As new media explode with new efforts to seamlessly bridge distances across time and space, they also introduce new and highly complex apparatuses of mediation. These offer both democratic and authoritarian potentials, related to pressures from commercial markets, state bureaucracies and dominant or antagonistic social groupings. In order to find ways to further develop an open, democratic public sphere in face of these developments, refined and extended forms of analysis of processes of culture and communication are needed, beyond the compartmentalisation and other limiting structures in the old academic world.

C. Reflexivity and critique

A third trend is towards *reflexivisation* – a growing reflexivity in all corners of social life. One result is to revitalise *critique* as a basic demand in everyday and cultural life, as well as in academic life. Making distinctions and scrutinising the premises of what is put forward is a necessary task when information flows multiply and traditional authorities tend to erode. Reflexive modernity implies not only a critique against pre-modern remnants or antimodern reactionaries, but also against the deep problematics of the modern project itself, including academic scholarship. This *critical reflexivity* implies a need for cultural research to communicate across university borders and take active part in dialogues with other actors in the cultural field and the public sphere at large. A renewed critical discussion of cultural research and cultural life at large is badly needed, when old taken-for-granted truths are questioned.

2. Global cultural studies

All these transformations thus put new demands on cultural research. The increased social centrality, rapid transformation and problematisation of culture call for more and renewed forms of cultural studies. Better means are needed for understanding new cultural tendencies that disrupt old models. In order to promote innovative work of long-term relevance to the understanding of culture and cultural change,

interdisciplinary co-operation and a dialogic interchange is growing in the margins and on the borders between traditional disciplinary areas. There is a need to break the compartmentalisation of humanistic research, and to intensify the traffic between for instance textual/aesthetic/humanistic, contextual/institutional/social and subjective/psychological/behavioural perspectives on cultural meaning formations. Such transgressive currents open up new frontiers that in their turn fertilise and modernise the established disciplines.

During the last few decades, many scientific and scholarly disciplines have developed strong cultural branches, and cultural dimensions have gradually advanced into their general focus, in a 'cultural turn' that is parallel to a simultaneous culturalisation of economy, politics and everyday life. The centrality of symbolic forms and constructions of meanings have become acknowledged in large societal sectors. It has become increasingly crucial to the human sciences to map and interpret those complex symbolic forms that are anchored in texts and genres created and used by interacting human subjects in polydimensional contexts to produce meanings and identities.²

The international and multifarious current of critical and interdisciplinary *cultural studies* is a particularly important response to these challenges in late modern cultural life. This growing field has emerged in the borderlands between disciplines and been nourished by the cultural turn in the main academic disciplines. It aims at providing a better understanding of the impact of new cultural phenomena and thus of meeting current societal demands, while simultaneously offering invigorating new perspectives to both the humanities and the social sciences, by crossing the border between them. Its interdisciplinary practices facilitate analyses of cultural problematics that are too complex or dynamic to be tackled by any one single discipline, and are therefore today under-researched. This includes the challenges actualised by late modern globalisation and migration, international relations and the new economy, advances in genetics and reproduction technologies, digital communication and intermedial convergence, and hybridising trends in popular and everyday culture.

Cultural studies as an intellectual field has a quite complex structure and history. One of its most famous roots goes back to the British 1960s. It was there that the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) developed its enormously influential work, where the term itself was coined. Scholars like Richard Hoggart, Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall tried out a new fusion of critical sociological, literary and historical academic perspectives in higher education and research. This answered the challenges posed by the new societal situation after the Second World War, with far-reaching transformations of everyday life through the invasion of international popular media and the late-modern transformation of traditional class, generation, gender and ethnic relations. Cultural studies evolved from this new

² Many have recently argued for an increasing importance of culture to social and human life, and for the need for more basic, advanced and interdisciplinary cultural research. The UNESCO initiatives for global perspectives on culture and sustainable development are but one of many examples of a renewed interest in cultural research. Cf. the Swedish reports Kleberg (1998) and Knutsson (1998).

societal impetus, together with the changes in the academic field itself, including an expanding numbers of students with a wider social background.

In the 1970s, CCCS working groups in areas like British imperialism and politics, working class culture, youth culture, gender, media and sports developed these foundations. New theoretical influences came from French and Italian Marxism, feminism, psychoanalysis, semiotics, linguistics, postmodernism and deconstruction. British cultural studies began to be an internationally recognised paradigm, with names like Brunson, Cohen, Gilroy, Hebdige, Hobson, McRobbie, Morley and Willis. There were many other parallel developments in other world regions as well, sometimes with even older roots back in history, but the British line achieved a key global status. Other regional positions sometimes combined or confronted the British inspiration with overlapping interdisciplinary intellectual movements like various schools of critical theory, psychoanalytical cultural theory, cultural sociology, cultural history or media studies. In this way, more or less distinct national or regional varieties of cultural studies traditions tended to develop in continental Europe, North and South America, Africa, Asia and Australia. Mediators like Ang, Bennett, Chambers, Chen, Fiske, Grossberg, Hartley, Jameson, Kellner and Radway helped connecting these other branches to the UK tradition. Further developments in neighbouring areas like Internet and science-and-technology studies (Latour, Haraway, Turkle et al.), post-colonialism (Bhabha, Said, Spivak et al.), gender and queer studies (Braidotti, Butler, Moi et al.) continued to widen the frontiers of the field.

The cultural studies field is thus rapidly expanding into new research areas, academic sites and world regions, thereby itself being differentiated and transformed. A series of cultural studies programmes, centres and institutes have been founded, with stimulating and revitalising effects on cultural research. Conferences, journals, books and associations with this profile offer fruitful meeting-points for a wide range of researchers. Cultural studies has grown as a response to the post-war wave of cultural modernisation, renewing the impetus from interdisciplinary predecessors like the Frankfurt school of critical theory, while incorporating insights from other and more recent theories with which it is in vivid dialogue. Just like the Birmingham school once answered to several urgent and combined societal and academic challenges and contributed something new and unique, so does the present global wave of cultural studies networks. It is motivated by needs of new orientation in a world in flux, where old explanatory models have lost their credibility and traditional disciplines are in need of innovative renewal.

There are many ways to understand the term 'cultural studies'. An extremely wide sense, as a multidisciplinary cultural research that additively includes all the humanities and social sciences, does not catch the actual impetus of this genuinely trans- and interdisciplinary field. For a long time, a considerably more narrow definition has been dominant, referring only to a specific British paradigm founded in Birmingham in the 1960s and subsequently disseminated across the world, with a particular strong (and somewhat deviant) branch in the USA.

However, as Anglo-American tradition spreads globally, it also becomes globally contested, and not only by hostile opponents. It becomes more and more obvious that it is only one of several interesting and mutually interacting, critical and inter-

disciplinary currents of cultural research. The British breakthrough has paved the way for acknowledging a much more heterogeneous view of this field as a whole, without widening it so much that it collapses into the first mentioned totality of cultural research in general. From historic and material reasons, British and American cultural studies remain particularly influential and important for the formation of this field, and they can certainly not be ignored. Its focusing on the interconnections between texts or genres, societal contexts and issues of identity, between high and low, and between power and aesthetics, has had an invaluable worldwide impetus. Yet, it is now possible to accept a series of other partners in this dialogic field. The strong Anglo-American dominance, where 'international cultural studies' for a long time included only English-speaking nations, has long made other geographical, linguistic or cultural world regions effectively invisible.³ There are now signs that this might be changing. The widening and spread has revealed a confluence of partly overlapping regional counterparts that today take part in the forming of this global field without simply copying the British recipes. Thereby, the premature ban against some older currents in for example critical theory, cultural sociology or hermeneutics has been lifted. Cultural studies' borders to other areas are often the sites of intense debate. Important developments have started with critical engagements with and/or inspiration from critical theory, modernity theory, symbolic interactionism, hermeneutics, deconstruction, psychoanalysis, feminist studies, postcolonial studies, social history, anthropology, cultural sociology, political economy and media studies, just to mention a handful of its edges.⁴

The present convergence of a series of diverse cultural studies formations into one dialogic international field of cultural studies is an indication of its vital importance. These diverse but converging roots have created tensions and triggered off debates that have revitalised cultural research in a series of international projects, publications, journals, conferences and associations. There are now emergent course and research programmes for cultural studies at many universities worldwide, with an agenda combining Anglo-American elements with other but related traditions. This heterogenising process is also obvious in the increasing number of scholarly journals.⁵ Large international conferences have made visible an unexpected variety

³ Almost all English texts in the field suffer from such Anglocentrism, including for instance the extremely biased list of resources in *Cultural Studies*, 12:4 (1998). However, those who write from a Nordic position also often tend to reproduce a similar blindness to neighbour colleagues, in an effort to connect to the hegemonic British and American discussions, and to obey the demands from the dominating international (i.e. British and American!) publishers.

⁴ Examples of such border discussions are found in Donald (1991), Easthope (1991), Denzin (1992), Schwarz (1994), Miller (1994), Frow (1995), Jameson (1995), Kellner (1995), Curran et al. (1996), Larsson (1996), Lundgren (1997), McRobbie (1997), Pickering (1997), Ferguson & Golding (1997), Saukko (1998) and Radway (1998). A defence of cultural studies against attacks from political economy proponents is offered by Morley (1998).

⁵ Journals like *Cultural Studies*, *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, *Critical Arts* or *Inter-Asian Cultural Studies*.

of perspectives and projects.⁶ Some regions have their own associations, and an International Association of Cultural Studies (IACS) has recently been formed to organise researchers in this field.

The many ongoing debates touch on many important issues. One is the balance between texts, artefacts, interpretations or discourses on one hand and contexts, institutions, experiences or practices on the other. Another is whether the depth of recent cultural transformations calls for a total postmodern revision of all inherited ideas or rather a critically reflexive late modern development of cultural theory. A third concerns the balances between theoretical and empirical work or between advanced academic research with an emphasis on intellectual autonomy and policy-oriented applications with a strong political agency.⁷ Some want disciplinary institutionalisation to warrant stability, resources and integration into academia, others prefer independent 'anti-disciplinary' and unconventional institutional forms.⁸ Some strive to resolve petrified parts of the cultural studies doxa and go for a critical renewal in hitherto untested domains; others defend certain of its basic foundational ideas and traditions against disarming dissolution.

The chosen paths for cultural studies vary greatly between cultures and contexts, and the various intellectual and institutional formations of cultural studies worldwide therefore have encountered different problems and limitations, and have shifting needs. These shapes, needs and potentials of cultural studies in Sweden and globally have developed in close relation to other, neighbouring areas of research. The separate but converging and entwined roots of cultural studies continue to tinge the

⁶ Important international conferences have been held for instance in the United States, Latin America and East Asia. Closer to Sweden, a series of 'Crossroads in Cultural Studies' conferences have been organised in Tampere in 1996 and 1998 and in Birmingham 2000.

⁷ Cf. Ted Striphas (1998: 455) for a discussion of the relation between critical writing practices and institutional practices concerning policy, activism or pedagogy. Tony Bennett (1992) and Jostein Gripsrud (1998: 83ff) both appeal for more policy interventionism. Sean Nixon (2000) pleads for connecting Bennett's 'neo-Foucauldian' emphasis on the institutional regulation and social management of fields of culture ('cultural policy') with Stuart Hall's 'neo-Gramscian' emphasis on cultural fields as sites of struggles for hegemony ('cultural politics'), since both share an attention to the decentred character of modern power. Nixon warns against short-circuiting the nature of the exchanges between critical intellectuals and cultural practitioners, and underscores the need for a process of translation required for cultural studies scholars to reach out beyond an academic audience.

⁸ The issue of cultural studies' multi/trans/inter/anti-disciplinary institutionalization is a tricky one. Giroux et al. (1998) call for critical antidisciplinarity, but it can be questioned if cultural studies has not always been an academically institutionalized practice, and whether integration into the university system is really so much more devastating than other institutional forms. Tony Bennett (1998: 535) argues that cultural studies 'neither displaces disciplines nor integrates their partial findings into some higher-order, more complete knowledge. Rather, the role it has played [...] has been that of acting as an interdisciplinary clearing-house within the humanities, providing a useful interface at which the concerns of different disciplines, and of other interdisciplinary knowledges, can enter into fruitful forms of dialogue', thus performing the role 'of both stimulating and managing certain kinds of intellectual traffic in the humanities', and being 'an interdisciplinary discipline'. In our context, it should be added that the social sciences must not be excluded from this model of what cultural studies has been and/or may become, even though (perspectives from) the humanities must play a defining role in its formation.

field differently in each specific geographic and disciplinary locality. Different national contexts have produced different dynamics for cultural studies. In both the UK and the USA, there has been a peculiarly destructive wavering between textual and social emphases, where one camp at one moment reduces everything to intertextual games while another camp then replies by denouncing all textual analysis in search for a direct way to pure experience. In areas like Australia or Scandinavia, the scene is quite different, with a closer interaction between humanities and social sciences, as well as stronger interrelations between academia and cultural life.⁹ The ongoing widening and pluralisation of voices and perspectives in the global field of cultural studies gives hope for a strong renewal and advancement of this field.

Cultural studies are thus always localised in space, but also in time. People enter this field at varying sociocultural moments, which gives it different meanings and functions for shifting generations of researchers. For some, it has been the experience of not fitting into traditional disciplines and wanting to break out of rigid institutional frameworks that made it an attractive refuge. Others look for theoretical renewal or societal responsibility. Its own growing institutionalisation adds to societal transformations in creating new conditions for new generations of students and researchers with other frames of reference – just as has been the case in other research fields, such as gender studies.

Cultural studies should then not be defined as the sum of all cultural and human sciences, nor their competing alternative. Some strive to make it a discipline of its own, but it might preferably be understood as an analytical perspective that may be put into work in all disciplines, and thus as a specific interdisciplinary linkage between different traditions of cultural research. This is not a sharply defined camp to which one belongs (or not), but a kind of intellectual practice: something to do rather than something to be. It connects academic disciplines and geographic areas in order to let the emergent cross-currents enrich old disciplines and develop new insights into multidimensional cultural processes. Cultural studies can feed back into the disciplines a will to avoid esotericism by confronting questions from the general public about urgent issues concerning popular culture and everyday life, connecting to feminist and other critical social and cultural research that strives to be accountable to civil society.

The choice of the term 'studies' is not arbitrary. It emphasises the plurality and openness of research, a connectedness to everyday life forms of knowledge and interpretation, and an implicit scepticism towards building giant, unified thought castles. But it also deliberately connects to an internationally established academic current. In English language use, however, 'cultural studies' is usually treated as a term in singular, mirroring a tendency towards sterilising closure. A more pluralistic perspective would favour the plural grammatical form that the term actually implies, whereby cultural studies would be seen as an interdisciplinary linkage or bridge between many different traditions of cultural research.

⁹ For Australia, cf. Banks et al. (2000). For Sweden and the Nordic countries, cf. *Cultural Studies*, 8:2(1994), *Kulturella perspektiv*, 3:3 (1994), Hannevik & Hastrup (1996), Hemmungs Wirtén & Peurell (1997), *Zenit*, 135-136 (1-2/1997), Johansson et al. (1998) and Eriksson et al. (1999).

Cultural studies should not be polarised too sharply against other disciplines or paradigms, though there are certain shortcomings in other research domains that this field critically strives to counteract and thus inspire innovative development of these domains. In relation to many dominant social science approaches, it implies an intensified attention to textual structures and interpretations, corresponding to a general cultural turn. In relation to most aesthetic disciplines, it instead implies a greater care for social and institutional contexts. An attention to interactive relations between different symbolic genres, communication media, identities and forms of power cannot be escaped. On the other hand, there are also problematic gaps in the dominating international lines of cultural studies which Swedish cultural research is in a favourable position to engage with, if a decisive switching-point can be installed to create those mediations needed for this mutual advancement to occur.

The international field of interdisciplinary cultural studies is thus developing in a rapid pace.¹⁰ While expanding into new research areas, academic sites and world regions, it is itself being differentiated and transformed.¹¹ There is however more that unites the field than its pluralism. Uniting links may be traced back to precisely those main cultural developments that have made this field emerge. Cultural studies may be defined as an evolving set of efforts to link cultural research developed in the margins of many existing disciplines. In spite of its great variety, this polycentric field is generally driven by certain strategic choices and preferences that emphasise precisely those three main characteristics and aspects mentioned above, by being held together by a focus on culture, communication and critique.

A. Culture and meaning

Culture is the first keyword, to be understood both as an area and as a perspective of research: studies of culture as well as studies of a cultural kind. Both aspects are united by a focus on meanings.

On one hand, cultural studies are *studies of culture*, understood in a very broad sense, making cultural phenomena – symbols, forms and meanings – an explicit object of study. This may include culture in all the complex senses of the word, including the traditional high arts, popular culture and entertainment, as well as the explicitly aesthetic practices in everyday life. It is particularly important to reconnect this whole aesthetic field, including both its high, low and middlebrow sectors. The high arts constitute one crucial focus, but so does popular culture and the aesthetics of everyday life, as well as interpretative aspects on in principle all human and societal interaction and communication. Cultural studies build bridges between the various genres, circuits, arts, media, discourses and forms of expression that are elsewhere

¹⁰ Cf. Punter (1986), Brantlinger (1990), Turner (1990/1992), Mukerji & Schudson (1991), Grossberg et al. (1992), Jenks (1993), Storey (1993 and 1996a & b), Adam & Allen (1995), Morley & Chen (1996), Cevalco (1997), du Gay et al. (1997), Redhead (1997), or various issues of various journals.

¹¹ Relevant examples of cultural studies perspectives partly inspired by the main British and American streams and partly critically alternative to them are found in Ehn & Löfgren (1982), Hannerz et al. (1982), Deichman-Sørensen & Frønes (1990), Alasuutari (1995), Fornäs (1995), Jacobsson & Lundgren (1997), Liedman (1997).

often studied in isolation from each other. No communicative mode is by definition excluded. Likewise, all the stages in cultural processes are to be scrutinised: texts as well as their production, distribution and use. In fact, many strands of cultural studies problematise such linear sender-message-receiver chains, not least inspired by recent interactive Internet media that seem to demand a rethinking of many established categories. The mentioned widening and problematisation of the cultural sphere in society leads to a questioning of its customary external and internal borders, and cultural studies reply on these challenges by exploring these emergent borderlands.

On the other hand, cultural studies are also *studies of a cultural kind*, deliberately using meaning-constructions as a methodological tool of a culturally operating or interpretive research, that gives matters of understanding and reflexivity focal attention. Interpretative means and hermeneutic strategies are used to approach human and social life, not only to reproduce others' meanings but also to uncover otherwise hidden signifying dimensions in works and practices. Meaning is produced around symbolic forms that are embedded in all social spheres and sectors of human activity. Cultural studies focus the interrelations between the materialities, form-relations, meanings and uses of human practices, and reflexively regard themselves as inevitably embedded in similarly multidimensional and contextualised cultural circuits. In this sense, cultural studies offer interpretive perspectives on symbolic forms and practices.

Culture is thus on one hand a possible object of study (a set of art and entertainment genres, a societal sphere and a field of practice) that may be studied from various perspectives (textual, social, institutional, psychological etc.). It is on the other hand a particular aspect (of form and meaning) that may be studied in every human or societal area. This aspect of culture therefore relates both to what is studied and to how it is studied.

It remains impossible to fix univocally one definite concept of culture, as each living concept is necessarily contested. One must resist reductionist temptations to define it too narrowly. Culture is thus not only the area of the institutionalised high arts, but also includes the aesthetic practices, processes and artefacts of media, popular and everyday culture. All these put symbolic forms and meanings in the centre, but forms and meanings intervene in all human activity, so that cultural perspectives may be applied also to fields that are not primarily cultural, such as politics, economy or psychology.

Culture is about symbolic communication and intersubjective production of meaning, which implies relations between people, but not only communities in the narrow sense. Culture concerns differences and conflicts as much as it has to do with what is common to people: it is something that divides, just as much as it unites, even though cultural divisions presuppose some shared understandings over which to fight. This also means that culture as a general concept includes not only what is shared by all or even by a majority. Common sense and the basic presuppositions of a group or a society are certainly constituents of culture, but so is subcultural or avantgarde art and all kinds of marginalised, radical, oppositional or highly individual symbolic expressions that certainly cannot be thought as generally or even widely shared by a people.

Culture is often associated with tenacious structure and historical heritage, but this is only one of its facets. Technology, economy, politics and the human psyche have stable structures too, which for that reason only should not automatically be defined as culture. And while the historical dimension is important in culture (as everywhere else), it is just as important to study contemporary processes of dynamic creativity. Cultural interpretations need to be anchored in historical knowledge, but cannot be reduced to the issue of inherited meanings. Understanding future-oriented tendencies and transgressive innovations is equally important, as culture grows through an ambivalent balance between creativity and regulation, novelty and tradition, change and reproduction.¹²

B. Communication and interaction

Communication is a second keyword, and it can likewise be understood both as an object or content of research (studying culture as a communicative process) and as a method or form of research (developing knowledge in a consciously dialogical practice built on conflicts of interpretation). Here, both these aspects are united by a focus on interaction. The communicative focus connects culture to its mediation and use, and implies researching in dialogic, interdisciplinary ways.

Culture is defined through symbolic communication, where human subjects use objects to create shared meanings. Culture is intersubjective, connecting people, even when it may join them in fierce conflicts. Culture as communication starts with processes involving the creative combination of three elements: subjects, texts, and contexts. Meaningful symbolic forms are texts shaped and used by interacting individual subjects in polydimensional spatial, temporal, societal and institutional contexts. *Subjects* are interacting agents that use texts to make meanings, and thereby develop polydimensional and dynamic identities along a series of interconnected difference orders like gender, generation, ethnicity and class. The issue of how culture relates to subjectivity and identity is a main theme in cultural studies, connecting it both to psychoanalytical and other subject theories and to discussions of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, age, generation, class and other more or less polarised discursive identity orders. *Texts* in the wide sense are artefacts or 'meaningful' symbolic webs that may be made of words, images, sounds or any other forms of expression, and that become symbolic structures by being drawn by subjects into processes of interpretation. *Contexts* are the immediate settings as well as the overarching spheres and institutions which frame the processes where subjects shape and use texts.

Cultural studies also work through communication. Interdisciplinary co-operation and dialogues are crucial. Like society and culture in general, research practices are

¹² Bauman (1999: xivff and xx) argues for an essential ambiguity of culture, created by the fact that meaning and sense, as its core, starts from a human freedom to choose and act, but also implies a restriction of that freedom: making meanings implies to invent but also to make order and construct patterns that reduce chaos and thus delimit future meaning-making. He argues that artistic concepts of culture tend to stress the first side (unique works changing history), while anthropological ones tend to emphasise the latter (reproduction of heritages). However, it is also important to note that the dialectics of transcendence and tradition is equally present in the arts as in the cultures of everyday life.

basically communicative, building upon interactions between interpretative human beings. This acknowledgement implies an expressed antireductionist interest in mediations and interdisciplinary combinations. Cultural studies combine aesthetic, social or psychological aspects of culture. Similarly, micro, meso and macro perspectives ought not to exclude but rather inform each other. Synchronic studies of present or recent phenomena are to be connected to historical perspectives on past events, earlier periods or longer processes of development. Methodological pluralism is crucial for the explorative attitude needed to develop new insights and transcend outdated limitations. Ethnographic fieldwork, close textual analysis, readings of historical documents and statistical data analysis all are relevant ways to research culture, and one-sided biases, for instance towards the present, textuality or any other particular dimension should be observed and counteracted by paying attention to otherwise neglected aspects.¹³

The focus on communication and interaction implies a necessary contextualisation of textual interpretation. Much research in the aesthetic disciplines tends to focus on the formal structures of single bodies of texts. Instead, aesthetic texts and genres are here interpreted in relation to various intersecting situational, social and historical frameworks, including intra-, inter- and extratextual relations, institutional settings and identity structures. The intertextual and intermedial contexts situate single texts, genres and forms of expression in relation to other symbolic forms with which they are profoundly connected.¹⁴ This implies a lively traffic between the specialised aesthetic disciplines, so that the cross-currents between works and genres within literature, art, music, theatre, film and other art or media forms are understood. Another aspect is the extratextual contextualisation of symbolic forms as entwined with subjective and social orders and institutions. This necessitates a vivid exchange between the humanities and the social sciences. Culture has both textual and institutional aspects, and the combination of specialist knowledges that have historically developed in separation to analyse these aspects is essential. Interpretative textual studies need to be intimately connected to political and economic studies of institutions, and to historical perspectives on macro-processes of modernisation and globalisation.

The research field of cultural studies is a hybrid borderland, and in three interconnected senses. First, it is a *free field*, an intellectual free-zone, a third space of refuge in-between all the established disciplinary closures. Second, it is a *battlefield*, a field of fighting contradiction on the very borderline where interdisciplinary struggles take place. Third, it is a *cultivation field*, a field of hybridising bricolage construction in the overlap between what is elsewhere separated. These three sides are intrinsically and dialectically interlaced. Release from disciplining restriction and the free play of critical contradiction are both necessary conditions of creative cultivation. Cultural

¹³ In relation to historical and aesthetic disciplines, it is often useful to approach contemporary phenomena, and the latter may also need to be balanced by more contextual angles on texts. In relation to sociology, historical perspectives, textual analysis and micro-processes might be a more appropriate corrective. In this way, the problems and emphases differ across the various sectors and edges of the whole cultural studies field, and each discipline have unique competences to offer the others.

¹⁴ Cf. Lehtonen (2000).

studies can only grow through conflicts in open spaces, being constructed precisely through dialogic struggles of interpretation and liberation of imagination.

Interdisciplinarity is here more than multidisciplinarity but 'less' than metadisciplinarity. Its transdisciplinary hybridisation not only combines distinct disciplinary areas into a multifaceted whole, but enables new constellations to grow in a process with no final end-point. Efforts to synthesise different paradigms may certainly be useful, but there is always room for other syntheses to compete, in a struggle of interpretations with no final solution. It is essential to combine an interest in contact and mutual sharing with a respect for differences between positions. Networks and platforms in this field therefore form a series of overlapping public spheres where interpretative communities grow and compete, in productive contact with each other.

C. Critique and power

Critique is a third basic trait, implying an effort to uncover power dimensions of representations and reflect on the interfaces between academia and society at large. Both new and older variants of cultural studies tend to emphasise their critical perspectives on power and dominance forms in systemic institutions as well as in everyday life, through critical interventions that are grounded in interpretative acts of understanding the key contradictions and ambivalences of modern culture.

Cultural studies investigate relations of power and representation, politics and culture, states, markets and the life-worlds of civil society. Though culture is always about power, it is never *only* about power. Other aspects are always relevant, too, since symbolic practices are not only used for dominating or oppositional purposes. But a readiness to look for power dimensions of cultural practices is a central feature of the field of cultural studies.

Cultural studies is not just an internal academic enterprise, but also an ethos, a critical project related to the social world outside of academia, criticising society as well as other academic traditions. It may be said that cultural studies is to research on culture in general approximately like feminism is to studies of gender: a polyphonic stream of expressly critical perspectives within the larger area that comprises most of the humanities and social sciences. In interpreting symbolic representations, it emphasises how they are authorised by power. It reflects upon the specific role, conditions and rules of academic research as a particular social field of knowledge production, but sees no absolute or total epistemological break between everyday knowledge and academic theories. Its critique builds on the ambivalences, contradictions and critical elements in the knowledge people already have, in dialogue with them rather than above their heads.

The relation between culture, knowledge and power is a strong theme in cultural studies. One point of critique concerns how textual forms and practices are embedded in the commercial market system and the cultural industries, with their economic imperatives, inequalities and alienations. Various Marxist and political economy perspectives have been influential in cultural studies. A second direction of critique is towards the other main societal system, that of the state and its administrative power, with problematic tendencies towards centralisation and bureaucratisation.

Each of these two systems that frame modern culture has both enabling and restraining functions, and they sometimes join forces, at other times contradict each other. But cultural power relations are also seated in the communicative life worlds of civil society and its various private and public institutions. Everyday life, the media and the public sphere may perhaps aim for free and equal communication, but are cut through by cultural hierarchies that need to be critically scrutinised. Feminism, queer studies, postcolonial studies, youth culture research all are important currents for cultural studies, to understand how such dimensions of domination intersect.

The critical perspective makes cultural studies deeply involved and engaged in social and political life. Instead of striving for academic isolation, critical intellectuals strive to actively communicate and interact with other groups and spheres. A certain, relative autonomy for scholarly research may be used as the very basis for specific interventions in discussions of cultural policy, identity politics, social movements, globalisation, state/market-relations and other related issues outside of academia.¹⁵ Cultural theories are not directly to be 'transformed' into political practice. This scientist idea has been a cornerstone in a long tradition of social engineering, with more or less respectable aims. Researchers should be both cultural theorists and political activists, but a certain differentiation between these two roles is crucial. Theory is itself a practice, and full of political struggles, but its force derives from the specific rules and relations of its relatively autonomous intellectual field. Cultural studies can certainly obtain a political use value and be used by cultural practitioners, but its main critical force is by conceptual and interpretative work rather than political activism. One reason why this is important is the need for also being able to reflexively criticise political activism, without ever reducing oneself to anti-politics.

The three keys to the field are closely interconnected. All in all, cultural studies, understood in a polycentric way that connects to current directions in the international arena, may be seen as answering to several needs. (1) A response to emerging new issues raised in cultural life and cultural politics, concerning cultural policy, globalisation and intermediality in the crossing between states, markets and lifeworlds, as well as the power/identity aspects of culture related to dimensions like class, gender, sexuality, generation, ethnicity and nationality. (2) A way of connecting disciplinary areas in the human sciences into a strong, joint force of creative renewal, bridging tensions like those between humanities and social sciences, contemporary issues and historical perspectives, textual interpretation and ethnography of lived experience.

3. Swedish cultural research

The field of cultural studies is in this sense today virtually present everywhere. There is today a good opportunity to take firm steps forward through an interplay between domestic and international currents. Nordic and Swedish versions of cultural studies have taken other shapes than their internationally dominant British and American counterparts, in processes of 'glocalisation' that connect, widen, enrich and pluralise

¹⁵ Cf. the call for a 'corporatism of the universal' in the afterword to Bourdieu (1992/1996).

the field.¹⁶ An increased traffic across borders would offer benefits on both sides – advancing domestic cultural research through contact with and inspiration from international trends while simultaneously advancing international cultural studies by adding new perspectives that may loosen up some petrified structures.

In many ways, Sweden has lagged behind when it comes to institutionalisation for the benefit of interdisciplinary cultural research.¹⁷ Many other countries, including several Nordic neighbours, have rather impressive long-term programmes, institutes and other infrastructural resources in this field (HSFR 1999: 35). There are promising local and regional initiatives to produce publications, give university courses or organise seminars and conferences in the cultural studies field, but many comparable countries in the Western sphere are ahead of us when it comes to firm national initiatives in this arena. This is a great pity, since Swedish cultural research has many strong elements that would forcefully be able to interact with others in a broader global arena.

There is a wide acceptance of the fact that Western society shifts its centre of gravity from material to cultural production, but little has hitherto been done to draw any conclusions from this 'new economy' for research policy. While the recent UNESCO initiatives on culture and development stress the crucial role of culture in the present and future modernity, Swedish disciplines of cultural research have been rather slow to meet with this centrality by forcefully focusing on the urgent new issues of our time. This is now about to change. In most universities, strong currents among scholars are becoming eager to deal with this agenda, and there are clear signs of a will to step into the frontier of international cultural studies. Initiatives on several levels are needed in this process, including programmes, centres, networks and institutes for both research and higher education, some locally based, others emphasising national or transnational networking.

Too much time has been spent on complaining about the obvious lack of resources, in particular for the humanities. It is high time to make much more offensive moves and install new initiatives that overcomes fragmentation and isolation, and connects the older traditions to new developments in society and cultural life. A constructively self-critical reflection on the state and limits of cultural research must be combined with more daring efforts to try new ways of connecting people and pushing frontiers forward.

Even though many individual scholars have strong contacts with colleagues abroad, international exchanges have hitherto been remarkably weak on an institutional level in Sweden. There is a strong need for opening up more windows to the world, to connect domestic studies to that of other regions, to start more comparative

¹⁶ On transnational cultural and intellectual flows, hybridity and glocalization as a combination of globalization and localization, cf. Hannerz (1992 and 1996), Gilroy (1993), Featherstone et al. (1995), Therborn (1995) and Berg et al. (2000).

¹⁷ The Swedish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences report on sectorial research within the area of culture (HSFR 1999) proposes a strengthening of this research, not least its interdisciplinarity and general quality. A recent state report on research policy (SOU 1998:128) defends basic research as well as the idea of building separate research institutes.

research and to improve the conditions for translating and disseminating Swedish research on a European and intercontinental scale.

There is a certain amount of conservative reluctance towards innovative moves that cut across the established disciplinary or geographical borders. Too many established scholars and departments avoid self-problematisation by never daring to go into tight dialogues with other disciplines or even with other sister departments at other universities. The older universities have exhibited a tenacity in dealing with such new and transgressive currents. Still, at several Swedish universities and university colleges, local or regional centres, courses and programmes for cultural studies have been launched. While new departments at smaller university colleges have sometimes offered a refuge for dissident interdisciplinarity, it takes long time to develop an advanced postgraduate environment out of these seeds, and the old academic divisions are not so easily avoided in that process of establishment and legitimation. Each new initiative often has grown out of a certain discipline, therefore tending to emphasise a particular aspect of the cultural studies spectrum. Thereby, each region has cultivated a more or less one-sided form of cultural studies, where important subfields fall into oblivion, giving rise to a new series of unproductive exclusions and marginalisations. New seminars and other meeting-places have been started, for shorter or longer periods, and sometimes expressly orientated towards some subfield of cultural studies (youth culture being a notable example). Old study programmes for the cultural sector have sometimes been given a more modern touch by importing inspiration (and sometimes even the English name) from international cultural studies. Disciplines like ethnology, sociology and literature have experimented with courses and other initiatives that try to transgress disciplinary boundaries in the cultural studies direction. Certain research projects, dissertations, journals, books and other publications have explicitly thematised or even inscribed themselves in a cultural studies tradition. Yet, these initiatives have hitherto largely remained either dissociated from (or even ignorant of) each other, locally organised or on a rather introductory level. There is still lacking a truly national-international setting on an advanced scholarly level with a wide and open scope of cultural studies research, encompassing in principle all the main areas active in the field today.

The older disciplinary areas from which the new field grows have offered highly different (though potentially converging) roads into cultural studies. In Sweden, as elsewhere, anthropologists and ethnologists have brought other competences and interests into the field than have sociologists, historians or scholars from the aesthetic humanities. Each new programme, institute and network tends to focus a particular subsector within the whole field, and there is too little mutual communication between such initiatives.

There have been several efforts to improve conditions. In 1989-1995, the Swedish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences (HSFR) ran a programme for comparative cultural research. This programme encompassed seven interdisciplinary projects developing a range of studies in the cultural field and models for cooperative research. These experiences remain important for later developments. One lesson was that even with relatively small resources, much could happen if committed researchers get the chance to build active networks around relevant issues. An

evaluation recommended somewhat larger, more long-term and more focused future bids in order to get more substantial results.¹⁸ There is however always a risk that programmes invited 'from above' are experienced by researchers as less attractive frameworks, almost comparable to the university faculties. Something more needs to be done, with a stronger intellectual coherence, presence and permanence, and with an active core of motivated researchers who function as entrepreneurs or activists, while keeping it open also for others who just want to use its resources without totally identifying with it.

More focused networks and programmes have been formed in various fields of relevance here, from youth culture to European studies. The term 'cultural studies' has been used in several universities where older education programmes for jobs in the cultural sector have been modernised and widened. Some doctoral courses, seminars and post-doc research programmes have sometimes been added to such centres. These environments are often lively meeting-points but tend to lack institutional stability and therefore be vulnerable.

For several decades, *Linköping* University has developed a strong interdisciplinary profile in research and doctoral education, and there are chairs with an explicitly cultural focus in several of their programmes. This includes those of technology, of communication, and of gender. A strong focus there is on feminist cultural studies of science and technology. A new campus in *Norrköping* has a strong cultural profile with interdisciplinary undergraduate programmes. It also houses two new departments, one for ethnicity studies and one for research on cultural heritage and cultural production. Both collaborate with the new National Institute for Working Life programme for Work and Culture in *Norrköping*, where studies of Cultures of Work, of Ethnicity and Work and of Cultural Production and Cultural Work are the prime areas.

In *Växjö*, an impressive, mainly undergraduate programme for cultural studies has grown mainly from sociology. In *Uppsala*, such a programme is integrated with older programmes for aesthetics and library science. In *Umeå*, ethnology, media studies, museology and cultural administration programmes have been fused into a new department of media and culture. In *Göteborg*, there is a new Centre for Cultural Studies including undergraduate education, graduate courses/seminars and a research-orientated Forum for Studies of Contemporary Culture. *Malmö* has an interdisciplinary course programme for arts, communication and culture and for digital media, *Södertörn* University College south of Stockholm has one for contemporary aesthetics, and most of these places strive to add doctoral education and senior research projects to

¹⁸ Hannevik & Hastrup (1996). One of the most extensive of these seven projects was the research programme 'Youth culture in Sweden' (Forskningsprogrammet Ungdomskultur i Sverige, FUS; cf. Fornäs & Bolin 1995 and Bäckström et al. 1998). It organised some 70 Swedish researchers from a wide range of universities and disciplines in a large network, with annual seminars, publications, working groups and various forms of internal information exchange, aiming at theoretically qualifying empirical youth studies. Other projects were either wide interdisciplinary networks with large publication lists or a handful of people studying a more specific subject: the language of the workers' movement, the Christening of Sweden, technology and ideology, transnational cultural processes, the everyday organisation of multicultural and Swedish moral history.

their ground-level education packages. *Borås* is a centre for studies of cultural policy and Swedish culture. *Stockholm* University similarly houses interdisciplinary centres and/or networks for – among other things – culture and economics, immigrant culture, children’s culture, and studies of higher education.

All this is only a selection of the multifarious initiatives growing all around the country. However impressive this list may first sound, these programmes have large shortcomings. They are unstable initiatives, highly dependent on single committed entrepreneurs and therefore vulnerable to administrative policy changes. They are isolated islands with deficient mutual contacts. Each of them tends to be confined to one or some few disciplines and to one single city. There are no strong long-term sites for collective and transgressive cultural studies.

In spite of certain institutional shortcomings, Sweden certainly has many promising potentialities that make it well worthwhile to do more to enhance its interface to the international field of cultural studies. There are several strong traditions of empirically well-grounded research and good examples of interplay between academia and civil society. The Nordic types of welfare states and gender relations belong to the underlying conditions. Swedish cultural researchers have tended to emphasise a close connection between empirical research and theoretical development, and they have connected media and textual analysis to social and historical perspectives on cultural modernisation, social movements and the public sphere.

Within certain key fields, Sweden offers internationally unique experiences and traditions for building interdisciplinary cultural research.

- (1) Studies of the welfare state, popular movements and working life have benefited from their relative strength as well as from a less rigid and elitist division between academic and civil society-based knowledge production than in many other regions.
- (2) Everyday life and less prolific common cultures have been more studied than spectacular settings or subcultures, in conversation analysis, cultural history and ethnographic research. This mirrors the fact that interdisciplinary cultural researchers seem less marginalised within their respective disciplines in Sweden than often is the case elsewhere.
- (3) There is a strong critical-historical tradition that puts ongoing processes in a longer perspective, based on empirical investigation rather than airy speculation. For example, in the sociology of literature and of music, Swedish studies decades ago anticipated currents that have now become influential elsewhere, well deserving a wider recognition that would revitalise the international discussion.
- (4) In women’s and gender studies, a committed academic community and consistent state funding have combined to create a great wealth of solid research on women, men and gender relations, relatively well integrated in the universities. Feminist and queer cultural studies therefore form a strong profile here.
- (5) In studies of youth culture, socialisation, pedagogics and ageing, networks of scholars have managed to use strategic investments from state research coun-

cils to break new paths, crossing disciplinary as well as geographic borders, and connecting various theoretical influences in a path-breaking way.

In several other sub-fields of Swedish cultural studies too, there are similar early and well-developed research traditions that compare well to those of other countries. All these assets make Sweden a highly attractive place to visit for foreign scholars engaged in these kinds of areas. Through such experiences, some highly promising Swedish currents of cultural studies have thus emerged, which may well continue to enrich the humanities and social sciences, while also serving as a fruitful addition to the global field of cultural studies. These potentials may again be discussed in three steps, connecting to the key aspects previously mentioned.

- A. *Meaning, genre and aesthetic practice.* One set of studies has been orientated towards aesthetics and cultural sociology. There are important studies within linguistics, literature, theatre, film, music and arts that make contextualising interpretations of works and genres in relation to everyday aesthetic practices, art institutions, taste patterns and processes of socialisation.
- B. *Interaction, community and everyday life.* Another strong area has been the study of how identities and communities are formed in everyday life. Such studies within history, ethnology and anthropology have either had an historical perspective or worked by ethnographies in the present.
- C. *Power, democracy and politics.* A third strong Swedish tradition has been the study of new social movements and cultural policy matters, sometimes related to issues of youth culture or media use. These studies engage with urgent matters like democratic citizenship, political processes and the public sphere.

Utilising these and other resources, Swedish perspectives might help solve certain aporias that have hampered the international discourse in cultural studies, by building bridges across the great divides that are widely felt to be dysfunctional. 'Beyond the great divide' is the call from younger generations of British and American researchers who are dissatisfied with the mutual suspicion within cultural studies or between that field and a series of 'others' (like critical theory, political economy, cultural sociology, social anthropology or hermeneutics). There is an option here to step into the voids and niches where Anglo-American traditions have failed, and an international interest in learning from these alternative histories and experiences. One important issue for future dialogues is precisely to explore in greater detail how the historical tradition of research into culture in Sweden connects to the agendas for cultural studies being shaped in the UK and USA.

In developing this field in Sweden, one must learn from others' experiences and meet others' needs, too. It is important to critically scrutinise earlier mistakes and limitations within interdisciplinary cultural studies, without losing the impulse and will to create something better, rather than surrender to the sometimes bitter experiences from before or from elsewhere. Advancing cultural studies in Sweden implies a dialectics between expanding and improving the field, and between the Swedish and the international agenda. Domestic strengths must be built upon and offered channels out, but domestic shortcomings should also be critically acknowledged and remedied by innovative moves inspired by international currents.

Like so many global regions, Sweden and the Nordic countries are in the shadow of UK/US hegemony. This hegemony is to a large extent internalised and actively reinforced by Swedish scholars, too. They have tended to reproduce similar processes of making Swedish studies effectively invisible in order to become accepted, published and read by Anglo-American colleagues via English-based conferences and publications. The varied traditions of studying culture around the world are being subject to a dominant model of cultural studies, advocated by publishers, the British Council and certain 'star' intellectuals from the UK and the USA. This model is actively embraced by many Swedish scholars as well, whether they identify with it (and therefore hide their various Nordic influences and connections), or inversely disclaim it (in favour of domestic traditions that are then constructed as completely outside cultural studies). Such mechanisms make it difficult to catch sight of the specific traits of Swedish cultural research. This kind of relation to the dominating intellectual world centres is shared by most of the marginalised world regions, but there are also crucial differences. For example, Sweden has not been equally integrated in the imperialist-colonial nexus of global relations. It has certainly profited materially on colonialism and been co-responsible for its cultural reproduction. But it still has a particular status as situated somehow in a borderland between centre and periphery.

All in all, there is at this moment an excellent chance to make a decisive move to advance cultural studies in Sweden. Intellectually, time is ripe for stepping into that field, in order to enhance traffic in both directions and to renew both sides in that exchange. Institutionally, the many local and region programmes on basic and doctoral levels would get a welcome support by a national centre on an advanced, primarily post-doc level. Interdisciplinary efforts have hitherto mainly been tried either in undergraduate or graduate education, or in single research projects. In both cases, the full advantages of such transdisciplinary co-operation may not get a chance to be realised. Politically, there are repeated calls for more socially relevant humanistic studies that get a grip on some of the most debated issues of today.

These are some of the many contextual factors behind the initiative to launch in Sweden a new advanced research institute for cultural studies. This is one response – among others needed on many different levels – to the challenges and opportunities apparent here today.

ORGANISATION

Ideas for a new infrastructural initiative for Swedish cultural studies led to the organisation of an 'Advancing Cultural Studies' international workshop, 4-5 February 1999. It gathered some 30 highly qualified national and international researchers. They discussed the present state of cultural studies in Sweden and world-wide, the contribution of each discipline/country to interdisciplinary cultural studies, and of international cultural studies to each disciplinary and/or national branch of research. A strong recommendation was to immediately start working for developing a plan for establishing some new nationally organised and internationally working body in this field, in the form of an advanced national research institute for cultural studies.

Representatives of most of the relevant disciplines and universities thought that time was ripe for such an initiative. A full report from the workshop was published two months later.¹⁹ It included written statements from the participants, summaries of the discussions and a very provisional outline of how an ACSIS could be envisaged. It has also been published on the Internet in the electronic journal *Culture Machine*, operated from the University of Teesside in Britain.

Two state research councils are supporting these activities: the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation (RJ), and the Swedish Council for Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences (HSFR). The funds were used for networking and meetings with the purpose to discuss how the field is best developed in Sweden and how to best shape a new research institute in this area. A series of regional meetings have been arranged with key researchers in the field, both in Sweden and internationally, aiming to pursue the project of further consolidating interdisciplinary networks in the area of Swedish cultural studies and improve the institute outline.

The result of this thorough preparatory work is the proposal for and outline of a national research institute called *AC SIS: The Advanced Cultural Studies Institute of Sweden*. Recent convergences between branches of cultural research create a need for meeting places with a commitment to an agenda that confronts key social and cultural issues while developing a critical interdisciplinary reflexivity. This must then be fed back into the disciplines an increased accountability to the civil society by taking seriously the task to respond to questions from the general public about emergent and pressing cultural processes and issues. New knowledge demands non-traditional forms of study, and the ACSIS would be an independent research institute outside of – but closely interacting with – the ordinary university system. Such a networking institute would allow for a truly international scope, combine flexibility with permanence and maximise the flow between disciplines and universities.

1. Tasks

The ACSIS will operate as an anchored network, with a wide connective activity from a physical basis. It is to be an independent national unit, funded basically by public means. Its main objective is to *promote innovative basic research in the field of cultural studies*, in the form of empirical studies, theoretical and methodological development, and the organising of international and multidisciplinary communication. Using information and networking to make this advanced study useful for education and cultural life is also a relevant sub-task. The institute should not operate in solitary isolation, but interact with other actors in the cultural field, building bridges and offering qualified scholarly support for training programmes, both in the humanities disciplines and in the arts and crafts area.

The proposed *name* ‘Advanced Cultural Studies Institute of Sweden’ is intended to enable the abbreviation ‘ACSIS’, which carries welcome associations to a driving and connecting ‘axis’ between the researchers, subfields and dimensions involved, as

¹⁹ Fornäs (1999), 146 pp.

well as to providing ‘access’ to vanguard competences and resources. A kind of ‘axis principle’ will be operative on all levels of the institute activities, in that it will strive to build links and bridges both in form and content. More importantly, each word in the full name conveys important traits of the institute profile. They will here be commented in reverse order.

A. Sweden

Despite its international outlook and connections to local universities, the institute will be a national institution of *Sweden*. The institute will engage researchers from all parts of the world, but be located in Sweden, run mainly by Swedish scholars and funded by national Swedish resources.

The ACSIS would need a local and regional basis of some kind, and will clearly make itself useful to its surrounding environment and stay in close contact with local cultural life and research. It must however nevertheless carefully avoid being confined to that geographical area. Instead, activities must strive to spread out all over Sweden, and even into other parts of the world as well. It must therefore obtain a relatively independent status in relation to its hosting university.

An ACSIS would offer Swedish cultural research an important window to the world, directed both ways. On one hand, it would offer a way for Swedish scholars to become more visible on the international arena. Valuable Swedish assets are well worth a wider global breakthrough. This would also push international cultural studies forward in new and productive directions, by adding both empirical insights into new cultural areas and path-breaking kinds of theoretical perspectives. On the other hand, Swedish research would receive vitalising impulses from foreign currents and environments, as local and regional activities in Sweden would be able to make use of the intellectual resources gathered by ACSIS. It will enable Sweden to become one important focal point in the expanding international field of cultural studies, while reshaping its models in a mutually creative dialogue with domestic traditions of cultural research. Sweden has now a great opportunity to place itself in the international frontline by creating such a communicative space for different perspectives within the field.

B. Institute

As for the precise type of institution, this is not to be a regular ‘department’ centred on a definite ‘discipline’. The institutional form and name must live up to the given tasks of this national/international interface and primarily post-doc research site. A term like ‘collegium’ tends to signify a more closed and clearly delimited group of people. The ACSIS will certainly gather a core of researchers and research fellows who will be active each year, but also spin plural and flexible interactive networks around that core. Through digital, mediated and seminar communications, the ACSIS will strive to interact intensely with other centres, departments and nodes on the field. ‘Centre’ and ‘forum’ are other options, but they are already in use mostly for intra-university bodies. An ‘*institute*’ is simply something that is instituted or

established, and fits well for the intended kind of relatively autonomous research institution. New knowledge demands untraditional forms of study. A research institute outside of but closely interacting with the ordinary university system seems a most useful model.

The focused institutional basis must however not become a closed prison. The institute will enable productive localised meetings in time and space, but should always also put great emphasis on dispersed networking, making use of all available techniques of communication. Still, geography, space and embodiment will continue to matter, and a specific spatial setting will form the core of this networking. The term 'institute' is thus not meant to exclude extrovert openness.

Neither is it meant to avoid dynamic flexibility. A delicate balance must be upheld between permanence and versatility. There is a need for a continued long-term presence rather than a temporary programme, but a high degree of mobility and self-renewal must be built into the ACSIS. One way to do this is by developing a flexible set of themes around which activities are formed. Another is through the temporary fellowships and the time limits on the more permanent research positions. A third is by adding permanent elements of critical self-evaluation, identifying weak points and new directions.

C. Cultural Studies

The ACSIS will focus on *cultural studies* with the three main pillars culture, communication and critique, as clarified above. It will build new alliances that strengthen alternative voices internationally and allow these joint 'peripheries' to speak back to the dominant global centres. The field of cultural studies is therefore understood in borderland terms as an axis between various disciplines and traditions.

The ACSIS will try to cover the whole cultural studies field, connecting studies of historical, societal and institutional contexts of culture with mappings of its micro-processes and with close textual readings. It would be able to initiate productive border-crossings and efforts to build bridges across various divides. This makes possible a richer understanding of multimedia intertextuality, contextual uses of texts and textual aspects of social interaction, relations between everyday aesthetics, popular culture and the arts, and the interplay of cultural production and reception. In ACSIS the emphasis will be on making connections and contextualising, with a focus on critical analyses of relations between representation, identity and power in transformation. The empirical field covers all those issues that cannot satisfactorily be studied by any single discipline in isolation, for instance the interplay between different media or other complex phenomena emerging from cultural modernisation that need to be scrutinised from several angles. The focus is on critical analyses of relations between representation, identity and power in transformation. A dialogic anti-reductionism must oppose all tendencies from various disciplines to unduly narrow the potential scope and connectivity of cultural studies.

D. Advanced

The term '*advanced*' is meant to denote the highest possible academic and scholarly level. On that level, it will be possible to engage researchers with high competence and a strong sense of disciplinary identity, in combination with those who have rich experience of working in the crossroads between disciplines. It is however crucial to strike the best balance between the high quality ('advanced') level and the equally important accessibility and open communication within the institute as well as outwards. Internally, the high quality standards must never be allowed to turn into a snobbish elitism that makes younger scholars afraid of testing brave new ideas.

Externally, the ACSIS will connect to and support other local, regional or national units for cultural studies, on various levels. Initiating such an 'elite' institute is not intended as a competitive alternative to local university centres or departments in this field, but as a central supporting resource for them. The ACSIS would as far as possible support undergraduate and graduate course programmes and centres as well. The main task is to let innovative developments in the field be discussed, pushed forward and synthesised on a top intellectual level, but this should also be able to function as a vanguard to inspire also undergraduate and doctoral education.

In order to serve as a renewing motor for cultural research at large, being innovative is a most crucial value. The border-field of cultural studies is no closed and solitary area of its own, but an interface with many different aspects defined in relation to surrounding others. It fulfils its tasks only if it remains engaged in the frontline of new developments, both in cultural life and in research. Advanced theoretical development and new currents in research will be supported, rather than the continuation of well-established traditions. This implies the necessity of striking a good balance between established and young researchers.

A related tension is between academic and aesthetic practice. The ACSIS is primarily intended as a place for theoretically underpinned scholarly research. However, in cultural research of today, the border between cultural and academic work has become contested. This is done by a radical deconstructionist problematisation of the conceptual differentiation between aesthetics, ethics and epistemology. It is also done by less esoteric efforts within higher arts education programmes to acknowledge the way in which arts practices do also contribute to a systematic search for knowledge, and by self-reflection on the discursive and mediated forms and genres of academic thought itself. This partial destabilisation does not dissolve all boundaries, and a certain relative autonomy of academic research is still relevant. But there is certainly a need to continually reflect upon these issues, and to establish strong dialogues with advanced cultural producers of various kinds.

The ACSIS will stress its 'advanceness', while working self-reflexively on the interfaces towards lower levels of education and towards 'applied' aesthetics. It will let innovative research communicate with general university studies and with cultural life at large. Advancement necessitates continuous self-reflection. The ACSIS will try to install from the beginning procedures for self-evaluation. Identifying weak points and neglected issues is a vital method to develop the field of cultural studies.

The ACSIS is an effort to 'advance' – extend, strengthen and improve – cultural studies, by developing a more solid institutional form of co-operation. Such a national institute for advanced cultural studies would be able to work on elsewhere frozen boundaries: between the humanities and the social sciences, between various disciplinary traditions, and between aesthetic spheres. Interaesthetic analyses are needed to understand the increasingly complex symbolic webs of late modern societies, transformed by developments in communication technology. Better communication between different humanities disciplines would enable context-sensitive textual analyses to integrate more efficiently the widespread media and popular cultural forms, which are essential to the shaping of meanings, relations and identities, but too often marginalised within the aesthetic disciplines. Media studies need to incorporate cultural perspectives and cultural phenomena. Social scientists need greater respect for and competence for the intricacies of textual interpretation, and they also need places to discuss issues of general importance for all social research, including relations between micro and macro levels, qualitative and quantitative methods, politics and economy, socialisation and power, institutions and identities. An advanced institute for cultural studies can stimulate such productive border-crossings.

The ACSIS will strengthen and improve interdisciplinary cultural research, in contact with cultural politics, practices and pedagogy, connecting scholars from various disciplines and sub-fields, attracting international competence and serving as an international interface. This initiative thus answers a number of converging needs:

- (1) It would let Swedish cultural research be more forcefully fertilised by the international stream of cultural studies, with all its potentials for dealing with pressing research issues and enhancing interdisciplinary co-operation, based on critical and contextualising interpretations of representations and their uses.
- (2) It promises to generate more innovative research transcending outdated borders into urgent areas of recent transformations in cultural life.
- (3) It would be a nodal driving force of co-ordination and innovation, keeping up quality standards of cultural research within and between the ordinary disciplines, by attracting competence and developing new knowledge.
- (4) It would act as a window to the world for Swedish research traditions, letting them more visibly and decidedly feed into the international cultural studies arena. The strengths of these traditions may form a vital corrective and push international cultural studies into new and fruitful directions.

2. Frames

AC SIS is planned to start its activities in full scale January 2004, provided funding is assured from January 2002. The first funding application covers the preparatory period 2002-2003 plus the first six full years of operation, 2004-2009.

AC SIS will work against all relevant academic sites. Most of its activities will involve scholars from many universities, and each year, various events will be localised in these other universities, organised in co-operation with them. However, all activities cannot be evenly spread out, and there is a need for having an identifiable

centre of these activities as well as some kind of formal association to one university, though never being confined within any single city or university in these activities. This centre will be located at the islet of Laxholmen in the centre of *Norrköping*. This choice was made after a careful consideration of alternative options. The proximity to and excellent communications with the capital area of Stockholm ensures easy access to central resources and for international visitors. There are good communications by trains and flights, domestically as well as internationally, and the premises are within easy walking distance from the train and bus station.

The *City of Norrköping* offers a rich cultural and academic space. This former industrial working-class town has a long history of active cultural policy and activity, and is presently transforming into a post-industrial town of culture and knowledge-production. There is good access to resources like libraries, archives and cultural institutions. Finding appropriate housing for researchers and fellows will be reasonably easy. The ACSIS premises right in the middle of its charming city centre will definitely be highly attractive to visiting scholars. The premises generously offered for free by the municipality are the most fitting and delightful ones that can be imagined. They are perfectly located right in the centre of town, close to all relevant academic activities and with a unique position in old refashioned industrial buildings on an islet surrounded by streaming waters. No other city can compete in this respect.

The premises are well fit to the needs of the ACSIS staff, with good space for offices for researchers, administrators, post-docs and fellows, facilities for copying and communication as well as seminars, workshops, courses and conferences. In the preparatory period, the premises will be only partially used. In January 2004, the whole space must be ready for full operation of the institute.

The hosting *Linköping University* has at short notice made a strong investment in the planning of ACSIS. The university has undertaken to supply administrative and technical resources, while fully respecting the need for ACSIS to be primarily a truly national (and international) rather than local resource. This testifies to a strong and committed will to support new and innovative currents in interdisciplinary cultural research. No other university site can match this offer. Linköping University in general has a uniquely strong interdisciplinary experience since more than two decades of organising large thematic programmes for research and doctoral education, including highly relevant areas like communication, technology, children and gender. Its Campus Norrköping is no large university site, but instead has a strong profile of joint resources for qualified interdisciplinary cultural research and new kinds of undergraduate programmes for interdisciplinary cultural studies. The programme for Ethnicity Studies ('tema E') and still more that for Cultural Heritage and Cultural Production ('tema Q') will help form an excellent academic neighbourhood for the ACSIS. Linköping University is also planning a 'Birgitta Forum' in Vadstena as a meeting point for junior and senior humanities and social sciences scholars, with workshops and conferences also for the public and other parties, which may become a useful co-operation partner for ACSIS.

The experiences of the National Institute for Working Life programme for Work and Culture in Norrköping will likewise be useful in the development of the ACSIS routines, and will with its strong research on cultural production, work and ethnicity

add momentum to the site. Another good neighbour will be the secretariat of the association of institutions of feminist education and research in Europe (AOIFE), which is moving to Linköping in close relation to its Department of Gender Studies, where feminist cultural studies is a key profile.

Both university and city thus have a particularly attractive profile for ACSIS, while being modest enough to leave visiting researchers free to connect also to other Swedish universities. There are plenty of related activities in the region already, though none with a quite similar profile. For instance, the NIWL programme for Work and Culture has a more regional profile geared toward work issues, while the Department of Cultural Heritage and Cultural Production is geared towards doctoral education rather than advanced research.

The institute must have an organisation and status corresponding to its task as a truly national institution. It should be linked to Campus Norrköping of Linköping University by some kind of *special national institution* status, preferably outside the ordinary faculties.²⁰ The precise juridical status of ACSIS will be negotiated with the funding bodies and formally set up before or during the preparatory period. Long-term contracts for the whole period applied for here will be entered with the municipality and the university, as soon as the main funds have been guaranteed.

The ACSIS will be run by a *Governing Board* installed in 2001 or 2002 and including representatives from all Swedish universities and the funding bodies. It is an advantage if Board members are selected who are themselves actively engaged in cultural research. One option is to let the head of Linköping University formally appoint Board members on the basis of proposals from the heads of all other Swedish universities, so that there is one representative for each university. Linköping University may then appoint the secretary of the Board, while the main funding bodies (research councils) also should have their representatives in the Board, including the chair. In this way, ACSIS will be directed by a Governing Board that represents the main national bodies in the field of advanced cultural research. In co-operation with the hosting university, the Board will appoint the staff of the institute and consider and approve the annual report and budget request of the directors.

AC SIS is meant as a complementary supplement to disciplines and universities. It may be experienced as a free zone of creativity, but in close interaction with ordinary university life. The fellows will spend two months of their fellowship time in the central ACSIS premises and the remaining four months elsewhere. The post-docs and co-directors will also spend some of their time at some other Swedish university department. The research staff will be free to install whatever local, national or international *advisory boards* they find useful in order to fulfil the ACSIS tasks.

The ACSIS staff will co-operate closely with the funding and hosting bodies in order to find a lasting solution on how to secure continued operation after the period

²⁰ A possible Swedish term for this may be 'särskild nationell inrättning utanför ordinarie vetenskapsområden'. This model is somewhat parallel to the Swedish Collegium for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences (SCASSS) in Uppsala, but also has certain similarities with the new Swedish Institute for Studies in Education and Research (SISTER) in Stockholm and the Swedish Secretariat for Gender Research in Göteborg.

applied for here, i.e. from 2010 onwards, provided the evaluation of activities turns out positive and a prolongation is recommended. This will presumably include the state departments of education and culture together with the hosting university and municipality, possibly together with some pool of co-operating and co-funding other universities offering shares in the budget in return for the benefits they will get from the activities. A range of private donors and other sources may also be found. A careful evaluation must also then decide whether to continue in the same place or let the centre move on to somewhere else.

3. Staff

ACSIS will have a small durable staff of four employed senior Swedish researchers in the field, assisted by two qualified administrators. Their task is to organise all activities including research and networking. They will all be placed at the institute.

One of the four researchers – the director – will be assigned 100% time for the whole first six-year period. This is to be split equally between research (50%) and administration/co-ordination/networking (50%). This durable head position will be appointed from the start, actually already during the two-year preparatory period, and will thus not be advertised. This is due to the fact that a strong continuity back to the initial ACSIS initiative is needed in order to ensure that the intentions behind it will be optimally realised.

The director will need to be a senior humanities and/or social science scholar with a well-established position within both Swedish cultural research and the international cultural studies field. A strong competence in cultural theory is needed, as well as experience from a wide range of empirical and methodological research areas. An extensive experience of interdisciplinary co-operation, networking and research is required, as is a rich international publishing as well as documented competence as an organiser and initiator of collective projects.

The three other ‘permanent’ researchers – the co-directors or zone directors – will be employed for 80% time in three-year periods, to make it possible then to adjust the composition of the staff if needed. These positions will be announced during the preparatory period, each to be responsible for one of the three main zones into which activities will be differentiated, as explained below. The co-directors will use 40% of full time for research and 40% for administration/co-ordination/networking. The remaining 20% of their time will be spent at some other Swedish or foreign university, either their respective old home university or through a separate contract at some other interested university. This construction will ensure a continuing contact with regular university life. There must however be made a reasonable contract with these individual home universities so that these 20% will not interfere too much with the ACSIS tasks. They should mostly be used for doctoral supervision, small amounts of doctoral teaching and other senior duties. This will be seen as a kind of contribution to ACSIS from the co-directors’ home universities, in return for the feedback from the advanced international arena that this connection will offer these university departments.

The co-directors must also be senior scholars who share a firm commitment to and experience of interdisciplinary and critical cultural research, in close contact with international currents of cultural studies. Organisational competence will also be needed. Each of these positions will be further specified according to the zone for which it will be responsible (cf. below). Like the head director, the co-directors will fill professor-like tasks of not only carrying on their own research but also organising collective work within their respective zones. At the same time, an active involvement in new branches of cultural studies is a necessity, in close contact with more recent fields of study and a younger generation of scholars. Competence on at least a senior lecturer, associate professor or 'docent' level will therefore be required.

The four directors will jointly manage all activities, headed by the main director. They will all operate mainly from the ACSIS site. After the first six-year period of operation, the evaluation will decide whether the director or any of the co-directors should continue for yet another three-year period.

The administrative staff will consist of two full-time permanent positions: one responsible for general administration and economy, the other for publishing, information, communication and technology. If additional external resources permit, more staff members may be added for temporary tasks in projects, courses or conferences.

During the preparatory period 2002-2003, the intended head director will be appointed 40% together with three 20% provisional co-directors, one 40% secretary and one 20% communicator. They will all be assigned to set up the organisation, negotiate university contracts, organise introducing conferences, advertise and appoint the permanent staff, and advertise and select the first year's fellows. The head director and administrator will have permanent offices at the ACSIS site, where they will be seated when doing the preparatory work, whereas the co-directors and the communicator might work on a distance from their ordinary positions, only visiting the site for regular co-ordinating meetings. There must also be resources for temporary assistance with conferences and the like.

4. Post-docs & fellowships

International and Swedish post-docs and fellows will visit the institute for certain periods, in order to carry on their own research or writing, and to take part in certain joint activities. These scholarly positions offer a particularly good chance for a dynamic innovativity and a wide set of interdisciplinary and transnational connections to develop.

Three *post-docs* will be appointed for one-year periods, one within each of the zones, and with a possibility to add a second year. They will have 80% time at ACSIS and the rest at some university.

Six *fellows* will be chosen carefully each year, roughly two within each zone, among applicants from all over the world. These fellows should be graduated and well-established scholars in their fields, but the emphasis must always be on innovative basic research in the frontline of cultural studies. Promising younger scholars will therefore be as welcomed as famous professors. Not more than half of the fel-

lows should be from Sweden. It is important to include other regions than the Western and Nordic countries.

The fellows are first selected and proposed by the ACSIS staff, assisted by evaluations made for each candidate by specific referees selected among renowned scholars, and then approved and formally appointed by the Governing Board. Criteria for acceptance would be top academic quality, a genuine interdisciplinary interest and experience of work in the cultural studies field, and a potential to fit together with the other fellows of the same year as well as with the present research profile and themes of ACSIS.

An important task of ACSIS is to advance cultural studies, to improve the field and to make a firm contribution on a top level to the enhancement of cultural research. It will therefore not least in the first phase of operation be crucial to actively attract key international proponents of cultural studies, in order to ensure that ACSIS will achieve the international status and attractiveness that it will deserve. Some of these fellows may well already have central positions within their respective disciplines, but others are bound to have marginal positions in one way or another, balancing between established academic or geographic areas, or occupying new borderlands between them.

The fellows are employed either full time during a six months period or full time for two months and half time for eight months (so that the whole fellowship lasts ten months), depending on their own choice. They will pursue their own research, but also be expected to engage in joint ACSIS activities and interaction.

The fellows will be physically present at the institute site for a specific period, in order to participate in the joint activities. This period will be decided in advanced by the directors, and it will amount to two months time, during which the fellows must be engaged and present full time on the ACSIS site.

The remaining part of their fellowship period will be spent either at their home university department or at a selected Swedish co-hosting university department, but always actively connected to the ACSIS networking. These home or co-hosting universities will be actively encouraged to add up research time so as to make an active contribution to the ACSIS work, in return for the innovative impulses offered by this connection. This construction will help prevent the ACSIS to get isolated in relation to the academic community at large. The foreign visiting fellows would also be encouraged to offer lectures and seminars to academic departments elsewhere in Sweden. They may also be willing to offer certain assistant supervising services to advanced doctoral students.

During the preparatory period, the first group of fellows (for the first full year of operation, starting January 2004) will be proposed by the provisional team of researchers (director + co-directors) and selected by the Board.

5. Research

The ACSIS researchers and fellows will co-ordinate a range of longer-term (3-6 years) *research programmes* in co-operation with other Swedish and international scholars

and departments, and externally financed in the ordinary way, primarily by public national or international research funds. These research programmes will involve international networks of scholars that meet at ACSIS during its regular workshops and conferences. Each research group would also organise its own seminars and digital communication networks at the ACSIS site or at other universities involved in the respective programme. Each programme will be geared towards one of the zones or themes chosen according to the model outlined below.

International comparisons and interdisciplinary co-operation are essential features in these projects. It may also be possible to serve as an independent 'think-tank' with certain commissioned studies as an interface with decision makers, though this must not become compete with the advanced scholarly activities that remain focal here. The regular research ethics as formulated by national Swedish research bodies will always be strictly followed.

During the preparatory period, the directors will strive to launch one such research programme, in co-operation with external scholars. This programme will be directed by the head director and try to combine aspects of all the three zones mentioned below.

6. Conferences, workshops, seminars & meetings

In workshops, seminars and conferences, researchers, fellows and other interested participants will contribute to a more fluid and open meeting-space, sometimes for scholars only, sometimes in dialogues with teachers, artists, journalists, politicians or other key actors in the cultural sphere. Networks will thereby actively be spun among researchers, both through actual meetings and by digital communication. All this calls for generous resources for travel, accommodation and communication.

Larger *conferences* and *workshops* will be organised annually during the two months periods where the fellows are gathered at the ACSIS site. They will also include researchers from the ongoing research programmes and projects. At least one larger and more open 2-3 days conference will be held every year, as well as one or two more intimate 2 days workshops for specially invited scholars. At least one such larger event will take place at the ACSIS hosting university, at least one other will be arranged at some other Swedish university, and on some occasions events may well also be organised or co-hosted in other countries. The conferences and workshops will be organised mainly on an international scale, related to ongoing research projects and the themes focused each period. They will be well marketed and publicised. Certain activities (at least during a part of an event) may aim to reach also a non-academic public, in the form of debates or lectures for invited groups of people, like politicians or artists.

There will also – particularly during the two 'fellow-months' – be series of shorter *seminars* in co-operation with various partners. They may either be research-oriented and take place at some chosen Swedish university, or on some occasions be geared towards the interface between research and cultural life or cultural policy, in which case they may perhaps be placed in some other relevant cultural institution.

During the rest of the year, the staff members of the institute and those ACSIS-related researchers who work close enough will have weekly *meetings*. Also outside the two intense months, there will be regular occasions where scholars visiting or working at or close to the hosting university will be invited for open seminars. Some such activities may be expanded through separate external funding. Some seminars may again be primarily intra-academic, while others may turn outwards to teachers, artists, politicians or others involved in the cultural field. Each programme/project will also have their own regular planning meetings, and so will the groups engaged in the three ACSIS zones.

One useful form may be the organisation of small networks formed around study groups or *research clusters*, where Ph.D. students and senior researchers gather around various themes for 2-5 years, on a voluntary basis. These research clusters will often be correlated with the ongoing research projects and/or with the zones and themes running. They will be able to arrange their own low-key conferences, or just gather informally to discuss texts and key trends in culture, society and theory. Each group will be offered a smaller sum every year to be able to arrange meetings and conferences. These kinds of activities are common in some countries, and they may also use experiences from the Nordic Summer University with its rotating scheme of themes studied and discussed both in local study groups and in annual Nordic conferences.

During the preparatory period, the acting staff will of course have regular meetings. Four 1-2 days international conferences for specially invited scholars will also be organised during these two years. There will be one conference for each of the ACSIS zones, plus one more generally on the field of cultural studies in general. They will all aim at surveying the field and formulating key issues for future research within each of the zones. At least the most general one will be held at the ACSIS site, in order to mark its presence. Some of the three zone-related conferences may however well be placed at other Swedish universities, in order to make clear the national character of ACSIS (cf. below on the zones).

7. Courses

There will be no full Ph.D. education programme, but rather single, annual one-week advanced *courses* open to visiting Ph.D. students from all relevant departments and universities. Offering regularly open doctoral courses related to ongoing projects and visiting fellows will provide some of the benefits of keeping together research and education. Another method will be by inviting teachers and others to specific workshops and seminars on issues of cultural pedagogy and the like.

The institute is intended for research rather than education, but contacts with younger scholars add crucial momentum and innovative force to the site. There are already many other initiatives to support doctoral education, for instance in research schools. The ACSIS will engage in such initiatives, and the annual ACSIS course may itself possibly be developed into a full-fledged research school of its own, in co-operation with other universities. But the main imperative will remain to empower

post-doc research, which is probably the most rewarding level when it comes to interdisciplinary work.

During the preparatory period, preparations will be made for the first course, which will then be held during the first full year of operation.

8. Publishing, information & networking

Active *information* to other relevant universities and disciplines is essential to avoid isolation. Digital *networking* is crucial, and diversified *publications* will also be a useful component.

A series of organised *digital networks* will connect fellows and researchers around specific themes. There would be several types of on-line activities, including well-linked ACSIS web-site, discussion groups and mailing lists, both for the ACSIS as a whole and for various thematic subgroups and research programmes within its frames, as well as for anyone interested in cultural studies. They may be used for intellectual debates around empirical, theoretical and methodological issues of research policy, interactive research co-operation and information on ACSIS and other cultural studies activities, publications and projects, as well as for interfaces with other interested actors in the cultural, educational and political spheres. Electronically based doctoral courses may also be organised.

Publications of varying kinds will be organised, in the form of newsletters, working papers and reports. Co-operations with professional publishers and/or distributors will be sought. Efforts to improve the conditions for Swedish cultural studies to reach out internationally will be pursued, through contacts with publishers and associations in the field. It might be found useful to start a regular international publication series of books from the institute, and it will in any case decisively work for convincing state funds and publishing firms to improve conditions for the translation and spread of key non-English cultural research texts.

During the preparatory period, digital networking and a newsletter will be launched. The introductory conferences will produce some kind of documentation in printed form. An official presentation of the ACSIS will also be prepared for publication during the first spring of operation.

TOPICS

1. Zones

The whole first six-year period, activities will be roughly organised into three thematic *zones* (domains or salons), chosen carefully to fit productively into both national and international structures of competence as well as of needs. Together they will

add up to a structured whole that offers an interpretation of what the field of cultural studies is or should be.

One of the ways in which ACSIS strives to construct axes concerns these general areas. They will be defined not as closed, monolithic units but rather as relatively open fields of tension, so that each zone is conceptualised as a relational field or borderland where different aspects are put in relation with each other. The zones are meant to connect to established research fields and disciplinary borders: these must be acknowledged and respected, but they should not simply be reproduced. Instead, the zones will strive to make interesting combinations that intervene in cultural research in a fruitful manner. There will therefore by necessity be plenty of overlaps between them, even though the emphasis will be clearly distinguishable. Each of them will focus on interrelations and interferences, and they will mutually interpenetrate in many ways. The following description of profile and tasks for each zone is highly preliminary, and only outlines some important sets of issues among which the directors will always have to choose, and which also will have to be extended in relation to unforeseen, upcoming issues in the field.

During the first period of operation, the following three zones will be organised. Each of them will be headed by one of the co-directors, who will be required to be particularly qualified within its particular sector of cultural studies. The head director will have a particular task of helping establishing interzonal communication, and will also share with each zone director a responsibility for securing a specific general function to be taken charge of by each zone, as explained below.

A. Interpretations: crossing meanings

The first zone puts the concept of *culture* in focus by making the production of symbolic forms and *meanings* a key issue. Here, phenomena of *representation* and *interpretation* are studied closely in their social settings. This field of meaning and culture is in itself a borderland area, bridging several important gaps.

Meanings are produced in encounters between plural subjects and plural texts in plural contexts. There is therefore a need to combine studies of individual and collective subjects, textual and medial genres and social contexts – even though this zone prioritises the textual corner in this triangle. Academic specialisation too often separates them, so that efforts to recombine them are rewarding. Dialogues between aesthetic, linguistic, sociological and psychoanalytic perspectives are for instance to be nourished.

Late modern processes of mediatisation and remediation, and new kinds of digital media networks have also highlighted the complex interplay between texts, genres and media. Concepts like intertextuality and intermediality may offer a useful approach to the interweaving between plural technological, symbolic and generic forms. This will demand ways of bridging inherited borders between the aesthetic disciplines, so that interaesthetic phenomena may be fully interpreted. Culture is always intertextual, as no text, symbolic mode, art form or media genre develops in isolation. Connective mediation and transgression may here be studied concretely. Several Swedish cultural researchers are today focusing on how the senses and the emo-

tions work in culture, integrated in or transcending communicative discourses. This relates to the borders between human and machine, inner and outer, mind and body or discourse and practice. A reinforced study of multi- and intermediality is demanded in response to the new digitalised convergence between everyday cultural production and media forms, while various docutainment genres demand more insight into the interlacing of public discourses and non-discursive, embodied emotions. The interplay of writing, speech, music and visual culture in representation and communication also belongs here.

The strength and limits of logo- or verbocentrism also needs to be interrogated. Words in speech and writing seem to have a privileged position in the intellectual field, but their precise relation to non-verbal symbolic forms remain undertheorised. This actually is not only a theoretical problem, but relates to issues like schooling, democratic discourse and freedom of expression. The interfaces between humans, machines and symbolic forms point at issues of sense and the senses that evoke an intersection between discourse and materiality, culture and nature. By cross-reading representations, genres, media and symbolic modes, this dialectic process of signification will be investigated.

The production and mediation of culture – and the cultures of production and mediation – deserve a much more focused research. This is where the mediation between culture (aesthetics) and economics (markets) may become a productive borderland for innovative studies, rather than a petrified divide to get stuck in. Developments in cultural economics and cultural media studies in Sweden may offer useful openings in this process.

Temporal aspects of process, history and memory adds other dimensions to this complexity. Meaning and culture is produced in dialectic and narrative movements between past, present and future. All times are thus intertimes, and aesthetic interpretations always need to relate studies of contemporary culture to interlaced historic horizons. This offers a connection of past and present as well as of individual and collective, in the form of historical narratives and intergenerational relations. Scandinavia has strong traditions both for autobiographical work and for local history movements with museums and amateur associations. Historical perspectives may provoke the present by posing disturbing questions to prevailing, quasi self-evident ideas of the alleged novelty of digital forms of mediated communication.

This zone thus will safeguard the first of the three main pillars of cultural studies: culture in its two main aspects. As a field of study this is the zone which will most emphatically focus on aesthetic phenomena and the cultural sector in its dynamic development. As a perspective, this zone will take charge of development analytic techniques for understanding and interpretation of symbolic forms in general. Studies of non-verbal performance, digital cyberculture and nomadic identities have problematised previous methodological assumptions, blurred borders like that between ethnography and textual analysis. Such tendencies question the still strong tensions in cultural studies between 'textual' and 'empirical' approaches, asking for further reflection on the tools of interpretation. This methodological task will be focused in one shorter or longer seminar and report every year, organised by this zone director to-

gether with the head director, thereby making sure that issues of interpretation and understanding will never be taken for granted in ACSIS.

The director heading this zone must have a strong profile within the humanities, with a wide competence in aesthetic analysis and interpretation, and with an interest in recent developments in media or interart studies.

During the preparatory period (autumn 2002 or spring 2003) a conference will be arranged within this zone, located at one Swedish university but in co-operation with key scholars from other universities as well. Members of the present planning committee have declared themselves willing to assist in the organising of these conferences, and there are several good options for their localisation. In this zone, Malmö/Lund and Södertörn/Stockholm/Uppsala belong to those areas where a conference might well be placed. A possible theme may be a focus on the interplay between *sense/s and/or re/collection* (cf. these and other themes below).

B. Interactions: crossing practices

The second zone deals with social *interaction, communication, relations* and forms of community in everyday life. Culture is created and inherited by human and social *practices* that continually constructs and crosses various borders. In the cultural triad, this zone thus starts with the actors and their actions, but sets them in relation to the cultural genres and social fields in and with which they appear.

Ethnographic studies of everyday practices in various settings offer valuable clues to how culture is made, experienced and used to create bonds and boundaries between individuals and groups in society. Processes of interlocking, linterlinking and interlacing show the basic interdependency between people who differ from each other. This zone will investigate such practices that form identities and differences between individuals or groups.

This zone crosses borders between human practices and artefactual products, as well as between collectives and individuals. The stiff border between subjective and social aspects, or psychology and sociology, needs to be worked on, as does that between social and aesthetic perspectives, ethnography and textual analysis. There is an obvious overlap with the first zone, since social practices and textual meanings always intertwine and mutually constitute each other. As linguistics and conversation analysis shows, language uses are also practices, while hermeneutics and semiotics indicate that all human actions may in a certain sense be read as texts. Both zones will join in the study of how representations and actions are joined.

This overlap is clear in studies of direct face-to-face interaction where words and gestures, images and sounds, are never completely transparent vehicles of co-ordination, thus making reflections on interpretative methods unavoidable. The development and use of more advanced technological media – where the concept of interactivity has become a significant keyword – in social movements and other forms of community will also be studied here.

A fascinating issue here is how societal and cultural transformations change the conditions of human subjectivity and transgresses or at least questions previously

stiff borders between humans, machines, animals and other organisms. Ideas of a post-human world are widely discussed, in either dystopian or utopian terms, in relation to poststructuralist and cyberfeminist theories of the death of the author or of the subject. Ongoing developments in artificial intelligence, virtual reality, genetics and reproductive technologies are also addressed here, opening doors towards an exchange with science and technology studies and the natural sciences as well. The new material and ethical conditions of being human will anyway be a key theme in this zone.

Another important area here is the complex flows of transnational hybridisation whereby local and global communities intersect, resulting in multicultural mixes or intercultural conflicts.

This zone thus will secure the upholding of the second pillar of cultural studies: communication as content and form of research. It will directly focus the communicative processes through which culture is developed, by investigating concrete processes and patterns of interaction. And it will intensely work on developing new interactive forms of scholarly co-operation. One annual seminar and report will be organised by this zone director, together with the head director, in order to regularly put such issues of interdisciplinary and dialogic studies on the agenda and develop the forms of association and communication of ACSIS itself.

The director for this zone ought to be well experienced in ethnology, social anthropology, qualitative sociology and/or sociolinguistics, with a capacity for close but contextualising analysis of interactional micro-processes and the formation of social relations.

Again, during the preparatory period (autumn 2002 or spring 2003) a conference within this zone will be organised at some Swedish university, with active assistance from other universities as well. Among the places possible are Umeå and Malmö/Lund. A thematic focus might be on *social linking in dispersed communities*.

C. Interventions: crossing powers

The third zone emphasises the aspect of *critique* and *power* by looking closely at those *interventions* whereby *structures* and *institutions* of dominance, resistance, avoidance or negotiation are produced.

Interventions of power and resistance interrupt cultural flows, install divisions and rise borders between texts, between people and between social settings. This zone will investigate how this is actually done and what structures result from such processes.

The focus here is mainly on those institutional structures that form contexts for actors to produce texts and make meanings. This zone definitely intersects both the others, as all cultural studies perspectives critically focus on the performance of power in representations and daily practices.

One aspect of this zone relates to the recent transformations in state policy, market trends, institutional practices and art discourses that may be related to the ongoing process of aestheticisation of political life. Culture is an issue for state policy, public

spheres, volunteer associations and social movements, and the interface between culture, power, justice and freedom is an important ethical and political issue for democratic societies, deserving closer investigation.

Issues of marginality and centrality, social movements, citizenship and democratic politics in a globalised world belong here. New initiatives to join elements of social sciences with cultural studies perspectives could prove productive.

Centrality and marginality are never given a priori as pure facts, but always produced by heterogeneous sets of discursive and embodied practices, including those of the political, economic, social and cultural spheres. These complex practices of centralisation and marginalisation make power no abstract essence but a kind of relational pattern constructed not least by everyday political practices. The same applies for subordination and resistance. Ordinary political life and experiences of marginality outline areas necessary for cultural studies where the Nordic countries have something substantial to offer. The practices, discourses, institutions and movements of the political sphere act themselves as mediators between the lifeworlds of individuals, groups and public spheres and the state and market systems. Due to the combination of institutions inherited from the organised social movements and the strong welfare state systems, Nordic research has often a concrete political edge and more direct connections to civil society at large. This creates a strong sense for ordinary, everyday political processes, issues around authority, leadership, macro-structures and other societal contexts. International comparisons would here be a fascinating task. Cultural politics is of course a particularly relevant part of this. The theme of marginality is a related aspect, where the Nordic welfare systems, in spite of recent neo-liberal dismantling efforts, have offered specific conditions for social and cultural research. Issues of marginality concern mediations between locality and globality, between centres and peripheries, as well as between the class, ethnic, gender and age faces of modernisation. Also, there are always third positions in-between such polarities: intermediaries and interstices that mediate between opposites or fill up diffuse interspaces. There is thus a need for connecting studies of dominant, dominated and bridging positions in political and cultural life.

There are certainly many material and geographic aspects to this problematic. Issues of locality and globalisation will be of great relevance in this zone. They will also actualise general discussions on the relations between hegemony and marginality, power and resistance, structure and agency.

Borders are here thus crossed between centres and margins, but also between theory and practice – between cultural research and cultural life. This zone will reflexively analyse the institutions that produce meaning and knowledge, not least the universities. Critical reflexivity is essential in academic research, and a key impact of cultural studies has been to intensify this reflexive awareness.

This zone is particularly responsible for securing the third pillar of cultural studies: critique. On the content level, it will focus critically upon power structures and institutions in society. On the methodological level, it will strive to develop a self-reflexive perspective on academic research and critically scrutinise how cultural research conceptualises and regulates culture. Concepts like cultural prisms, hybridity, ambivalence and contradiction are crucial to cultural studies, but their impli-

cations and limitations need to be identified. Critically reflexive interpretations of the role and differentiated development of cultural studies, in relation to other scholarly and societal fields, will be a crucial way to continuously reformulate the agenda of ACSIS in a process of self-evaluation. Aided by the head director, its zone director will annually organise one smaller or larger seminar and publish one shorter or more extensive report about the role of cultural studies in society, in relation to structures of dominance and marginality in politics and cultural life. As with the parallel general tasks of the other two zones, this seminar will take place during the two months intense ACSIS-work period and be intended to engage all the zones equally, though thus organised by this third one. This will be a way to develop the general profile of ACSIS as well as to prevent any falling apart into three parallel sections.

This zone needs a co-director with sociology, political science, history or some economic discipline as a basis. An understanding of the historic development of social structures and institutions is needed, as is a critical capacity to reflect upon the condition of academic knowledge production.

During the preparatory period (autumn 2002 or spring 2003) a conference within this zone will be organised in the same manner as with the first two zones. Göteborg or Stockholm may be a good choice of location in this case, but again there are also other options. *The politics or making of centrality, marginality and intermediation* might be a possible focus. In all three zones, it might also turn out to be useful to make co-arrangements with other networks and conferences, in order to achieve a synergetic effect and build productive alliances with neighbouring fields.

2. Themes

The zones form relatively stabile frames for long-term work in ACSIS, including setting up the director positions and organising some of the activities. The fellows will also become involved in that structure, by affiliating mainly to one of the zones, depending on research profile and interests.

It should once again be noted that the construction of zones is not meant to be exclusionary. The zones definitely overlap, as there is no logical necessity in the specific combination each of them makes. Interpretation is as central in zone 2 and 3 as in zone 1, there are communicative dialogues in symbolic texts and societal contexts as well as in intersubjective relations, and power critique is as important in the study of aesthetic forms or of everyday interaction as in relation to institutional structures. This implies that other couplings of these aspects might be chosen if the zones need to be reconstructed after the first period of operation. However, given existing groupings among cultural researchers in Sweden today, this model seems useful.

No general and wide zones will suffice to point out topics of current interest and importance. There will therefore also be a need for choosing sets of much more specific themes that will be the focus of activities each year. These themes should have a number that allows both concentration and a certain spread of focus. They must be left open to change over time, in response to changing needs in society and academia. They must also be wide enough for the institute to be relevant to the

whole field of cultural studies, and so that no important dimensions (subjects, text and contexts, identity orders, genres etc.) are permanently excluded. Which themes that will actually be under scrutiny should not be prescribed in advance, but decided by the ACSIS researchers.

Each year, a new set of 3 themes will therefore be chosen. Depending on the needs in ACSIS, they may be varyingly organised. Particularly in the beginning of ACSIS, they may be chosen one for each zone, to develop particular interest areas within them and make them work practically. This would be a good means to get the zones into operation and try out their potentials. However, they should also regularly be formed in a different way, by instead cutting across the organisation in zones, so that each of them is a joint interest for all or at least two of those areas.

Each theme is to be developed in fellowships, conferences and other activities. Some of them will spill over into longer-term research projects as well, so that continuity is combined with a flexible response to urgently upcoming research issues. This results in a continually evolving set of 1-3 year long themes, overlapping each other in time so that at any given moment there might actually be perhaps up to 6 themes running, of which 3 are new for the year and the others are inherited from before. Each theme would then be explored during a 1-3 year period, in a series of projects, seminars and courses.

The axis or borderland orientation will affect the formulation of themes as well, so that they strive to find productive crossings of areas otherwise rarely combined. They will be conceived as contradictory fields of ambivalent tension – as fields of struggle and as hybridising bridges – rather than as self-contained homogenous units. They would identify research areas that are not sufficiently researched, and that would clearly benefit from a cultural studies perspective. The focus has to be on areas that connect to wide international currents in order for the ACSIS to be relevant to others and to use the impetus of international cultural studies to invigorate the Swedish academia. It is equally important with a strong connection to earlier and other strands of Swedish cultural research, so as to make use of the relative strengths and experiences accumulated here. The themes should connect to the traditional strengths of Swedish cultural research while also bringing some new elements that are able to pull that research forward. At the same time, they must connect to the main currents in international cultural studies while simultaneously adding something new that can push that field forward as well. This implies the opening of a borderland of new overlaps between regional research traditions and the transnational cultural studies field. The goal is to form a site and node with both relevance and innovative force in relation to both international cultural studies and Swedish cultural research. In this way also, the ACSIS needs to function as an axis between borderlands, mediating between the research field that usually goes under the cultural studies label and the more local and regional academic traditions that are strong in the North. Both sides might gain from such an intervention.

As has already been mentioned, three of the conferences during the preparatory period will focus upon one zone each. Also, the first year of full operation, and then at least every second year, each co-director will be responsible for organising one theme within each zone. All themes may be the core of several kinds of research and

discussion activities, in projects, seminars and publications. One theme might each year be chosen for a doctoral course, while the two other themes will form the basis of conferences or workshops.

Possibly every second year of full operation, it might be useful to instead organise conferences that involve close co-operation between pairs of zones. It might also be found suitable one year to let all three zones collaborate closely around one specific theme in order to integrate the whole ACSIS more tightly, or to formulate a theme that lies outside all three zones in order to expand the scope of the institute.

The following list is but a first outline of possible (overlapping) themes to be inspired by or chose between. The directors must make great effort to elaborate themes that manage to catch crucial issues in a thought-provoking manner, and the following suggestions must certainly all be much modified and further developed in order to possibly qualify. The order of the themes mentioned here is not according to priority but roughly the same as that of the three zones, with the mediating themes placed between those that are more firmly anchored within one zone or the other.

- *Multimedia, intermedia, intertexts.* Comparative studies of forms and meanings in different cultural sectors and genres, of intertextual exchanges between cultural spheres, and of multi- and intermedial developments in cultural industries and everyday life. New digital technologies and forms of consumption, hybrid genres and convergences in the cultural industries, as well as intercurrents between everyday cultural production and media forms, have all changed the conditions for media use and for the constitution of 'audiences'. Aesthetic convergence in cybercultural production is well worth an interdisciplinary illumination.

- *Sense/s:* how the materiality of physical senses and objects interrelate with the signification processes of communicative discourses. This relates to interfaces like those between interpretation and production, meaning and emotion, text and practice, human and machine, mind and body. A need to expand the understanding of culture outside the boundaries of verbal discourse makes necessary a rethinking of basic concepts like sign, symbol, communication and culture.

- *The politics of re/collection.* The formation of memory, tradition and heritage is an area where cultural, individual and social aspects meet. Deeply felt memories are shaped through the use of narrative genres, objectified traces and collective negotiations. By gathering traces of the past into ordered wholes, interpretative communities make recollection possible. The generic, material and institutional frames simultaneously delimit, distort and enable this process. There are definite power dimensions to these issues, as cultural heritage, canons and identities are never innocent, as Walter Benjamin once warned.

- *Cultural production cultures.* The organisation and development of the cultural practices of work deserve closer attention, especially in the cultural sector and its surrounding spheres, including the production of 'events' by the whole 'industry of experience': popular culture, media, museums and tourism. Fast changes in the cultural sector have made such cultural production increasingly large and central in societal and economic life. The ACSIS may thereby help exploring the borders of aesthetic practices, in co-operation with various newly formed university/art/design centres,

faculties and campuses. Art discourses and institutional practices in the cultural sector will also shed light on the aesthetic aspects of cultural research itself.

- *Aesthetic learning processes.* Culture is transmitted and developed by aesthetic learning processes within and outside of the educational school system, involving also central cultural institutions like libraries and museums. A closer look at these should make use of systematic comparisons between countries, historical periods and cultural sectors. Variations might be related to the differential positioning of expressive practices, as for instance in the case of circus acrobats and ballet dancers where a high/low hierarchy seems implicated. This also involves general issues of quality, taste and aesthetics, for instance how the dichotomous hierarchies and cultural divides between high and low are constituted and revised.

- *Humanity redefined.* Genetic, reproductive and communicative technologies have changed the conditions for being human. Cyberfeminists as well as animal rights activists and ecological movements have questioned the superiority of homo sapiens, and recent philosophical debates have either problematised the inherited norms of humanity or asked for a renewed effort to produce a universal ethics. The definition of humanity is therefore an urgent theme. This also relates to processes of distinction, identification and representation whereby individual and collective positions are constructed. Symbolic discourses underpin changing individual agency and social communities in modern societies, including the (often fraught with conflict) interplay between class, age, generational, gender, sexual, confessional, national, racial and ethnic relations.

- *The borders of culture.* Culture is a contested field. There is no definite definition or delimitation of its scope. Instead, a series of struggles, practices and discourses historically develop its shape. Both external and internal borders are thus continuously renegotiated: the limits of what should count as culture and the differentiation of various aesthetic subfields can be systematically studied. This theme also touches upon the issue of cultural freedoms and rights. There are everywhere limits for freedom of expression in culture, some that need to be criticised and others that may be unavoidable. Comparative research between countries and between aesthetic areas (literature, art, music, theatre, film, radio, television, Internet) would be useful.

- *Intermarginality.* Most studies of (geographically or socially) marginal cultures tend to relate them mainly to a particular centre, but it might also be useful to study their mutual connections. One aspect of this theme concerns interethnic links in dispersed communities. There is a need to connect the various postcolonial discourses around different types of diaspora, and to rethink widespread concepts like diaspora, hybridity, creolisation and multiculturalism, by studying practices of separation and dialogue between Jewish, Black, Turkish, Asian and other dispersed ethnic communities. Accelerating migration, transport and communication media have accentuated the importance of connectivity on distance. Already the old bourgeois public sphere crucially relied upon the making of imagined national communities and the gathering of transnational publics through the use of press, literature and other technologies of mediation. Later audiovisual and digital media have only enlarged the scope, in a combined process of mediatisation and globalisation. Combined discussions of transnational mediation and diasporic communities may shed new light upon how

social links between people are forged. Another aspect concerns the way Sweden relates to various other regions. A comparative updating of studies of Scandinavia and the Nordic region may shed light on recent transformations in the relation of the 'Swedish welfare model' towards the rest of the world. There is for instance a strong Nordic tradition of amateur cultural activities and education programmes organised by popular social movements and forming alternative public spheres. Their role in civil society, in relation to the administrative and commercial power of states and markets, may be investigated by international comparisons.

•*The making of centrality and marginality.* Cultural modernisation and mediatisation imply new forms of differentiation and connection, individualisation and community, identification and hybridity, power conflicts and marginalisation. The problematic sides of late modern culture need to be scrutinised, including the biased and centralised mass media, the structural cruelty of the 'new poverty' that stigmatises whole urban areas, or the shifting variants of xenophobic, purist, fundamentalist and racist movements. Studying everyday culture in the new Europe may also offer hints towards a more effective cultural and economic politics of demarginalisation. Comparative studies of political everyday practices need to concretise the mostly sweeping debates around power and globalisation. There are fewer simple dichotomies in this area than is commonly believed. The force of symbols of resistance is repeatedly problematised by commercial flirts with revolutionary icons or various kinds of 'reactionary' or 'fundamentalist' popular movements. Differentiating between kinds and degrees of resistant practice may be one way to avoid romantic and populist traps, and clarify the notions of power and hegemony.

PREPARATIONS

As has already been mentioned, preparations for ACSIS started with the February 1999 international workshop *Advancing Cultural Studies*, resulting in the report with the same name. The next step was getting funding for the project of letting a smaller committee developing this report. The group has had several meetings, and regional discussions have also been organised in various parts of the country, as well as during study visits in other countries. This work continues in 2001. The tasks and activities during the preparatory two years 2002-2003 may be summed up as follows.

1. 1 director (40%), 3 researchers/co-directors (25% each), 1 secretary (40%) and 1 communicator (20%) employed from 2002-01-01 to 2003-12-31 in a working group with the task to get the ACSIS off ground. They will have a basis in the chosen ACSIS site; however, the co-directors need only regularly visit this site and may fulfil most of their work tasks from their ordinary home universities. One well-informed and actively engaged representative of (and paid for by) the hosting university will also participate in the preparation group (not included in our formal budget). The following activities will take place during those preparatory years.
2. Installing the core parts of the Governing Board.

3. 4 international conferences autumn 2002 and spring 2003, one within each of the zones and one interzonal, as specified above, with specially invited Swedish and international researchers, and resulting in publications.
4. Extensive national and international networking in order to anchor the ACSIS in a wider academic community and secure its reputation and attraction in regard to its future activities.
5. Announcing (autumn 2002) and employing staff members for the 2004-2009 period: three 80% zone directors, three 80% post-docs, one 100% administrator and one 100% communicator.
6. Announcing (spring 2003) and choosing the first six fellows.
7. Drawing up contracts with all parts of co-operation (universities, municipality etc.).
8. Equipping the ACSIS premises.
9. Refining and further developing the whole ACSIS plan, including its tasks, zones, themes, organisation and activities.

The suggested preparatory director is Johan Fornäs (Norrköping), the researchers or co-directors Ulf Lindberg (Lund/Aarhus), Britta Lundgren (Umeå) and Ove Sernhede (Göteborg). Together, they represent different disciplinary areas and geographical locations, while still being able to work together in a focused manner.

A secretary (economic and practical administrator) and a communicator (networking, publishing and information officer) will be appointed who know the chosen university site well. The provisional staff will finish its work when the ACSIS is officially opened with all elements in place and working from January 2004.

Johan Fornäs was the original initiator of the whole ACSIS project, and has led the planning work up to date. His background includes mathematics, philosophy, editorial work and cultural activism (Lund and Göteborg), a dissertation in musicology (Göteborg) and years of research in youth culture (Göteborg and Stockholm). He has recently left a professorship in media and communication studies (Stockholm), in order to head the cultural production and cultural work area within the programme for Work and Culture at the National Institute for Working Life (Norrköping). Among his recent research projects are 'Popular Passages: Media in the Consumption Space' and 'Digital Borderlands: Cultural Identity and Interactivity on the Internet', and his publications include *Cultural Theory and Late Modernity* (1995).

Ulf Lindberg lives in Lund but presently works as Swedish Lecturer at the Department of Scandinavian Studies, Aarhus University, Denmark. He has a background in interdisciplinary Swedish research on pedagogy, socialisation and youth culture. His 1995 dissertation in Comparative Literature dealt with rock lyrics, but he has also published work on Swedish 20th century literature, popular culture and rock criticism. Present interests include a historical perspective on aesthetic developments. He will jointly with the head director prepare the formation of the first zone.

Britta Lundgren has from the start taken part in the ACSIS planning. As Professor of Ethnology in the Umeå University Department for Culture and Media, she is well trained in interdisciplinary co-operation and institute building. She is also member of

the board of the Swedish Secretariat for Gender Research in Göteborg. Her own previous research and publications include studies of friendship, family, gender, work, education and everyday life. She will be responsible for constructing the second zone.

Ove Sernhede has likewise always been active in the ACSIS planning, as one of the key figures in the introduction and development of cultural studies in Sweden, and with extensive international contacts. As Associate Professor he heads the new Göteborg University Centre for Cultural Studies and their interdisciplinary programme for studies of contemporary culture. In his own research and publications, he has dealt with issues like youth cultures, popular music, social work, socialisation and identity work. His task will be to form and develop the third zone.

FUNDING

Preliminary calculations of the costs of installing and running an ACSIS land on around 100 million Swedish crowns (SEK) in all for the 2 preparatory years (4-5 annual millions) and 6 first years of full operation (14-18 millions annually).²¹ These figures may well change considerably before everything is in place, but they at least give a hint of the scope of this proposal.

The ACSIS institute is an overarching interest of the whole research community, and must therefore be funded directly by the state rather than by any single university. By practical-administrative reasons, it will have some kind of connection to one particular hosting university, but the main funding and responsibility of academic activities is national rather than local or regional. During the preparatory period and the first six years of operation, the main funding is proposed to be by *the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation* (RJ) and the new state research council *Science Council* (Vetenskapsrådet, incorporating the old HSFR). After a 6 years test period and evaluation, the institute should possibly be permanently funded directly by the state departments of education and/or culture together with other sources, as mentioned above under the 'Frames' heading.

The local university and municipality have both been extremely positive to getting the chance to become the site of ACSIS, and therefore promised to make substantial contributions to guarantee the success of the institute. This institute will regularly attract a number of international key senior scholars in this vital field of research, and their presence will lend symbolical honour to this site and offer fruitful interaction with the university programmes and colleagues present in its immediate surrounding. This geographical site will attract a great number of prestigious scholars and activities with great repercussions in the academic and cultural sphere in general. Norrköping and its university campus will thereby become a widely spread and well-known location in the global field of cultural studies.

²¹ In February 2001, 100 SEK \approx 9-10 USD, so that 100M SEK \approx 9.5M USD.

Therefore, the local municipality of the *City of Norrköping* will contribute materially by offering free premises for all ACSIS activities in Norrköping. This includes offices and other spaces necessary for daily activities. The ACSIS has generously been offered the whole top floor of the so-called Strykbrädan ('ironing-board'), a converted 19th century industrial building. These c. 650 square metres have a lovely location in the very centre of the city, with the National Institute for Working Life below and a series of museums and university buildings in the vicinity. This gift indicates that the ACSIS is a welcome addition to the city's profile, and implies the best working conditions in this milieu.

The hosting *Linköping University* has offered to cover the general administration costs. Some kind of affiliation or special institution status will be installed, preferably outside the ordinary faculty structure.²² The exact juridical status will have to be negotiated during the preparatory period. The university also offers free access to its technical support and library resources, as well as to its localities for larger conferences and courses. Investments in furniture and technical equipment (computers etc.) will probably also be covered by the university. This most substantial contribution secures the material basis for the operation of ACSIS, and drastically reduces the demand for national funding by approximately 25-30%.

The contributions promised by Linköping University and the municipality of Norrköping will be formally regulated by a contract set up early in the preparatory period, as soon as the main funding is granted. The management of both the municipality and the university have agreed to these general terms, promising to make the establishment of ACSIS a secure and swift process, once the main research council funding may be in place. Additional funding may be offered by other state institutions, universities, local communities and other sources as well, making possible a further expansion of fellowships and other activities.

All universities will also be offered the chance to contribute resources for ACSIS to expand the number of fellows or add more research activities, provided the choice of scholars and spheres of action is left completely to the ACSIS staff and Board. Linköping University has already expressed a willingness to add to the resources by aiding in financing post-doc and/or fellowship positions. Contributions of resources for additional fellowships would be a warmly welcome form of sponsorship from all universities committed to supporting the advancement of cultural studies.

The organisation may temporarily grow by *externally financed research projects*. Applications of this kind will regularly be sent to other research councils. That will additionally increase the interaction with the surrounding academic world.

The ACSIS is primarily an advanced scholarly enterprise, but its specific field of activity makes possible mutually rewarding interfaces towards other *public cultural institutions*. Certain national institutions in the cultural field (like archives, associations of cultural workers or copyright collection funds) might be useful partners of co-operation in specific events (conferences, seminars or publications) of general interest, but on the whole this will probably remain a marginal source of income. Du-

²² The model is comparable to SCASSS at Uppsala University or the Swedish Secretariat for Gender Research in Göteborg.

ring the preparatory period, the staff will investigate how these relations might be regulated to mutual satisfaction.

Commercial sponsoring is a somewhat delicate issue in this kind of critical cultural research, where scholarly reputation and legitimacy is precarious. However, even state subsidies have limitations, and a certain influx of support from the cultural industries could later become a welcome addition. During the preparatory period, this will be further investigated.

Nordic (NOS-S/H and NorFa), *European* (EU and ESF) and *international* (UNESCO etc.) funds may well become a welcome additional source of funding in the long run, though the national (state) basis will probably always remain central. This will also be further investigated during the preparatory period and the first period of full operation.

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