ACSIS – Annual Report 2007/2008

GENERAL INFORMATION

ACSIS – Advanced Cultural Studies Institute of Sweden – is a national centre for transnational cultural studies. It has been established by Linköping University in order to develop advanced research and higher education in the field of interdisciplinary cultural studies in Sweden. It serves as a national resource for exchange between disciplines, universities, countries and intellectual currents, striving to develop diversified networking between Swedish cultural research and the transnational field of cultural studies. This field may provisionally be divided into three mutually interacting zones: “interpretations” for texts, media and aesthetics; “interactions” for practices, identities and relations; and “interventions” for power, institutions and movements.

ACSIS was established early in 2002 as an independent unit within Linköping University. The centre is administratively connected to the Department for Studies of Social Change and Culture (ISAK). Its linking, driving and quality rising tasks are realized through programs for visiting scholars, research, publications, seminars, conferences, PhD courses and various forms of networking. The national character of ACSIS is guaranteed by a board with members chosen by all Swedish universities and a chair appointed by the rector of Linköping University. Activities are headed by a director appointed by the rector.

Board

ACSIS is since 2003 headed by a board with one member chosen by each Swedish university and a chair appointed by the rector of Linköping University. The board has an ordinary biannual meeting and actively engages in promoting the ACSIS goals and activities.

- **Chair**: Professor Emeritus and former Director of the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation (Riksbankens Jubileumsfond) *Dan Brändström* (2007-); succeeding Prof. Em. *Inge Jonsson* (2003-2006).
- **Göteborg University**: Professor of Musicology *Alf Björnberg* (2006-); succeeding Professor of Literature *Lisbeth Larsson* (2003-06, thereafter deputy board member).
- **Karlstad University**: Professor of Media and Communication Studies *Robert Burnett*.
- **Linköping University**: Professor at the Department of Culture Studies, historian *Peter Aronsson*.
- **Lund University**: Professor of Ethnology *Orvar Löfgren*.
- **Mid Sweden University**: Lecturer of English *Anders Olsson* (2006-).
- **Stockholm University**: Professor of Social Anthropology *Helena Wulff*.
- **Umeå University**: Professor of Ethnology *Britta Lundgren*; deputy member Associate Professor of Literature *Anders Öhman* (2006-).
- **Uppsala University**: Professor of Economic History *Maths Isacson*; deputy member Associate Professor of Ethnology *Birgitta Meurling* (2006-).

May 2008
- Växjö University: Professor of History Gunlög Fur (2005-); succeeding Professor of Sociology Mats Trondman (2003-05).

- Örebro: Professor of history Christina Carlsson-Wetterberg (2008-); succeeding Professor of Swedish Language Per Ledin (2005-08) and Professor of Education Bernt Gustavsson (2003-05).

Staff

The Director and initiator of ACSIS is Professor Johan Fornäs, Professor at the Department of Culture Studies (Tema Q). The administrative assistant 2004-06 was PhD student Helene Egeland, followed 2006-2007 by PhD student Ann Werner, spring 2007 PhD Sofia Seifarth and from autumn 2007 Martin Fredriksson, PhD student at Tema Q. From September 2008 the post as assistant has been share between Martin Fredriksson and Andreas Nyblom, PhD at Tema Q. The conferences have been organised by PhD Bodil Axelsson, Lecturer at Tema Q and the Masters Programme for Culture and Media (KSM) (2005 and 2007), PhD Sofia Seifarth at Tema Q and head of research at the Museum of Work (2007), and Andreas Nyblom (2009). I addition to this PhD student Andreas Gunnarsson, Tema Q, and MA student David Cardell, KSM assisted the conference organizers in 2007. ACSIS can be reached at the following addresses:

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ACTIVITIES 2007

Board and Administration

New board chair was Dan Brändström, former Director of the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation (Riksbankens Jubileumsfond). Board meetings were held 17/4 and 27-28/11 – the latter extended to enable strategic planning of future joint activities on a national scale. Linköping University renewed its commitment to support ACSIS activities, and gave ACSIS the additional local task to coordinate cultural research as a strong area at this university.

In September 2007 Martin Fredriksson replaced Sofia Seifarth as administrator at ACSIS. Due to ACSIS constantly growing commitments the administrator’s level of employment was extended from 20% to 30%.

Finances

During 2007 the faculty of humanities at Linköping University contributed with 400 000 SEK to ACSIS general budget and another 50 000 as directed funding for the conference Inter. ACSIS also received 350 000 SEK as external funding for the conference that generated a return of 313 000, primarily thanks to the conference fees.

Apart from that we got 25 000 from the Wennergren foundation to cover the costs for Doreen Massey’s visit and approximately 120 000 from Svenska Instutet as a postdoc grant for Naomi Stead.

All in all ACSIS received about 800 000 SEK as external funding and conference fees and 450 000 from Linköping university, which means that 64% of ACSIS budget came from external funding in 2007.

Visiting Scholars

ACSIS has a programme for visiting scholars, that lets distinguished and innovative researchers take active part in its intellectual and networking activities, interplaying with ongoing research, courses, seminars and workshops, and in cooperation with other university units. Visiting scholars may be of three main kinds: visiting professors, postdocs and PhD students. These often have their own external funding, but in some cases ACSIS has been able to raise funding for supporting such visits. ACSIS offers office space with great opportunities to take part in the expanding local environment for cultural research, as well as access to its wide national and international networks.

Visiting scholars during 2007 were professors Doreen Massey (UK, October, funded by the Jan Wallander visiting lecturer grant of the Wenner-Gren Foundations), Pertti Alasuutari (Finland, October) and David-Thiery Ruddel (Canada, November-December); postdoc scholars Giacomo Bottà (Italy/Finland, September-October) and Naomi Stead (Australia, October 2007 – February 2008), and PhD student Monica MacDonald (Canada, November-December).
A key task for ACSIS is to develop networks in the field of cultural studies, in order to exchange information and ideas as well as to forge links and support co-operation that will strengthen cultural research. Besides a range of individual exchanges and the general visiting scholars programme, ACSIS has also been involved in an institutional exchange scheme with the Centre for Cultural Research (CCR) at the University of Western Sydney (UWS) since 2004. As a part of this exchange programme two PhDs students from CCR, Lynne Spender and Jayde Cahir, visited Norrköping for six weeks during fall and spring 2007. Martin Fredriksson from Tema Q/ACSIS also visited CCR in March 2008.

During 2007 ACSIS also established a new exchange program with the Kwan Fong Cultural Research and Development Programme at the Lingnan University in Hong-Kong and Martin Fredriksson visited Lingnan University for two weeks in February 2008.

Conferences

ACSIS also organises larger events, from dedicated workshops for specifically invited project groups to large conferences for the whole field of cultural studies. Inter: A European Cultural Studies Conference in Sweden was organised in Norrköping 11-13/6, with 240 participants. Plenary speakers included Tony Bennett, Georgina Born, Gerard Delanty, Paul Gilroy and Annette Kuhn (UK); Regina Bendix and Gerhard Schulze (Germany); Kirsten Drotner and Anne Scott Sørensen (Denmark); Mikko Lehtonen and Bengt Kristensson Uggla (Finland); Joke Hermes (Netherlands); Álvaro Pina (Portugal); and Karin Becker, Erling Bjurström, Dan Brândstrom, Barbara Czarniawska, Johan Fornäs, Peo Hansen, Maths Isacson, Orvar Löfgren and Tom O’Dell (Sweden).

Seminars

Locally at Linköping University, which is the main sponsor, great efforts have been made to anchor activities within a wide range of its units, including hosting a series of local meetings to make possible the formation of culture as a strong field of research at this university. Besides its main national task, ACSIS has taken on to serve its host university with coordinating local tasks in the area of cultural research, offering the same kind of services to any university willing to give corresponding activity support.

Outside of Linköping University, a series of meetings and seminars is organised at the different universities in order to discuss the local conditions and possibilities for cultural research as well as the links needed between universities, with ACSIS as the key hub. In 2007 ACSIS director, Johan Fornäs discussed the current situation for cultural studies with prominent local scholars in a series of three national seminars at different universities in Sweden. The seminars took place at Umeå University, April 12, Uppsala University, September 20 and Växjö University, September 24. A summary report can be found on ACSIS website: www.acsis.liu.se/publikationer.

ACSIS also organises higher interdisciplinary seminars for cultural studies, often in cooperation with other departments and built around visiting scholars. These are often extended to half- or whole-day workshops with a handful of foreign and domestic speakers. During late 2007 ACSIS arranged several such seminars and workshops. Doreen Massey held a separate lecture on “Relational Space and the Politics of Local Responsibility”, and also took
part in a workshop with local and visiting scholars, and a half-day seminar on “Space and Place” with Giacomo Bottà, Pertti Alasuutari and Mattias Legnér. A separate seminar lecture was held by Pertti Alasuutari: “The Moderns: The Governmentality of Western Societies”, and a half-day seminar on ”Global Culture – National Museums: Tensions, Fractures, Integration” with visitors Naomi Stead, David Thiery-Ruddel and Monica Macdonald.

Most Wednesday mornings, ACSIS invites everyone with an interest in cultural studies to an informal gathering in Norrköping. These popular ACSIS Cultural Mornings with coffee always contain a brief “Secret Event” where some aspect of culture and cultural studies is thematised in an inspiring manner. During 2007, 15 ACSIS mornings were organised, with secret events presented by the visiting scholars plus Erling Bjurström, Ann Werner, Sofia Seifarth, Magdalena Hillström, Svante Beckman, Bodil Axelsson, Johan Fornäs and Mattias Legnér. The topics stretched from "Cake studies - part two" to “The political trajectories of academic concepts in Hugo Chavez' Venezuela”.

Information and Publications

ACESIS is keeping a constantly growing and increasingly diversified website which works like a useful portal, with links to other sites as well as extensive information on visiting scholars, PhD courses and conferences. Apart from the website ACSIS also hosts a mailing list for cultural research in Sweden which serves as an important forum for a great variety of upcoming events.


In November the proceedings from this summer’s conference, Inter: A European Cultural Studies Conference in Sweden, were published at Linköping University Electronic Press. This encompasses more than 70 plenary presentations and conference papers published as an open access web resource (http://www.ep.liu.se/ecp/025/).
ACTIVITIES 2008

Board and Administration

Board meetings for 2008 were held on May 5 and November 27.

January to August 2008 Martin Fredriksson worked 50% as administrator at ACSIS. From September Andreas Nyblom temporarily took over 20% of the assignment as administrator and also started preparing the conference Culture–Nature that will be held in June 2009.

Visiting Scholars

In 2008 ACSIS received an institutional exchange grant from STINT for an exchange programme with the CCR at UWS, “Culturalisation and Globalisation: Advancing Cultural Research in Sweden and Australia”. This made it possible for the professor Brett Neilson and Dr. Elaine Lally to visit ACSIS for a week in early October while the PhD students Joanna Winchester and Erika Smith spent six weeks at ACSIS in October and November 2008.

Another postdoc researcher, Rafael Smoczynski from Poland, received a grant from the Swedish Institute to visit ACSIS for six months, starting in September 2008.

Conferences

November 26-27 a national conference entitled Kulturvetenskapens nytta (The uses of cultural research) was organised by ACSIS at the Museum of Work in Norrköping.

Seminars

October 9 ACSIS hosted a workshop in Norrköping with the four visitors from CCR, Brett Neilson, Elaine Lally, Joanna Winchester and Erika Smith, on the theme “Cultural Research into the Future”.

Visiting scholar Rafael Smoczynski presented his research at a seminar in Norrköping October 15.

Information and publications

ACSIS initiated a special issue of the peer-reviewed Swedish ethnology journal called Kulturella Perspektiv (“Cultural Perspectives”), produced and edited by ACSIS Director Johan Fornäs and ACSIS Board member Orvar Löfgren together with Billy Ehn and Roger Jacobsson. The issue (vol. 17:2) deals with the changing conditions of cultural research in the new research policy landscape and was published in June 2008, widely distributed within the academic world.
In spring 2008 ACSIS initiated a new, peer-reviewed and electronic academic journal, *Culture Unbound: Journal of Current Cultural Research*, together with Tema Q and the Swedish Cultural Policy Research Observatory (SweCult). More than 60 prominent scholars were recruited from all over the world to the editorial board. Thanks to additional funding from Riksbankens Jubileumsfond, *Culture Unbound* held its first meeting with the editorial board on November 26. This took the form of a workshop that drafted outlines for the journal’s future publication profile.

**Courses**

In November-December 2008 ACSIS arranged a PhD course directed by Tom O’Dell and entitled *The Cultural Turn and After: Critical and Applied Perspectives on Cultural Analysis and Market Forces*. 
COMING EVENTS 2009

Board and administration

In April 2009 members of the ACSIS Board plan to visit a number of universities in Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Leuven in search for future exchange partners. A similar visit to Vienna is planned to take place in fall 2009.

Visiting Scholars

_Celia Lury_ will be ACSIS visiting Scholar in June 2009.
_Annie E. Coombes_ will be the next visiting Scholar in October 2009.

As a part of the exchange program with CCR, two professors, two postdoc researchers and four PhD students from Tema Q will visit Sydney during spring and fall 2009.

Conferences

15-17 June ACSIS organises a national conference on cultural research in Norrköping. The theme of the conference is *Culture-Nature* and it is expected to host more than 200 participants.

Seminars

During her visit to Sweden, _Celia Lury_ will give three open seminars: in Norrköping June 8 and in Umeå and Gothenburg 9-12 June.

Information and publications

In June 2009, ACSIS will in co-operation with Tema Q and SweCult launch the first edition of the new academic journal *Culture Unbound*. This will consist of a thematic section called “What’s the use of cultural research?”, edited by Johan Fornäs, Jenny Johannisson and Martin Fredriksson.