ACSIS – Annual Report 2013

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. 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 raising 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 of members chosen by all Swedish universities, and a chair appointed by the Vice-Chancellor of Linköping University.

Board, administration and staff

ACSIS board is elected for a three-year period and a new board convened for the first time in June 2013. The mandate of the previous board expired at the end of 2012, and the old board had its final meeting in January 2013. The board elected for 2013–2015 have the following members:

- Chair: Professor emeritus Orvar Löfgren (2013–)
- Göteborg University: Professor of Gender Studies Lena Martinsson (2013–)
- Karlstad University: Professor of Media and Communication Studies André Jansson (2009–)
- Linköping University: Professor of Child Studies Anna Sparrman (2013–). Deputy member professor of Ethnicity and migration studies Stefan Jonsson (2013–)
- Lund University: Professor at the Department of Arts and Cultural Sciences Tom O’Dell (2009–)
- Mid Sweden University: Professor of English Anders Olsson (2006–)
- Stockholm University: Associate professor in the History of ideas Solveig Jülich (2013–)
- Umeå University: Professor of Literature Anders Öhman (2006–)
- Uppsala University: Professor of Ethnology Birgitta Meurling (2006–)
- Linnaeus University: Professor of Archaeology Cornelius Holtorf (2013–)
- Örebro University: Professor of History Björn Horgby (2013–)
- Additional member: Associate Professor Lotten Gustafsson Reinius from the museum of Ethnography (2009–)
In January 2013 Bodil Axelsson took up the position as acting director of ACSIS, employed by ACSIS on 15 %. In 2013 Martin Fredriksson was on leave from his position as coordinator on ACSIS, Johanna Dahlin substituted him on 35 % employment for 2013. Martin Fredriksson upheld his responsibilities as editor for Culture Unbound on 20 % throughout the year.

New directions
ACSIS new board and management underline ACSIS capacity to act as an open platform for cultural researchers in Sweden. The emergent qualities of cultural research are accentuated and ACSIS aims at moving in tune with cultural and societal transformations as well as theoretical and methodological advancements. The new board is thus seen as an important resource in developing ACSIS activities and themes. In accordance, a workshop was held in conjunction with a board meeting to set out the directions for the years to come. The workshop explored possible themes for PhD courses, the next biannual conference, and seminars as well as forms for collaboration. The year of 2013 has thus been a year of taking out new directions.

The board identified themes for 2014 and 2015. The overall theme for 2014 is Cultural Research and its Public Interfaces. One of these interfaces is academic publishing. Increasingly researchers are asked to produce outcomes with impact but what does that mean for critical research? In order to explore current trends and resistances, ACSIS organizes a one day conference to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the journal Culture Unbound with speakers from the journal’s board. The second critical interface ACSIS will focus on 2013 is museums. Today many museums host innovative critical cultural research at the same time as they nurture public awareness using new modes of exhibiting including new media and artistic approaches. What are the affordances of critical research for museums, and vice versa, what can critical researchers learn from museums?

For 2015, the board decided on cultural studies of historical and contemporary processes of mediatisation, also the theme for ACSIS biennial conference 2015.

Finances
For 2013 the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at Linköping University contributed an annual amount of 674 000 SEK to ACSIS, this also included the publication of the journal Culture Unbound. In addition, two universities represented in ACSIS board contributed with the total amount of 75 000 SEK (Linnéuniversitetet 50 000 and Umeå University 25 000).

ACSIS received a grant from Riksbankens Jubileumsfond on 150 000 SEK to organise the conference On the Move in June 2013.

Conference
Every other year since 2005, The Advanced Cultural Studies Institute of Sweden (ACSIS) has organised a broad-based cultural studies conference that has brought together scholars in the field from Sweden and abroad. In June 2013 ACSIS held its fifth biennial cultural studies conference.

The theme of the ACSIS Cultural Studies Conference 2013 was On the Move. The conference took place 11-13 June 2013 at the Louis De Geer facilities in central Norrköping. It had four plenary panels and 23 parallel sessions. About 120 researches from Sweden and internationally participated in the conference.
On the Move explored the “mobility turn” in media studies, cultural studies, sociology, ethnology, anthropology, tourism studies, literature studies and several other areas of cultural research. Papers dealt with movement and/or immobilization across a broad spectrum and within many contexts, from the micro-movements of streptococci to the mobile, or not so mobile, lives of artists and artistic productions, cosmopolitans, refugees and tourists. They addressed social, cultural and political movements as well as practices embodied in sports, dance and everyday life. In addition to the exploration of the spatial mobility of humans, organisms and objects, the circulation across time and space of representations and the vehicles for movement – topics at the heart of the mobility turn – this conference also presented plenary panels and sessions dealing with the transformation of cultural and social norms.

Given the fact the conference was advertised only three months before it was carried out, 120 participants was an achievement. This year, the conference attracted an unusual number of participants from Linköping University. The decision to alternate between two conference languages – Swedish and English – turned out to be a success. All plenary sessions were held in English, whereas all session slots had English as well as Swedish alternatives. This set up turned out to support ACSIS general aim to connect Swedish and international currents, still providing Swedish scholars the safety of giving presentation in the native language.

The conference was supported by the city of Norrköping and Riksbankens jubileumsfond.

Information and Publications

The website, social media and the mailing list
In 2013 ACSIS website was thoroughly redeveloped after being continuously updated, but not restructured for many years. The design was refined to improve user experience and to ensure easier access to information. Emphasis was also put on less visible aspects of improved archives and storing of information. An English version of the new website will follow.

The design of the webpages spotlights upcoming events at ACSIS and Linköping University and connects to ACSIS presence on social media. Since 2009 ACSIS has a Facebook now converted to a page, providing information on coming ACSIS events to its followers. In 2011 this was also complemented by a Twitter identity. The new entrance page also directs the attention to ACSIS mailing list Kulturstudier, which serves as an important forum for a great variety of upcoming events in Sweden and beyond, and the journal Culture Unbound.

The journal Culture Unbound
The journal Culture Unbound, published by ACSIS, Tema Q and Swedish Cultural Policy Observatory (SweCult), continues to increase its range and distribution. So far the journal has published 25 articles, encompassing about 500 pages. Its website had an average of about 4300 visitors each month, which is a major increase, compared to 2012 when we had 3100 hits per month. The most downloaded thematic sections were ‘Culture Work and Emotion’, from 2010 with 1378 downloads, followed by ‘Rural Media Spaces’ (also 2010, 1148 downloads), and ‘City of Signs/Signs of the City’ (from 2009, 1084 downloads). The statistics thus confirm that while Culture Unbound constantly attracts new readers, our old publications have a long life span, which contributes to a steady and long-term growth. Most visitors came from Sweden, USA, China, UK and Japan.

In 2013 Culture Unbound also received financial support from Vetenskapsrådet (VR) and Nordiska Samarbetsnämnden för humanistisk och samhällsvetenskaplig forskning (NOS-IHS), in the latter case for the coming three years.

Conference proceedings
Following the conference On the Move, proceedings from the conference were published by Linköping University Electronic Press in late 2013.

Special thematic issue
In early 2013 a special issue of Kulturella perspektiv (Umeå University) was published, edited by Anders Ekström, ACSIS director during 2012, and with contributions from a wide range of scholars across Sweden. Aiming for an overview of ongoing activities there was an open call for contribution. All in all 19 short pieces introduced and discussed multi- and/or transdisciplinary contexts for research and education after the cultural turn.