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

ACSIS supports interdisciplinary and socially relevant research that is consistent with a changing world in which media, art forms and forms of expression are increasingly encroaching upon one another, with new interplays between cultural, social, political, economic and technical factors, and in which different social groups interact and create both communities and differences that link up to or run counter to traditional structures.

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

**Cultural Research and its Public Interfaces**

In 2013, the board identified themes for 2014 and 2015. The overall theme for 2014 was 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 co-organised a workshop to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the journal Culture Unbound with speakers from the journal’s editorial board.

The second critical interface ACSIS focused on 2014 was museums, which was explored in two workshops on the affordances of critical research for museums, and vice versa, what can critical researchers learn from 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. The workshops examined the boundaries between explorative cultural studies and the collections and interpretations of museums by way of a dialogue between actors in the borderland such as museologists, curators and cultural and media studies students and researchers.
The theme identified by the board for 2015 is cultural studies of historical and contemporary processes of mediatisation, and this theme is also evident in ACSIS sixth biennial conference “In the Flow: People, Media, Materialities” which will take place 15–17 June 2015.

**Board, administration and staff**

ACSISS board is elected for a three-year period, the current board is elected for 2013-2015. A new member for Stockholm University, Anna Dahlgren, joined the board in June 2014. ACSIS board convened twice in 2014, and have the following members:

- **Chair**: Professor emeritus Orvar Löfgren (2013–).
- **Göteborg University**: Professor of Gender Studies Lena Martinsson (2013–).
- **Karlstad University**: Professor of Media and Communication Studies André Jansson (2009–).
- **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 Art history Anna Dahlgren (2014–).
- **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–).

Bodil Axelsson was acting director of ACSIS, employed by ACSIS on 15 %. In 2014 Martin Fredriksson was on leave from his position as coordinator on ACSIS, he was substituted by Johanna Sjöberg on 35 % employment in the first half of 2014, and Johanna Dahlin on 50 % employment from August 2014. Martin Fredriksson upheld his responsibilities as editor for Culture Unbound on 20 % throughout the year. Johanna Sjöberg was employed in August to identify cultural researchers in Sweden.

**Finances**

For 2014 the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at Linköping University contributed an annual amount of 673 332 SEK to ACSIS, this also included the publication of the journal Culture Unbound. In addition, five universities represented in ACSIS board contributed with the total amount of 275 000 SEK (Linnaeus University 50 000; Lund University 50 000; Karlstad University 50 000; Göteborg University 50 000, Uppsala University 50 000 and Umeå University 25 000).
Conferences, seminars and workshops

In 2014 ACSIS organised or sponsored seminars and workshops at Linköping University, Linneaus University. Umeå University, Göteborg University, Stockholm University as well as the Museum of Ethnography and the Swedish History Museum.

Conference planning
Every other year since 2005, ACSIS has organised a broad-based cultural studies conference that has brought together scholars in the field from Sweden and abroad. In June 2015, the sixth conference themed “In the Flow: People, Media, Materialities” will be held in Norrköping. Planning for the conference started in the spring 2014, and during the autumn a call for sessions was issued. Before the call closed in November, 35 session proposals were submitted. The program for the conference took shape autumn 2014, as key note speakers were as well as participants in plenary panels and spot light sessions were contacted. A general call for papers was issued in December 2014.

Workshop on piracy
In April The PiracyLab and ACSIS arranged an open workshop with the title “Piracy?”. Participants were James Arvanitakis, University of Western Sydney, Yiannos Mylonas, Copenhagen University, Jonas Andersson Schwartz, Goldsmiths College, and Stefan Larson, Lund University.

Gränsytor (Interfaces) I & II
During 2014, ACSIS, in partnership with the National Museums of World Culture and the Swedish History Museum, arranged two workshops on the topic of ‘Interfaces’. The first workshop was held on May 16, and the second was held October 31.

Interfaces I ACSIS c/o Etnografiska museet
This workshop focused on the role of ethnographic exhibitions in today’s Europe. Invited speaker Wayne Modest used the notion of proximities as a starting point to discuss ways to make people engage in colonial collections. How could they invoke feelings such as reconciliation, unification and citizenship and social texture? After the talk, the workshop invited the 40 participants to re-imagine the current exhibitions at the museum.


The workshop was hosted by Lotten Gustafsson, head of the Museum of Ethnography.

Interfaces II: ACSIS c/o Historiska Museet
This workshop explored museum’s abilities to handle contentious and complex historical events and hot topics related to, for example, nationalism, sexuality and norm criticism, subjects approached also within cultural studies. The starting point for laborations in the museum’s exhibitions was Bodil Axelsson’s talk on the ways in which museums today see themselves as societal actors, constantly urged to reform themselves and their visitors.
Introducers and speakers: Bodil Axelsson, Fredrik Svanberg, Sophie Nyman and Lena Hejll.

This workshop was hosted by Fredrik Svanberg, head of research at the Swedish History Museum.

**Seminars on new formations of white femininity**

ACSSIS hosted Raka Shome as visiting scholar in September-October 2014. Shome was invited in collaboration with Catrin Lundström, associated professor at Tema Q. During her time in Sweden, Raka Shome participated in a number of seminars. The first, titled “White Femininity and Cosmopolitan Healing: the Spiritual Fix of Whiteness”, was held in Norrköping on October 1st. Following this, seminars were held in Umeå on October 3rd, Växjö October 9th, and Göteborg October 16th. A planned workshop on White Femininities at Södertörn Högskola was cancelled due to illness.

Shome’s talks focused on new formations of white femininity in the millennium (and contemporary post millennial years) that are articulated through particular logics of borderlessness of privileged white women. This borderlessness is organized around a discourse of cosmopolitan spirituality, well-being, and healing, and frequently incorporates the ethos of Asian-inflected therapeutic practices of inner wellness, planetary connectivity, and “finding yourself.” These practices have emerged as technologies for recrafting and healing the white (usually female) subject of contemporary neoliberalism.

**Workshop on publishing for Public Knowledge**

The journal *Culture Unbound* was launched in 2009 and has now published five full volumes. In order to celebrate *Culture Unbound*’s five years of success a public workshop was arranged in Norrköping 20 November 2014 on the subject “Publishing for Public Knowledge”.

The workshop departed from Culture Unbound’s dedication to open access publishing, and the assumption that the kind of work prioritised by cultural researchers aims to produce public knowledge, open for sharing by any interested member of the general and global public. It is thus a way of making ‘unbound’ what would otherwise be monopolised by closed elites. In the current situation, new threats but also new tools for such critical knowledge have appeared. On the one hand, neo-liberal efforts to commercialise and privatise universities have intensified. Public universities cannot any longer be taken for granted, but need to be argued and fought for. On the other hand, the spread of new, social and digital media have also paved the way for new ways of making research public through open access and other forms of publishing. Publications such as academic journals are not just neutral tools for sharing results, and there is a need to acknowledge the new opportunities and threats facing academic publishing today, not least for those engaged in open access journals.

Speakers were Roman Horak, Ferda Keskin, Jenny Björkman, Geoff Stahl, Mark Banks, Eva Hemmungs Wirtén, Jenny Johannisson, and Toby Miller. Johan Fornäs and Martin Fredriksson opened the workshop.
Seminars on Greenwashing and Environmental Politics

In November a seminar was arranged with ACSIS visiting scholar Toby Miller and Martin Hultman from Umeå University. Miller's presentation “Greenwashing Culture: The Search for a Social License to Operate by Big Oil and its Counter by Little Art” was about how oil companies like Shell and BP are using art to get support for its mining operations, and how performance artists try to counteract these efforts through their own art. Hultman talked under the heading “Masculinities of Environmental Politics: Exploring Examples of Industrial-, Ecomodern-, and Ecological Masculinity” about gender configurations in environmental policy, with a focus on masculinities in a historical perspective and in three different contexts: climate change, environmental policy and entrepreneurship.

On the courtesy of ACSIS Toby Miller visited Stockholm University for a special edition of JMK higher seminar November 25.

Visiting researchers

Raka Shome

In September-October 2014 ACSIS was visited by Raka Shome, a Media, Communication, and Feminist Cultural Studies scholar who writes on postcolonial cultures and transnational feminism. Currently based in New York, Shome has published numerous articles in leading journals and anthologies in the field of Media, Communication and Cultural Studies. She is the author of Diana and Beyond: White Femininity, National Identity, and Contemporary Media Culture (University of Illinois Press, 2014). Under her co-guest editorship, the first-ever special issue on “Postcolonialism” was published in the field of Communication Studies in the International Communication Association journal Communication Theory (August, 2002). She recently also guest edited a special issue on “Asian Modernities” (2012) in the journal Global Media and Communication, which included several articles focused on the question of what it means to be “modern” outside of liberal western frameworks. Her current research interest is in the logics of non-western modernities.

Toby Miller

In connection with the workshop Publishing for Public Knowledge, ACSIS was visited by Toby Miller, an interdisciplinary and internationally oriented social scientist who is now Professor of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies at the University of Cardiff and Sir Walter Murdoch Professor of Cultural Policy Studies at Murdoch University. His work covers the media (in particular film and television), sports, labour, gender, race, citizenship, politics and cultural policy. His over 30 books include SportSex (Temple UP 2001) and Cultural Citizenship: Cosmopolitanism, Consumerism, and Television in a Neoliberal Age (Temple UP 2007). His article ‘Surveillance: The “Digital Trail of Breadcrumbs”’ was published in Culture Unbound (Volume 2, 2010).

Information and Publications

The website, social media and the mailing list

The improvements of ACSIS webpage, which in 2013 was thoroughly redeveloped, continued in 2014. Most notably, an English version of the new website was launched. Emphasis was
put on less visible aspects of improved archives and storing of information, and improved user experience and easier access to information.

The design of the webpages highlights upcoming events at ACSIS and Linköping University and connects to ACSIS presence on social media. Since 2009 ACSIS has a Facebook page, providing information on coming ACSIS events to its followers. In 2011 this was also complemented by a Twitter identity. ACSIS homepage directs the attention to ACSIS mailing list Kulturstudier, which currently have 418 members and serves as an important forum for a great variety of upcoming events in Sweden and beyond, and the journal Culture Unbound.

Advertising ACSIS
To increase knowledge about ACSIS among Swedish cultural researchers, an information campaign was launched in the second half of 2014. It included an advertisement in the journal Universitetsläraren, which reaches a large part of ACSIS potential audience, placed in issue 10, published on October 6th 2014. Further, a letter presenting ACSIS was sent electronically to everyone who through the respective webpage could be identified as a cultural researcher on the Swedish universities that has representation on ACSIS board.

The journal Culture Unbound

The journal Culture Unbound, published by ACSIS, Tema Q and Swedish Cultural Policy Observatory (SweCult), celebrated its five-year anniversary in 2014 and the publication continues to expand. In 2014 the journal has publish a total of 60 articles, encompassing more than 1200 pages. Its website has, so far, had an average of about 6500 visitors each month, which is a major increase, compared to 2013 when we had 4700 hits per month. The most downloaded thematic sections were ‘Changing Orders of Knowledge’, from 2014 with 4374 visits, followed by ‘City of Signs/Signs of the City’ (from 2009, 3982 visits) and ‘Capitalism: Current Crisis and Cultural Critique’ (from 2014, 3297 downloads). The fact that the second thematic section Culture Unbound released in 2009 – ‘City of Signs/Signs of the City’ – remains among the most read confirms that while Culture Unbound constantly attracts new readers, old publications have a long life span, which contributes to a steady and long-term growth. Most visitors in 2014 came from China, USA, Sweden, UK and Germany.


In 2014 Culture Unbound received financial support from Vetenskapsrådet (VR) and Nordiska Samarbetsnämnden för humanistisk och samhällsvetenskaplig forskning (NOS-HS), in the latter case for the coming three years.