



***Culture Unbound* Vol. 10 Editorial**

By Eva Hemmungs Wirtén, Johanna Dahlin, James Meese & Kristin Wagrell

In the 1930s, H.G. Wells famously spoke of a “World Brain.” Inspired by ideas that had been circulating for decades, Wells envisioned something like a giant information network, an encyclopedia that would assist mankind in the constant quest for improvement and betterment. Such lofty goals, however, could not be attained without the knowledge and information that would flow through this abstracted Brain. Wells’ utopian ideas would be cut short by World War Two, but had he been able to look into the future, he would have been gratified to see that the World Brain did become a reality. It was called Google. But still.

The topic of Volume 10, Issue 1 of *Culture Unbound* is not a World Brain, but (to borrow from contributing author Markus Idvall) that of a new “brain world”, something very different from what Wells had in mind. Entering the “brain world,” which constitutes the overall frame for the interdisciplinary collections of articles in this thematic issue, is to enter a research landscape that shows remarkable breadth. You will meet the brain in a number of guises, some of which might be new to you (fusing neuroscience and political science in order to understand behaviour) and some of which might seem more familiar (the “mad scientist” of popular culture), but all of which form an exciting collection of texts which span across the natural sciences and the traditional humanities.

The “brain world” is a creative topic approached from a number of different perspectives and disciplinary leanings. Historical events and processes are given new interpretative life when reinterpreted through the lens of new imaging technologies. Patients with Parkinson’s disease and those who have lived through the experience of stroke provide another insight into the sometimes very painful life of the brain. The different contributions work with different “sciences,” that to some extent seem easily identified and classified, but that, in fact, have less stable connotations and often overlap. Ethnographic work, interviews, readings of text

and images: from popular culture to the body politic, the creative and productive interdisciplinary potential of the brain seems encyclopedic in scope.

Issue 2 of 2018 contains the thematic section *This Season of Discontent: Understanding Student Movements in Neoliberal Times*, which aims at bringing together contributions from countries currently in the throes of student movements the world over; from Brazil to South Africa and India. Increasing repression of institutions of higher learning and the commercialisation of higher education has led to numerous student protests. This thematic issue is an attempt to tackle the larger question of how scholars and educators can engage with and elucidate these student movements.

Issue 3 is entitled *Critical Explorations of Media Modernities in South Asia* and will critically explore how conflicting meanings of modernity are played out in the wake of Indian “media revolutions”. In postcolonial contexts media and communication technologies are often conceptualized as particularly powerful tropes of social and cultural change and South Asia is a telling example. From the latter half of the twentieth century India has witnessed consecutive “media revolutions” promising to deliver modernity, development and emancipation. First with the tremendous growth of vernacular newspapers since the 1980, then the introduction of satellite television during 1990s and, most conspicuously, the rapid penetration of mobile and smart phones from the turn of the millennium. New technologies, genres and applications have opened up opportunities for popular participation, interaction and protest which are clearly, albeit variedly, perceptible across different sections of society.

We will close the volume with looking into the future. Issue 4 will contain a thematic section on *Critical Future Studies*, introduced by Luke Goode & Michael Godhe in *Culture Unbound 2017: 1. Critical Future Studies* investigates the scope and constraints within public culture for imagining and debating different potential futures. It interrogates imagined futures founded—often surreptitiously—upon values and assumptions from the past and present, as well as those representing a departure from current social trajectories. In the thematic section, visions of the future (or “futurescapes”) from popular science to science fiction will be examined. The thematic sections aims to contribute constructively to vigorous and imaginative public debate about the future—a futural public sphere—and to challenge a prevalent contemporary cynicism about our capacity to imagine alternative futures while trapped in a parlous present.

In late 2017 we learned that Culture Unbound would receive funding from the Swedish Research Council as well as the Joint Committee for Nordic Research Councils in the Humanities and Social Sciences for 2018-2020. We are enormously grateful for these grants, as they secure the journal’s Gold Open Access profile and ensures the absence of any author fees for the next few years. With this support, we can continue working for an open, inclusive and truly interdisciplinary journal.

Publishing a journal entails a lot of work. Most of this work is unpaid, and a lot of it is also unacknowledged. Therefore, we would like to open this volume by expressing our gratitude to the people who are never recognised for the crucial work that they do for the journal: the anonymous reviewers. The referees are the core of any academic publication. They are an indispensable voice of expertise for the editor and a source of support and constructive critique for the authors. While they often contribute greatly to the outcome of the final publication they are per definition always left out when credits are distributed.

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