

***Culture Unbound* Volume 6, Editorial**

By Johan Fornäs, Martin Fredriksson & Naomi Stead

With this volume, *Culture Unbound* celebrates its five-year anniversary. This makes a good opportunity both to look back at what we have achieved and to gaze ahead to what we have planned for the future.

Ideas for starting a new journal of cultural research had been circulating for some time at Linköping University, in and around its Department of Culture Studies (Tema Q), the Advanced Cultural Studies Institute of Sweden (AC SIS) and the Swedish Cultural Policy Research Observatory (SweCult). In spring 2008, Johan Fornäs, who was then professor at Tema Q and director of AC SIS, decided that it was time for action, and took the necessary steps to establish such a publishing project. Policy documents were written and signed by these three founding units, editors were recruited, the trademark was duly registered, logo and web design were commissioned, the editorial board invited, guidelines of all sorts developed in collaboration with Linköping University Electronic Press, and calls for articles were launched along various channels.

The first articles of Volume 1 were then published in June 2009. From then onward, roughly 160 articles comprising more than 3,000 pages and organised into 18 theme sections have been published in the first five volumes, with an average of 32 articles, 600 pages and 3.6 theme sections per volume. The trend is towards a steady growth, and the sixth volume is likely to comprise 40 articles, 750 pages and 4-5 theme sections, which we now regard as our established standard. The number of manuscripts received steadily continues to grow, which stretches our review and editing capacities to the limit. We also receive many very promising theme proposals, which ensures that no volume will ever lack substance, but also means we increasingly have to make a delicate selection of which themes to prioritise. This stream of original themes and articles forms a very inspiring and informative map of current trends in the field, and creates a vital interaction between us and our guest editors, authors and reviewers, thereby contributing to the formation of this transnational as well as transdisciplinary field.

Since the journal's beginning, founding editor Johan Fornäs has remained Editor-in-chief. Martin Fredriksson has likewise continued in the role of managing editor, the only one involved to receive a (minor) salary for his work, employed as a researcher at Tema Q. For the first four volumes Jenny Johannisson, based at the Centre for Cultural Policy Research of the Swedish School of Library and Information Science in Borås near Göteborg, served as associate editor, particularly covering research with relevance to cultural policy.

From Volume 5, her position was taken by researcher Naomi Stead from the ATCH Research Centre in the School of Architecture at the University of Queensland, Australia, who has further strengthened the journal's international profile as well as links between arts and academic research.

In qualitative terms, the journal has been a success. Its articles often attract thousands of readers, it is referenced by CrossRef, DOAJ, Scirus and OHP, and has received funding support not only from Linköping University but also from the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet) and the Joint Committee for Nordic Research Councils for the Humanities and Social Sciences (NOS-HS). The editorial board with its nearly 100 eminent scholars has provided solid academic support to attract and review article manuscripts and theme sections.

Editorial board members will be invited to a workshop on 'Public Knowledge' this forthcoming autumn, to discuss how a journal like *Culture Unbound* can further contribute to the strengthening of an intellectual International – a public sphere for critical investigation and reflection on culture and society. The workshop will have two main subthemes: 'Public Universities' (the struggle for open, public universities against the disruptive effects of privatisation and commercialisation) and 'PublicACTIONS' (new ways of making research public through open access and other forms of publishing). These sub-themes, and the workshop as a whole, are a means to further develop and sharpen the aims of the journal, and our tools to fulfil them.

Over the year 2013 that has just passed *Culture Unbound* published four thematic sections: 'Reports and Reflections From the Field: Current Issues in European Cultural Studies'; 'Feminist Cultural Studies'; 'Communicating Culture in Practice' and 'Pursuing the Trivial'. The first two sections were derived from the conference 'Current Issues in European Cultural Studies', which was held in Sweden in 2011. The first one 'Reports and Reflections From the Field' documented the attempts to map the current state of cultural studies in Europe that constituted an overarching goal of the conference. The second thematic section, 'Feminist Cultural Studies', focused on the encounter between feminism and cultural studies, which became one of the most important and appreciated issues of the conference. The third theme of the year, 'Communication Culture in Practice' discussed how cultural research can be applied outside of academia, focusing on particular challenges and opportunities that researchers have met when working with civic or commercial partners. The final theme, 'Pursuing the Trivial' addressed the social significance of popular culture past and present, and analysed how the seemingly trivial shapes our daily lives and therefore our perceptions of the world.

Together these four themes present a dialogue between academic self-reflection and an outward looking ambition to take part and place in contemporary society that is endemic to contemporary cultural research. While some of the themes and articles focus on the changing conditions for knowledge production in

general and the transformation of the field of cultural research in general, others discuss or exemplify how cultural research can be applied in new ways, approaching new kinds of materials from different perspectives. The themes all point towards the crucial interaction between the conditions for cultural research and the applications of that research, where changes in the economic and political context within which research is undertaken are important not only for the researchers themselves but also for what cultural research can hope to achieve and what role it can play in society.

Volume 6 continues to grapple with contemporary society. The opening theme, 'Capitalism: Current Crisis and Cultural Critique' offers a rich and comprehensive analysis of the present economic order. In thirteen articles a number of renowned academics discuss the (un)sustainability of the current mode of capitalist production, against the backdrop of the recent economic crisis and in the light of cultural and social theory. This theme, that plunges head first into the transformation of contemporary society, will be followed by a theme about 'Social Movements and Protests' that looks at societal changes from the perspective of resistance. Here the conditions for and consequences of a variety of activist and oppositional social movements are analysed in relation to aspects such as space, religion and new media. Later this year we will publish a section about 'Therapeutic Solutions and Discourses of Self Empowerment', discussing the emergence of a therapeutic culture, or even a structure of feeling, based around the notions of individual wellbeing and personal self-empowerment. 'Therapeutic Solutions' will be paired with an issue that demonstrates and critically addresses the multiple and disputed features of 'Sustainabilities': a set of articles that point to, test, and perhaps also transgress the limits to this notion so widely (mis)used in political, economic, social and environmental discourses. These are followed by a section on 'Changing orders of knowledge? Encyclopedias in transition' analysing the current transition and expansion of the concept of the encyclopaedia, and the consequences of the encounter of encyclopaedic knowledge – traditionally communicated in print – and the changed conditions for production of knowledge that digital media and networks bring with them. In the long term we also plan to explore themes such as 'Writing at Borders'; 'Concurrences: Archives and Voices in Postcolonial Places'; 'Circulating Stuff: Second-hand, Vintage and Retro'; 'The Instability of Intellectual Property' and 'Motion and Emotion'.

This new volume, which will be more extensive and ambitious than ever, thus marks a readiness and willingness to engage with some of the most acute problems and complex transformation that society faces. We hope and believe that this not only expresses the ambitions of *Culture Unbound* but also reflects a more general tendency within contemporary cultural research. In order to better accommodate the most recent developments within the field of cultural research, and facilitate intellectual discussion and critical analysis of contemporary issues we also plan to expand our repertoire of published material. In the coming year

Culture Unbound will therefore introduce a section of texts we have chosen to call ‘Unbound Ideas’. Here we welcome academic essays and texts of a somewhat shorter format and freer approach to scholarly convention than our usual full-length research articles. These essays will take different – perhaps speculative or conjectural – positions, or give a new perspective on pressing topics or recently emerged concerns within cultural research.

‘Unbound Ideas’ is not so much a ‘speakers corner’ offering space for personal opinions and heated debates, as a ‘scholars pulpit’ where the best parts of academic knowledge, insight and critical thought can be applied to crucial or complex issues in contemporary society, but without being ‘bound’ by the formal, methodological and stylistic constraints associated with more conventional research articles. Here we will offer space for texts that are by no means un-academic, but that might be allowed to wear their scholarship lightly: texts that are intelligent and learned, but not conventionally scholarly in the sense of being embroidered with references and restricted by conventional research aims. This is thus not a genre that requires less intellectual and stylistic deliberation and accuracy, but rather the contrary – it demands a different kind of rigour, with originality, topicality, relevance, importance and quality of argument being even more crucial than for those ordinary research articles which are obliged to give an overview of a particular field and present research findings. By embracing an essayistic approach to scholarly work, ‘Unbound Ideas’ will acknowledge the power of writing and rhetoric in the presentation of intellectual arguments, and encourage the submission of perhaps more experimental, though equally rigorous, forms, genres or modes of text.

Together with the rest of our themes for the coming year, ‘Unbound Ideas’ reflects our aim to embrace the best parts of academic thinking and writing. *Culture Unbound* is now firmly established as a leading international and interdisciplinary academic journal for cultural research, with a highly user-friendly open-access interface. You are all welcome to join in our enthralling explorations!

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