



Culture Unbound
Journal of **Current Cultural** Research

New Modes of Publishing for the Future of Democracy *Culture Unbound* 15-year Jubilee Symposium

December 5, 2024 at Louis de Geer Konsert & Kongress i Norrköping (program below)

From the first issue of *Culture Unbound* in 2009, which asked the still-relevant question “What’s the use of cultural research?”, the publication has been a forum for some of the most pressing issues of our time, publishing scholarship without cost to authors or readers on topics such as surveillance, sustainability, digitalization, climate change, natural and technological disasters, urban renewal and development, media modernity, and geomediality, and AI, just to name a few. Born digital and operating under a gold OA scheme, *Culture Unbound* continues to operate on the cutting-edge of publishing, most recently with the publication of two “experimental” special issues using innovative, interactive technology that invites readers to engage with the research process rather than a supposed “final product” of that process. Reflecting on the past 15 years of *Culture Unbound* through these themes, we recognize an implicit overarching concern with questions and concerns relating to the future of democracy.

The future of democracy is a concern for all of society, making it vital that discourse on topics such as those addressed in *Culture Unbound* must be open, transparent, and egalitarian to contribute to democratizing knowledge and its circulation. The implications and possibilities of this are essential to address, and we believe that the 15th anniversary of *Culture Unbound* is the perfect time to discuss how we can critically examine where we have been and where we need to go to help ensure the future of democracy. Our starting point for the *Culture Unbound* 15-year Jubilee Symposium in December 2024 will be how “experimenting” with new modes of publishing can enable us to be more inclusive – for example, of citizen scientists and marginalized voices – and foster cultural research that aims to serve democracy and humanity now and in the future. In addition to the topics already noted, discussions can also include topics such as futures, energy transition cultures, cyber/digital capitalism, artificial intelligence, attacks on and the role of journals in defense of the humanities, the role of collaborative writing and publishing in relation to the merging of humanities with the sciences, such as the medical humanities. Key elements of the discussions held at the Symposium will be integrated into a report being developed on the past and potential future(s) of *Culture Unbound*. In addition, a thematic special issue of *Culture Unbound* will be published for the 15-year Jubilee.

The symposium is public and free of charge, but please register before November 25, 2024, at the following link: <https://forms.gle/V2e6wDivFToucVh27>

For any questions, please contact victoria.martinez@liu.se or adam.bisno@liu.se.

Program

Thursday, 5 December 2024

- 13.00 Arrival reception (Vingen 8, de Geer Konsert & Kongress)
- 13.15 Opening introduction by the editors
- 13.30 Rebekka Kieswetter: *Editing as Enabling: Tentative Lessons from a Guest-Editorship*
Abstract: Taking my guest-editorship for the special issue [‘Publishing after Progress’](#) of the peer reviewed open access *Culture Machine* journal as a starting point, in this talk I will explore editing as an intellectual and political praxis. This praxis combines an interventionist engagement with current metrics- and productivity-driven institutional publishing frameworks and related normative ideas on scholarly work with addressing democratic concerns about knowledge equity and diversity in academia. In ‘Publishing after Progress’ I experimented with editorial practices such as open peer review, responsive workflows, and flexible timelines. My goal was to engage a diverse range of knowledge creating actors not merely as competitive producers of measurable research outputs but as active agents in shaping the conditions for academic work. This approach valued knowledge equity and diversity, scholarly agency, purposeful interaction, and emotional support above mere productivity and visibility metrics, while remaining committed to intellectual questioning, rigor, and debate. Sharing insights from this experience and discussing the potentials and challenges of the approach experimented with, during the symposium, I hope to contribute to and invite conversations about the value, scope, and purpose of editorial, review, and publishing work – in a time in which the value of scholarship is increasingly judged by its ability to generate reputational and economic benefits, while disparities in academia persist alongside environmental and humanitarian emergencies, as well as media, political, and institutional anti-intellectual charges increasingly threatening humanities disciplines.
- 14.00 Comments, discussion
Discussant: Anna Sparman
- 14.30 Isak Hammar: *(Un)boundary work? Historical and contemporary reflections on scholarly journals and their audiences*
Abstract: In the very first issue of *Culture Unbound*, the editorial theme introduction noted that: “Works written and published in the domestic language and distributed to a wider audience locally or nationally can, [...] sometimes be deemed more immediately useful to society than those with high excellence points in the big international journal.” In this talk, I would like to explore the topic of audience and readership, surely crucial for the future of democracy, by looking back to the introduction of disciplinary journals in many humanities disciplines towards the end of the 19th century, but also by exploring where we stand now, as well as where we are headed. Are the humanities today less engaged with broader audiences, local questions, policy makers and, as some clearly feared in 2009, and moving towards modes of academic publishing that first and foremost are about impact factors and career trajectories?
- 15.00 Comments, discussion
Discussant: Adam Bisno
- 15.30 Coffee/Fika break
- 15.45 Roundtable discussions
- 16.45 Closing comments by editorial team
- 17.00 End

Speakers & Discussants

Isak Hammar is Associate Professor of History and a researcher at the Department of History, Lund University. He also works as a publications coordinator for the Joint Faculties of Humanities and Theology with special focus on monograph publishing. His research is focused on the history of humanities and the history of knowledge. His main research project, financed by the Swedish Research Council (2022-2026) analyses the impact of scholarly journals for the development of the humanities during the 19th and early 20th century.

Rebekka Kieseewetter is a Research Fellow at the Centre for Postdigital Cultures (CPC), Coventry University, and a member of the [Post-Publishing research strand](#). From an intersectional feminist perspective, she works on the ethical, political, epistemic, and psychosocial dimensions of research, communication, and publishing using experimentation to enact more equitable, diverse, and supportive futures for scholarly knowledge creation and sharing. Rebekka also is a Research Fellow on the Research England Development Fund and Arcadia funded [Open Book Futures \(OBF\)](#) research project; a co-convenor of the [Radical Open Access Collective](#); a co-editor of the [Combinatorial Books: Gathering Flowers experimental book series](#) with Open Humanities Press; and an editorial board member of the experimental open access journal [continent](#).

Adam Bisno is a research coordinator at Tema Q, Linköping University. He received his PhD in history from Johns Hopkins University in 2018 and is the author of *Big Business and the Crisis of German Democracy* (Cambridge University Press, 2024). As the first official historian of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (2020–2023), he created the agency's public history program and participated in PASSIM ("Patents as Scientific Information, 1895-2020," funded by the European Research Council; PI: Eva Hemmungs Wirtén, Linköping University).

Anna Sparrman is Professor in Child Studies at the Department of Thematic Studies, Linköping University, Sweden and Visiting Professor in child culture at the Department of Arts and Cultural Studies, Inland Norway University. Sparrman is an interdisciplinary child studies scholar exploring and challenging taken for granted ideas about children. She undertakes both theoretical and empirical investigations and writes on empirical philosophy. Her latest projects are *Children's cultural heritage – the visual voices of the archive* and *Children as professional influencers and internet celebrities*.