

Call for Papers:

Historicizing the Impact and Organization of the Scandinavian Humanities

The modern history of the humanities displays a multitude of legitimizing and mobilizing claims for the value of humanistic knowledge. Sometimes, these strategies have been conflicting, reflecting a fundamental tension between reactive and generative strategies employed for the use—and defence—of the humanities. It may be asked whether humanists have been associated with tradition or progress, elites or outsiders, ivory towers or public intellectuals, the past or the future, and thus critique or construction of the present and future society.

With no doubt, the legitimizing narratives of the humanities have undergone profound changes in the modern era. Their social contract has been under constant renegotiation, which might indicate that the humanities have been particularly sensitive to the emergence of new political constellations. This implies several questions: What has it meant, at specific times and in specific contexts, to mobilize the humanities for engaging with societal problems? In which ways has the production of humanistic knowledge been organized in order to meet such ends? What are the conditions for a successful mobilization and organization of the humanities today, at a time characterized by epistemological doubt and a mounting pressure on academic knowledge to demonstrate its societal impact?

In November 2018, scholars from Sweden, Norway and Denmark who have touched upon these issues, gathered for a workshop at Uppsala University. The workshop generated many innovative perspectives, some of them in line with the new approaches on the history of the humanities that have emerged internationally in recent years and thus integrated previously heterogeneous fields of research. The gathering of Scandinavian scholars clearly demonstrated the value of conducting a transnational fusion of existing research, not least by enabling a comparison between the histories of the humanities in these different national contexts, while still maintaining a distinct focus on what has been specific to the wider region. The main themes discussed at the workshop can be summarized under the title ‘Historicizing the Impact and Organization of the Scandinavian Humanities’. We would hereby like to invite all the workshop participants, as well as other interested scholars, to submit paper proposals on this topic.

Our point of departure is to study the humanities from a wider knowledge political perspective, that is, as an integrated field rather than as individual disciplines. We look for contributions with wide chronological range and also encourage comparative approaches based on Scandinavian case studies. Empirically, this might encompass studies of how the impact and character of humanistic knowledge has been articulated in research and educational policy, how the position and organization of the humanities within these fields has changed, but also more general inquiries into knowledge political debates and theoretical reflections on the expected societal impact of the humanities. Together, the papers will provide new perspectives not only on the history of the humanities and their positioning within universities and in relation to other fields of knowledge, but also on other factors or phenomena of general historical interest that have had an impact on the devel-

opment of the humanities up until the present day, such as nationalism, democracy, welfare regimes, the public sphere, education systems, the media landscape, etc.

Further examples of issues discussed at the workshop include:

- The organization, production and circulation of humanistic knowledge, including overlooked actors and sites/arenas
- The positions and value of the humanities in Scandinavian welfare societies
- The role of the humanities in cultural policy and public debate
- The role of the humanities at universities
- The shifting position of the humanities in the long history of the modern organization of knowledge
- The professionalization and/or de-professionalization of the humanities
- The humanities in relation to narratives of modernity and the idea of progress
- Historical meanings of the concept of “impact”
- The relationship between different fields of research, such as history of the humanities, history of knowledge, history of science and intellectual history

Depending on the number of contributions, the publication of a thematic issue of a journal or an anthology will be considered.

Please send your paper proposal (max. 500 words) to hampus.osthgustafsson@idehist.uu.se no later than 1st April 2019.

Applicants will be informed about the outcome of their proposal by 1st June 2019. The aim will be to request full papers for peer review in late 2019, leading to a publication in the fall of 2020.