

## NEWSLETTER, No. 1 (September 2011)

This is the first newsletter from the newly founded Nordic network for comics research, also known as NNCORE. The network is funded by the Danish Research Council for a two year period starting from September 1, and the activities will culminate in an international conference to be held at the University of Helsinki, in the spring of 2013. NNCORE consists at present of 28 members from all the Nordic countries and Estonia, including both junior and senior scholars, who all have comics as an important component in their work.

The academic study of comics is experiencing a rapid growth, and with NNCORE we want to make sure that the Nordic countries are at the forefront of this development. Studying comics spans across many disciplines, from art and media studies to history and sociology, which offers a wide selection of possible connections between fields of research that are usually divided into different university departments. This characteristic makes it an exciting and challenging field of research, but it also means that it is necessary consciously to create platforms and spaces of interaction for comics research. NNCORE intends to provide such a platform. The result will hopefully be a strong Nordic network on comics research that will cooperate with other national and international networks, and that will generate new scholarship through collective research projects and the production of journal articles, anthologies and monographs.

### ***NNCORE according to its members***

*A Nordic network for comics researchers is, simply stated, a brilliant idea. Why? Because it brings together researchers with similar interests within a field where most may feel rather alone in their home countries. Because it also allows for a multi-faceted, collective and creative scholarly work on a unique medium that is able to cross boundaries on multiple levels. And because comics are seriously awesome.*

**Mervi Miettinen**, PhD student, University of Tampere, Finland,  
founding member of NNCORE



NNCORE is especially focused on the education of up-and-coming comics scholars. Together with experienced researchers within NNCORE the network's international Advisory Board will provide coaching and supervision of PhD students in relation to network meetings and conferences. With this focus we intend to strengthen future comics research as well as the national, Nordic and international infrastructure of the field.

It is furthermore our ambition to maintain a close relation to the national comics associations in the Nordic countries and generally interact and cooperate with partners outside of academia in all the Nordic countries. We will be very happy to present the network and discuss comics and comics research in schools, cultural institutions and libraries. Any ideas and initiatives in this respect are very welcome.

#### ***NNCORE according to its members***

*This exciting new venture has come along at just the right time: comics scholarship has taken on great momentum in the last few years, and has achieved a heightened academic profile. Nonetheless, we are still at a stage where comics researchers may find themselves isolated within their individual institutions. This network will enable a sense of community to be built and an ongoing dialogue to be pursued among both PhD students and established academics in the Nordic countries. The international (and intercontinental) composition of the Advisory Board will encourage further productive exchanges and projects. I'm thrilled to be involved!*

Dr. Ann Miller, Research Fellow, University of Leicester, UK,  
member of the NNCORE Advisory Board



#### **Who can join?**

We intend NNCORE to be an open platform for communication, common activities and collective publications for Nordic comics scholars and students, also beyond the 28 founding members. Anybody who is interested in comics from an academic perspective is therefore very welcome to contact us and become involved in our activities. As we would like to strengthen regional research and cooperation as the point of departure for broader international connections, you would have to be from one of the Nordic or the Baltic countries, or affiliated with an institution within the Nordic countries. So if you want to join or have ideas for cooperative research activities, please do not hesitate to contact us. For more information about NNCORE, see the network website on [...]. You are also welcome to contact the network manager, **Anne Magnussen**, PhD, Associate Professor, University of Southern Denmark, Denmark, E-mail [magnussen@hist.sdu.dk](mailto:magnussen@hist.sdu.dk) or one of the other members of the steering group: **Fredrik Strömberg**, PhD student, Malmö University, Sweden, E-mail [sekventiellt@me.com](mailto:sekventiellt@me.com); **Kai Mikkonen**, PhD, Associate Professor, University of Helsinki, Finland, email [kai.mikkonen@helsinki.fi](mailto:kai.mikkonen@helsinki.fi); **Margareta Wallin Victorin**, PhD, Senior Lecturer, Linnaeus University, Sweden, E-mail [margareta.wallin-wictorin@lnu.se](mailto:margareta.wallin-wictorin@lnu.se); **Michael Prince**, PhD, Associate Professor, University of Agder, Kristiansand, Norway, E-mail [michael.j.prince@uia.no](mailto:michael.j.prince@uia.no); **Michael F. Scholz**, Dr. phil.habil., Professor, Gotland University, Sweden, E-mail [michael.scholz@hgo.se](mailto:michael.scholz@hgo.se); **Ralf Kauranen**, PhD, Researcher, Åbo Akademi University, Finland, E-mail [rkaurane@abo.fi](mailto:rkaurane@abo.fi); **Rikke Platz Cortsen**, PhD student, University of Copenhagen, Denmark, E-mail [rpc@hum.ku.dk](mailto:rpc@hum.ku.dk); **Svenn-Arve Myklebost**, PhD student, University of Bergen, Norway, E-mail [Svenn-Arve.Myklebost@if.uib.no](mailto:Svenn-Arve.Myklebost@if.uib.no); **Øyvind Vågnes**, PhD, Postdoctoral fellow, University of Bergen, Norway, E-mail [ov@nomadikon.net](mailto:ov@nomadikon.net).

#### ***NNCORE according to its members***

*The comic is at present one of the most vital forms of expression that we know. Its global influence is unquestioned and its aesthetic hybridity is a source of genuine complexity. The need for critical and analytical readings of comics has never been bigger. Over the next years, the Nordic research network will participate in shaping new directions within this field and will function as a meeting place for Nordic researchers who want to develop and rethink comics theory in the broadest possible sense.*

Øyvind Vågnes, senior researcher, University of Bergen, Norway,  
founding member and part of the NNCORE steering group



#### **NNCORE's first meeting: Odense, October 27-29**

The network will have its founding meeting October 27-29, 2011 at the University of Southern Denmark in Odense. The meeting will be the first time that the NNCORE members get together and discuss plans, ideas and interests. To kick off the meeting, there will be a panel discussion of the future possibilities of comics research with a specific focus on Nordic comics research. The panel will include three representatives from our six-member Advisory Board, namely Dr Bart Beaty, Professor at the University of Calgary, Dr Ann Miller, Research Fellow at University of Leicester and Dr Roger Sabin, from the University of the Arts, Central St.

Martin's in London. The thematic groups described below will discuss their future plans and present them for the Network, and we have invited a representative from each of the major European comics research networks, IBDS and ComFor to discuss our long term plans and draw on their network experience.

The meeting is open also for people who are not members of NNCORE, but interested in comics research one way or another. We especially welcome MA students who include comics in their MA theses. There is no participation fee, but registration before October 1 is necessary. Please contact Anne Magnussen for information and/or registration.

#### ***NNCORE according to its members***

*The Nordic countries hold a unique position in relation to comics culture, with a considerable publication of comics within the Franco-Belgian tradition, a strong representation of superhero comics and a new and important focus on Manga. In combination with a research tradition that is open to new methods and strategies, this places the Nordic countries in a strong position when it comes to the study of the comics' distinct form of expression. The Nordic perspective offers a flexible perspective on the complex and colorful medium of comics, and a Nordic network for comics research constitutes an important active in the further development of comics research.*

Steen Christiansen, Associate Professor, Aalborg University, Denmark,  
founding member of NNCORE



#### **THEMES AND GROUPS**

The core activities in NNCORE are centered around six thematic groups on the following themes. As of fall 2011 the groups are:

##### **[A] Telling stories, challenging convention**

The group focuses on the way in which comics communicate narratives within complex networks of visual and textual signs, activating time and space in ways that are unique for the comics medium. The group includes a focus on how the specific ways of telling stories in comics influence ways of imagining the world. Contact: Fredrik Strömberg, [sekventiellt@me.com](mailto:sekventiellt@me.com).

##### **[B] Comics in between: Intertextuality and inspiration**

As a multimodal medium, comics are positioned at the intersection of different media, drawing on literature, film, visual art generally, and more recently, the Internet. The group will study the ways in which different media interact and inspire each other through references, copies, pastiche, caricatures etc. and discuss how this intertextuality/intermediality shape both comics and other media. Contact: Michael Prince, [michael.j.prince@uia.no](mailto:michael.j.prince@uia.no).

##### **[C] Contesting – and creating – identities and communities**

Traditionally, many comics especially for children have participated in reproducing dominant national identities, but lately the medium has started more consistently to question these identities through counter narratives and the inclusion of the individual and of minorities. The emergence of many comics (auto)biographies is one excellent example of this. Another is comics that focus on conflicting national pasts and memories. The group will study this development from different historical and geographical perspectives. Contact: Øyvind Vågnes, [ov@nomadikon.net](mailto:ov@nomadikon.net).

##### **[D] The power of comics: propaganda and censorship**

The group will study examples of how comics have been said to explicitly influence society, as political and social critique; as state propaganda or as a potentially damaging influence on children. The group will include both current and historical perspectives, with examples such as war propaganda and the 1950s debates about comics as a bad influence on children. It will cooperate with the collective research project

*Censorship, self-censorship and other limitations*, University of Copenhagen. Contact: Michael Scholz [michael.scholz@hgo.se](mailto:michael.scholz@hgo.se).

**[E] Manga and the globalization of comics**

Due to its intermedial nature contemporary comics have become a global phenomenon, and comic cultures around the world influence each other in style and themes. This has been particularly significant in regards to Japanese manga, which has become one of the most popular comic genres in Europe, the US, as well as in other Asian countries. The group will study Japanese and other Asian comics as a popular cultural phenomenon in its own right, as well as focus on the mutual interaction of comic cultures in a globalized context. Contact: Anne Magnussen, [magnussen@hist.sdu.dk](mailto:magnussen@hist.sdu.dk) for further information.

**[F] Learning from and through Comics: comics as a didactic tool**

Comics hold a didactic potential due to their specific ways of telling stories in combinations of word and image, and the group will discuss how comics can be used on all educational levels, incl. a focus on visual literacy. The group is part of an expanding field, e.g. with the creation of the first academic journal. The group will work together with the *Centre for Children's Literature*, Aarhus University, Denmark. Contact: Rikke Platz Cortsen [rpc@hum.ku.dk](mailto:rpc@hum.ku.dk).

**SOMETHING WE SHOULD KNOW?**

Please contact one of the members of the steering group (see above) if you have some news you want to put in the newsletter or have questions about NNCORE activities and objectives.

And check out our website for more information on news, activities and other information on [www.sdu.dk/nncore](http://www.sdu.dk/nncore).