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Editorial

Rethinking Culture – Making Change

**Viktorija Čeginskas, Eerika Koskinen-Koivisto
& Tytti Steel**

When news of the COVID-19 pandemic went global in March 2020, people could not yet estimate the extent of how much the pandemic would affect their private and professional lives as well as their access and rights to public space. In 2020 and 2021, many European societies were in lockdown repeatedly. New regulations that limited interpersonal contacts reduced access to sites, and rules on social distancing, travel restrictions and quarantines affected not only our personal but also our work lives. Children could no longer go to school or day care, and, in some countries, even playgrounds were closed. People were asked to work from home, which called for new coping strategies to respond to work and family needs. Social life came to a halt when bars, restaurants, cinemas, theatres, sports facilities, libraries, archives, museums and other places had to be closed to reduce the risk of infection. The experience of such unprecedented times also called for rethinking previous approaches in academia. Conducting research and teaching online and getting used to new types of online conferences were among the activities that turned out to have both positive and negative sides.

In our themed call *Rethinking Culture – Making Change*, we asked for articles discussing various ways of making change through applied ethnographic and ethnological research, or texts that discussed diverse ways of making an impact on society and academia based on the participation and collaboration of various interest groups in research.

In her article ‘Slow Activism and the Cultivation of Environmental Stewardship in Rural Spaces’, Katherine Borland examines the participation and collaboration of various interest groups in environmental stewardship in Scioto County, Ohio, USA. Drawing on the archives of the Ohio Field School, she explores the role of research in social activism and citizen-science initiatives as well as in processes of decision-making. Borland argues that one way of making an impact through research is to use participatory approaches and collaborate with stakeholders outside academia. She suggests looking for alterna-

tive research strategies, such as the slow activism of rural citizen scientists, in which the role of the researcher/research group is one of social activist(s) and the aim is to transform local residents into stewards of their own forests and watersheds. According to her, activist scholarship can take a variety of forms depending on the contextual situation in which a researcher operates by showing that such approaches require methods and epistemologies that make room for different actors and their worldviews.

In their article “Stadi Derby and the Securitization of Urban Public Space”, Miira Kuvaja and Pia Olsson discuss the ambiguous nature of public space and the right to public space, with a special focus on the general public, bystanders and ordinary football spectators. By evaluating both the media coverage surrounding the football derbies in Helsinki and the opinions and experiences they evoke beyond the fan base, Kuvaja and Olsson discuss how media coverage can change people’s understanding of public space. They examine diverse approaches and mechanisms of using and controlling public space, and what is considered acceptable behaviour in it. In their conclusion, they emphasise the need to create dialogue and multivocality in research.

In this issue, we have two thematic review articles. The first is by Pilvi Hämeenaho and Miia Sainio, who report on their research project on pupils’ well-being and the impact of remote schooling on pupils’ learning outcomes during the pandemic. In their review article ‘Lessons from Remote School and Work – New Vistas for Research on Children’s Well-Being’, they describe both positive and negative effects of remote and online schooling. While the use of digital tools can provide new opportunities for teaching and interacting with pupils, their research report also highlights that the closing of schools during the pandemic affected pupils with a disadvantaged socio-economic background in particular. Their project supports the view that differences in skills and family support have an impact on children’s equal opportunities for learning, participation and academic success in remote/online school environments. In their paper, Hämeenaho and Sainio emphasise the need to consider the importance of the home environment for future digital and hybrid school approaches to ensure equal opportunities and adequate support for all pupils in digital learning environments.

In the second review article ‘Art in the Community: Heritage and New Collaborative Practices’, Nevena Škrbić Alempijević, Josip Zanki and Maja Flajsig analyse the opportunities and challenges in working with different stakeholders of a local cultural scene to affirm, negotiate or redefine culture-building strategies. Drawing on the project ‘Art in the Community: Redefining Heritage of the Association of Artists “Zemlja” (Croatia, 2018 – 2020)’, which included local artists from Hlebine and students of Visual Arts and Ethnology and

Cultural Anthropology from Zagreb, the authors discuss various initiatives of culture-making and place-making at the intersection of ethnology and cultural anthropology, art and cultural politics. Their focus is on the ways in which joint ethnological and artistic involvement can change the dynamics within a local community in terms of how research can produce knowledge that can also be used in practice and what impact it can make beyond academia.

One of the biggest highlights among the research community of ethnologists, folklorists and anthropologists is always the biannual SIEF congress. The 15th SIEF Conference ‘Breaking the Rules? Power, Participation, Transgressions’ organised by the University of Helsinki addressed discourses and practices of making, breaking, reinterpreting and transgressing rules as a means of change in social, economic, political, cultural and academic contexts. Instead of meeting face to face and enjoying the unusually hot days and long white nights in Helsinki, all panels, workshops, roundtables and coffee breaks and parties took place online in the virtual conference space. Our issue features a report on the SIEF conference written by four young scholars, who not only describe the different events in detail but also discuss the first virtual SIEF conference from their perspectives. In addition to the conference report, this issue features two interesting book reviews of recent ethnological PhD theses.

We would like to express our heartfelt thanks to all the authors, reviewers and editors of this issue. We need collaboration to do research and get our papers published, and together, through research, we can contribute to making change and making the world a better place.

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