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## **Editorial**

# **Hope in Times of Crisis and Transformation**

## **Viktorija L.A. Čeginskas, Maija Mäki & Kirsi Sonck-Rautio**

Global climate and ecological emergencies, biodiversity loss, societal polarisation, war, hunger, soaring energy prices and inflation are some of the simultaneous crises that humanity is facing today. The impacts of recent environmental and macroeconomic developments have been aggravated by severe geopolitical conflicts and social tensions (Bjerregaard & Kverndokk 2018; Jansen 2021). Demanding crises that need to be resolved also occur in everyday life. Burnout, unemployment, poverty, health problems and other existential experiences can all be considered personal crises, which makes it challenging for people to imagine a better future. Experiences of social injustice, inequality and societal transformations raise fears and cause emotional stress that often unleash a negative spiral (Turner 2020; Lockwood 2020).

It is often easier to engage with hope than to speak about the future or present solutions that can help tackle immediate challenges. Hope is both an emotional resource in difficult times and a power of agency that prompts action. The emotional content and idea of hope empowers individuals to act during critical situations and to channel their agency in a more resilient direction. Through hope, people aspire to bring about transformation and positive changes, whether in their own lives or in society, for tackling global challenges and crises (Bryant & Knight 2019). Hope for positive change often translates into concrete actions, like with the Finnish students who opposed educational cuts planned by the Finnish government during Autumn of 2023. Student demonstrations took place all over Finland, and in Turku students took over a building shared by two universities, the Swedish-speaking Åbo Akademi University and Finnish-speaking University of Turku. The cover picture of this issue is from this occupation, which brought together students from different universities. The student activism has resulted in public discussion about the current problems in academic culture, such as mental health problems and burnout at the personal level, as well as structural problems, for instance under-funded departments and the

constant pressure to achieve measurable results. At the same time, student activism can be seen as a glimmer of hope when a large number of young adults seek to demonstrate the weaknesses of the system and the urgent need for changes.

In this theme issue (2/2023) of *Ethnologia Fennica*, we ask the following questions: Where can hope be found, and how? Under what circumstances does it emerge and flourish? What kinds of narratives are constructed based on hope? In what kinds of personally overwhelming or global crises and transformations can hope help people imagine new alternatives and become resilient and active? This issue contains three research articles that contribute, from different perspectives, to the theme of hope in times of crisis and transformation. Galina Kallio introduce us to her intensive ethnographic fieldwork with regeneratively oriented farmers, who have started to build a radically different life by pursuing livelihoods through diversified small-scale farming. Kallio uses the concept of 'hope as action' to show how hope is manifested in the work and everyday lives of the farmers. In her article, Kallio analyses both hope and hopelessness from the perspective of temporality, and by doing so, she manages to create a better understanding of whose hopes are being mobilised through regenerative agriculture and how and why they are being mobilised.

The article by Kristiina Korjonen-Kuusipuro and Sari Tuuva-Hongisto evaluates how hope is present in young people's lives in online environments and everyday practices. Korjonen-Kuusipuro and Tuuva-Hongisto have worked among Finnish ninth graders and noticed that some of them are acting as goodwill ambassadors by doing small things, like sending positive messages or hearts to important people in their lives. Korjonen-Kuusipuro and Tuuva-Hongisto analyse these tiny everyday online practices within the context of future-oriented hope. They conclude that these examples of small-scale agency can lead to more considerable results, well-being and friendships in the online environments. Jenni Rinne and Pia Olsson analyse in their article two rapid-response questionnaires by the Finnish Literature Society. The questionnaires were collected during the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's rapidly expanding war of aggression against Ukraine. The main idea in the article is to look at the affective practices that people adopt to negotiate the various emotions aroused by global crises. People have tried to keep their daily routines as normal as possible, they have produced and shared humorous materials via social media, and they have engaged in grassroots actions and activism. Rinne and Olsson discuss these practices as a way of allowing room for hope and engendering hopefulness for a better future.

This issue of *Ethnologia Fennica* also includes two research articles that fall outside the current theme of focus. The article by Neža Čebren Lipovec reflects on a participatory research initiative involving place attachment and heritage discourses. Local inhabitants of Koper/Capodistria, Slovenia, took part in memory evenings. In the events, locals shared their personal and collective memories of sites in the city's old town. According to Lipovec, the current theory and practice of built heritage conservation must engage more with people-centred approaches, particularly in contested spaces. The facilitators of the group meetings, in this case memory evenings, learned about possibilities to share the hidden and silenced memories of marginalised groups; the evenings made it possible for those people to be heard by the majority population of the city.

Studying the history of European ethnology is essential for understanding the current issues and developments of our discipline. In the second article outside the current theme, Marleen Metslaid explores the work of the Estonian ethnologist Ilmar Talve and how he adapted to Swedish academia while working at the Institute of Folklife Research in 1945–1959. Later, Talve was known as a professor of ethnology at the University of Turku in Finland. Metslaid focuses on the complex nature of an émigré position in the academic world and its influences. Also, the ways in which Sigurd Erixon, the director of the Institute of Folklife Research, influenced the work of Ilmar Talve and Finnish ethnology are interesting subjects in this article.

The issue includes two book reviews. Linda Huldén has written a review of Karin Sandell's doctoral thesis. The extremely timely and relevant topic of study is online hate speech directed at Swedish speakers in Finland. In a second book review, Art Leete reviews Ulla Kallberg's doctoral thesis. The topic of Kallberg's thesis is the self-image of sailors, viewed from the perspective of their everyday practices. Kallberg has used as archival data written questionnaire responses from the 1960s, collected by Professor Ilmar Talve at the University of Turku. It is interesting how the old archival materials can be used for the purposes of current research.

Finally, this issue includes three conference reports. Sanna Karimäki-Nuutinen has written a report on the IX Finnish Conference on Cultural Policy Research, held in Rovaniemi in April 2023. Päivi Leinonen shares her impressions of the 16<sup>th</sup> SIEF Congress, held in Brno, Czech Republic, in June 2023. Finally, Alicja Staniszevska reports on the Biennial Conference of the Finnish Anthropological Society, held in Rovaniemi in March 2023.

With this issue focusing on hope, we wish to contribute to scholarship on societal transform in times where many feel hopeless and in need of positive

change. We see hope as a powerful tool for agency and acknowledge the need for research focusing on the prospects of our discipline to grow and be an advocate for hope in troubled times.

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Cover photo: Maija Mäki 2023. *Representation of the student activism at the University of Turku, Finland. "University is occupied. University is not a corporation."*