



Editorial

Methods in Contemporary Ethnology

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For this issue of *Ethnologia Fennica*, we called for research and review articles that focus on the choices and use of different methods in ethnology and related disciplines. Although methods concern all research and are a fundamental part of every research article, we feel that there is still room for further reflection on the processes underpinning our methodological work. Recently, ethnographical methods focusing on sensory, affective and urban ethnography have generated much interest and discussion within Finnish ethnology, and these methods have also been well represented in the latest issues of *Ethnologia Fennica*. With the current issue, we wanted to encourage more dialogue on what other kinds of methods and ethnographical variations are being used, and why. We provided space for researchers to reflect on the choices, challenges and benefits of their chosen methods, as well as on the need to apply different methodological variations or even create new methods in their work. We were also interested in digital technologies, multidisciplinary research and ethical concerns related to the different methods.

Our contributors responded wholeheartedly, offering many nuanced reflections on methods of both producing and analysing research material. Indeed, the call was so successful that we decided to publish two issues under the same theme. The articles included in this first volume of “Methods in Contemporary Ethnology” introduce new innovative fieldwork methods and look at the uses of established methods and theories from new angles. We hope that the articles provide food for thought for all ethnologists as they ponder their own methodological choices.

In the first research article, **Juhana Venäläinen** explores on-site nature experiences in mire landscapes and their digital counterparts, photographs found on Instagram. Venäläinen has created a hybrid methodology that combines ethnographic fieldwork with computer vision analysis. The participants in the ethnographic senso-digital walks were asked to discuss their sensory nature experiences and use of digital tools to record and share their experiences

with others. The AI-based analysis focused on image clustering, using a dataset of more than 6000 Instagram images from the Patvinsuo mire. By combining such approaches, Venäläinen makes an important observation that instead of juxtaposing qualitative ethnographic and quantitative AI-based analysis, combining them can benefit both approaches. In the context of this article, the methodological experiment showed how digital mediations shape engagement with nature and also how ethnography reveals something about the intersection between algorithmic logic and cultural representations of nature.

In the second article, **Yonas Tesema** discusses the method of participant observation from the viewpoint of access. He has collected research material for his PhD thesis from a company in Ethiopia, which is, as Tesema points out, an ethnically divided society. He raises the question of a shared ethnic background as a possibility to build friendship and trust and eventually gain access to a company that does not necessarily welcome researchers. In his case, the shared ethnic background worked as a gateway to fieldwork, which in another case and for a person with another background may have been denied. Tesema's article also discusses how ethnic privilege can create both possibilities and ethical dilemmas. He likewise illustrates the importance of taking the relationship dynamics that are formed during fieldwork into consideration when writing the ethnography.

Caroline Reinhammar's article analyses how common sense is constructed and used in social media narratives about climate change denial. She has collected data from social media sites, focusing on narratives that combine the climate change warnings issued by the scientific community with the case of Galileo Galilei, the Inquisition, authoritarianism and the economy. In her methodological discussion, she suggests that to best capture and analyse the narratives, critical folkloristics and particularly Fredric Jameson's four-fold model for allegorical analysis are needed because they help reveal how the narratives are connected to cultural, historical, and political frameworks and help us understand their political influence.

In the final research article included in this issue, **Anne Häkkinen, Avanti Chajed, Johanna Ylipulli, Dani Kalarikalayil Raju** and **Aale Luusua** look at the possibilities offered by playfulness and creativity through the application of cultural probes as a research method. Cultural probes, originally developed as a method in design anthropology, encourage creative ways of self-documentation by participants and can make it possible for them to conduct investigations without the researcher's presence. Different probes can be sent to research participants, and they may include playful activities like drawing and journalling. Häkkinen, Chajed, Ylipulli, Raju and Luusua introduce three case studies and show how this experimental method can provide

understanding in multidisciplinary and multicultural research settings and with topics that might otherwise be difficult to grasp when using more conventional methods, such as interviews. They also discuss how the method may work better in some social and cultural settings than others and emphasise the need to scrutinise the method critically and consider the epistemological understanding behind its use.

Creativity is also the focus of a commentary article by **Tytti Suominen**, who examines the creative thinking of work counsellors and its connections to methodological creativity in research. According to Suominen, everyday creativity is connected to imagination and flexible and spontaneous thinking. Creative thinking and the ability to find new solutions in different situations are needed in working life but also in methodological work in research. She also notes that an ethnological understanding of everyday life and its processes has something to offer to our understanding of the concept of creativity. Creativity is not just an individual or psychological process; it also involves historical, social and cultural elements. Especially the cultural aspects of creativity could be scrutinised more, which would be a task for ethnologists.

In addition to the articles, this issue also contains three conference reports. **Johanna Pohtinen** attended the *Artefacta* conference, held on 13–14 February 2025 in Helsinki. *Artefacta* is a conference for those involved with research on materiality and objects. Even though the programme covered multiple topics related to materiality, Pohtinen found they shared a common thread of sustainability and the environmental impact of objects.

The *Ethnos Spring Seminar*, held in Helsinki on the 28th of March 2025, focused on the theme of power in the partnerships between museums and ethnology. As recounted by **Helena Laukkoski**, the seminar offered presentations on the relationship between museums and ethnology, followed by a panel discussion focused on enhancing their collaboration. The ties between ethnologists and the museum field have strong roots, and as Laukkoski points out, the methods of creative co-creation are familiar to both. However, in practice the collaborative projects between museums and universities need thorough planning so that they will serve the needs of both organisations.

Eerika Koskinen-Koivisto and **Anna Kajander** participated in the Digital Research Data and Human Sciences (DRDHum) conference, which was held on 10–12 December 2024 in Joensuu. In the report, they discuss the need to develop methods that combine qualitative and digital/AI-based tools for gathering and analysing data. In the context of humanistically driven digital methods, it is important to discuss both the successes as well as the problems that may concern, for instance, the development, use, and ethics of the tools.

We dedicate this issue to our beloved and greatly missed colleague **Jenni Rinne**. We thank **Päivi Leinonen**, **Eino Heikkilä** and **Maija Mäki** for composing a thoughtful eulogy for Jenni, reminding us of her incredible personality and her multiple roles in the field of ethnology.

We would also like to thank Maija Mäki and **Kirsi Sonck-Rautio** for leading *Ethnologia Fennica* during the past three years. **Inkeri Hakamies** and Anna Kajander will continue their work as Editors-in-Chief for the next three-year-period. Both this year's issues have been edited with the support of our Guest-Editor-in-Chief Johanna Pohtinen, whose insight and input throughout the process, starting from drafting the call for papers, has been invaluable.

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