Editorial
Methods in Contemporary Ethnology II

Inkeri Hakamies, Anna Kajander & Johanna Pohtinen

Methods are an essential and inevitable part of all research processes, intertwined with collecting, producing and analysing research materials. The chosen methodologies define the structure and outcomes of the project. Instead of holding on to familiar and commonly used methods, researchers must – or at least *should* – take the time to consider their methodological choices and evaluate different approaches to or variations of a particular method that would help them achieve better results. New theoretical discussions and technological advances are constantly providing ethnologists with more options, and even classic fields of study like ethnography have spurred new research approaches, such as autoethnography, digital ethnography, visual ethnography and sensory ethnography. The chosen method must relate to the questions one wants to answer. If not chosen carefully, the perspectives adopted and questions being posed can render research material useless or the results of the research pointless and complicate the entire research process (Jönsson and Nilsson 2017, 8). Conversely, any research material can become an invaluable source when approached with relevant questions and methods. In the end, the question is about what kind of knowledge we can produce with each method.

Despite the essential role of methods in research, much of the methodological work and reflections remain outside the discussion presented in research articles due to limited space. The failed experiments and the uncertainties involved with undoubtedly all research projects are seldom reported, even though they would be pedagogically quite useful especially for early-career researchers. Ethnologists have also been accused of glossing over their methods or mystifying the analytical process, presenting it simply as the "ethnological gaze" (Jouhki and Steel 2014, 14; Löfgren 2014, 121). To better understand different methodological options and make informed choices, more conversations are needed in which researchers share their ideas and experiences. The conversations may occur, for instance, in face-to-face meetings, workshops and conferences – in interaction with constantly revised methodological lit-

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erature. We are pleased that *Ethnologia Fennica* can also provide such a space for ethnologists to reflect on and update their methodological knowledge.

This issue of *Ethnologia Fennica* is the second part of a double issue that focuses on methodological work and the variations and usage of different methods in contemporary ethnology and other related disciplines. *Ethnologia Fennica* has also dealt with methods in previous issues, but the theme has usually been more focused, such as in the 2/24 issue "Sensing the Urban", which centred on sensory methods in urban research. In the current double issue, contributors were free to choose their approach to the discussion. The current 2/25 issue provides four different viewpoints on methods in three research articles and one review article.

Researchers in different fields related to ethnology and cultural studies often meet and observe people in their own environments. Since the research settings and questions vary, sometimes even within a single project, new variations and methodological developments are needed. In the first research article, **Inkeri Aula, Masood Masoodian** and **Alicia Núñez García** discuss a multidisciplinary project focused on Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH). They argue that experiences, stories and embodied knowledge are all connected with heritage sites and deepen people's connection to the past. To preserve and share such practices, their research group has adapted and developed two kinds of multisensory narrative methods: on-site walking interviews, which draw inspiration from the method of sensobiographic walking, and narrative workshops, which combine a storytelling circle and sensory activities. They present two case studies that focus on the ICH of megalithic sites in Portugal and Scotland and discuss the methods, engagements with local communities, and possibilities to use the gathered data.

In the second article, **Sauli Okker** applies perhaps more traditional and familiar methods: participant observation, interviews and photographs. The author did volunteer work at a punk festival, *Hässäkkä-Päivät*, observing the values that are connected to the festival space Tukikohta and how those values are realised during the event. Okker applied the concept of heterotopia to analyse the space as a counter-space that fosters values like independence and inclusivity. The article reflects on the researcher's insider position and participatory methods and how they are intertwined with conceptual work. When examining a community as a heterotopia and understanding its values in practice, it is beneficial for researchers to methodologically position themselves inside the phenomenon, as Okker has done through participating in the event as a volunteer.

Both above-mentioned articles discuss methods that take the researchers to physical sites and connect them with communities. In the third research

article, **Danila Rygovskiy** introduces an ethnographic research project that is "partially remote". He focuses on a restricted religious community of Russian Old Believers, *Chasovennye*. Due to contemporary circumstances, the possibilities to do on-site fieldwork with the Chasovennye community is quite limited. In the article, Rygovskiy reflects on combining fieldwork with writings produced by the community, discusses the challenges of using written sources in ethnographic research and shows that the combination of methods – on-site ethnography and ethnographic reading of the texts – provides a deeper understanding of each respective source.

This issue also contains a cross-disciplinary review article by anthropologist **Małgorzata Kowalska** and palaeontologist **Björn Kröger,** in which the authors discuss the need for multidisciplinary work for more responsive and meaningful research on local environments and nature conservation. The article is written in the form of a conversation, and the choice of format reflects the authors' aims of producing novel knowledge and more dialogue between scientific disciplines to discover just what matters most to communities and societies. Their focus is especially on the changes taking place in two lakes, which are personally meaningful for them. They compare existing research and knowledge production about the conditions of the lakes with their personal experiences and observations about the changes that have occurred in the lakes' ecosystems in recent years. They suggest bringing together the methods and theoretical understandings of different disciplines to create more comprehensive research and understanding instead of merely adopting a focus that is overly narrow and instrumental. In this case, it would mean combining anthropological and cultural knowledge with the scientific methods of environmental research.

The issue provides four reviews of doctoral theses, two book reviews and three conference reports. In her doctoral study, "Engaging with Wicked Heritage Problems. The Societal Agency of Museums in Flux in Contemporary Finland", **Mari Viita-aho** investigates how contemporary museums deal with participation, colonialism and climate change in their heritagisation processes. Viita-aho has made use of the practice of triangulating materials and methods, such as semi-structured interviews, observation and the documenting of museum exhibitions, as well as critical close reading, object analysis and a discursive approach. She also analyses the methods that museums employ to engage people in their activities. As **Katriina Siivonen** points out in her review, the thesis raises further questions about how to define the "users" of museums and heritage and how museums can involve people to solve wicked problems in society.

Eino Heikkilä's thesis "Narratiivinen tutkijuus ja tietäminen etnografiassa" *(Narrative subject of the researcher and knowing in ethnography)* delves deeply into the nature of ethnographic knowledge. In his work, Heikkilä has analysed seventeen ethnographic theses completed at Finnish universities between

2010 and 2020. As **Ilona Raunola** notes, Heikkilä's thesis is a meta-study of doctoral theses, and, while examining them as ethnographic narratives, the author also produces one himself. According to Raunola, Heikkilä's thesis draws attention to the ways in which researchers and ethnographers learn to write. Subsequently, she calls for a more conscious approach to writing.

What makes **Terhi Pietiläinen**'s thesis interesting is that it focuses on the oral histories of Vyborg's residents – a group of displaced Karelians that has received less attention so far, as **Anne Heimo** points out – but also that its research process has expanded over the past two decades, thus showing us concretely how ways of doing ethnological fieldwork and analysis are being updated. The thesis is based on interviews conducted with video-recorders – a novel method in the early 2000s. As Heimo also notes, through the author's reflective process, the thesis becomes an examination of not only the original research material but also of the ways in which oral histories are produced and how the researcher's later experiences and societal changes have influenced their interpretation.

The researcher's own experiences also play a role in **Johanna Latva**'s thesis, analysed by **Arja Turunen.** The four articles included in the thesis focus on the meanings attributed to women's baldness, the role of hair in expressing gender roles and the emotional and sensory experiences of women who have lost their hair. Turunen points out that the idea behind Latva's thesis is connected with the author's own experiences. The research brings a new perspective to a social and cultural phenomena that has been overlooked in previous studies, thus making it an example of the type of "ethnological attitude" that is important for analysing culture and society.

In addition to the reviews of doctoral theses, the issue includes two book reviews. **Tuija Hovi** analyses a non-fiction book about sacred trees (*Pyhät puut*) by **Reetta Ranta.** Instead of introducing a research question and providing analysis, the book draws from various disciplines, such as folklore, religion and scientific research, and different research materials, such as archival materials of the Finnish Literature Society, interviews conducted by the author and her personal experiences and memories**.** Hovi writes that Ranta "illustrates how tradition lives and evolves with the values of its time" and notes how knowledge about traditional sites, such as sacred groves, could be linked to sustainability and the protection of forests. **Sandra Kvist**'s review introduces the second volume in a series of anthologies published by the Society of Swedish Literature in Finland. The volume has been edited by **Anna-Maria Åström** and **Fredrik Nilsson** and focuses on themes at the core of ethnology: homes, things and the changing spaces of everyday life. While the authors' empirical materials and methods of producing them – questionnaires and interviews – are not that novel, the volume shows that with new analytical tools and a new

conceptual framework, they can still produce new ideas and interpretations. As Kvist writes, the book sheds light on how material objects were not only passively used in history but also on how they also actively shaped it.

The issue also includes three conference reports. **Matylda Elson** and **Oleksandr Tsilyi** attended the 36th International Nordic Ethnology and Folklore Conference (NEFK2025, 11–14 June) in Turku, while **Alicja Staniszewska** joined the 17th International Society for Ethnology and Folklore (SIEF 2025, 3–6 June) in Aberdeen and **Robert Statkiewicz** the Finnish Anthropological Society Biennial Conference (FAS2025, 16–18 June) in Helsinki.

The disciplines of ethnology and cultural studies have recently received sad news about the passing of two eminent professors. This issue contains an obituary for University of Tartu Professor of Cultural Studies **Kristin Kuutma**, written by her colleagues Katriina Siivonen and **Pauliina Harvilahti**, and an obituary for Professor Emeritus of Ethnology **Pekka Leimu** by Professor Emerita **Helena Ruotsala.**

In the past year, the editorial team of *Ethnologia Fennica* has also seen some changes. We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to **Viktorija Čeginskas** and **Tomislav Oroz** for their work on the journal over the years and welcome new members: Ilona Raunola (editor) and **Katariina Murtolahti** (sub-editor).

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Cover image: a LEGO figurine handling objects in an office cubicle. The photo was taken at the Museum of Play's LEGO building competition, which had a 'museum' theme. Photo: Inkeri Hakamies, 2022.