



## Outi Fingerroos, Professor of Ethnology at Jyväskylä University

Docent Outi Fingerroos was named professor in ethnology at Jyväskylä University in August 2014. Fingerroos was born in 1974 in Paimio, in Southwestern Finland, near Turku. She completed her doctoral thesis in comparative religion at the University of Turku in 2004. She has worked as a researcher both at the University of Turku (University Consortium of Pori) and, since 2007, at the University of Jyväskylä at both the Department of History and Ethnology and the Center for Research on Multicultural Issues. She is a council member of the International Oral History Association, representing Europe, and is a founding member of the Finnish Oral History Network. In her research, Fingerroos has focused on Karelia, oral history methodology, ethnicity, migration and refugees.

In her doctoral thesis, *Haudatut muistot* (Buried Memories), she studied death rituals and their meanings in oral tradition from the Karelian Isthmus during the years 1917–1939 (Helsinki, SKS, 2004). Her research presented new perspectives on the history of Karelia and on the studies of death and the Finnish civil war in 1918, particularly since the deaths reported in Karelia during the Civil War are an example of the forgotten memories that the research discusses. After completing her thesis, Fingerroos has continued to study the meaning of Karelia as a place of memories and as a utopia using the methods of oral history research (*Karjala utopi-ana, Nykytulkintojen Karjala, Takaisin Karjalaan*). During the years 2009–2012, she was the leader for an Academy of Finland funded research project called *Strangers from the East*, which examined the narratives of Karelian exiles and re-immigrants from Russia regarding their integration in Finland and the measures taken by the Finnish authorities during the post-World War II period.

Fingerroos is one of the central figures in the recent methodological discussions on Finnish oral history research. Finnish researchers in the fields of ethnology, folkloristics and comparative religion have always worked with oral history materials, often quite independently of the establishment of oral history as a scholarly discipline. Oral history studies — in Finnish, ‘muistitietotutkimus’, the study of remembered information — became a subject of academic discussion already in the 1980s, but especially in the first decade of this century, when Fingerroos and her colleagues have in their own research, and in relation to such works as *Muistitietotutkimus* and *Ääniä arkistosta*, engaged in a fruitful methodological discussion about oral history or remembered information as a reconstruction created in various remembered situations and about narrative as a form of knowing and interpreting. Fingerroos has also co-edited *Uskonnon paikka*, which discusses how religion is conceptualised and studied as a part of the study of religions.

In addition to Finland and Karelia, Fingerroos has also conducted research in Mexico and Kenya as well as in Ethiopia, where she was a visiting professor at Addis Ababa University in 2010. At the moment, Fingerroos is an Academy Researcher working on the project ‘Reuniting the family. A study of the experiences of immigrants and officials’. The aim of the study is to better understand the family reunification process of Somalis travelling via Ethiopia and Kenya to Finland from the perspective of both officials and Somalis.

As professor of ethnology at the University of Jyväskylä, Fingerroos wants to strengthen the role of *applied ethnology* (yhteiskuntaetnologia), which focuses on social changes and important social questions. Her aim is, therefore, to bring

ethnology back to its roots as a discipline that actively participates in social and political discussions. She also emphasises that the most significant characteristic of ethnology in Jyväskylä is the fact that it has been multidisciplinary since the 1960s, when it was established: an ethnologist studies both the material and the immaterial culture and combines the methods and perspectives of ethnology, cultural anthropology and folklore studies. An ethnologist's subject of research is not defined by old disciplinary boundaries and their field is not restricted to Finland or even Europe; it can even extend to fields that have traditionally belonged to cultural and social anthropology. For her, ethnology means an analysis of culture through a particular ethnological lens or viewpoint and with the methods of ethnographic fieldwork.

Arja Turunen

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