
Fast, Slow, Undetected and Explosive Change

Koskihaara, Niina, Mäki, Maija & Sonck, Kirsi (eds.)
2014. *Osumia – Kansatieteellisiä avauksia muutoksesta, sen hallinnasta ja sopeutumisesta*. Turku: Turun yliopisto. 116 pp. III. ISBN 978-951-29-5821-4.

Osumia – Kansatieteellisiä avauksia muutoksesta, sen hallinnasta ja sopeutumisesta (Hits – Ethnological approaches to change, controlling it and adapting to it) is a book about cultural change. The authors include several ethnologists who encounter and deal with change and its effects on a daily basis as a part of their studies. The book is edited by the doctoral candidates Niina Koskihaara, Maija Mäki and Kirsi Sonck from the University of Turku's Department of European Ethnology. The publication focuses on the inevitable motion of all cultures and on continual change. Without it, a culture will diminish; with it, a culture will slowly turn into something else.

As Professor Helena Ruotsala says in the preface of the book, Finnish ethnology today concentrates on three dimensions: time, place and social limitations. In other words, ethnology is a way to research the ever-changing culture of a society, and the University of Turku has been doing this recently in a number of fields. The book *Osumia* is a showcase of the latest results from recent studies conducted by various doctoral candidates and staff members at the Department of European Ethnology. The book is divided into four sections, which deal with future and locality, surroundings

and places, jobs and working milieus, and family within everyday life.

In the first section, Maija Mäki analyses tourism and the travel industry by focusing on ancient relics and wonders how the situation might be different in the future. In her article, she also reflects on how the methods of Futures Studies work in such a case. The main reasons for change in ancient relics tourism would seem to be the warming climate and the fact that more and more people living in Finland do not feel that the relics are part of their own past. As such, they may no longer consider the relics valuable or worth saving.

Similar issues can be discovered in many rural areas of Finland. Niina Koskihaara, who studies the modern Finnish countryside, points out that volunteer-based associations, relations and personal ties are what the public need today. As the population continues to grow and new people are moving into rural areas, they will not feel at home unless they get to know the new area. Here, the associations create a bridge between place and people, a site where people can gather together and get to know one another in a relaxed setting. Maija Lundgren has also concerned herself with the same issue. She is studying local authorities and village representatives. She has found that when the connections are not in place, the village will suffer and people will move away. The main duty of village representative is to build a network between people, place and authorities and to support the participants in times of conflict. If successful, they can offer local people ways to build a strong sense of identity and community, one

where it is possible to have a well-balanced life.

Identity problems are also the main topic of discussion in the article by Kirsi Sonck, who is doing her research on winter seining in Rymättylä. Similar to Maija Mäki, Kirsi Sonck has also discovered the effects of climate change on local culture. With the winters becoming increasingly warmer, there are fewer possibilities to fish in traditional ways. She has also studied the traditional jobs now being mechanised and how this affects the identity of the villagers. She has realised that there are financial, social and psychological costs to losing a traditional way of life.

Timo J. Virtanen, in his article, discusses changes at the remote Bengtskär Lighthouse Island. The main point in the article is the process of modernisation that has occurred with respect to historical buildings, which are no longer used for their original purpose. Bengtskär Lighthouse, for example, has been renovated and become a tourist attraction; it receives thousands of visitors every year. In this way, a building and place that was used for many purposes, and already once abandoned, has now found a new life and way of keeping its history alive.

Place is also a point of discussion in the article by Karri Kiiskinen, who focuses on the question of visible and invisible borders. He analyses the subject through the role of a cyclist who moves across various spaces. Bicycles nowadays are a mode of transportation that, in Kiiskinen's words, can transcend invisible borders, especially for the people crossing them every day on their way to work. They can also be a way to attract tourists, as many cities organise festivities to tempt people to come visit and cycle around. As Kiiskinen's study shows, what you do and how you get around significantly changes the way you see and experience places.

The third part of the book concentrates on working milieus, and it begins with Maria Vanha-Similä's discussion of the Forssa textile industry. Changing culture has had a major effect on the industry and the textile factories in the town of Forssa, so much so that factory work is no longer available as it used to be previously. In the past, it was typical for all family members to end up in the same factory working together, and no education

was needed, as new recruits were taught on the job and by family members. In the 1990s, a new generation of young people broke with tradition and sought work elsewhere. Also, the nature of the work has become more professional and effective, and many factories have closed down in recent decades.

The same influences are evident in prisons, as we can read in Marja-Liisa Räisänen's article. She has studied the shutting down of Konnunsuo prison as a way to lower public costs in Finland. The prison was given two years to close down, and in the end the remaining personnel felt that it was a burden to continue doing a job that should have required more employees. Decision makers felt that by slowly shutting down operations, people would have enough time to find new jobs and homes, but in the end the remaining personnel seemed to think that a quick end to operations would still have been better for everyone.

The fourth part of the book deals with change within families and ordinary life. Päivi Roivainen has studied ongoing discussions about clothing and how to treat small children. The change in attitudes has been quite dramatic in less than 100 years: in previous centuries, the main focus was on advising mothers on how to decrease the number of childhood deaths. Now, much more attention is paid to dressing children in the latest fashions. According to Roivainen, this tells us a great deal about how attitudes regarding how to act in a proper manner have remained in present until the present, only the ways of doing it have changed.

Last but not least, Hanneleena Hieta deals with multicultural families in her article. She has discovered that nowadays it is easy to stay connected with your friends and family, even when living in a foreign country. Children can talk with grandparents through social media and it is easy to send parcels by mail. With digitalisation, the change involved in moving away from one's home country is no longer so radical, and it is now easier for immigrants to maintain a hold on their own culture, too. So here the circle closes, and we are brought back to the beginning and Maija Mäki's article on cultural heritage.

All in all, *Osumia* is a book that addresses the

current situation of Finnish culture in the 2010s: It covers topics such as personal relationships to places and history, modernisation and the breaking of traditions, moving and multiculturalism. It is not written so much for the general public as much as for other scholars. This is evident in the chosen points of view and in the ways of discussing the results; for that reason, some of the articles still contain a certain amount of ethnological jargon. Also, the broader theme of the book — cultural change — may not be very interesting to everyone in the general public, whereas some of the more specific topics, like the history of

children's clothing and a family's historical view of changes in a textile factory, might also generate interest outside academia. The book is most useful for those interested either in recent studies in the field of ethnology or in ways to cope with cultural change. The many good examples of the successful adoption of new methods to deal with change can be seen as an advice for those in need of ideas. Perhaps later the same issues and results will also be found in articles aimed for the general public.

Helga Lähdemäki
