

**From Multi-Targeted Ethnography to Hybrid Humanism –  
Perspectives to Applied Cultural Studies**

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Pilvi Hämeenaho, Tiina Suopajarvi & Johanna Ylipulli (eds). 2018. *Soveltava kulttuurintutkimus*. [Applied cultural studies.] Tietolipas 259. Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society. ISBN 978-952-222-975-5.

Recently, ethnologists and other cultural studies researchers have become increasingly attached to cross-disciplinary work that aims to solve problems in everyday lives and questions concerning the future. This book opens up discussions around the definitions and meanings of applied cultural studies. The term refers to a methodological umbrella that combines different disciplines. Practical solutions and participatory methodologies have become characteristic properties of applied cultural studies. The writers are mainly Finnish anthropologists and ethnologists, while some other disciplines such as philosophy and landscape studies are also represented.

The main message of several articles of the book is that applied research is always somehow connected to cultural studies. Tom O'Dell and Robert Willim (2015) have defined ethnography as multi-targeted research, meaning that not only the objectives but also the usage of the research may have many different targets. In his article, Jaakko Suominen connects the targets of applied studies to the practices of power and ideologies behind the research. Suominen presents the concept of hybrid humanism, which refers to multi-, inter-, and cross-disciplinarity and a materially networked, humanistic style of doing research.

The book consists of three chapters that include both practical and theoretical articles about applied cultural studies. The articles of the first chapter focus on questions of shaping cultural knowledge. The second chapter contains many practical case studies, and the last chapter focuses on the cultures of technologies. The most valuable part of the whole book is the introduction, which opens up the recent discussion around applied cultural studies. The articles include a variety of topics, and the writing styles also vary depending on the researchers' scientific background. The uniting introduction is an essential help to understand the structure of the book and the meanings of the different articles. In addition, Jaakko Suominen's article offers a historical view to the development of applied cultural studies and how we understand the field today.

In this review, I want to foreground some articles with critical viewpoints, which arise from the authors' deep knowledge and practical experiences of ap-

plied cultural studies. Tiina Suopajärvi describes the participatory planning process of the “smart city” of Oulu. As a methodological tool, she has used participatory action research, and she discusses the question of good participation and the power structures behind the planning process. Suopajärvi describes her research among senior citizens in Oulu as feminist and empowering. She also observes the actual participation process in a critical way and asks who sets the goals of these kinds of processes. Participating means different things to different people, and it is not automatically the key to a successful and socially equal planning of a city.

The second article that offers deep understanding of cross-disciplinary projects is Johanna Ylipulli’s article about human-computer interaction in a city environment, again in Oulu. Ylipulli has discovered differences between anthropologists and computer scientists in their philosophical way of thinking. These epistemological differences may also create conflicts in actual cross-disciplinary projects. Ylipulli describes that the meaning of ethnography is sometimes “quick and dirty”, meaning that ethnographic methods are used only as a helpful tool and not as a holistic approach for the whole research. Ylipulli also offers some useful solutions for the problems of insufficient use of ethnography in the development processes of technology. One example is so-called short-term ethnography, where the intensity of the field work process compensates for the traditional time-consuming and deep ethnographic process.

Ylipulli also highlights the situation of pedagogy in universities. Today, there is a greater demand for inter- and cross-disciplinary education than before, not only in theoretical but also in practical ways. This is already the reality in many subjects of the humanities, but humanistic approaches and methodologies should also be introduced to technologically oriented sciences. In the future, the humanities and cultural research cannot merely be a handful tool for the development work of new technologies; rather, cultural studies and understanding should be at the center of all technological development. Only that way, also ethical and social questions can be taken into account seriously. The detailed descriptions of the real experiences and the analytical evaluations of the case studies create the significance of this book. It serves both researchers and especially students as an introduction to applied cultural studies in Finland.

### **AUTHOR**

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