

# EDITOR'S NOTE

It gives me great pleasure to present the latest issue of *Suomen Antropologi: Journal of the Finnish Anthropological Society*. Issue 46 (1) is a special issue titled 'Frontier Making through Territorial Processes: Qualities and Possibilities of Life', guest edited by my Helsinki colleagues Anu Lounela and Tuomas Tammisto. This, as it happens, is also the last issue published during my editorship, but more on that later.

The current issue focuses on resource frontiers. These could be described as transitory value regimes: historically specific phases or 'situations' marked by the arrival of new value regimes that treat land, labour, and other unmanufactured phenomena as commercial resources. The issue, moreover, pays particular attention to land and the way frontier conditions are established—but also opposed—through the use of territorial tactics.

This approach narrows down the range of frontiers examined here. The authors all study resource frontiers in peripheral and relatively unregulated regions where sufficient land is available for large-scale projects. And not just any type of land: the projects described in this collection, movement to large-scale soybean or palm oil production, the introduction of fast-growing commercial tree varieties in drained peatland, or the intensification of reindeer herding over a semi-subsistence base, are all undertakings which do little to increase the commercial value of the land required—usually the opposite.

From that point of view, it is worth noting that this issue also canvasses a mode of valuation not based on the ownership of land—a globally disappearing source of profit, as Piketty (2014) shows—but on usufruct. Indeed, the scenarios described in these articles all describe conflicts or contradictions between land valued for its commodity-producing capacity and land as a good (Gregory 1997) intended for household reproduction. The first, as all the articles in this collection indicate, involves a transitory, passing dynamic typical of liminal moments during which natural phenomena are rendered into resources, after which the frontiers move on, or are 'closed'. The second valuation evokes a longer timeframe tied to the relative permanence of the places or landscapes that precede and outlast the frontier conditions.

But this collection does not just repeat the old narrative about the arrival of bad commodification, or the 'curse' cast by resources. Instead, it tries to show that commercial crops and livestock can occupy very different roles in territorial frontier processes, all the way to being deployed in ways that hinder or oppose the frontier conditions, as directly stated in Tammisto's article. In their introduction to this issue, Lounela and

Tammisto evoke David Graeber (2001: 88) to point out that the greatest political struggles are not only about appropriating value, but also about defining what is valued. This obviously also extends to modes and media of valuation, to the extent that territorial tactics can even be redeployed in defence of competing conceptions of value.

This perspective complements the authors' focus on the involvement of non-human forms of life in the territorial processes of value ascription. The current issue actually originates in a conference panel titled 'Temporal perspectives on state formation and commodification on frontiers' held at the Finnish Anthropological Society conference in 2019. Along the way, the authors came to realise that more than temporality, their work canvasses the way non-human actors—trees, crops, and animals—get co-opted into the territorial processes that characterise the frontiers under analysis here. Hence Lounela's article 'Making and Unmaking Territories with Plants within the Riverine Peat Landscape of Central Kalimantan' is an ethnographic examination of the suitability of the two predominant commercial plant varieties—sengon and rubber—in the drained peatlands of central Kalimantan. In her article, Lounela draws an unsettling picture of the shortening temporal cycles of production in an area where fires appear with frightening regularity, forcing people to sell their produce before it reaches full maturity. Tammisto's article 'Closing the Frontier, Opening Doors: Local Cash Crop Production, Large-Scale Resource Extraction, and Shifting Resource Frontiers in Pomio, Papua New Guinea' similarly shows that different commercial species can be deployed for dissimilar ends. Cocoa production, Tammisto argues, can be embraced as a conscious strategy for reversing or challenging the frontier conditions that, in New Britain, have recently been advanced by palm oil plantations. Panu Itkonen's (University of Lapland) article discusses three waves of state-driven commercialisation in the Skolt Sami people's traditional lands in the Finnish Lapland. Here the most successful commercialisation strategy, to date, has involved the use of reindeer as agents of intensified production under an EU subsidy system, which has been scaled so that it is available only for enterprises beyond a local subsistence level. Markus Kröger's (University of Helsinki) article 'Frontiers of Existence: Redefining Who Can Exist and How at Resource Frontiers' takes a more provocative approach, suggesting the concept 'frontiers of existence' to complement the pre-existing frontier terminology in an effort to highlight the loss of diversity—in an expanded, ontological sense—that accompanies resource frontiers in Brazil. In his afterword, Timo Kaartinen (University of Helsinki) zooms out from the particular

ethnographic contexts of the individual articles to look at the global political and economic changes that underlie the re-emerged relevance of the concept of frontier.

I hope this small collection of articles will provide food for thought for people interested in topics such as multi-species anthropology, political ecology, political economy, value, location, and beyond. Personally, I have found these texts inspiring to work with, and have enjoyed this brief engagement with frontier processes.

As stated above, the publication of Issue 46 (1) also marks the end of my term as Editor-in-Chief of *Suomen Antropologi: Journal of the Finnish Anthropological Society*. After four years and fifteen issues, I am very happy to pass on the responsibility to the capable hands of Heikki Wilenius and Tuomas Tammisto, the journal's new Editors-in-Chief. Heikki and Tuomas are a force to be reckoned with: full of new ideas and capable of accomplishing a lot during their editorship. They have already showed as much in their recent collaborative undertakings, for example the edited volume *Valtion antropologiaa* ['anthropology of the state'] (Tammisto and Wilenius eds 2021) and their unselfish work towards the open-access republication of *Culture and History in the Pacific* (Siikala ed. 2021 [1990]). I believe they are exactly the right people to take this journal forward.

So, I would like to thank everyone who has been part of the making of this journal over the past four years: authors, reviewers, editorial board members, and most of all the editorial team. I will not quit the journal altogether, but will, for the time being, continue as part of the team. But even so, I want to say that I am quite proud to have played a part in the history of this journal, and more generally in promoting open-access publication of academic research. While recent public discussion has been taken over by an 'open science' discourse that highlights the availability of open *data* for the *research community* at large, I believe it is more important than ever to make sure well-written, analytic, and peer-verified research *findings* are available both to our colleagues outside the paywalls, and to those members of the general reading public who are not frightened away by the mannerisms of academic English.

Finally, a small announcement: this issue marks the beginning of a new volume. Starting with this issue, we will publish three issues per year instead of the four that we have published up until now. This decision was made jointly by the *Suomen Antropologi* editorial team in order to maintain the high standards we set for our journal, but also to save our energies every once in a while. We publish a small, independent journal that relies on

the voluntary labour of its editors and reviewers. A slightly more sparse publication schedule will allow us to save our energies for other projects, too, but hopefully also to publish even better journal issues for years to come.

Thank you for everything, everyone.

MATTI ERÄSAARI,  
Editor-in-Chief

## REFERENCES

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