

EDITORS' NOTE: ACTIVIST ANTHROPOLOGY, PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT, AND INVASIVE SPECIES

Once more, we are thrilled to announce the release of a fresh edition of *Suomen antropologi: The Journal of the Finnish Anthropological Society*. Since the last issue, there has been no changes in the journal's processes or editorial team. A noteworthy piece of news is that our editorial secretary Saara Toukolehto successfully defended her thesis (2023) on immigrant integration and its paradoxes in Berlin at the University of Groningen in June. Our heartfelt congratulations to Saara from the whole editorial team. We are delighted that Saara continues to work with us at the journal and emphasize that along with defending her thesis, she also copy-edited this issue.

Since the publication of the previous issue, in addition to our regular tasks reviewing manuscripts and editing, we have dedicated substantial effort to the housekeeping and maintenance of the journal. Our aim is that after two issues, sometime next year, after having completed a full term, we could step down as editors-in-chief and give way to others. To make the transition as easy as possible, we have continued to develop and document the publication processes of our journal so that new people can easily join the team and that there would be as little 'silent knowledge' vested in us and other members of the editorial team as possible. For a large part this work consists of very mundane things, such as writing instructions on the use of the publication software, on the workflows of editors and thinking of ways of reducing administrative work.

This issue of *Suomen antropologi* is a normal issue, which consists of individual article and research report submissions sent to us. Once again, by fortunate happenstance, the various articles, research reports and essays discuss related topics, lending the issue a sense of internal coherence. This issue consists of articles by Ville Laakkonen (Tampere University), Timothy Anderson (University of Tallinn) and Jacob Seagrave, who examine migrant disappearances, migrant detention and climate activism respectively. In the research reports are three *lectio praeursoria*, namely short lectures read by a PhD candidate in the beginning of their public thesis defense. In her lectio, Lidia Gripenberg discusses her research among Finnish Roma and Bulgarian Roma immigrants. Victoria Peemot (University of Helsinki) presents in her lectio her research on human–horse relations in Southern Tyva, and Pilvi Posio (University of Turku) presents her dissertation on the

sense of community and long-term disaster recovery in East Japan. In his essay, Thorgeir Kolshus (University of Oslo) reflects on public anthropology in Norway and Heikki Wilenius reports on the conference of the Finnish Anthropological Society in Rovaniemi in March 2023. Finally, we have three book reviews by Elina Hytönen-Ng (University of Eastern Finland), Samuli Lähteenaho (University of Helsinki) and Anna Varfolomeeva (University of Helsinki).

ARTICLES IN THIS ISSUE

Ville Laakkonen's opening article examines the death and disappearances of migrants in the southeastern borderlands of the European Union, namely in Greece on the island of Lesbos and in the Evros region. Laakkonen shows that the border violence of the European Union does not only cause the death of migrants from the Middle East, Africa and Asia, but border violence continues after their deaths. The disappearances, the non-identification of dead bodies and the denying of proper mourning to relatives and close ones are, according to Laakkonen, the continuation of border violence by other means as the very existence and equal humanity of migrants is denied even after death. Laakkonen conceptualizes this violence as *forensic bordering*: while forensic sciences seek to provide answers and even accountability, forensic bordering with the active non-identification of dead bodies does exactly the opposite. It classifies the dead migrants as *Agnostoi*, the unidentified, denies answers and ultimately rejects accountability of the violence that happens on our borders.

While Laakkonen examines the deaths and disappearances of migrants in the borderlands, Timothy Anderson follows what happens to migrants who reach the European Union, but who are detained in detention centers. As Anderson discusses in his article on an Estonian detention center, the detention of migrants is presented officially as an administrative procedure needed to enforce immigration laws and to process 'irregular' immigrants. However, it is often experienced by detainees as a punitive practice. This disjuncture made detention disorienting, uncanny and insulting for the detainees—Anderson's interlocutors. And as Anderson shows, the 'punitive protection' of detention has often very real negative effects on the health and well-being of the migrants. On the face of it, detention seems like a form of border violence based very much on its limbo-like character; on the very liminality to which some migrants are subjects when living and similar to the forensic liminality other migrants are subjected to in death—as described by Laakkonen. Anderson however rightly stresses that the

detainees do not lose their agency and confront the detention regime in different ways and with different means available to them.

Laakkonen and Anderson approach these questions as both scholars and activists working to assist migrants. In line with the ethos of 'activist anthropology', this obviously does not mean that political aims override scholarly rigor, but that scholarly rigor is employed as a means to advance political objectives. In this case, countering border violence by documenting forms of bordering practices that often are hidden in plain sight from the citizens of the EU. The topics of Laakkonen's and Anderson's research are grim, but we feel such 'dark anthropology' (Ortner 2016) is needed for as long as there is darkness.

This issue's third article moves from activist anthropology to the anthropology of activists. In his article, Jacob Seagrave analyses the social movement Extinction Rebellion (XR) based on an ethnographic fieldwork in England. Seagrave argues that within XR, there is a project of forming a new kind of subjectivity, where the emotion of grief is a central motivating force for the activists. This, he contends, is in a marked contrast with the disruptive and extremist public image of the movement. According to Seagrave, XR is fundamentally anti-political, by putting the duty to truth and earth before political goals. This new kind of political subjectivity is an example of the social changes brought by climate change.

Lidia Gripenberg's *lectio* comes back to the theme of migration. Gripenberg summarizes the core arguments of her thesis based on ethnographic research in 2014–2015 in Finland on how Finnish Kale assisted fellow Roma who had moved to Finland from Romania and Bulgaria. This was a time when migration was a particularly 'hot' topic in Finnish public discourse, as migration was on the one hand seen as needed to ensure labor in an aging population, while on the other hand the arrival of asylum seekers—as well as migration in general—was met also by an anti-immigrant discourse, practices and outright racism. The Roma from Eastern Europe were however citizens of the EU and formed an 'invisible' group of migrants to whom Finland officially had practically no responsibilities. Gripenberg discusses how the Finnish Kale, both privately and through associations, helped the Roma from Eastern Europe, what mutual relations they forged, how migration of Roma was conceptualized amid the larger discussion on migration as well as how both Finnish and East European Roma conceptualized themselves and others in terms of various and shifting identities.

Relations are the focus of Victoria Peemot's *lectio*, which presents her thesis on the mutual becoming of the relations between Tyvan horsemen,

their horses and their relations to the land. Based on ethnographic fieldwork in Tyva and Mongolia, Peemot discusses *čer törel*, a Tyvan expression, which can be translated as 'land-based kinship', relations based on being born or belonging to the land. This relation does not encompass only humans, but also nonhuman animals and particularly horses. Peemot's thesis focuses on the rich and generative human–horse relations in Tyva, and how horses create and mediate relations between people, animals and the land in Tyva—and beyond, as Peemot's discussion of her Helsinki-born daughter's horse in Tyva shows.

Pilvi Posio's *lectio* on her thesis on community responses to disasters and returning (or not returning) home following the earthquake and tsunami of 2014 in East Japan shares common themes with the research articles and reports of this issue. As Posio notes, the earthquake and subsequent tsunami, as well as the following disaster at the nuclear power plant at Fukushima, left over 470 000 people internally displaced. They were permanently or temporarily evacuated or relocated, and their homes destroyed or significantly damaged. Posio examines the varying conceptions and temporalities of the concept of 'community' in the responses to disaster, especially among those who chose to return. Posio focuses particularly on the futures, both imagined and actively constructed, enacted through community-making.

PUBLIC ANTHROPOLOGY AND 'HORRIBLE HYBRIDS'

Thorgeir Kolshus, in his essay, ponders on the contemporary role of anthropologists as public intellectuals. He posits that public anthropology is making a new comeback, offers Norwegian anthropology as a model for how anthropologists should engage with the public, and, moreover, contends that these encounters with the public helps anthropologists identify their own biases and provide sources of fresh analytical thinking. Kolshus also expresses scepticism towards recent developments in the anthropological conceptual apparatus regarding 'notions of privilege and victimhood', asserting that since their genealogy points to social scientific thinking in the United States, they are ill-equipped for analysis elsewhere.

His example of this is 'white flight', which, according to his anecdote, was demanded by a reviewer to be used in an analysis of inner-city change in Norway, even though the social change depicted in the article did not involve ethnic Norwegians, but, instead, wealthy immigrants. Thorgeir's point is that the alleged hegemony of these kinds of concepts undermines

the authority of anthropologists in Norway, and, consequently, elsewhere outside the United States, since analysis that is based on wrong kinds of concepts is not legible or credible to the public.

This essay underwent a standard review process for essays and research reports in *Suomen antropologi*. That means that instead of a double-blind peer review, they are reviewed by members of the editorial staff and sometimes sent for additional comments by an expert on the topic. During the review process, we pointed to Kolshus that to us, the case described in the essay was not about concepts originating from the United States colonizing European anthropology, but simply an instance of a bad scientific review. He nevertheless insisted leaving this point in the essay 'for the reader to ponder'. So, in the end, we mutually agreed that the essay stays as it is, but we express our dissenting view in this editorial note.

In the light of our disciplinary history, and the history of social sciences in general, concepts have always travelled. Sometimes the result might resemble the kind of 'conceptual override' that Kolshus writes about. He accuses US-based Mertonian middle-range theories taking over European anthropology, but we wouldn't have them in the first place, if Talcott Parsons hadn't translated Max Weber for the US audience, influencing, in turn, Robert Merton's idea of social analysis.

Was Parsons, while applying Weber's thinking for contemporary political analysis (Parsons 1942), 'conceptually overriding' the social reality of the United States? Or, to bring up an example closer to home: African kinship studies influenced anthropological thinking about kinship considerably, but also created a lot of rather convoluted research, when anthropologists tried to apply the concept of unilineal descent to the social reality of their fieldwork locations, which wasn't possible without considerable conceptual violence. The history of anthropology is full of this kind of cross-pollination; sometimes it is wildly successful, sometimes, in hindsight at least, it is underwhelmingly mediocre.

Each and every anthropological concept has their roots in a certain empirical context or contexts. Sometimes these travel well, sometimes less so. But if a reviewer insists on using a concept that does not make sense, well, let's say we don't agree that it can be taken as a leitmotif of contemporary anthropology. But if Kolshus's *Zeitdiagnose* resonates with your experiences in academic publishing, we more than welcome letters to the editor on the topic.

An interesting correspondence to Kolshus's argument is in the conference report, also in this issue, from the biennial conference of the Finnish Anthropological Society, held in Rovaniemi in March this year.

Heikki Wilenius reports on an exchange that took place in the roundtable session of the conference, about what kinds of concepts the discipline needs. Marilyn Strathern expressed the view that, roughly speaking, aligns with Kolshus's thoughts about concepts limiting our understanding. However, as an antidote, Strathern argued the discipline needs 'horrible hybrids': concepts that break through our established patterns of thinking. In the same discussion Tim Ingold expressed his strong dislike of the concept of intersectionality, complaining that anthropologists are 'clumsy' in using words, 'without thinking about what they really mean', which could be read as a veiled critique along the same lines as Kolshus's 'conceptual override'. But, made in a conference, where a lot of inspiring intersectional research was presented, the remark sounded out of place, and perhaps a bit outdated too. Piers Vibetsky, when questioned from the audience about the optics of an all-Cambridge representation on the roundtable stage, quipped that 'everyone else is welcome to become their own invasive species'. Based on the weak signals in the conference panels, perhaps the intersectional invasion has already begun.

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Editors-in-Chief

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