

EDITOR'S NOTE

This issue of *Suomen Antropologi* commences with a contribution on medical anthropology. Hubert Wierciński's (University of Warsaw) article explores the experiences and perspectives of cancer patients in Poland by analyzing their narratives. The operational concepts in his study are taboo and stigma—a pair that originally stems from the sphere of religion and ritual, but which can actually help us to approach the experience of sickness in a new way. Wierciński discusses the feelings of isolation, ostracism, stress, anxiety, and shame suffered by the patients and describes the great lengths they go to in order to hide their condition and its related symptoms. He also addresses the culture of silence surrounding cancer in Polish culture. Furthermore, studying fatal diseases by using anthropological methods does not come without certain problems and accordingly Wierciński dedicates a section in his article to the challenges of 'hospital ethnography'. Not much has been previously published on the medical culture of Poland in English-language journals and thus Wierciński's piece is an important opener in this respect as well.

The second article in this issue, by Saila Saaristo (independent researcher), takes us to an urban setting in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro, that is, the shanty-town neighbourhoods that contrast with the more affluent parts of the city. The border with the poorer areas can also be conceived as a hierarchical divide between two kinds of citizenship with different and uneven repertoires of legal, political, and economic rights. According to Saaristo, this class division is actively maintained and reproduced by the Brazilian state with its definitions of the favela residents as 'a deviant population' accompanied by specifically targeted policies. Saaristo is principally interested in the activities of the local residents' associations as a response to the marginalizing and oppressive measures of the state. However, she also points out how some associations have partly contributed to the continuation of the present circumstances by involving themselves in clientelist local politics. The article is based on a year of fieldwork and earlier residency in one of the favelas located in southern parts of Rio.

Questions of class relations in contemporary capitalist societies are also the topic of the forum section in this issue, although in a more general global and historical perspective. In his opening piece Professor Don Kalb (Central European University/Utrecht University) observes how in recent decades anthropology has had the tendency to discuss capitalist transformations under the guise of such terms as 'cultural globalization', 'modernity at large', or 'assemblages' and thus it has been at pains to address the power relations that are fundamental in these processes. However, along with recent interventions from high-profile scholars like David Graeber and Thomas Piketty, there appears to be a growing interest among anthropologists to re-adopt a political economy perspective for analyzing the new configurations of global capitalism. This development, according to Kalb, has been partly obscured by a 'primitivist reflex' in anthropology, which posits 'uncontaminated' and 'pristine' non-Western societies as an alternative to capitalism, social forms which,

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in reality, do not exist. In her response, Professor Sharryn Kasmir (Hofstra University) looks at the division between the world-historical anthropology advocated by Kalb and culturalist approaches from the point of view of American anthropology. She highlights the importance of studying non-Western social formations in terms of labour, ownership, gender equality, and such things, but insists that they always need to be located in a wider spatial and temporal field. In his piece Matti Eräsaari (University of Manchester) is sympathetic towards Kalb's call for the rehabilitation of the concepts of class, labour, and social reproduction, but considers his disapproval of the so-called primitivists to be based on a misunderstanding. In Eräsaari's view the ethnographies that Kalb criticizes do not claim to have discovered 'utopias' outside capitalism but rather social systems that stand opposed to capitalism.

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