

## EDITOR'S NOTE

I recently had the privilege to chair the Finnish Anthropological Society's festive panel that sought to pinpoint the role of anthropological knowledge in society. In the best pre-Christmas-party spirit, the panel came up with various ways in which anthropology makes the World a better place. Yet at the same time, 'anthropological knowledge' itself remained a bit of a mystery—is it expert knowledge or is it generalisable understanding? The anthropological process, method, perspective, and insight were all discussed at length, but what should we consider the end product? In the end we—myself and the panelists Hilja Aunela, Jukka Huusko, Mari Korpela, Ninnu Koskenalho, and Minna Ruckenstein—came to agree on a number of features characterising said knowledge: the ability to question pre-established viewpoints, a conveyable intimacy, a fondness for eccentricities, narrativity, and an idiosyncratic way of packaging and serving information. One feature in particular was considered useful for making anthropological insights more accessible where they sometimes appear a bit esoteric to general audiences: anthropologists' ability to move from the small, seemingly insignificant, and even the outright odd, to general-level statements. This can be a fine model for 'thinking big' instead of merely 'fiddling around', the panellists concluded.

This ability to 'extrapolate' from details is illustrated in the articles published in issue 3/2017 of *Suomen Antropologi: Journal of the Finnish Anthropological Society*. The issue opens with an article by Francisco Martínez (Aalto University, Helsinki) on the use of the categories of 'waste' and 'potential' in the urban development of Tallinn. In it Martínez highlights two themes: one involves the use of people in the assignation of labels like 'waste' or 'potential'; and, the second, the way in which market 'potential' is created through the presence of creative classes—just as 'waste' is construed by 'naturalising links between dirty places, disorderly people, and the need to remove or regenerate them'. Martínez thus argues that such labels have very tangible consequences for the way urban planning is conducted. At the same time he also looks into the different entailments of the categories themselves. He aligns the planners' notion of 'waste' with a Douglasian idea of matter out of place to argue that the label does not just express a sense of superfluous but, rather, a threat to proper order. Likewise, the idea of 'having potential' begs the often-unvoiced question 'potential for what'? If 'waste' ties in with the discarded, then 'potential' carries a kind of teleology, intentionality—a purpose. 'Another interpretation of "potential" could be that if a space is empty, it must be filled', Martínez writes.

The article by Taina Cooke (University of Oulu), for its part, discusses the so-called 'cultural defence' in order to analyse women and agency in the (Finnish) courtroom. Cooke's concern is with the deployment of cultural evidence against the legal ideal of facts and absolutes: this tends to deploy culture as a false consciousness from which one needs break free, but also a model of agency which 'seems dubiously uncomplicated' in all its binary simplicity. Indeed, while taking us through the details of 'Miss Sayed's' case, Cooke manages to reveal a further layer of irony involved in the legal process, which is the fact that whilst querying the agency of women through legal processes, the courtroom proceedings assign women to the role of mute tokens. Though this is but a minor thread in her argument, it illustrates the level of taken-for-grantedness that surrounds the Western courtroom.

The Special Section, titled 'Half Hero, Half Idiot: The Hitchhiker as Ethnographer', turns the questioning viewpoint around, as it were. In it three artists, Tuuli Malla, Anna Kholina and Lauri Jäntti, discuss a technique they call *urban hitchhiking*. This is a method—for lack of a better term—for making unexpected contacts in the city by 'hitchhiking' a walk-along: sticking up a thumb, possibly accompanied by an explanatory sign, in order to request permission to accompany someone on a walk. The authors contrast urban hitchhiking with both urban ethnography and psychogeography to highlight its performance-like character: as a practice, it draws attention to the hitchhiker rather than trying to fade her out into the background. Thus, the essay also implicitly calls attention to the likewise 'artificial' or constructed practise of ethnography, to which we have grown so accustomed that we hardly stop to wonder why it would be any less artificial for an ethnographer to tag along with her or his informants than for someone to hitchhike walk-alongs in central Helsinki. Short commentaries by Eeva Berglund (Aalto University), Michael O'Regan (Bournemouth University), David Jeevendrampillai (University College London), Tauri Tuvikene (Tallinn University), David Harris Smith (McMaster University) and Frauke Zeller (Ryerson University, Toronto), and Patrick Laviolette (Tallinn University) look into the potential uses for urban hitchhiking and ask how it might be developed. In the course of discussion, they also touch on questions of experimentation and new methodologies in anthropology, and issues like whether or why experimentation might be necessary within the discipline.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome new people into the *Suomen Antropologi* Editorial Team and Editorial Board. It gives me great pleasure to announce that we now have two new Editors, Andrew

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Graan (University of Helsinki) and Elina I. Hartikainen (University of Helsinki), a new Special Section Editor, Francisco Martínez (Aalto University), and an Assistant Editor Ville Laakkonen (University of Tampere) involved in making the journal. In addition, five experts have agreed to join the journal's Editorial Board: Melissa Demian (University of St Andrews), Sarah Green (University of Helsinki), Donna P. Hope (The University of the West Indies), Yasmine Musharbash (University of Sydney) and Minna Ruckenstein (University of Helsinki). I look forward to working with them and look forward to seeing them make their mark on the journal.

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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF