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THE WORK BEHIND THE WORDS: LABOUR, ETHICS, AND CARE IN ACADEMIC PUBLISHING

'Congratulations! Your article has been accepted for publication in our journal!' Anyone who has ever written an article, received peer review remarks on it, and edited it in response to those comments—often, many times over—knows the joy sparked by that acceptance email. For authors, this notification marks the end of the most work-intensive part of publishing. From our perspective, however, it marks only the beginning of what may seem like a 'black box' in journal production. In this editorial note, we open up this black box, drawing attention to the often invisible but important work taking place within it.

We argue that a tension exists between what the publication process feels like for the author on the one hand and the political economy of publishing on the other. In order for the process to appear convenient, quick, and positive for the author, the publication process requires a lot of work. But whose work? And at what remuneration? Unpacking this tension through an exposé of the work involved in the production of *Suomen antropologi* provides us with the opportunity to introduce our new and expanded production team, individuals who have worked together in their current roles for the first time to produce this issue.

Once an article or essay is accepted for publication by one of *Suomen antropologi*'s editors, Vanessa Fuller, a professional English-language academic editor and trained anthropologist, carefully revises each piece for style and grammar—often going far beyond mere proofreading—to improve the readability and flow of each text. Authors then accept or reject her suggested changes, after which our two copyeditors—Saara Toukolehto and Roman Urbanowicz, both of whom are also professional anthropologists—thoroughly copyedit the texts and references, and crosscheck not just the citations but also one another's work. The entire production process is overseen by editorial secretary Janette Lindroos, who carefully tracks where in the process each individual piece included in an issue lies; sends gentle reminders to authors who may forget to reply to our messages; and keeps the ropes in hand until the editors-in-chief declare an issue ready for layout. Once the editors-in-chief signal their okay, Maija Räisänen then gives the texts and the entire issue their final shape,

after which they are uploaded to our journal portal and set up for publication.

We aim to do all of this work as quickly as possible. However, every single member of our editorial team is precariously employed and needs to fit their work for the journal alongside their other responsibilities. Knowing from experience how hectic life can be, we also give *authors* much more time to respond to requests than most journals do. Our 'black box', therefore, is shaped by our ambitious quality standards, an ethos of collaborative teamwork, and a refusal to impose breakneck deadlines at the expense of our own (and our authors') wellbeing. The resulting publication experience for an author working with *Suomen antropologi* can notably differ from that offered by some commercial journals, where the publication 'black box' remains largely impersonal, automated, and outsourced.

Recently, this became blatantly clear to one of our editors, as they and their manuscript navigated this process with a major commercial publisher. After a rigorous round of reviews, a letter of acceptance popped into their inbox. Included was a link to an elegant and practical online service, where the author was requested to make all of the changes to the PDF, within 48 hours of receiving the message. The publisher provided no language editing, and copyeditors had done nothing other than check for missing references. Following a full day's work finalising the language and technical editing, the author confirmed the final PDF, after which the article was immediately published online in page-proof format. After some final adjustments were made, relying on outsourced technical editing, the article was formally launched online.

Speedy publication was achieved by outsourcing all of that 'black box' work to the author, and most likely to an underpaid subcontractor, all ultimately and most likely aimed at maximising the publisher's profits. By contrast, at *Suomen antropologi,* this 'black box' work is completed by a collective of individuals committed to doing this work well on behalf of our authors. We provide this service because, as an editorial team, we share the ethos that all stages of academic publishing—from peer reviewing to polishing—should be attended to with the same level of effort and care our authors put into their fieldwork, their analysis, and their writing.

Navigating personal choices amid systemic problems

As the previous editors-in-chief have often stated in *Suomen antropologi*'s 'Editors' Notes', the current academic publishing environment is fundamentally unethical (see, e.g., Graan et al. 2018; Tammisto and Wilenius 2024). A few large for-profit publishers own a vast number of journals. They appropriate largely publicly funded research as submissions, and the primarily publicly funded labour of researchers reviewing and

editing the journals for next to nothing. Then, once published, they sell that research back to the societies which funded it in the first place through subscription and open access fees. This is no small amount of money: as Sami Syrjämäki (quoted in Teppo 2026) of the Federation of Finnish Learned Societies recently noted, the size of the academic publishing industry, which generates about US$25–30 billion annually, is comparable to the international music industry (see also Buranyi 2017). Yet, humanities and social science programmes are currently being defunded due to 'insufficient funds'.

For researchers who see the ethical problems inherent in this model, the situation presents genuine dilemmas. Do we review for journals owned by 'Evilcorps' to support our colleagues who edit for or want to publish in them? Do we ourselves submit our work to these journals, recognising their relevance as venues for our research, and when our (potential) employers require high-ranking publications to secure our positions? Do we encourage our students and junior colleagues to publish in them, whether we ourselves do or do not? Do we decide on a case-by-case basis or adopt a purist position?

Within our editorial team, we share certain key commitments; yet, as individuals, we also make (and accept) different personal choices, shaped by our politics and by our precarities. The core thing we realise is that, whilst individual choices are important, they address the symptoms of a problem rather than the root causes of it. What matters most is that we do something together to create and maintain more ethical alternatives. By volunteering for or accepting rather modest honorariums from a community-managed, nonprofit, and fully open access journal which does not demand publication fees from its authors, we strive to be a part of the change we want to see in the academic publishing world.

And, in this endeavour, *Suomen antropologi* is thankfully not alone. Within anthropology—and, more broadly, in academic publishing—an entire ecosystem of journals exists, all committed to openness and accessibility. They share a basic commitment to operating in an open and transparent manner. And, they understand that open access is not just about making articles accessible to anyone to *read*, but is also for *authors,* regardless of their access to institutional funding to cover the cost of publishing their research.

The work of editorial teams like ours is made possible by the authors, the readers, and the reviewers, all of whom choose to work with them.

For this reason, it is our great joy to introduce the contents of this issue, which altogether contains the labour of 25 authors and more than 20 peer reviewers. From *Suomen antropologi*, editors Henni Alava, Suvi Rautio, Tuomas Tammisto, and Heikki Wilenius worked with these authors

and peer reviewers on the contents in this issue, alongside the technical editing team we introduced above.

A special issue…

This issue is one of the largest *Suomen antropologi* has ever produced. It contains a Special Issue, guest edited by Pirjo Kristiina Virtanen (University of Helsinki) and Minna Opas (University of Turku), entitled '(Un)relating and (un)learning with More-than-Humans during Ethnographic Practice'. In it, the authors explore how more-than-humans become an integral part of the research process through their presence and actions, through their negotiations and dialogues with the researcher(s). In the Introduction, Opas and Virtanen outline the issue's contribution to existing research in this dynamic field, focusing specifically on the impact more-than-humans have on research and the ethical implications of that impact.

In the subsequent articles, Taynã Tagliati (University of Bonn), in her article 'Co-responding with a Parrot in Amazonia: Cosmopolitical Engagements and Ethnography', describes a multispecies relationship between herself, a parrot, and the parrot's human companion, a Kayapo shaman. Tagliati describes what she calls 'parrolitics', a specific kind of cosmopolitics done with and by parrots. This parrolitics allowed Tagliati to develop an attentive patience, helping her develop a relationship with the parrot, which in turn influenced Tagliati's relationship with the shaman, emphasising the active role of the parrot.

In her own article, 'Speaking and Singing Firmly: Beings (Un) related and (In)activated by Language in Amazonian Academic Research', Pirjo Kristiina Virtanen reflects on the role played by more-than-human elements in research. Drawing on over two decades of research in Southwestern Amazonia, where the life of the communities with which she works is profoundly threatened by resource extraction, Virtanen considers the ethical weight of research. Considering the importance of land and its more-than-human residents to her interlocutors, Virtanen reflects on the role of language, singing, and bodily movement for researchers' evolving and expanding understanding of the world.

Monika Kujawska (University of Łódź) also takes the reader to Amazonia, in 'Forest Cosmo-Politics and the Agency of Plants: A Case Study from the Asháninka People in Peruvian Amazonia', a vivid account of the embodied relational learning enabled by forest walks. Drawing from a method well-established in ethnobotany, Kujawska invites anthropologists to reconsider human-centric views on interspecies relations through an articulation of the lessons to be learnt through forest walks. This method makes apparent the agency of plants and other more-than-human beings with which her Ashaninka interlocutors relate.

The article by Beth Conklin (Vanderbilt University), 'Microbes and Ethnographic Fieldwork', looks back on Conklin's formidable career in Amazonian anthropology, drawing upon the perspectives of Indigenous studies and science and technology studies (STS) scholars, alongside anthropologists. Here, she reconsiders some of her own earlier interpretations of Indigenous understandings of biology in light of newer research findings. Conklin also considers the implications of anthropologists' contacts with microbes on research and life trajectories, and closes with a call for researchers to reckon with and learn through reflecting on their relations with microbes.

Elina Oinas (University of Helsinki) and Katriina Huttunen (Tampere University) take on similar questions in 'With-nessing Bacteria'. Drawing from debates in feminist STS and new materialist theories, the authors reflect on how their personal interactions with microbes—primarily through avoiding, encountering, and dealing with illness—during ethnographic research on a diarrhoea vaccine trial contributed to their theoretical analysis. These reflections also enabled insight into the multiple diffractions of the human body through scientific and medical practices.

In his article 'Soul Loss in the Forest of Symbols: Transformational Bodies, Avá-Guaraní Acoustemology, and Magical Mediating Methodological Instruments', Eric Michael Kelley (Boston University) reflects on the Avá-Guaraní concept of 'soul loss' through his prolonged ethnographic and ethnomusicological engagement with Avá-Guaraní shamanistic rituals, knowledge, and music. Kelley describes how his own incorporation into Avá-Guaraní acoustemological communities produced a change of habitus in himself. Through personal reflections, Kelley provides a detailed account of Avá-Guaraní shamanic practices in the context of deforestation and displacement caused by the expansion of commercial agriculture.

In addition to these articles, the Special Issue includes two essays. First, Silvio Sanches Barreto Bará considers the vital role of the stool of thought for the Eastern Tukanoan people, which invites one to sit and attend to the other through careful listening. Second, Siran Liang provides a captivating account of what she learned through attempting to learn to milk and care for yaks in other ways during her fieldwork in Tibet.

We thank each of these authors, as well as the guest editors, for the patience compiling a Special Issue always demands. We are also grateful to them for providing our readers with such unique, ethnographically rich, and methodologically and theoretically insightful glimpses into the work each has done.

…and more

Alongside the Special Issue outlined above, this issue contains a wealth of other submissions which have accrued in the *Suomen antropologi* submission pipeline over the past half year.

First, Majid Imani's (Tampere University) article, 'Reclaiming "Normal Life": Everyday Resistance by Gen Z in Iran', builds upon his important on-going research. Relying on online ethnography and research interviews with young Iranians, including those engaged in activist groups, Imani argues that, for members of Gen Z, actively working towards 'normal life' in online and offline spaces constitutes a viable form of everyday resistance to the violence and oppression in contemporary Iran.

In the final full-length article in this issue, 'A Panpsychist Theory of Shamanism(s)', Olof Ohlson (Federal University of São Carlos) weighs in on the strengths and failings of existing theoretical approaches to shamanism, before weaving them together to understand shamanistic experiences in their complexity. Ultimately, Ohlson argues that, beneath different contextually shaped expressions, there lies something fundamentally shared within the human experience. He stakes this claim by revisiting old and on-going debates within anthropology's sister discipline, philosophy.

These articles are followed by two essays, two research reports, a book review, and a *lectio præcursoria*.

First, the essay by Matti Eräsaari (University of Helsinki) discusses academic citations as tokens of different kinds of value in a wider moral and political economy of academic publishing. Eräsaari originally delivered the essay 'I Don't "Like" Malinowski, I Cite Malinowski' as a talk at a symposium held at the University of Turku, reflecting upon the 100th anniversary of the publication of Bronislaw Malinowski's *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922). In his essay, Eräsaari returns to classic anthropological concepts such as gift, commodity, and (in)alienability to discuss changes to academic citation practices.

In an autoethnographic essay titled 'Knowing Familial Soils', Saana Hokkanen (University of Helsinki) traces and explores different ways of knowing soils through the personal experiences of her grandparents, her father, and herself on a family farm in Central Finland. Her essay discusses the various places and the interrelations formed on the farm over time, pondering how diversifying knowledge contributes to understanding more-than-human relations and local ways of knowing the land and soils.

Two research reports follow. First, in Ecological Restoration and Tree-Planting Efforts in the Ihorombe Grasslands of Southern Madagascar', Jenni Mölkänen (University of Helsinki), Tellu Loikkanen (University of Helsinki), Matthieu Pierre (University of Fianarantsoa), Fitiavana Tanjona ny Rindra (University of Antananarivo), and Marketta Vuola (University

of Helsinki) summarise their preliminary findings from their research in Madagascar as a part of a broader consortium working on research which examines ecological restoration in the Global South. Second, Nikodemus Niko, Efriani, and Francis N. Reginio, in '*Kawan Adat:* The Traditional Marriage Ritual of the Dayak Benawan Indigenous People of Indonesia', combine a written account and vivid photographic material of this Indigenous ritual.

To close out this issue, we present the fruit of anthropological research at Tampere University. First, we include a conference report on the symposium, 'Vitality of Water: Rethinking Modernist Hydropolitics and Ontologies' (27–28 May 2025), written by the organisers, Iuliia Gataulina (Tampere University) and Ismaël Maazaz (Tampere University). Second, we publish the *lectio præcursoria* presented at the doctoral defence of Arvi Pihlman, 'Rescue and Exchange: Tracing Sprouts of Viable Living in the Field of Help and Care in Finland'. And, finally, Susanne Kuehling (University of Regina) offers her review of Tuomas Tammisto's book, *Hard Work: Producing Places, Relations and Value on a Papua New Guinea Resource Frontier* (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press 2024).

New ways of working with an expanded team

This mammoth issue marks a shift in our publication process. Beginning with this issue, we are moving towards a biannual publication schedule. In addition, we will continue making some significant changes to how we organise our work in order to make it easier for all of us to predict and plan our workloads throughout the year.

This issue is also the first spearheaded by Henni Alava and Tuomas Tammisto as co-editors-in-chief. We extend a huge thanks to our previous editor-in-chief, Suvi Rautio, for steering the journal over the past two years. Rautio came to the editorial team a mere six months before accepting the responsibility of running the journal. During her tenure at *Suomen antropologi*, Rautio oversaw the publication of six normal issues comprising two yearly volumes, whilst also conceiving the idea for and managing production of a supplementary Jubilee issue, which celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Finnish Anthropological Society.

In the coming year, we will work towards putting into practice many of the insights that came to light within the editorial team under Suvi's lead. More specifically, we will continue documenting our processes in order to smooth transitions for new team members. We will also revisit the division of labour between editorial team members, ensuring no-one's workload is too cumbersome. This will include adopting a hopefully permanent model of sharing the editor-in-chief's role between two people. Finally, we are delighted to share our work with the expanded technical editing team we

introduced above, and with a similarly expanded group of editors, now that Ismaël Maazas, Jenni Mölkänen, and Jelena Salmi have all joined our team within the past six months.

We believe in what we are doing. And we want *Suomen antropologi* to continue to thrive as an open access anthropology journal far into the future. The more of us who choose to devote our time to strengthening ethical publishing avenues in anthropology and neighbouring fields—as editors, as technical editors, as authors, and/or as reviewers—the stronger those avenues become.

Each person who reads, cites, writes, and reviews for this journal contributes to creating the kind of academic publishing world we collectively strive for a reality. Thank you for being a part of this effort, and for helping us nurture more transparent, equitable, and caring scholarly practices.

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