

Preface

The 3rd Nordic Geographers Meeting was held in Turku, Finland, 8–11 June 2009, under a theme “Change – society, environment and science in transition”. Reflecting the comprehensiveness of the theme, during the four days of the conference in the University premises change was discussed from a 360° view angle. In 66 parallel sessions, change was reviewed from the viewpoints of physical environment, climate, economy, innovation, landscape, tourism, cities, children’s geographies, food and education, just to name a few. The fact that change is strongly present in all these aspects reflects the dynamic and fluid state of contemporary societies globally. Regarding the future, change is constantly in the state of becoming, making the planning of the future today perhaps more challenging than ever.

This special issue of *Fennia* brings together a sample of the variety of perspectives portrayed in the conference. The first two papers of the Special Issue are based on keynote presentations from the plenary lectures of the conference. In the first paper, Gunnar Olsson maps the forbidden, although in his words “the mapping of forbidden is in itself forbidden”. This forbiddingness present in the paper intertwines closely with the notion of taboo, which drives Olsson in thinking about questions such as “why should I devote my professional life to issues which are not important enough to be taboo?”, and “how could I possibly stop wondering about how I understand how I understand?”. In the paper, he also discusses the notion of abysmal, the theme of his latest book.

Anne Buttmer’s plenary lecture on explorations of Alexander von Humboldt (1769–1859) has developed further in that the topic of her paper covers also the journeys of a Finnish geographer Johannes Gabriel Granö (1882–1956). These two gifted scholars of their times both found inspiration from the Altai mountains in Central Asia, and did important work in unravelling the complexities of landscapes and lifeways in this remote region. This paper describes the trips of Humboldt and Granö and their revealing of innovative insight into interactions of society and the environment.

The other eight papers of this volume are based on presentations from different parallel sessions. The first one of these original papers “Networks of European cities in worlds of global economic and environmental change” is authored by Stanley D. Brunn, Lomme Devriendt, Andrew Boulton, Ben Derudder and Frank Witlox. The authors analyze the importance and connectedness of European cities using hyperlinks, or the electronic information provided by the Google Search engine. The results demonstrate how hyperlinks represent valuable databases in measuring the impact of crises as well as regional and global urban linkages.

Elga Apsite, Anda Bakute, Līga Kurpniece and Inese Pallo deal in their paper with future climate change impacts on the runoff of five Latvian river basins at the end of the 21st century. Their simulation results based on the conceptual rainfall-runoff model indicate major differences in hydrometeorological parameters in the future. Both scenarios of the model demonstrate changes in seasonal runoff patterns where the major part of river runoff will be generated in winter, followed by spring, autumn and summer.

Change in the mining industry is the topic of the paper by Erika Knobbloek and Örjan Pettersson, titled “Restructuring and risk-reduction in mining: employment implications for northern Sweden”. Common to numerous countries all around the world, employment in northern parts of Sweden has been largely dependent on the extraction of natural resources. This dependency, together with the shifting demands and price fluctuations for raw materials, has had a major effect on local mining communities in the county of Västerbotten. The authors focus their study on the time period since 1990. After 2002, there has been some increase in the mining employment. Restructuring in mining generates new business opportunities in subcontracting, consultancy and equipment production, but also creates new challenges for regional development.

Change is essentially present in the paper by Päivi Kymäläinen and Paulina Nordström in their study of “Temporary geographies of the city: the experienced spaces of asylum seekers in the City

of Turku, Finland". The authors discuss the notion of temporarity and argue that this has a significant role in today's urban spaces and peoples' experiences of them. The theoretical aspects of temporary geographies are illustrated with empirical material collected among young asylum seekers in 2008–2009. The material demonstrates the feelings of momentarity in urban space as the uses of the city by asylum seekers were tinted with uncertainty while waiting for the decision on residence permit.

Elen-Maarja Trell and Bettina Van Hoven in their study of "Making sense of place: exploring creative and (inter)active research methods with young people" discuss the simultaneous use of various "new" creative and (inter)active research methods. The authors use examples from their research project with young people in Cedar, Vancouver Island, Canada. The findings demonstrate that combining the two methods motivates people to share their experiences of everyday places and gives a detailed picture of sensed daily places.

Karen Heikkilä and Gail Fondahl contribute to post-colonial studies in their article "Indigenous toponyms as pedagogical tools: reflections from research with Tl'azt'en Nation, British Columbia". Heikkilä and Fondahl discuss the value of indigenous place names as messengers of knowledge about the natural world, indigenous language and (oral) history. The results clearly show the value of indigenous toponymy in education.

Change is written and illustrated in the paper "Two fires and two landscapes – a tale of two cities", where Michael Jones describes the landscape change, and the planning and redevelopment processes seven years after a ravaging fire. The fire hit the historic city centres of Trondheim in Norway and Edinburgh in Scotland, in 2002. Jones studied how the prevailing planning ideologies, communicative planning theory and neo-liberal realities of new public management meet at historical site where vacant land suddenly becomes available. Jones argues that the planning process in both cities showed more features of new public management than of communicative planning theory.

Cristina Del Biaggio explores change in cross-border cooperation, regional identity and local networks in the paper "Theoretical reflection on the making of the Alpine region. The role of transnational networks of local actors on regional identity and institutionalization". Del Biaggio shows how the Alps are being institutionalized and how a pan-Alpine regional identity is built across national boundaries. The paper proposes an application of existing theories on identity and regional identity to the Alpine case.

The 10 papers accepted for publication in this Special Issue make history in the sense that they are the first ones to be published solely in an electronic form. Fennia, as of this very issue, turns into an Open Access Journal. Open Access means that from now on the contents will be available free of charge on the Internet, after a respectable history of 120 years and 187 volumes of printed issues. Open Access also means – so we hope – a wider audience in the globalised and more competitive scientific publication arena, where journals are becoming ever more specialized. For geographers, narrowing scope is not necessarily the preferred change in publishing. Global challenges and their complex regional analyses on various spatio-temporal scales often involve a wealth of methods and a combined physical and human geographical 'hybrid' approach. Such manuscripts may experience difficulties in finding their place in highly specialized journals. Therefore, we believe that there is a growing market for holistic journals that cover various aspects of geography. Fennia is there to serve such needs. Open Access Fennia employs the OJS freeware platform hosted by the Federation of Finnish Learned Societies. This means easier submission, and more transparent and faster review process. It will also allow more flexibility in the manuscript length and use of colours in illustrations free of charge. We hope that you will enjoy the new Fennia as a reader as well as an author.

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