

Cross-social scientific conversations on Finnish society

The first issue of *Research on Finnish Society*, which was the previous name of the *Finnish Journal of Social Research*, was launched in 2008 by Jani Erola and Pekka Räsänen, and published by the the *Society of Social and Economic Research in the Universities of Turku* (Turun korkeakoulujen yhteiskunnallistaloudellinen tutkimusyhdistys ry.). The founding editors deliberately challenged disciplinary boundaries and attracted a wide variety of scholars from sociology (including several subfields), social psychology, political science, economics and social work. The first years tend to be the hardest period for scientific journals, as the journal is unknown and unranked. However, Räsänen and Erola managed to consolidate the journal's position as a Finnish social scientific journal published in English. This work was continued by Juho Härkönen and Antti Kouvo who served as editors from 2014 to 2016. In 2017 Elina Kilpi-Jakonen stepped into the role, and in 2019 Outi Sarpila joined her as co-editor, and Iida Kukkonen as editorial assistant. Now it is time for us to step aside. We are delighted to welcome Aki Koivula and Irene Prix, from the University of Turku, as new editors. In this last editorial of our tenure, we summarise and reflect on the research themes that have been most prominent during our editorship. We then introduce the articles in this issue.

During our editorship we have had the opportunity to engage in scientific dialogue with scholars from various institutions and disciplines. We have continued to publish one issue per year. The only exception to this was the 10th volume of the journal, which included two issues. The first of these was a special issue dealing with research related to the *Tackling Inequality in Time of Austerity (TITA)* project, edited by Mikko Niemelä.

Different facets of wellbeing have been a major topic during our years of editorship. Wellbeing has been approached from the perspectives of life satisfaction (Lindblom & Lindblom, 2017; Näsman & Nyqvist, 2022), disability retirement and mortality (Klein & Saarela, 2018), active ageing (Nyqvist et al. 2019), as well as trust and victimization (Näsi et al., 2017). Social capital and social networks are a major predictor of wellbeing—as also discussed in one of this year's articles (Näsman & Nyqvist, 2022)—and a strong aspect of social capital are voluntary associations, which have also featured in the journal from the point of view of their dissolution (Sundblom et al., 2020). This year's volume also includes a discussion of how the COVID-19 pandemic has influenced wellbeing in Finland from a gender equality perspective (Elomäki & Mesiäislehto, 2022). A gendered perspective on wellbeing was also the focus of an article on men's self-care (Hyvönen, 2019).

The social structures that support wellbeing have been covered quite widely in the journal: from the perspectives of basic social security (Moisio et al., 2017; Tervola et al., 2019), healthcare (Moolla et al., 2021), and the education system (Adiputri, 2021; Kalalahti & Varjo, 2020; Zacheus et al., 2017). Education has also been examined from a within-family perspective in terms of the intergenerational transmission of reading behaviour (Toivonen, 2018). Further, the current and future role of university education has been discussed by the rectors of two universities in Turku (Kola, 2020; von Wright, 2020).

A second major theme has been policy making and administration, which has been approached through analyses of parliamentary discussions of conditionality and unconditionality (Varjonen, 2019),

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multicultural policies (Saukkonen, 2018), the metagovernance of regional development (Sundqvist, 2021), and the social construction of corruption (Groop, 2021). Policy making is also linked to political parties, which have been analysed from the perspectives of party members (Keipi et al., 2017), the geography of political competition (Nurmi & Meskanen, 2018), and the party leadership of the Finns Party in this most recent volume (Ketola & Nordensvärd, 2022).

A third, cross-cutting theme that has come across in a number of articles is multiculturalism and different types of minorities in Finland, with a strong emphasis on Finland's Swedish-speaking population (Klein & Saarela, 2018, Nyqvist et al., 2019, Näsman & Nyqvist, 2022, Saukkonen, 2018, Zacheus et al., 2017). A fourth important focus has been demographics, encompassing births and fertility (Comolli, 2018; Nisén et al., 2022), life trajectories (Komp-Leukkunen, 2018) and death (Klein & Saarela, 2018).

In sum, it seems that by building on the work of the past editorial teams, we have continued to make the journal a platform for 'cross-social scientific' (Erola et al., 2008, p. 2) conversations. This year's issue is no exception, as we again bring together timely research on Finnish society from different social scientific subfields and theoretical orientations.

In the first article of this volume, Markus Ketola and Johan Nordensvärd analyse the leadership of the Finnish right-wing populist party, the Finns party, with a focus on storytelling and its role in defining the party. The party has had two leaders to date: Timo Soini and Jussi Halla-aho, and the analysis portrays how the narrative of Soini changes when the party enters government. The counter-narrative of Halla-aho undermines the new consensus-seeking narrative of Soini, which eventually leads to the breakup of the party. The article highlights how government responsibility is a challenge for populist parties that have built their popularity around a 'credible truth telling' narrative.

The second article is Jessica Nisén, Marika Jalovaara, Anna Rotkirch, and Mika Gissler's study on changes in fertility in Finland during the COVID-19 crisis. The authors' analyses are based on the aggregate data on preliminary numbers of births provided by Statistics Finland. It seems that fertility increased during the first two waves of the COVID-19 pandemic due to a general fertility rebound combined with a fertility-boosting effect of the pandemic. The authors note that the results are in line with other studies conducted in Nordic countries. In contrast, in other European countries, the COVID-19 crisis had a more negative effect on fertility.

In the third article, Marina Näsman and Fredrica Nyqvist examine life satisfaction in Finland and how it is predicted by social capital. In particular, the authors highlight differences in social capital between different age groups as well as between the Finnish-speaking and Swedish-speaking parts of the population, and analyse whether the relationship between social capital and life satisfaction varies by age and linguistic group. Overall, the authors find some age-related variation in whether individuals have strong social capital, but the results vary depending on the type of social capital that is considered. However, Swedish-speaking Finns consistently tend to be more likely to have strong social capital compared to Finnish-speaking Finns. Social capital itself is an important predictor of life satisfaction, but there seems to be some minor variation across the life cycle (or between different birth cohorts) as well as between the two language groups in which aspects of social capital are the most relevant.

Anna Elomäki and Merita Mesiäislehto analyse the societal impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic from a gender equality perspective. In their article, they draw together findings from the research project *The impact of the COVID-19 crisis on gender equality in Finland* and evaluate the impact of political decisions on the social and economic outcomes of the COVID-19 crisis. In sum, the COVID-19 crisis treated different genders unequally, although the gendered impacts were not as fundamental as in many other countries. Elomäki and Mesiäislehto conclude that limited attention was however paid to gender equality during the pandemic. They call for integrating a gender equality perspective in post-crisis management of the COVID-19 crisis. In addition, the authors emphasise the strong need for taking gender equality into account in resolving future crises.

We wish to thank the authors for their valuable contributions to Finnish social research. At the same time, we want to extend our gratitude to all the anonymous reviewers, whose invisible labor is vital for

academic publishing. Thanks are also due to the editorial board and the editorial advisory board for their advice, support and help. We also want to thank our publisher, the Society of Social and Economic Research in the Universities of Turku, as well as the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Turku for supporting the publication. Finally, we wish to thank our readers and wish you all a happy new year filled with exciting social scientific thinking!

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