

# Changing editors, evolving journal's identity: Insights into editorial practice

Discussion about the production of scientific knowledge focuses mainly on researchers, funders, or institutions. Less attention is paid to editors, who nevertheless have significant influence over the publication of scientific knowledge. Since scientific journals are the channels through which universities, research institutes, and individual researchers present their knowledge to the world, editors become mid-level actors in the publication process and in the broader societal interaction of science (Wellington & Nixon, 2005). The role of the editor is not merely technical or administrative: editors make decisions shaping the impact of science on public and policymaking (Siler et al., 2015).

A well-functioning editorial process can strengthen the quality of science, protect research from weak methods, and bring promising new ideas to light. This is visible in the concrete work of editors: they guide manuscripts from submitted texts to published articles and at the same time shape the journal's identity and scientific priorities. The field-shaping role that is described by Wellington and Nixon (2005) can be seen as boundary work in which editors define the internal boundaries and direction of a discipline.

Editors' dual role is emphasized by the fact that they not only evaluate texts but also influence researchers' development during the process. According to Acker et al. (2021), editors often act as supporters of authors, particularly in the learning process of early-career researchers. Thus, editors are not only gatekeepers but also facilitators of development who participate in the social and professional construction of the research community.

At the heart of editorial work is constant evaluation. Editors decide which manuscripts proceed to peer review, what kinds of reviews are emphasized, and when the editorial office needs to intervene in disagreements among reviewers. Horbach and Halfmann (2020) show that editors balance several conflicting pressures in this work: scientific quality norms, support for authors, and the expectations of publishers and institutions. The editor's role is therefore ambivalent, combining enabling and delimiting, support and control, internal norms of the scientific community and external pressures of the publication system.

At the time of AI-assisted or even AI-generated articles the role of editors becomes even more crucial. The editor is here as well the first gatekeeper to control for the proper use of AI. At FJSR we are currently working on the AI guidelines for submissions and considering what is and what is not reasonable AI-use in research. Already there have been submissions also in FJSR that have been desk rejected in part due to poor quality likely resulting from the extensive use of AI in the writing process or even AI-generation of the whole article.

With this issue, the editorial team's term at *Finnish Journal of Social Research* comes to a close. Editorial transitions are always turning points for a journal's identity and practices. Moments like this are also good opportunities to reflect on editorial work. Analyzing editorial labor serves as a reminder that every published text is part of a shared process in which editors and authors together construct scientific discussion.

During the start of our term, we benefited greatly from our predecessors' substantive work in developing the journal's graphical layout, editorial workflow, and indexing in open access journal databases. On this basis, we aimed at further increasing the visibility of our journal within Finland and beyond. To this end, we invested not only in our social media presence, particularly in LinkedIn, but also took care to seek out researchers in the social sciences in Finland by presenting our activities at the major social sciences conferences within Finland.

Part of the fruits of this labour are showcased in this issue by two original research articles and a lecture, which together represent the full diversity of social science research in terms of both subject matter and methodological approaches.

In the first research article of this issue, Kirsti Sippel, Erica Åberg and Anna Grahn examine time trends and social gradients in the importance that young people assign to their own appearance. Their article entitled, "**Shifting (un)concerns in considering appearance important among Finnish adolescents and young adults**", the authors show that, contrary to what popular opinion may expect, young people in 2019 were not more concerned about their appearance compared to their peers surveyed fourteen years earlier, at a time before the age of social media.

The second research article in this issue examines housing from a perspective of environmental economics. In their study, Ruslan Gunko, Lauri Rapeli, Matias Scheinin, and Patrik Karell ask the question, "**Does environmental quality play a role in determining housing prices in a coastal community?**". Taking into account both objective and subjective measures of water quality in close proximity to permanent housing and summer cottages, the authors find the state of the coastal environment as associated with local perceptions of housing prices, serving as a reminder of the economic dimensions of ongoing climate change.

This issue concludes with professor Janne Kivivuori's Mauno Koivisto -lecture, given in December 2024 on the topic "**Familial, femicidal, and intimate partner homicide in early modern Nordic societies**". Having initiated a Nordic collaboration to collect and harmonise criminological data going back to the 1600's, Kivivuori presents in his lecture fascinating insights on how historical crime patterns and their variation across the Nordic countries can illuminate our understanding of the social embedding of violence with economic structures, social control and gender inequality. Outlining also the methodological challenges faced by such a long-duration view, the lecture vividly exemplifies the importance of European and Nordic collaborations in furthering innovative social science research.

Collaboration will remain an important element also in editing Finnish Journal of Social Research. Starting in January 2026, we will pass on the baton to the new team of editors, Jessica Nisén and Aleksi Karhula (who has acted as substitute for Aki Koivula this year and therefore also brings some continuity to the change), and Alisa Jashari as the new editorial assistant. We warmly welcome them to the journal and wish them the very best for their work in consolidating and expanding this journal's place within open access academic publishing in Finland.

Happy new year!

Aki Koivula, Aleksi Karhula and Irene Prix

## References

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