



Approaching Methodology

Second revised edition with an introduction by Ulrika Wolf-Knuts

Edited by
Frog & Pauliina Latvala

With
Helen F. Leslie

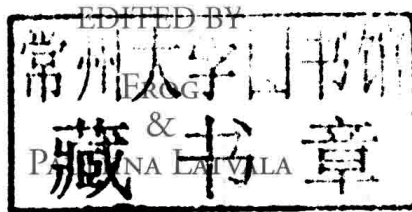


FINNISH ACADEMY OF SCIENCE AND LETTERS

SUOMALAISEN TIEDEAKATEMIAN TOIMITUKSIA
HUMANIORA 368
ANNALES ACADEMIÆ SCIENTIARUM FENNICÆ

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Annales Academiæ Scientiarum Fennicæ is part of the publishing co-operation between the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters and the Finnish Society of Science and Letters.

The series Humaniora continues the former ser. B.

Editor:

Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila

Associate editor:

Petteri Koskikallio

Contact address:

Dept. of World Cultures, P. O. Box 59, FI-00014 University of Helsinki, Finland

Email:

jaakko.hameen-anttila@helsinki.fi / pkoskikallio@gmail.com

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Academia Scientiarum Fennica

Cover: Juha Markula

Cover illustrations: Marja-Kristina Frolova

Distributor:

Bookstore Tiedekirja

Kirkkokatu 14, 00170 Helsinki

Finland

Tel. +358-9-635 177

Fax + 358-9-635 017

Email: tiedekirja@tsv.fi

Webstore: www.tiedekirja.fi

ISSN 1239-6982

ISBN 978-951-41-1085-6

Printed by Vammalan Kirjapaino Oy, Sastamala 2013

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Approaching Methodology emerged as a project and experiment to organize a small thematic special issue of the new, exclusively electronic publication *RMN Newsletter*. *RMN Newsletter* is the medium of contact and communication for members of the Retrospective Methods Network (RMN), published by Folklore Studies, University of Helsinki. However, the *Approaching Methodology* project clearly connected with current interests and concerns in the academic world: it received an unexpectedly large international and cross-disciplinary response. The size, scope and richness of the collection exceeded all expectations and it holds a relevance extending far beyond the limited audience of the Retrospective Methods Network. As a consequence, a decision was made to organize a hard-copy edition of this important collection that would make it more generally internationally accessible to a much broader audience.

The roots of this publication project trace back to a seminar at the Department of Folklore Studies, University of Helsinki, where the potential and direction of *RMN Newsletter* were discussed. Professor Emerita Annikki Kaivola-Bregenhøj (University of Turku) emphasized that, however important they are, method and methodology have always been challenging for researchers. She suggested that these challenges should be directly addressed by preparing a special issue devoted to methods and methodology, a suggestion complemented by Carsten Bregenhøj's contribution to the discussion. This was the seed of *Approaching Methodology*.

The editorial staff of *RMN Newsletter* had observed the challenges described by Kaivola-Bregenhøj in submissions to *RMN Newsletter* and also at the RMN's 2010 meeting (Bergen, Norway). The RMN is united by an interest in the problems, approaches, strategies and limitations related to considering some aspect of culture in one period through evidence from another, later period: 'retrospective' methods. Such comparisons range from investigating historical relationships to the utility of analogical parallels, and from comparisons across centuries to developing working models for the more immediate traditions behind limited sources. The connection of this collection to the RMN is evident

in the strong presence of these themes in a number of contributions. In spite of this focus, methods and methodology had received surprisingly little focused attention: they tended to be more implicit than explicit; scholars exhibited a general inclination to emphasize results rather than means. This was particularly prominent from the perspective of folklore studies in Finland, where methods and methodology are vital topics for discussion. A special issue seemed an excellent strategy for stimulating discussion. Pauliina Latvala (University of Helsinki) was invited to be a guest editor of the special issue with Frog (University of Helsinki), and together they immediately set about organizing the publication project.

For making the *Approaching Methodology* publication project possible, we would like to thank the contributing participants, Jill Bradley (Radboud University, Nijmegen), Rebecca M. C. Fisher (University of Sheffield), Vladimir Glukhov (†) & Natalia Glukhova (Mari State University), Erin Michelle Goeres (University College London), Haukur Þorgeirsson (University of Iceland), Kirsi Laurén (University of Eastern Finland), Helen F. Leslie (University of Bergen), Thelma Lazo-Flores (Chatham University), Francisco Martínez Ibarra (Towson University), Mathias Nordvig (University of Aarhus), Emily Osborne (Cambridge University), Sonja Peterson-Lewis (Temple University), Dani Schrire (Hebrew University of Jerusalem), Espen Suenson (Åbo Akademi University), Venla Sykäri (University of Helsinki) and Fjodor Uspenskij (Institute of Slavic Studies, Russian Academy of Science Moscow, and Higher School of Economics), and also the consulting participants Daniel Sävborg (University of Tartu) and Michael Bates (University of Sheffield). Without the hard work and motivation of these individuals, this project would not have been possible. We would also like to thank the external respondents to the working papers of the collection, Joonas Ahola (University of Helsinki), Tonya Kim Dewey (University of Bergen), Henning Fjortoft (Norwegian University of Science and Technology), Charlotte Hedenstierna-Jonson (National Historical Museum, Stockholm), Karina Lukin (University of Helsinki), Emily Lyle (University of Edinburgh), Debbie Potts (Cambridge University), Jyrki Pöysä (University of Jyväskylä), and Ulla Savolainen (University of Helsinki). The insights, perspectives and understandings of these individuals played an essential role in the development of the working papers into the present collection. We are grateful to Helen F. Leslie (University of Bergen) for her assistance and hard work in the final stages of editing the collection. We would like to express our great appreciation to Ulrika Wolf-Knuts (Åbo Akademi University) for her interest in the present volume and her enthusiasm to write an introduction for this

second edition. Finally, we would like to thank our friends and colleagues, both those concentrated at the Department of Folklore Studies of the University of Helsinki and those spread internationally around the globe, for their support and enthusiasm through the process of bringing this project to fruition.

FROG and PAULIINA LATVALA
March 19, 2013
Helsinki, Finland



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