

# English abstracts 34 (2017): 1

## **Suvi Salmenniemi & Anne Birgitta Pessi, "Wake up, you fools!": Self, society and change in self-help literature**

This article addresses self-help literature as a paradigmatic example of therapeutic culture, referring to the centrality of psychological knowledge in making sense of human life in contemporary societies. The article conceptualizes self-help as a therapeutic technology by means of which one seeks to transform one's relationship to oneself and the social world. Drawing on discourse analysis of bestselling self-help literature published in Finland during 2000–2009, the article traces cultural understandings of selfhood and social and personal change in the literature. It suggests that in Nordic books, selfhood is often understood as being shaped by social structures, and the need for political change is acknowledged. Globally circulating bestsellers, by contrast, perceive the self as less societally embedded and emphasize individualized ethical work in lieu of social change.

## **Virve Peteri, The lure of the chair – national competitiveness and the dangers of sitting**

During the last few years the national and international media have reported that sitting kills more surely than smoking or HIV. In Finnish media texts the subject has been constructed as a national health problem which ruins the health of office workers and wrecks our economic competitive ability. At the same time, a spatial shift is taking place in office settings. In Finland, *Proposed Government Premises Strategy* (2014) states that all ministries, government agencies and departments will be transformed into "Activity-based offices" by the year 2020. Activity-based office rests on the idea that in the future, people will not own a workstation anymore, and therefore will be able to stand and move at the workplace more than today. The article analyses the risk of sitting as a discursive and rhetorical accomplishment, which serves ideological purposes and strives to produce a certain kind of ideal citizens. The article establishes how the discourse identifies and

shapes ideal citizens who belong to the middle-class. The ideal citizen is identified as having a white-collar job and material and economic resources. The discourse promises to unravel the class differences but ends up reproducing the old hierarchies. The article draws methodological ideas from critical discourse analysis.

## **Harley Bergroth, Therapeutic knowledge production and systems of activation in the everyday life of self-trackers**

Everyday use of self-tracking technologies has proliferated in recent years. By self-tracking the author refers to the use of popular consumer-grade technologies, such as fitness trackers and sleep trackers that people use to gather data about themselves in order to examine and possibly adjust their lives. Drawing from 18 semi-structured interviews, autoethnographical observations and self-tracking related textual material, he asks how self-tracking becomes functional as a therapeutic technology of self-related knowledge production. The article illuminates contemporary

sociotechnical processes of self-making and shows how various human and non-human actors co-operate in performing political work within self-tracking assemblages. Although tracking technologies are often criticized in a technical sense for various reasons, they appear especially influential in their moral knowledge production. The article argues that contemporary self-tracking assemblages become functional as sociotechnical systems of activation that open up selves as potentials as well as encourage management of these potentials.

### **Inna Perheentupa, Critical lense and sanctuary. Feminism as a therapeutic technology**

This article analyses feminist activism as a therapeutic technology of the self. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork among feminist communities in St Petersburg and Moscow, it highlights how activists use feminism as a therapeutic tool in order not only to work on themselves but also to transform society and its highly conservative norms of gender and sexuality. Feminist work on the self is conducted among the activists in order to become an active and moral subject. In order to illuminate

this self-transformation the article delves into the stories of becoming a feminist and metaphors given for feminism in contemporary Russia. The article is based on fieldwork conducted in St. Petersburg and Moscow during 3.5 months in 2015 and consists of observations as well as 40 interviews of feminists.

KULTTUURINTUTKIMUKSEN  
SEURA ry

SÄLLSKAPET FÖR KULTURSTUDIER I  
FINLAND rf

SOCIETY FOR CULTURAL STUDIES IN  
FINLAND

PUHEENJOHTAJA / CHAIR  
FT Toni Lahtinen, yliopisto-opettaja,  
kirjallisuustiede, Tampereen yliopisto  
✉ toni.lahtinen@uta.fi

SIHTEERI / SECRETARY

Minna Nerg  
☎ 050 599 8842  
✉ Nykykulttuurin tutkimuskeskus  
PL 35, 40014 Jyväskylän yliopisto  
✉ Research Centre for  
Contemporary Culture  
PB 35  
FI-40014 University of  
Jyväskylä, Finland  
✉ minna.m.nerg@jyu.fi  
<http://kultut.fi>

POSTITUSLISTA / MAILING LIST  
✉ kultut@lists.jyu.fi

Kulttuurintutkimuksen seuran tavoitteena on toimia korkeakouluissa ja muissa tutkimuslaitoksissa kulttuurintutkimusta harjoittavien tutkijoiden yhdyssiteenä ja jatkokoulutusta tarjoavana yhteisönä. Tavoitetaan seura toteuttaa järjestämällä tieteellisiä kokouksia ja seminaareja kulttuurintutkimuksen eri alueilta sekä julkaisemalla *Kulttuurintutkimus*-lehteä.

The objective of the Society is to serve as a connecting link between cultural researchers active in institutions of higher education and in other institutions, and to function as a community offering post-graduate education. The Society pursues these goals by arranging scholarly meetings and seminars around topics from various fields of cultural studies, and by publishing the journal *Kulttuurintutkimus*.