EDITORIAL

Social anthropology and cultural studies programmes and jobs have come under scrutiny in several New Zealand universities over the previous eighteen months because of decreasing student enrolments in humanities and social sciences. This perhaps reflects the political economy of a marketplace oriented tertiary education sector in which some disciplines emerge as winners and others as losers. But it also begs the question of whether social anthropology and cultural studies are still relevant in the academy, and more broadly, are they still relevant to New Zealand society? What is it that social anthropology and cultural studies contribute?

At the risk of being theoretically glib, my response to this question after two decades of working as an anthropologist, is that social anthropology and cultural studies play an essential role in our understanding the world that we as humans both construct and participate in. This is more important than ever before given how rapidly we are changing our world, and the concomitant challenges of globalisation, neoliberalism, technologisation, warfare and humanitarian crises, environmental exploitation, pollution and degradation, and the persistence of widespread social inequity, suffering and poverty. One factor that makes social anthropology and cultural studies particularly relevant is that they provide a suite of methodologies, languages and practices for the task of socio-cultural analysis and critique across the range of human endeavour, and across micro, meso and macro levels – as exemplified in this issue of *Sites*.

Health technologies for example, are the subject of Susanna Trnka and Andrea Merino Ortiz's, and Phoebe Elers, Frances Nelson and Angelique Nairn's articles. Trnka and Merino Ortiz examine the ways in which health apps engender new everyday forms of subjectivity and engagement with other individuals who inhabit app user communities. Elers, Nelson, and Nairn examine the promises made in advertisements for patient portal technology to patients and health professionals, and ponder the potential for this technology to (re)construct new relationships between healthcare service providers and the consumers of healthcare services.

A critical analysis of gender discourses plays through several of these contributions to this issue. Mike Lloyd explores a short video on the opening of a

mountain bike skills area that features both male and female mountain bike riders, and problematises the conflation of skill with masculine performances of fast, aggressive and risk-taking riding, and conversely, the assignment of relative lack of skill to female performances that appear to be slower, more conservative and cautious. Trisia Farrelly, Rochelle Stewart-Withers, Sharon McLennan, and Lorena Gibson share their experimentation with the method of collective memory-work, at the same time drawing attention to the normative masculinist values governing productivity within the corporatised neoliberal university and the possibilities open to academic women to resist by participating in research collectives and slow scholarship. Rita Robinson, Clare Hocking, and Deborah Payne employ Foucauldian tools to examine contemporary normative discourses associated with toilet training. Such discourses fail to challenge assumptions that toilet training is the mother's responsibility, despite increasing participation in child-rearing practices by fathers and other kin, and increasing rates of mothers in paid employment outside the home.

Identity politics is another thematic addressed in several contributions. Louise Humpage examines perceptions of identity and cultural politics among Māori and Pākehā members of expatriate organisations in London. Although a small pilot study, her findings indicate that the cultural politics of 'home' appear to be somewhat diminished among this group because of their geographical distance from New Zealand with its ever present violent colonial history and contested bicultural and national discourses. Rather, her participants talk of the construction of a shared expatriate identity based on their diasporic experiences.

Is it possible to transcend identity politics? Should such a world be imagined? Nigel Rapport responds to Brigitte Lewis' critique of his 2012 book, *Anyone: The Cosmopolitan Subject of Anthropology*, 'Multiple Peripherals One Cosmopolitanism: Rights Based Feminism and the Globe Trotting Pick Up Artist', published in *Sites* Volume 13, Number 2 (2016). Here, Rapport reiterates the theme of *Anyone*, that the individual represents humanity, and that the 'cosmopolitan project of anthropology' is to explore the tensions between 'human commonality lived as individual difference', and to distinguish between cultural fictions and ontological truths. Lewis is given the final word in a brief rejoinder – she counters by asseverating that individuals can never be free from the restraints of identity politics because they are deeply embedded within social relationships.

An example of this is the representation of a violent episode in New Caledonia's recent history involving Kanak hostage-takers and French militia that is the subject of Karin Speedy's analysis of the Mathieu Kassovitz film *L'Ordre et*

la morale. The film challenges colonialist versions of the event and the stereotypical portrayal of indigenous people, and Speedy reveals several competing discourses about the film itself and the authenticity of its narrative.

Speedy comments on the contrast between European linear time and Kanak cyclical time (a fusion of past and present) presented in *L'Ordre et al morale*, and this is a theme that Raymond Nairn, Angela Moewaka Barnes, and Tim McCreanor also draw attention to in their article on the archaeology of death notices. They argue that New Zealand death notices display several characteristics that betray naturalised colonialist discourses. Compared with death notices in other cultural contexts, these feature linear forms of temporality as the deceased is relegated to the past, and individualism as the deceased is de-contextualised from their social and community emplacement. Another temporal rhythm emerges in Robinson, Hocking, and Payne's article, where time becomes a critical component employed in child development discourses about the appropriate time for toilet training, the use of toilet training as an opportunity to enrich a child by reading and other activities deemed to connote 'quality' time, and the purchasing of other adults' time for toilet training as a component of paid childcare.

Together these articles demonstrate the breadth of engagement with the human condition that critical studies in the humanities and social sciences can bring and the satisfyingly complex readings of our contemporary 'wicked' problems that such sustained scholarship provokes.

Finally, the *Sites* Board is pleased to announce the winner of the *Sites* Graduate Student Essay Competition. This year Claire Black, from the University of Auckland, won the competition with her essay, 'Narrating Agency and Constructing Community: Commonalities and Tensions in Health Technology Narratives'. We are also pleased to announce Jeff Sluka from Massey University as the winner of the Déjà Lu award this year for the most engaging and innovative article published in *Sites* during 2016.

As the incoming General Editor of *Sites*, I am grateful for the support of the outgoing General Editor, Professor Emerita Julie Park, the Layout Editor, Les O'Neill, and the *Sites* Board, particularly the Chair, Associate Professor Ruth Fitzgerald. I extend my thanks to the contributing authors, reviewers and copyeditors, and all others who have helped materialise this issue.

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REFERENCES

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