

EDITORIAL

It is with a sense of gratitude for difficult times survived and hope for an easier year ahead that we present this second issue of *Sites* for the publishing year of 2020. In doing so, we acknowledge that our authors, readers, layout and copy editors and board members are owed a special debt of gratitude for their patience and support during this year of new ‘normals’, worries over health, and anxieties surrounding the economic uncertainties of life against the pandemic’s backdrop.

The contents of this issue provide two reflections on the experience of living through the Covid pandemic here in Aotearoa New Zealand. One is a reflective piece by Susanna Trnka which takes the form of meditative diary entries explored by the writer during the most intense lockdown phase experienced in Aotearoa New Zealand – level four. At this level, household members were required to stay within their usual property boundaries for the majority of the day, with socialising restricted only to members of each ‘bubble’ of contact, exercising locally, all the while maintaining two meters of distance from those outside one’s own bubble. Extended and blended families, and the randomly as well as purposefully connected co-inhabitants of shared spaces, along with the solitary, were all required to interpret and apply these bubble rules of social connection within their various circumstances. Trnka’s phenomenological reflections chart her responses to this sense of both restriction and liberation from prior daily routines in conversation with a sample of her academic reading at the time. The result is powerfully thought provoking – triggering for us as readers our own memories and reflections of life during this period through the clarity of direct comparison with the diversity of our own lockdown experiences.

From a different perspective, Nayantara Appleton and colleagues provide an alternative society level view of the recent Covid lockdown. They draw on a variety of responses from online survey material, in which the authors argue that the much vaunted ‘kiwi success’ of managing the pandemic overlooks the difficult caring work of carrying out mundane essential tasks in tiring and dispiriting circumstances, including underappreciation. The work also reveals the less than unified responses to the dominant public health messages of

the internationally applauded PM briefings by Prime Minister Ardern and Director General of Health Bloomfield. The accumulated survey evidence is a reminder of the need to understand the many differently positioned narratives and experiences of living with the pandemic that entwine, support and contradict the wider, more internationally accepted narrative of ‘winning’ against Covid. We invite more of our scholarly community to continue this discussion in the next general issue of *Sites* which will appear in June 2021 – these two excellent articles suggest that are still more perspectives and lines of analysis to be presented on this topic.

The second theme explored in this general issue relates to the ongoing processes of decolonisation in contemporary settler/invasor societies. One of our featured articles explores this issue in Australia and another two do so from the perspective of living in Aotearoa New Zealand. I begin by considering the article by Mitchell and colleagues (whose work opens this issue), and who draw on the contemporary experience of living with a diabetes diagnosis in an aboriginal community in the Northern Territory, Australia. The authors argue that improved health care for this particular population of people requires a decolonising approach to the provision of allopathic diabetes treatment. The work is based upon two years of careful ethnographic fieldwork using the ‘yarning’ method of eliciting rich narratives. The study was conducted under the auspices of an esteemed local cultural advisor to reveal the complex interplay of traditional and biomedical treatment approaches that participants in the study selected in order to manage both the diagnostic label and the experiences of living with unwanted symptoms. It will come as little surprise for observers of the practice of clinical biomedicine in Australia that locally derived decolonising models for health care have been promoted but are often not used (McKivett, Paul and Hudson 2018) despite drawing inspiration from the long-standing Meihana Model from Aotearoa New Zealand (Pitama *et al.* 2007).

Clare Joensen’s article, which is also the outcome of a very successful masters level research project, is an insightful introspection into the ethical complexities of working within a decolonising research framework as a Pākehā researching Māori. The article’s focus is primarily on how to move innovatively and caringly beyond lower-level debates over the ethics of permission for such research and into a more meaningful higher level involvement with others in a significant and socially important research project. As her readers, however, we also receive, through her exposition, enchanting glimpses of the wider thesis argument itself, which investigates the overdetermined topic of bariatric surgery for extreme weight loss. From a variety of subject positions, readers of this work during review have noted its sensitivity and its satisfyingly complex methodological

discussions, and thus for those with a specialist interest in size politics, I suspect that the longer, publicly available thesis will beckon invitingly (Joensen 2019).

In another analytical approach to the complexities of the decolonising process, Simon's article critiques a particular example of the New Zealand-based far right literature emanating from the company Tross Publishing. Poignantly, the article begins with a recollection of the author complaining to a book store manager for misfiling such an offensive work under the category of Māori literature, only to soon receive a copy of the book from a well-meaning family member who thought it might be helpful for his dissertation topic. From this promisingly complex beginning, the author charts a discussion of the significance of the continued circulation of far right material for the future of Aotearoa New Zealand.

We are also delighted in this issue to showcase the work of the 2020 winner of the Sites Graduate Student Essay Competition, Jacqueline Watt. Watt's essay, entitled 'Kiwiburn – A "Biophilic Festival"' is a thoughtful analysis of people's attempts at organising more positive and sustainable future-oriented connections between humans and the wider landscape. The mention of this essay also serves as a timely moment to advise our contributors that the next Graduate Student Essay Competition (based on essays completed in 2020 and 2019) will run quite soon this year in order for the winner to be published in our June edition of *Sites*, which will now become the usual timing for our general issue every year.

May I take a moment to thank you all for your continued support of our journal, and to note that it is a pleasure to be, once again, sitting in the General Editor's chair for *Sites*. I wish you all productive reading.

Ruth Fitzgerald PhD FRAI
General Editor

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