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**EDITORIAL**

# Notes on a More Equitable Higher Education

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The 29 January 2021 marked one year since the first Covid-19 case – involving a Chinese tourist in Lapland – was diagnosed in the Nordic countries. After 12 months with various degrees of lock downs, academics have now learnt to cope with remote, home-based work and the digitalisation of everyday work and life. Digitalisation has rapidly transformed teaching during the pandemic. Online teaching and desk-based learning have reduced informal encounters and impeded social relations among students and between the lecturer and students, situations that Takayama (2020) terms learning in the ‘margins’. Globally, the pandemic has impacted on the well-being of students and staff in higher education. Students experience increasingly exhaustion, lack of motivation and isolation, especially those who were already in more vulnerable positions (Green et al. 2020).

Technology-inspired multitasking has achieved new levels during the pandemic; we can simultaneously listen to a conference keynote, answer emails on our phone, bake bread, work out or attend to our children’s piano classes or homework. Feelings of achievement might be one outcome after having juggled daily chores and online work from home, but feelings of exhaustion and emptiness may better characterise the outcome – a sense best described with the term *zombie*. Although virtual meetings are here to stay – the reduction of air travel will be a necessary step to tackle climate crisis and allow for access across the globe in unparalleled ways – healthier practices of using these technologies and how to better divide work and leisure time need to be developed.

Even before the pandemic, our mobile phones were craving our attention and making us incapable of listening to others and destroying our capabilities of focusing, as painstakingly analysed by Kate Murphy (2020) in her pre-pandemic, self-help book *You’re Not Listening. What You’re Missing and Why it Matters*. Murphy argues that not listening to each other is preventing us from making meaningful connections and making us lonelier and unhappier. Although Murphy’s self-help book is admittedly methodologically not very strong, it touches upon real problems related to multitasking that have been studied scientifically. Madore et al. (2020) published a pre-pandemic study in *Nature* on the relationship between memory and media-multitasking-generated attention lapsing. Their findings demonstrate that heavier media multitasking “is associated with worse episodic memory, in part, because of a greater propensity to suffer more-frequent or disruptive lapses of attention” (Madore et al. 2020: 90).

Media multitasking is thus not only bad for our sense of connection to other people but also for our capacities of remembering. We need to develop healthier relationships with technologies and healthier practices that reduce media multitasking as well as relearn how to listen and read actively. Our decreasing attention span is also reflected in other academic practices. The harmful institutional pressure to constantly publish is the academic version of talk, and the lack of time for reading is akin to our failure to properly listen.

We hope that the pandemic has demonstrated the value of community and connection, of listening and reading, and the need to rebuild and imagine how we can transform higher education systems from competitive, individualistic and instrumental institutions towards more inclusive, caring and equitable ones.

In the future balancing acts, we would like to encourage our readers to spend a little more time reading than writing. If you have the new year resolution to read more, we might suggest that you start with the winner of the *Nordic Journal of Migration Research (NJMR)* best article prize for 2019–2020, *Arnfinn H. Midtbøen (2019) Dual Citizenship in an Era of Securitisation: The Case of Denmark*. As announced during the biannual Nordic Migration Conference in January, Midtbøen's article is a 'well-grounded and timely academic contribution, as it documents and critically contributes to the dual citizenship literature.'

This new year 2021 marks also the 10th anniversary of *NJMR*, which saw its first issue published in 2011. The journal was a continuation of the *Norwegian Journal of Migration Research* (2000–2009) and the *Finnish Journal of Ethnicity and Migration* (2006–2010), and the two first co-editors in charge, Tuomas Martikainen (University of Eastern Finland) and Hakan G. Sicakkan (University of Bergen), had the foresight of making it an open access journal from the beginning. Now that open access format is increasingly demanded from funders and universities, we remain as one of the few journals that are completely free of cost for readers and authors alike. For that we can thank our sponsors The Joint Committee for Nordic Research Councils in the Humanities and Social Sciences (NOS-HS), The Society for the Study of Ethnic Relations and International Migration (ETMU) in Finland as well as Nordic Migration Research and its various institutional partners in the Nordic countries that fund *NJMR*.

Since the launch of *NJMR*, we have increased our readership and authorship, changed publisher to Helsinki University Press and revised our editorial board. We have also expanded our editorial team, and this year we are delighted to announce that Professor Mikkel Rytter from Århus University, Denmark, has joined our team as Associate Editor. We welcome Mikkel and look forward to working with him.

Finally, a peer-review journal cannot operate without the gift of reading and commenting other people's work that referees do for our journal. Although the pandemic has unfortunately affected the journal processes and made it increasingly difficult for us to find reviewers in due time, we are grateful to the following people who took the time to read and review the work of their colleagues during the exceptional year of 2020: Edward Alessi, Sharam Alghasi, Merja Anis, Vanessa Barker, Tuva Beyer Broch, Katia Bianchini, Kathy Burrell, Martina Cvajner, Solvig Ekblad, Gunn Elin Fedreheim, Katja Franko, Hanne Haaland, Gunilla Holm, Joachim Vogt Isaksen, Kirsi Pauliina Kallio, Tuuli Kurki, Aina Landsverk Hagen, Johanna Leinonen, Hilde Liden, Annika Lindberg, Monica Massari, Olivia Maury, Paula Mulinari, Caithlin Nunn, Astrid Ouahyb Sundsbo, Elisa Pascucci, Päivi Pirkkalainen, Christian Poirier, Tobias Pöttsch, Garbi Schmidt, Markku Sippola, Cinzia Solari, Ninna Nyberg Sørensen, Jonas Strandholdt Bach, Anna-Maria Tapaninen, Marja Tiilikainen, Ingrid M. Tolstad, Sayaka Osanami Törngren, Eva van Belle, Micheline van Riemsdijk, Östen Wahlbeck, and Tuomas Zacheus.

Thank you – the journal could not manage without your gift of review!

## Competing Interests

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

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