

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### THE 35TH NORDIC ETHNOLOGY AND FOLKLORE CONFERENCE “RE:22”

The 35th Nordic Ethnology and Folklore Conference took place between June 13 and June 16, 2022, in Reykjavik, Iceland. While this series of conferences has been running for more than a century now, this conference was unique in many respects.

Firstly, Nordic ethnology and folklore researchers had to wait for an extra year to reunite at this academic event: the usual three-year gap between the conferences was supplemented by the COVID-19 pandemic, so the meeting was even more long-awaited than in the former (pre-pandemic) days. This was probably one of the factors that contributed to another prominent feature of the event – the number of participants skyrocketed compared to the previous Nordic Ethnology and Folklore Conferences, with around 350 researchers attending the conference on site and 70 more joining online. The conference featured more than 80 panel sessions which meant that choosing what presentations to attend was not an easy task. Thirdly, the prominence of hybrid format – another contribution (or curse?) of the pandemic – ensured a wider and more flexible access to the conference presentations.



*Figure 1. Conference participants at the Open Air Museum.  
Photograph by Anastasiya Fiadotava.*



**Figure 2.** An art piece from the workshop on DIY as art-based methodological practice in ethnology. Photograph by Anastasiya Fiadotava.

These formal peculiarities of the 2022 Nordic Ethnology and Folklore Conference, important as they are, did not overshadow the conference's curious content. The conference topic consisted of just one syllable – “re:”. It invited the participants to reflect on repetitions, remixes, reuses, and multiple other theoretical concepts that play a crucial role in defining folklore and ethnological research as they allow scholars to trace patterns of human culture and approach them from a perspective that highlights both their traditionality and variation. As “re” words featured prominently in the conference call for papers, it came as no surprise that they were also integrated in many of the panels' titles shaping the participants' presentations and discussions.

However, the recurrent use of “re” concepts did not limit the variety of the conference presentation topics. They ranged from general reflections on modernity to very mundane engagements with money, food, or other everyday objects; from the historical overviews of the development of disciplines to the reflections on how contemporary digital technologies define our culture; from the focus on materialities to the discussion of narratives. The geographical scope was also not limited to Nordic countries but included other countries of Europe as well as more distant locales.

Alongside the regular panels the conference also featured workshops and plenary talks. Some of the workshops tried to breach the gap between scholarly work and art – for example, the participants of the workshop under the heading “Recycling and reimagining

materiality – DIY as art-based methodological practice in ethnology” were using recycled artifacts to create art pieces related to their personal (academic) experiences. The plenary talks shed light on two very different sides of ethnology and folkloristics. Tine Damsholt from the University of Copenhagen looked at how COVID-19 pandemic has affected our everyday temporalities, and Terry Gunnell from the University of Iceland reflected on the ways the 19th-century folklore collectors used the illustrations in their books as well as the connections between the collection of folklore and the creation of national culture in the Nordic countries.

One of the most inspiring aspects of the conference was the fact that it did not just remain a “thing in itself” but was rather a milestone marking the existing and potential future collaborations. For example, the conveners of the panel “Symbiotic living: Human-microbial relations in everyday life” explained that it is a part of a larger interdisciplinary project that they take part in, and the organizers of the panel “Re:producing and re:presenting the family & kinship in a digital age” suggested that the panel participants compile a joint publication. The conference also included a discussion meeting on the Nordic cooperation in ethnology and folklore and a planning session for a new SIEF working group (“Feminist approaches to ethnology and folklore”). All these initiatives – as well as the number of conference participants and their diverse research interests – showed that folkloristics and ethnology are thriving in the Nordic countries, and there are plenty of opportunities for scholarly work in these disciplines.

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