

Abstract

Municipalities, Borders, Culture. Experiences of Change

The discourse of Finnish municipal development is dominated by the pathos of competitiveness and cost-effectiveness. Emotional, cultural and experiential influences have received poor attention. This book was made to fill this research deficit. The focus lies not on political or administrative changes but in their impact on culture. How does the change in regional structure affect civil associations, cultural services or the sense of home? How do people feel these changes in the library, in the village club or in sheltered everyday life?

Municipal mergers have many faces. Each case is different because the merging parties are always unique. Changes do not appear equally in all the economic sectors, regions and groups of people. What is felt to be successful in one part of a new municipality may cause problems or even give rise to damage elsewhere. Influences vary with administrative sectors and actual lives as well.

The ten articles of this book are divided into three sections. In the first part we study the role and significance of place-basedness, local resilience and European new regionalism. The second section illustrates experiences of municipal mergers by examples taken from libraries, museums, local associations, and live-music organisations. Finally, attention is focused on human everyday experience: how does a regional change affect people's locality (or, actually, multilocality), sense of home, and mental image of place. The cases are taken from different parts of Finland: the lighthouse island of Tankar in the city of Kokkola, the still independent small municipalities of Iitti and Kuortane, and the consolidations of many municipalities in the Seinäjoki, Oulu, Salo and Jyväskylä regions.

The authors are professors and doctoral students in Finnish universities (Helsinki, Jyväskylä, Oulu, Turku, Vaasa, and Sibelius Academy) in various branches of knowledge (history, ethnology, geography, regional science, administration and musicology).

“How the municipal merger is felt is at least as important a consequence as how much the merger will cost. Experiential and economic consequences are equally valid.” *Sulevi Riukulehto*