
OBITUARY

Jenni Rinne (1977–2025)

Our beloved colleague, associate professor, PhD Jenni Rinne, died on 5 February 2025 in a tragic traffic accident on her way to Suomussalmi, heading to her family cottage for a writing retreat with colleagues. She was only 47 years old, born in Oulu on 10 December 1977.

Jenni had a diverse and international career path in the field of ethnology. She graduated with a bachelor's degree from the University of Tartu, a master's degree from the University of Jyväskylä and a doctoral degree from the University of Södertörn. Her doctoral thesis, which was revised



in 2016, dealt with the Estonian Maausk movement and its practitioners' understandings of events in relation to the broader history and surrounding society. Furthermore, she analysed the affective and embodied experiences of being a Maausk practitioner from a phenomenological perspective. She developed the theoretical perspectives further in her later studies. After completing the thesis, Jenni worked as a university lecturer at the University of Helsinki and Turku and as a senior research fellow at the University of Oulu. She was an associate professor of ethnology at the University of Turku. The most recent research project she was working on, together with Tiina Suopajärvi, Kirsi Sonck-Rautio and Helena Ruotsala, dealt the relationship between ageing and nature – a research theme truly close to her heart.

Jenni was a skilled and dedicated ethnographer. We, Maija and Päivi, worked with Jenni on a research project that explored everyday routes and experiences of change in a new residential area in Turku from the perspective of sensory ethnography. Jenni's contribution was essential to the project already in the planning phase. Her expertise in affective experiences of the environment was central to the project's methodological and theoretical framework. She was always eager to familiarise herself with the research field, meet new people and make sharp observations. For example, with the above-mentioned research project she found an Airbnb apartment in the middle of our research area, where she stayed for several nights on her field trips. We also enjoyed a one-week writing residency in Tartu. Having studied and lived there, Jenni was a wonderful guide for exploring the city, and for her, the week included a nostalgic visit to the university's Department of Ethnology.

Jenni was a clever and dedicated writer. She enjoyed writing – also with colleagues. She had a sensitivity to recognising the different strengths of people, and she encouraged them to bring those strengths to their texts as well as to trust their own voice. Her latest editorial works included a recent special issue of *Ethnologia Fennica*, "Sensing the Urban" (2024), in which she was acting as a visiting editor-in-chief. She also developed the idea and worked as an editor for the article collection *Affektit ja tunteet kulttuurien tutkimuksessa* [Affects and emotions in cultural studies], published by Ethnos.

Jenni promoted an awareness of ethnological research while working for Ethnos, the Finnish Ethnological Association, first in other roles and later as the chairperson. Jenni understood that the Association's activities are based on cooperation and that the chairperson's most important task is therefore to get all the board members to work together. Jenni showed great leadership,

especially by encouraging and supporting everyone equally while maintaining a constructive working environment. Her strengths were empathy and the ability to remain focused on the goal.

Jenni was also a well-liked teacher and skilled at engaging with her students. She was able to offer a variety of literary tips and perspectives on different subjects. She was well informed about new research projects and knew scholars across academic boundaries. She also had a confident approach to planning and developing her teaching. In the collaborative meetings, she did not necessarily express her views first but instead listened to others and then shared her insightful opinion, which was always well-reasoned.

Supervising a doctoral thesis is a multi-step process, one that Jenni knew particularly well. Her handprint is visible in the work of many doctoral candidates in ethnology. She demonstrated her ability as a supervisor by being sensitive to the demand for guidance from her supervisees. Some wrote their theses quite independently and mainly need guidance regarding the topic and content. Others, though, needed more emotional support and hands-on guidance. Jenni was able to assess what supervisory method worked best for each person. Jenni's supervisory method was attentive in that she suggested and gave recommendations, but she did not place demands or undue pressure on the supervisee.

It is noteworthy that Jenni was able to fully concentrate on both her supervisory and association duties while simultaneously holding a teaching position at the university. It shows a great dedication to the advancement of the ethnological discipline and research as a whole. At the same time, it is important to emphasise that those who knew Jenni appreciated, in addition to her expertise, her warmth, open-mindedness and inquisitive mind. Those qualities made her not only a respected academic but also a great person to work with. In her work, Jenni was diligent and thorough. She approached challenging situations with calm confidence and instilled a sense of belief in her colleagues as well. In moments of doubt, her words come to mind: "We'll get this done." The ethnological community in Finland as well as a great many international friends and colleagues will sorely miss her.

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Päivi Leinonen

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