Inkeri Koskinen

Changing Research Communities
Essays on Objectivity and Relativism in Contemporary Cultural Research

Academic dissertation to be publicly discussed, by due permission of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Helsinki in auditorium XII, on the 10th of August, 2015 at 12 o’clock.
Publishers:
Theoretical Philosophy
Philosophy (in Swedish)
Social and Moral Philosophy

P.O. Box 24 (Unioninkatu 40A)
00014 University of Helsinki
Finland

Editors:
Panu Raatikainen
Tuija Takala
Bernt Österman
Inkeri Koskinen

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Essays on Objectivity and Relativism in Contemporary Cultural Research
ISBN 978-951-51-1416-7 (paperback)
ISSN 1458-8331 (series)
Unigrafia, Helsinki 2015.
Abstract

This dissertation examines the effects of a change in the roles that extra-academic agents have in academic research: they are participating in the production of academic knowledge more actively than used to be the case. The focus is mainly on disciplines that fall under the umbrella of cultural research. Former informants are nowadays often becoming collaborators, co-researchers or co-authors in collaborative or participatory projects, or conducting activist research on their own cultures.

Cultural research is in a unique position when facing the contemporary urge towards more "democratic" knowledge production. In disciplines such as anthropology, folkloristics and ethnotnology, researchers have always interacted with their informants’ knowledge systems and developed research practices for approaching these systems. These practices are presently colliding with new demands that arise from the now common call for collaborative and participatory research.

I focus on normative epistemic questions related to relativistic research practices and to objectivity. When the roles of the extra-academic agents change, the composition of research communities is also changed. An interactive notion of objectivity has recently been defended in social epistemology. It takes a research community as the unit whose objectivity is to be assessed. In the articles I identify shortcomings in the interactive objectivity of the emerging research communities, and develop analytical tools that can hopefully be of use in improving the situation.

As the composition of research communities is changed, the established ways of approaching extra-academic knowledge systems also have to change. The moderately relativistic practice of avoiding the appraisal of alien knowledge systems is no longer as practicable as it used to be. When former informants join research teams in participatory projects, or indigenous activists become activist researchers, they become part of communities whose interactive objectivity can and should be assessed. This is the case even if some or all of the members of the communities are taken to represent, or see themselves as representing, extra-academic knowledge systems. The contributions of everyone belonging to a research community must be met with the same critical attitude, or the objectivity of the community will suffer.
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Acknowledgements

When I started work on this doctoral thesis, I did not yet know that I would end up doing philosophy of science. I was already working on many of the themes that are discussed here, such as research linked to local identities and nation-building, especially in the humanities. However, my approach was more in the line of history of ideas, phenomenology, and history of philosophy. I was also still looking at past developments at that time. The transition to contemporary issues and to philosophy of science would have been impossible without the invaluable help of a large number of people. There are are bound to be some whom I ought to mention here, but who now escape my memory. I am highly grateful to them all.

My sincere thanks go to my two supervisors, Professor Matti Sintonen and Professor Vesa Oittinen. Vesa kindly agreed to supervise me when my plans were still unfocused. When it became clear that what I was doing would be philosophy of science, Matti was ready to help. Their unswerving support has made it possible for me to concentrate on this thesis for several years. A third person who must be mentioned here is Professor Uskali Mäki. He has contributed to this thesis in a very concrete fashion by being the co-author of one of the articles that follow. Not only has he collaborated with me; I have also received well-measured advice and much needed encouragement from him.

I am greatly indebted to everyone at the Helsinki Philosophy of Science Group and the Finnish Centre of Excellence for the Philosophy of Social Sciences (TINT). This steadily growing group of people has formed an incredibly ambitious and brilliant community. I'm very grateful for the way in which I have been welcomed as its member. More people than can be mentioned here have offered me highly useful feedback during the past years. But I would especially like to thank Martina Merz, Caterina Marchionni, Manuela Fernández Pinto, and Miles MacLeod for their valuable comments in the last stages of my work, as well as Juho Pääkkönen for helping me with the layout of this thesis.
A very special thank you goes to my former office-mate Tomi Kokkonen, with whom I have taught philosophy of the humanities for several years. I have certainly learned more from our collaboration than I have managed to teach others. The whole time I spent on the sixth floor of Metsätalo was crucial for me in many ways. I owe special thanks to Panu Raatikainen, who has offered useful comments on my unfinished papers and helped me with many practicalities, and to the other night owl, Tarja Knuuttila, for cheery discussions at 2 a.m. I would also like to thank Auli Kaipainen, Terhi Kiuskinen and Hanna Peljo for all their help and patience.

Both "contemporary cultural research" and "communities" are mentioned in the title of this thesis. I am extremely grateful for the way in which I have been received among the researchers whose work I study. The tight-knit, amazingly friendly and warm community of Finnish folklorists has allowed me to participate in its research seminars, symposia and conferences. I am especially grateful to Professor Pertti Anttonen, docent Frog, Professor Seppo Knuuttila, and Professor Lotte Tarkka for useful comments and lively discussions. I owe particular thanks to Professor Anna-Leena Siikala for agreeing to an interview. Likewise, I would like to thank Professor Larry Zimmerman for his kind answers to my questions about collaborative archaeology.

Another community without whose help I would not have been able to write this thesis is the community of Sámi scholars. I am especially grateful to Irja Seurujärvi-Kari of the University of Helsinki and to Professor Nils Oskal of the Sámi University College in Kautokeino for their help, advice and interest in my work. I also wish to thank everyone I met in Kautokeino during my short visit in 2011 for their generosity.

My sincere thanks also go to the preliminary examiners of this thesis, Kristina Rolin and Mark Risjord, for their highly useful comments and kind words. Financially, my doctoral research was made possible by grants from the Kone Foundation and the University of Helsinki. I am very grateful for the opportunity offered to me.

A few good friends have witnessed my gradual transition towards philosophy of science. I greatly value Kaisa Luoma's friendship, insight
and analytical skills. I am grateful also for the many long and meandering conversations I have had with Tommi Uschanov during these years – as well as for the careful language revision of the introductory essay of this thesis (it goes without saying that the remaining errors are my responsibility).

I have been so lucky as to have parents, Pirkko and Jouko, who have supported me in everything I have ever chosen to do. I am thankful also to my sister Heini and my brother Pietari for their inspiring example in making independent and creative career choices. Finally, it might have been possible to finish this thesis without Arttu, but it certainly would not have been enjoyable. I am grateful for his love.

Helsinki, 29 June 2015
Inkeri Koskinen
List of original publications

This dissertation consists of the following publications:

I  Researchers Building Nations: Under what conditions can overtly political research be objective?
   Inkeri Koskinen

II  At Least Two Concepts of Culture
    Inkeri Koskinen

III Seemingly Similar Beliefs: A case study on relativistic research practices
   Inkeri Koskinen

IV Critical Subjects: Participatory research needs to make room for debate
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V Extra-Academic Transdisciplinarity and Scientific Pluralism: What can they learn from each other?
   Inkeri Koskinen and Uskali Mäki
   Submitted to *European Journal for Philosophy of Science.*
Part I: Introductory essay
Objective Communities and Relativistic Practices

1. Changing roles in contemporary cultural research
This dissertation consists of five articles that examine the effects of a change in the roles that extra-academic agents have in academic research. The focus is mainly on disciplines that fall under the umbrella of cultural research. Former informants are nowadays often becoming collaborators, co-researchers or co-authors, or they are conducting activist research on their own cultures. The main aim of this dissertation is to offer tools for cultural researchers who face the challenge of developing research methods and practices suitable for the new situation. I pay special attention to normative epistemic questions such as are raised by objectivity and by relativistic research practices.

The change in the roles that extra-academic agents have in academic research is part of a wider process of " democratisation" that affects many disciplines. Collaboration with different kinds of extra-academic agents – for instance local communities, private enterprises, patient associations or indigenous people – has become common, and researchers in many fields are interested in developing research practices that are more inclusive socially. This development has engendered discussions not only in the disciplines it touches, but also in science studies. The expertise of laypeople is being recognised, as is the importance of listening to the viewpoints of stakeholders in policy-relevant research (e.g. Epstein 1996; Nowotny, Scott and Gibbons 2001; Jasanoff 2005; Collins and Evans 2007). Compared to science studies, in philosophy of science there is less literature related to the democratisation of scientific knowledge production, but philosophers have recently become increasingly interested in the topic (e.g. Kitcher 2001; 2011; Figueroa and Harding 2003; Van Bouwel 2009; Fehr and Plaisance 2010; Grasswick 2010; King, Morgan-Olsen and Wong 2014; Froeyman, Kosolosky and Van Bouwel 2014; Wylie 2015).

The underlying premise of this dissertation is that the emerging, more democratic forms of research should be objective, in the minimal
sense of rejecting the use of values in place of evidence (Douglas 2007), or in the sense that "democratisation" must not promote vices such as disregard for criticism (Hacking 2015).

Cultural research, especially ethnography, is in a unique position when facing the urge towards more democratic knowledge production. This is because in disciplines such as anthropology, folkloristics and ethnology – unlike in many other fields of inquiry – researchers have always interacted with how their informants conceptualise, understand, and explain themselves and the world around them, this usually being an important part of what these disciplines study. Moreover, in cultural research the knowledge practices or knowledge systems of the informants have typically been clearly distinct from the knowledge systems of the researchers: academic knowledge systems differ from, say, shamanistic ones. Researchers have thus developed a theoretical understanding of the ways in which their informants produce and justify knowledge claims, and introduced research practices through which these claims are approached. These practices are presently colliding with new demands that arise from the now common call for collaborative and participatory research.

Collaborative and participatory research has been strongly criticised, along with different forms of activist research. Often the criticism is based on the claim that those engaging in such research are accepting problematic forms of relativism, and that the research conducted is value-laden and thus not objective. I examine the influence of diverse forms of relativism in cultural research. In summary: Ethnographic research practices developed for approaching alien knowledge systems have been shaped by moderate forms of relativism. It has become customary for ethnographers to avoid appraising their informants' knowledge systems. As informants are now turning into co-researchers, this practice is becoming outdated.

I also use certain ideas advanced in social epistemology. When the roles of the extra-academic agents change, the composition of research communities is also changed. When extra-academic agents become co-researchers, they join a research community. When indigenous activists receive academic training and become indigenous activist scholars, they form research communities. An interactive notion of objectivity has
recently been defended in social epistemology. It takes a research community as the unit whose objectivity is to be assessed. In the articles I identify shortcomings in the interactive objectivity of the new, emerging research communities, and develop analytical tools that can hopefully be of use in improving the situation. To summarise: *When former informants join research teams in participatory projects, or indigenous activists become activist researchers, they become part of communities whose interactive objectivity can and should be assessed. Avoiding the appraisal of alien knowledge systems is no longer viable. The only epistemically acceptable practice towards alien knowledge systems in these research approaches is critical interaction.*

Most of the disciplines I examine belong to the humanities. I do not take the natural sciences to be fundamentally different from the social sciences and the humanities. This, however, does not mean that the humanities should try to mimic physics. Different subjects of research require different methods. And the differences between various natural sciences – for instance, biology and physics – are also so great that there is no reason to emphasise the division between natural and human sciences (see also Hansson 2013). Many philosophical ideas developed with mainly natural or social sciences in mind are also fully applicable to the philosophical analysis of questions emerging in the humanities. This is especially the case with recent discussions in social epistemology, as research in the humanities is often strongly linked to social and political issues in which social epistemologists are interested. As Anton Froeyman, Laszlo Kosolosky and Jeroen Van Bouwel (2014) have recently noted, the development of the humanities "might be a veritable treasure chest of case studies for social epistemologists". I have certainly found this to be true.

In the next section of this introductory essay I present a short overview of the current philosophical discussion related to collaborative and participatory approaches in cultural research. Then, in Section 3, I introduce my philosophical and conceptual tool kit. In Section 4 I spell out my main arguments related to relativistic research practices and objective research communities. Section 5 introduces the disciplines and research programmes I study, and in Section 6 I analyse them by applying the philosophical distinctions and ideas described in Section 4.
In conclusion, I discuss my methods briefly and give an overview of the articles.

2. Short overview of the philosophical discussion

When taking notice of collaborative and participatory approaches in different disciplines, of attempts to integrate different forms of extra-academic knowledge with academic knowledge, or of other contemporary endeavours to "democratise" academic knowledge production, philosophers of science are for the moment mostly set either on defending them or on arguing against them. This is also the case when philosophers examine such developments in cultural research. Philosophical discussions of collaborative and participatory approaches in cultural research have thus far revolved mainly around two opposite positions, which both derive from battling positions in the so-called Science Wars. As yet there is not much philosophical literature that would address the epistemic problems that arise from the new, emerging forms of research – without scorning such research completely. In this section I will give an overview of the existing discussion, and briefly describe my own approach to the issue at hand.

Social epistemologists and scientific pluralists in particular have recently stressed the potential advantages of including extra-academic agents and knowledge in academic research. This discussion is connected to the recent science studies literature on the subject. Thus there is a growing amount of philosophical literature on topics such as the expertise of "laypeople", stakeholders who should perhaps especially have their voice heard in policy-relevant research, and the epistemically important criticism that extra-academic agents might be able to offer researchers (e.g. Hood 2003; Solomon 2009; Fehr and Plaisance 2010). Philip Kitcher has formulated a much discussed view on the role of science in a democratic society. He calls for more democratic ways of setting the agenda of knowledge production within academia, and stresses the importance of listening to the interests and perspectives of extra-academic agents (Kitcher 2001; 2011). However, the cases discussed in this literature are usually not taken from cultural research.
In feminist philosophy of science and postcolonial science studies, the idea of paying attention to knowledge held by socially marginal groups, or to knowledge produced in non-Western knowledge systems, is generally embraced (Figueroa and Harding 2003; Harding 2011; Wylie 2003; Crasnow 2007). The positive attitude to such knowledge is often based on standpoint epistemology and on the idea that some groups are victims of epistemic injustice.

According to standpoint epistemologists, such oppressed groups as indigenous communities may be epistemically privileged in some respect due to their standing in society. According to this view, our social location limits and shapes our knowledge. For instance, a member of a socially marginal group may have experiential knowledge of oppressive social mechanisms, while these mechanisms remain virtually invisible to the privileged in the same society. As academic researchers are often in a socially privileged position, topics that are important for the socially marginalised easily remain understudied, or if they are studied, they are easily misrepresented. Research that aims at social neutrality may thus end up representing the point of view of the socially privileged. Researchers could therefore benefit from taking the unique standpoints of socially marginal groups into account (Wylie 2003; Harding 2004; Jaggar 2004).

Indigenous or other socially marginal communities may also be victims of epistemic injustice. In other words, their knowledge about their lives and surroundings is dismissed for epistemically unfounded reasons. Miranda Fricker (2007) has distinguished between two forms of epistemic injustice: testimonial and hermeneutical. The first takes place when epistemic authority is not attributed to people because of the social group they belong to: they could have valuable knowledge about an issue, but their knowledge is disregarded as they are not considered as possible experts. The second form, hermeneutical injustice, results from a failure to understand key elements of the knowledge possessed by a minority because of different conceptual frameworks and communicative practices. As King, Morgan-Olsen and Wong (2014) note, the second form of injustice may occur even if researchers attempt to collaborate with extra-academic communities. The power asymmetry
between the researchers and the extra-academic agents might jeopardise the attempt fully to recognise the knowledge of the latter.

Alison Wylie (2003; 2015) has recently argued in favour of collaborative approaches in archaeology. She combines arguments deriving from social epistemology and feminist philosophy of science, and stresses the potential epistemic advantages of giving extra-academic agents an active role in the process of academic knowledge production. By so doing, she builds on Helen Longino's work. Among others (see Douglas 2009; Kitcher 1993), Longino (1990, 2002) has stressed the importance of critical interactions and multiple different viewpoints in scientific knowledge production. However, she concentrates on critical interaction within or between scientific or academic communities, and pays limited attention to extra-academic viewpoints. Wylie makes Longino consistent with standpoint theory by noting that extra-academic criticism too can prove useful. "Pluralist engagement" with indigenous communities may be epistemically advantageous, because when researchers get acquainted with alternative epistemic traditions, they may notice problems in their own academic systems: it is possible that "interaction with external, alternative knowledge systems will destabilise entrenched epistemic and methodological norms" (Wylie 2015, 204). Philip Kitcher has made a similar point when envisioning more democratic forms of scientific knowledge production. He holds that extra-academic agents can offer viewpoints and criticism not otherwise available, and thus raise the quality of the research conducted: "Representation of a broader set of perspectives within the scientific community has the potential to expose ways in which the methods used by that community are less reliable than they are supposed, and may thus lead to improvements in certification" (Kitcher 2011, 150).

Unsurprisingly, the sometimes overtly political forms of contemporary cultural research have also faced strong criticism. Especially in social anthropology and archaeology, collaborative and participatory approaches and indigenous activist research has raised controversy. Researchers who wish to take indigenous knowledge into account in their work have been accused of reviving an old, essentialising image of the
"Native" and of conducting research so value-laden that it is far from objective (Kuper 2003; 2006; McGhee 2008).

When philosophers have taken a critical stance towards the idea of extra-academic participation in cultural research, the critique is typically related to a perennial topic in philosophy of anthropology: relativism. The clearest formulation of this critique is by Paul Boghossian, who takes collaborative archaeology to be an example of alarming relativism. He has participated actively in the so called "Science Wars" or "Culture Wars", opposing social constructionist and relativistic views of science (e.g. Boghossian 1996). In his book on relativism (2006), he mentions two archaeologists as examples of "postmodern" epistemic relativists who supposedly advocate the "doctrine of Equal Validity". According to this doctrine "[t]here are many radically different, yet 'equally valid' ways of knowing the world, with science being just one of them" (Boghossian 2006, 2). It is taken as possible that these radically different ways of knowing can result in clashing propositions. If the relativistic position Boghossian describes is accepted, there is no way to choose between propositions made in different knowledge systems – or at least the only grounds left for making the choice would be political or otherwise value-laden. Boghossian fears that the idea of alternative, equally valid knowledge systems will lead to research that is highly value-laden, biased and thus not objective.

As noted, the philosophical discussion on the use of extra-academic knowledge and on the participation of extra-academic agents in academic research is currently still polarised. The Science Wars are mostly over, and Longino, among many others, has presented a more mediate view on the issues over which the most heated debates ranged. Nevertheless, these debates still appear to influence the way in which the issue at hand is understood, and the questions that are taken to be the most important ones. This is shown, for instance, by the fact that Kitcher starts his 2011 book with a discussion of the Science Wars, while Wylie, who builds on Longino’s work, presents her arguments as a response to Boghossian.

To sum up: In the current philosophical discussion, the defenders of extra-academic collaboration and participation usually rely on argu-
ments that derive from social epistemology, feminist philosophy of science and scientific pluralism. Those sceptical of such arguments worry about objectivity and relativism. In the articles I combine arguments regarding relativism with a view of objectivity developed in social epistemology. While I do respond to the issues the critics raise, and do think that there are good reasons to defend collaborative and participatory approaches as well as different forms of activist research, I wish to move on from the question whether these approaches are epistemically beneficial or not. Regardless of what philosophers say or do, they are becoming common in several disciplines, as well as in transdisciplinary research. My aim is to develop normative, constructive criticism that is useful for the further development of such approaches in cultural research. I identify and analyse epistemic shortcomings and offer philosophical tools that may hopefully be of use in correcting them. In the next section I briefly describe the main distinctions and ideas on which I build, and in Section 4 I proceed to my arguments.

3. Studying emerging research approaches

In order to move on from the polarised debates, I have studied some collaborative and participatory approaches that are currently emerging, as well as activist research. I take my examples and illustrations from actual cultural research. When I analyse them, I use philosophical distinctions and notions. As the philosophical audience of this work may be unfamiliar with the disciplines and research programmes I study, and folklorists, indigenous scholars, archaeologists and anthropologists may be unfamiliar with the philosophical ideas, I will now define the most important notions and distinctions I use: collaborative and participatory approaches and activist research; the notion of knowledge systems; three different forms of relativism; the notion of epistemic communities; and the interactive account of objectivity.
3.1. Collaborative and participatory approaches and activist research

A multitude of practices is included in the notions of collaboration and participation. Different terminology is used in different disciplinary contexts, and in colloquial use these words are somewhat ambiguous. Here I tentatively distinguish between collaborative and participatory research by paying attention to the strength of the role which extra-academic agents are given during the research process. In collaborative research they are consulted, typically several times. They may comment on any part of the work conducted by researchers, and the researchers take the comments into account. However, they do not fully become a part of the research team. Participatory research, on the other hand, at least aims to give to the extra-academic agents the role of co-researchers and co-authors. The aim of participation in cultural research is to change the relationship between researcher and researched from one between subject and object to one between subject and subject (Smith 1997). Participatory projects may also attempt to integrate extra-academic forms of knowledge with scientific or academic knowledge, especially if the existence of multiple "knowledge systems" or "alternative epistemologies" is assumed.

Activist research differs from participatory research, as activist researchers typically belong to the community studied, or otherwise see themselves as representing it. There are no outsider researchers who would work with extra-academic agents representing the community, as in collaborative and participatory research; this is not necessary, since the academic researchers are viewed as representing the community. Activist research is often an integral part of some overtly political, emancipatory movement. This is the case in the form of activist research I discuss in my papers: indigenous activist research or indigenous studies.

3.2. Knowledge systems

The term “knowledge system” is in common use both in participatory research and indigenous studies, as well as in postcolonial literature. (Expressions such as "alternative epistemologies", "indigenous para-
"digms" and "non-Western knowledge systems" are also widely used.) The term is sometimes also used in pluralist philosophy of science, but there it typically refers to scientific or academic knowledge systems, and rarely to extra-academic ones. Here, I discuss both academic and extra-academic knowledge systems.

In different parts of the world, people and communities have established different ways for arriving at knowledge claims and justifying them, as well as different sets of shared beliefs. These can be taken to stem from fairly coherent knowledge systems that comprise some stable epistemic norms, of which the people who follow the system may be (or become) aware. Scientific knowledge systems are typically taken to be of this kind. Alternatively, they can be seen as more loose, traditional practices from which it may not be possible to synthesise such a set of norms (see Kusch 2013). Both academic and extra-academic knowledge systems and practices can change. They are not static. In some cases – for instance in interdisciplinary research – they can also be integrated with each other.

In participatory research and activist research, researchers sometimes attempt to integrate extra-academic knowledge practices or systems with academic ones. In these cases, it is necessary to explicate the epistemic norms which thus far have perhaps remained implicit. It may also be necessary to stabilise loose practices into norms, at least for the duration of the research project in question. As I focus on such attempts, I will henceforth talk about knowledge systems, and mention knowledge practices or epistemic practices only when necessary.¹

3.3. Forms of relativism

It is not obvious that different knowledge systems can be integrated. They may be incompatible, but some of them can even be deemed incommensurable. The idea that some knowledge systems would be deeply incommensurable has often been linked to relativism. As noted,

¹ In the earliest of the articles (III) I use the term "epistemic practices". There, however, I discuss cases where integration of knowledge systems is not attempted.
collaborative and participatory approaches in cultural research have been criticised as relativistic. The same has been said of more traditional cultural research, especially anthropology.

Different forms of relativism can be described in terms of the general schema Y is/are relative to X, where Y may be, for instance, moral norms, meaning, standards of rationality, or knowledge, and X is a frame of reference such as a culture, a language, a conceptual framework or a knowledge system (Swoyer 2014). In cultural research it is typically assumed that people belonging to a distinct culture often share a language, a distinct conceptual framework, and in many cases a somewhat unique knowledge system or practice. Thus it is not surprising that several forms of relativism have influenced especially the development of ethnography.

When discussing relativism, I apply the practice-based account of science: I study the ways in which different forms of relativism shape actual research practices. Thus I focus on such forms of relativism as have had an important impact on practices in cultural research.

In the articles I refer to three influential forms of relativism. To define them briefly, by cultural relativism I mean the claim that "there can be no such thing as a culturally neutral criterion for adjudicating between conflicting claims arising from different cultural contexts" (Baghramian 2010, 31). Conceptual relativism is the holistic notion that conceptual frameworks influence thought so strongly that "insofar as it is a question of truth or falsity, one cannot legitimately compare statements made in one [framework] with those made within another" (Mandelbaum 2010, 68). In other words, when cultural relativists compare statements arising in different contexts, they start from the premise that these statements can be found to conflict with each other, while conceptual relativists question this possibility. Epistemic relativism differs from conceptual relativism in a similar way: comparing statements made in different frameworks is taken to be possible, but there is no neutral criterion for adjudicating between them. Different knowledge systems are deemed equally valid, even when these are mutually contradictory. The form of epistemic relativism dubbed "postmodern", mainly by its critics, can be characterised as Nietzschean: all
knowledge is considered to be partial, perspectival and tied to power structures, and there is no overarching perspective from which the different knowledge systems could be appraised (Baghramian 2004; 2010; see also Boghossian 1996; 2006).

3.4. Epistemic communities

The notion of a knowledge system (as well as that of a culture or a conceptual framework) typically includes the idea that there is a community which shares the system. The knowledge systems relevant in cultural research belong to communities and not just individuals. In collaborative and participatory cultural research, and in indigenous activist research, the knowledge systems of extra-academic communities are introduced to academia.

The notion of epistemic communities – or scientific communities or research communities – is crucial in social epistemology. In the communitarian forms of social epistemology, the primary knower is taken to be a community and not an individual (e.g. Nelson 1993; see also Kusch 2011). I endorse this approach. The epistemic communities discussed in the philosophy of science typically consist of the representatives of a discipline, a research programme or a paradigm. Here, I will of course also be discussing extra-academic epistemic communities. In participatory and collaborative research, as well as in indigenous studies, the extra-academic communities who are taken to have knowledge systems of their own are typically assumed to be communities who share a culture, traditions, a conceptual framework and often a language.

Philosophers of science sometimes also refer to the scientific community in its entirety. However, epistemic communities can also be very small. For instance, in inter- or transdisciplinary research, where several approaches from different disciplines or even from extra-academic sources are integrated, it is reasonable to treat the community of researchers and extra-academic agents taking part in the project as an epistemic community. This is because there is no larger community whose members could competently evaluate the work done within the project.
I do not use the more inclusive notion of the scientific community. By epistemic communities I usually mean communities comprised of researchers who represent the same discipline, research programme or approach. Sometimes I also follow the researchers I study when they talk about extra-academic knowledge systems, and assume that these systems are shared by extra-academic epistemic communities. In some cases, especially when discussing inter- or transdisciplinary research, I use the narrow notion of epistemic community described above.

3.5. Interactive objectivity

The sense in which I use the notion of objectivity is one that has been developed especially in social epistemology. I have found it useful in the study of collaboration, participation and activist research, as it allows for epistemic diversity and overtly political research, and relies on the notion of epistemic communities.

The worry of the critics mentioned in section 2 is that the "alternative knowledge systems" of the extra-academic communities are in conflict with norms and criteria accepted in academic knowledge production. Instead of attempting to assess the allegedly alternative knowledge systems, I suggest a focus on the assessment of the new, emerging research communities. Interactive objectivity of a research community occurs when the community reaches intersubjective agreement on an issue as a result of an intense debate, or when a community follows inclusive procedures that allow debates to be had effectively (Douglas 2007; 2009; Kitcher 1993; Longino 1990; 2002; Van Bouwel 2009; King, Morgan-Olsen and Wong 2014; Wylie 2015).

Interactive accounts of objectivity stress the importance of both intra-community and intercommunity criticism. Objective research communities should sustain, even encourage, diverse and competing viewpoints. They should also be responsive to outside criticism. When defending extra-academic participation and collaboration in academic knowledge production, Wylie appeals to this idea. By taking extra-academic critical viewpoints into account, researchers can in some cases increase the objectivity of the research they conduct.
Helen Longino (1990; 2002) has formulated criteria with which it is possible to evaluate the objectivity of research communities. These criteria rest on the idea of effective peer criticism: "subjecting hypotheses, data, reasoning and background assumptions to criticism from a variety of perspectives" (Longino 2002, 205) is an indispensable part of academic knowledge production. The criteria include: 1) the existence of venues for effective criticism, such as journals and conferences; 2) uptake of criticism: "beliefs and theories must change over time in response to the critical discourse taking place" (ibid., 129); 3) publicly recognised standards for evaluation of observations and theories; and 4) “tempered equality of epistemic authority”: "the social position or economic power of an individual or group in a community ought not to determine who or what perspectives are taken seriously in that community" (ibid., 131). The equality is "tempered", because a research community may have good reasons for rejecting some perspectives, and it is right to acknowledge expertise. Nevertheless, Longino stresses that it is important not only to allow potentially dissenting voices, but also to cultivate them.

I rely on these criteria when I examine the new kinds of research communities taking shape in both indigenous studies and participatory research. I do not concentrate on defending the criteria. Nevertheless, their applicability here may be seen as one argument in their favour. I do however comment on their suitability in the case of young or "immature" disciplines and research programmes. These often go through a phase in which they define their agenda, during which outside criticism is not taken into account as well as it should be under Longino's norms. A social, interactive account of objectivity should take these developments into consideration when discussing emerging research communities and young research programmes or disciplines. Longino's norms work best when they are applied to the evaluation of established academic communities. When using them to assess emerging research communities, it is important to pay attention to developments within the community, as it can become more objective over time – or fail to do so.
4. Practices towards alien knowledge systems

In the articles I develop normative, constructive criticisms which can hopefully prove useful in the development of the new forms of cultural research that are emerging as the habitual roles of researchers and their research subjects change. I identify and analyse epistemic shortcomings related especially to relativism and objectivity. In this section I summarise my main arguments on these two themes. I start with an account of relativistic research practices, and proceed then to delineate some criteria which the new research communities must meet in order to be objective.

4.1. Relativistic research practices

In two of the articles (III, IV) I discuss relativistic research practices. I am interested in one very specific type of practice. I focus on the ways in which cultural researchers, especially ethnographers, treat the knowledge systems of the people whose culture they study – or more precisely, how they treat the knowledge or beliefs of these people, and their ways of producing and justifying knowledge claims, in their publications. That is, I do not follow cultural researchers to the field in order to observe their encounters with informants, collaborators, co-researchers or colleagues. Instead, I focus on the ways in which the knowledge claims and knowledge systems of these people are treated in published research. I hold that the moderately relativistic practice of avoiding the appraisal of alien knowledge systems used to be justified in ethnography, but is now becoming problematic.

Let us distinguish four different ways in which academic researchers can treat extra-academic knowledge systems allegedly different from their own, and knowledge claims made by people who are taken to represent those knowledge systems.

1. **Disregard.** The researchers do not pay attention to the knowledge system and knowledge claims of the extra-academic agents.
2. *Ethnocentrism.* The researchers acknowledge the existence of diverse knowledge systems, but see their own as superior to the systems of the extra-academic agents.

3. *Avoiding appraisal.* The researchers do not disregard the knowledge system, but they avoid epistemic appraisal of it and of (at least some of the) knowledge claims of the extra-academic agents.

4. *Critical interaction.* The researchers approach the knowledge system and knowledge claims of the extra-academic agents responsively, but critically.

In the papers I focus on the last two approaches. I hold that the practice of avoiding the appraisal of alien knowledge systems is moderately relativistic.

When relativism is discussed in the context of ethnography, it is usually assumed that there are two clearly separate epistemic communities, the researchers and the research subjects, and that their roles are asymmetrical: it is the task of the researcher to understand and interpret the language, beliefs and culture of the people whose culture is being studied. If the issue at stake in the philosophical discussion is the apparently irrational beliefs of the research subjects, it is the researcher who should find out whether the apparent irrationality could be explained away. If that proves impossible, the approaches suggested vary. One can for instance stress the need to doubt the applicability of our norms of rationality when evaluating other knowledge systems (Wittgenstein 1967; Winch 1964) – and here it is once again the researcher whose duty it is to entertain such a doubt. The roles of researcher and research subject are also the same when the question is whether we can understand a belief we cannot hold (MacIntyre 1970; Williams 1974); whether the idea of incommensurable conceptual frameworks is tenable or not; or whether the possibility of translation rests on the assumption that the people whose ideas are being translated are rational. (Quine 1960; Davidson 1974; Henderson 1987. See also Wilson 1970; Hollis and Lukes 1982; Simon 1998; Risjord 2007.) This is natural as long as there are two very distinct communities, and the members of
one are trying to understand the members of the other. Moreover, in earlier ethnography this really was the case, and even today it often still is.

Different forms of relativism have influenced the development of ethnographic research practices. Relativistic ideas do not work in a vacuum, and during the last century, different forms of relativism have been linked to various influential clusters of ideas. Some research practices that I call relativistic also embody ideas deriving from schools of thought such as structuralism, hermeneutics and poststructuralism. As noted, the forms of relativism also vary. I concentrate on forms that have had an obvious impact on research practices in cultural research. Of the forms of relativism described in the last section, I discuss cultural relativism, but concentrate mainly on conceptual relativism and "postmodern" epistemic relativism.

Certain insights related to cultural relativism, and particularly to conceptual relativism, have pointed ethnographic research practices in the direction of avoiding the appraisal of knowledge systems alien to the researchers' own communities. As postmodern relativism has had an impact on the development of ethnography, and cultural research in general, it has indeed challenged some earlier practices, but not that of avoiding appraisal.

Cultural relativism shaped ethnographic methods and practices during the first decades of the twentieth century. It was formulated against the views of nineteenth-century anthropologists like Frazer and Tylor, who placed different cultures on an evolutionary scale ranging from primitive to modern. Franz Boas and his followers considered such ideas of cultural evolution to be ethnocentric. They emphasised "the validity of every set of norms for the people whose lives are guided by them" (Herskovits 1948, 76) and the need for anthropologists not to evaluate the cultures they study according to their own cultural norms. (Jarvie 2007; Hollis and Lukes 1982; Herskovits 1948; Marchettoni 2003.)

Though cultural relativism was important in the development of ethnographic methods and research practices during the first decades of the twentieth century, conceptual relativism has had at least an
equally strong impact on their later development. In principle, cultural relativism could lead to the practice of using the standards of evaluation accepted in an alternative knowledge system when evaluating knowledge claims made within it. Ethnographers rarely do this, however. Instead they do not evaluate such knowledge claims at all.

As I argue in (III) and (IV), different formulations of conceptual relativism fell in fertile ground among ethnographers as structuralist ideas, hermeneutics and the "linguistic turn" highlighted difficulties related to understanding and translation. Ethnographers came to see themselves as cultural translators. The strongest forms of conceptual relativism are problematic in that they can lead different conceptual frameworks to be assessed as deeply incommensurable, which is difficult to defend (Davidson 1974). Ethnographers cannot accept the idea of a total lack of translatability between different frameworks. The problem can be solved, for instance, by resorting to the hermeneutical view of understanding and interpretation: the conceptual frameworks of the researcher and the researched may be different, but the language of the former can be expanded so as to express the meanings and nuances of local expressions in the latter (Geertz 1973; Risjord 2007). Thus, comparisons between statements made in different conceptual frameworks are possible, but only following a slow research process that bridges the gap between them. The hermeneutic process is, however, often seen as never-ending. Neither do the research questions of ethnographers often necessitate comparisons. The initial methodological abstinence from comparison and critical evaluation can thus become the status quo.

In other words, it became normal in ethnography to avoid appraising the knowledge claims the informants made, as well as their alleged knowledge systems. There were – and still often are – good reasons to do so. Propositions that might seem prima facie similar to ones we might utter could, in fact, if uttered within an unfamiliar conceptual framework, differ considerably from our ways of thinking. It would be unwise to take sentences such as "My brother is a parrot" at face value (see Risjord 1993). If we assumed that we could at once understand them well enough to evaluate them, we might not only make a mistake,
but also prejudice our own understanding of the differences in question.

"Postmodern" epistemic relativism has had an impact on ethically motivated theoretical debates in anthropology and its neighboring disciplines, and it has also had an important role in the development of participatory research. It must be noted, however, that it is difficult to find philosophers who would defend any strong form of epistemic relativism. For instance, even though postcolonial and feminist philosophy of science have influenced participatory research and different forms of activist research, epistemic relativism is repeatedly rejected in feminist and postcolonial philosophical literature. As Sandra Harding (1993, 61) notes, "[j]udgmental (or epistemological) relativism is anathema to any scientific project". When reading various tracts, manifestos and programmatic statements published by indigenous activist researchers or ethnographers who embrace participatory ideals, it is nevertheless relatively easy to find comments that sound very much like epistemic relativism of the "postmodern" kind. Non-Western knowledge systems or indigenous epistemologies are indeed called equally valid as Western, scientific knowledge systems – even in cases where these appear to contradict each other.

As I note in (IV), if appraisal is understood as the act of estimating whether a belief, an argument or a way of producing knowledge claims is valid or not, then postmodern relativism does not encourage researchers to appraise extra-academic knowledge systems or knowledge claims made by the extra-academic agents they work with. It does not materially challenge the practice of avoiding appraisal. This is because the aim is not to appraise beliefs and ways of argumentation but rather to empower communities and look for ways in which they could use their local knowledge beneficially. The postmodern researcher quite methodically supports local knowledge systems.

4.2. Objective research communities

When the habitual roles in ethnographic research change, the ways in which ethnographers treat extra-academic knowledge systems also have to change. Moreover, if extra-academic knowledge systems are inte-
grated with academic ones, it is necessary to assess the outcomes of this. The ways of producing and justifying knowledge claims or the social-epistemic practices followed in diverse extra-academic communities are not necessarily such that the communities could be deemed objective in the interactive sense. As long as the community and its knowledge system or knowledge practices stay entirely extra-academic, this is of no concern to a philosopher of science. However, the situation may change when informants turn into co-researchers or activist researchers. I will now first analyse the ways in which objective research communities should approach extra-academic knowledge systems in collaborative, participatory and activist research. I then return to the question of extra-academic social-epistemic practices that could potentially jeopardise the interactive objectivity of the emerging, participatory research communities.

The roles given to cultural researchers and the people whose cultures are being studied are changing. In collaborative and participatory research, the power imbalance between researchers and researched is destabilised, and extra-academic agents are given an active role in research projects. Activist researchers often see themselves as representing the culture and the knowledge systems they study.

Let us distinguish five different roles that the people who are being studied – or whose culture is being studied – can have in cultural research.

1. **Research subject.** The extra-academic agent has no active role in the research.
2. **Informant.** The extra-academic agent has an active role, as the researcher relies on information received from the informant. However, the informant does not take part in the academic interpretation and use of the information received.
3. **Collaborator.** The extra-academic agent has an active role, and is consulted in the different stages of the collaborative research project. A collaborator may comment on any part of the work conducted by researchers, and the researchers take the comments into account.
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4. **Co-researcher.** The extra-academic agent does not have formal academic training, but has an active role in all stages of the participatory research project. Ideally there is no power asymmetry between the researcher and the co-researcher.

5. **Activist researcher.** An academically trained researcher who sees herself or himself as representing the viewpoints – and at times the knowledge system – of an extra-academic community, e.g. an indigenous community.

When the roles change, the composition of research communities also change. When informants become co-researchers, they join a research team, and when such teams become common, the change shapes larger research communities. When cultural activists become activist researchers and form a new research programme, they form a research community of their own. As the communities in question are research communities, their interactive objectivity can and should be assessed. This is the case even if some or all of the members of the communities are taken to represent, or see themselves as representing, extra-academic knowledge systems.

Let us now assess which approaches to extra-academic knowledge systems are acceptable when the role differentiations within cultural research projects change. The assessment will rely on an interactive account of objectivity: in order to be objective, the emerging research communities must follow inclusive procedures that allow effective debates.

1. **Disregard.** Researchers do not take notice of extra-academic knowledge systems. This is not a typical approach in cultural research, as the researchers usually wish to understand the knowledge system of the people they study. It is possible in archaeology if descendant communities are not taken to hold any knowledge relevant to the interpretation of the findings. However, this assumption has recently been criticised. Disregard is also possible in a field such as physical anthropology,
where the role given to the extra-academic agents is that of mere research subjects.

2. *Ethnocentrism.* Researchers acknowledge that extra-academic knowledge systems exist, but take their own knowledge system to be self-evidently superior. This approach has been strongly criticised in anthropology, and more recently also in other fields, for instance in development studies. It may lead to misinterpretation and errors, no matter what the role given to extra-academic agents.

3. *Avoiding appraisal.* Researchers avoid appraising extra-academic knowledge systems. As noted, as long as the knowledge systems of the researchers and the researched stay apart, it is possible to avoid the appraisal of alien knowledge systems. In other words, avoiding appraisal is feasible if the role given to the extra-academic agent is that of a research subject, informant, or to some degree, collaborator. However, as I argue in more detail below, if the extra-academic agent becomes a co-researcher in a participatory project, avoiding appraisal is not an acceptable practice, as it hinders intra-community criticism. Moreover, in the case of activist research, avoiding appraisal is not an acceptable practice, as it hinders inter-community criticism.

4. *Critical interaction.* Researchers adopt an open but critical stance towards extra-academic knowledge systems. In collaborative research it may often be necessary to approach the arguments presented by extra-academic collaborators critically, even when the arguments are taken to derive from an extra-academic knowledge system. In participatory research, where extra-academic agents have the role of co-researchers, all of their work must be approached in a critical manner, even if their knowledge claims or arguments are taken to derive from an extra-academic knowledge system. In the case of activist research, other researchers must also approach the work of activist researchers critically for the same reason.
Avoiding appraisal is still often a feasible practice. However, it is problematic in participatory research. If extra-academic agents become part of a research community – as they should, according to the participatory ideals – they then become part of a community whose interactive objectivity can be assessed, for instance by using Longino's criteria. If the contributions of all people belonging to a research community are not met with the same critical attitude, the objectivity of the entire community will suffer. Similarly, if fellow researchers do not approach the contributions of activist researchers in a critical manner, the activist researchers will miss valuable criticisms, and the interactive objectivity of the larger research community will suffer.

As an approach to activist research, avoiding appraisal is totally unacceptable. It is unacceptable even if – or perhaps precisely when – activist researchers themselves expect it. As I will show, there are cases where activist researchers have willingly adopted the role of critics, but where they have not been very receptive to outside criticism. As Rico Hauswald (forthcoming) notes, a typical activist research community is not very diverse epistemically. Instead, it is biased towards such theoretical and methodological approaches as are suited to the political goals the activists share. Intra-community criticism may thus be deficient. If activist research is to be objective, outside criticism must be offered to the research communities, and they must take it into account: their "beliefs and theories must change over time in response to the critical discourse taking place" (Longino 2002, 129).

In participatory research, the problems caused by the practice of avoiding appraisal may however be evaded for some time. As long as the difference between the scientific or academic researchers and a socially marginal, extra-academic community is stark enough on multiple levels, avoiding appraisal may not cause actual trouble. The researchers’ position makes it possible for them to direct the project and choose such pieces of local knowledge, and such features of the local knowledge systems, that the objectivity of the research community is not jeopardised. However, the better the project achieves its goals, the more problematic the practice of avoiding direct appraisal becomes. Efficacious participation is supposed to reduce the power differentials
between the academic and extra-academic participants, and to result in a single, merged epistemic community. Moreover, as Uskali Mäki and I note (V), the power imbalances in different participatory projects are not always alike. It is fully possible that some of the extra-academic agents taking part in a participatory project are in a social or financial position of power in relation to the academic researchers. Hence, avoiding appraisal is eventually untenable in a successful participatory project.

This of course highlights the difficulty of translation, to which the practice of avoiding appraisal was originally offered as a practical solution. As King, Morgan-Olsen and Wong (2014) note, difficulties in translation can be used as excuses that lead to epistemic injustice. They identify worldview agonism as dissent that "arises insofar as meaningful argument about particular scientific hypotheses or political proposals cannot even get off the ground: the parties do not accept compatible rules of inference and evidence". In other words, in worldview agonism the knowledge systems of the different communities are incompatible, even incommensurable. King, Morgan-Olsen and Wong worry about friction between academic and indigenous viewpoints being systematically misidentified as worldview agonism even where such a diagnosis is too hasty. They argue that in collaborations with indigenous communities, some shared standards of evaluation may be reached, even if the differences between the conceptual frameworks and knowledge systems of the different communities would seem considerable at first. A successful translation may prove the knowledge systems to be compatible enough for collaboration, perhaps even participation.

However, difficulties in translation do not only occur between researchers and extra-academic communities, but also in interdisciplinary research. There too, researchers have to endeavour to understand the knowledge systems of their colleagues who represent other disciplines. Diverse power imbalances are usually much more pronounced in participatory research and activist research than in interdisciplinary re-
search, but the only epistemically acceptable practice towards alien knowledge systems in these research approaches is critical interaction.

The importance of critical interaction stands out when we take into account the fact that extra-academic epistemic communities may breach Longino's norms in multiple ways. This may cause problems in participatory research. When discussing worldview agonism, King, Morgan-Olsen and Wong (2014) take into consideration the third norm – the requirement for shared, publicly recognised standards of evaluation (Longino 2002). Extra-academic epistemic communities may however have social practices related to knowledge and knowledge production that go against the core ideas of interactive objectivity in other ways. For instance, knowledge may be held to be something that only some members of the community are allowed to access; or it may be important to pass certain pieces of knowledge unchanged from generation to generation; or special epistemic authority may be given to people with a specific social status. Such practices conflict with Longino's first, second and fourth norm. Venues for effective criticism cannot exist if strict secrecy is required; beliefs cannot change in response to critical discourse if they must be unchangeable; and any link between social position and epistemic authority is inconsistent with the norm of tempered equality of epistemic authority.

Participatory research aims to form research communities with both academic and extra-academic members. In order to be objective, these communities cannot tolerate social practices that go against Longino's norms. However, to recognise such practices and to be able to effectively resist them, the members of the new, emerging research community need to approach the social-epistemic practices of all of its members in an equally critical manner.

5. Disciplines and research programmes

In the articles I examine some of the ways in which cultural research can be influenced by the changes in the relationship between researchers and the people whose cultures they study. In order to keep the

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2 On power imbalances in interdisciplinary research, see Mäki 2013.
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analysis strongly linked to actual changes taking place, I use examples from authentic research projects, and discuss local developments within larger research programmes. The examples are derived from various disciplines and programmes, the main attention being paid to folkloristics, especially Finnish folkloristics (I, II, III, IV); indigenous studies, especially Sámi indigenous studies (I, IV); and transdisciplinary research (V). Some illustrations are also taken from archaeology and anthropology. As some of these disciplines and programmes may not be familiar to the reader, I shall next give a short description of them and of the ways in which I approach them in the articles.

5.1. Researchers building nations: folkloristics and indigenous studies

My focus on folkloristics and indigenous studies, and especially the contrast between the two, is partly motivated by my belief that post-nationalist thought has as yet been somewhat neglected in the theoretical discussions related to the changes taking place in contemporary cultural research. Both indigenous studies and collaborative and participatory research in anthropology and the neighbouring disciplines have been inspired by postcolonial thought. Partly due to the protestations of cultural activists, and the influence of such critics as Edward Said (1978) and Vine Deloria, Jr. (1969), anthropologists have recognised ways in which they and their predecessors have served colonial rule. Similar developments have occurred both in former colonies and in settler states where the indigenous populations have long been minorities. Earlier cultural research is now viewed as oppressive. This has moved ethnographers – and for instance archaeologists – to seek more ethical research methods and practices, and indigenous scholars to developed new forms of research, often overtly political, where researchers typically belong to the group they study and seek to advance its interests. However, as many of these new forms of research are politically motivated, and as the explicit aims of indigenous studies include nation-building (see, e.g., Seurujärvi-Kari 2010; Stordahl 2008; Gaski 2008), theoretical work on nationalism and earlier research that has participated in nation-building ought to be taken into account here.

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Critiques drawing from the critique of nationalism presented in the 1980s (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Anderson 1983) have been voiced within indigenous studies (e.g. Valkonen 2010). However, the theoretical debates on collaborative and participatory research, as well as on indigenous studies, are especially lively in settler states like Canada and the United States, and in countries that used to be either colonised or colonising powers: in other words, countries where colonialism is a more prominent issue than nationalism. There are usually no references to post-nationalist self-critique presented in disciplines that have participated in nationalist movements as disciplines. Thus a comparison to folkloristics, a discipline that used to be strongly involved in nation-building around 100 to 150 years ago, seemed appropriate here.

Folkloristics is one of the disciplines that contributed in the building of the Finnish nation in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Along with other disciplines building nations at this time, early folklorists relied on essentialist ideas. According to their own understanding, patriotic researchers were uncovering the true nature of the nation. Influenced by the Romantic and Hegelian ideas of the time, they believed that a People could not develop into a fully-fledged Nation if it did not have a proper history. Finland had no written history as an independent or autonomous nation, but as the nineteenth-century nation-builders realised, the Finnish oral tradition of epic poetry was impressive. This made folkloristics an important discipline in the building of the Finnish nation, as it was able to find the required history in oral poetry. (Anttonen 2012; Masonen 2003; Wilson 1976.)

During the latter half of the twentieth century, the discipline went through a post-nationalist self-critique comparable to the postcolonial self-critique in anthropology. This was heightened by the constructionist critique of nationalism presented in the 1980s (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Anderson 1983). The essentialist notions of the early folklorists and other nation-builders were dismissed, their political projections were criticised, and their work seen not as an unveiling but as a building of nations. (Wilson 1976; Abrahams 1993; Anttonen 2005; Baycoft and Hopkin 2012.)
Contemporary folkloristics is a discipline devoted to the study of all forms of folklore, both historical and contemporary, and of their use and functions in society. Different methods are used depending on the project in question – archival work and ethnographic fieldwork are both common. Finnish folklorists often concentrate on domestic folklore, but important work is also conducted abroad, especially among other Finno-Ugric peoples. In Finland the discipline has a long tradition of research on the small Finno-Ugric ethnic groups in Russia. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, folklorists have studied the development of rising cultural consciousness, neotraditionalism or ethnonationalism in the Finno-Ugric region. Political change made cultural revival possible, and local intellectuals have been active in the promotion of local traditions and the rebuilding of ethnic identities. These processes bear a resemblance to the building of the Finnish nation approximately 100 years earlier, a fact that has not escaped the attention of the activists themselves. (Anttonen et al. 2000; Siikala, Klein and Mathisen 2004; Siikala 2005.)

Folklorists study cultural movements that have given rise to new forms of activist research, and in some cases they have also collaborated with activist researchers. More critical interaction could nevertheless occur between folklorists and activist researchers. In one of the papers (II), I illustrate how contemporary cultural movements have affected important theoretical ideas and concepts in cultural research, including folkloristics. My aim is to point out why and how folklorists could – and perhaps should – use the post-nationalist critique developed in the discipline’s own theoretical discussions in the more general debate on the links between cultural activism and cultural research.

*Indigenous studies* is an integral part of the international political movement of indigenous peoples, which includes groups geographically as distant from each other as the Māori, the First Nations and the Sámi. The notion of *indigenous peoples* has gained significant political weight during the last few decades, largely because of active co-operation by different activist groups who represent different indigenous peoples around the world. The co-operation and the uniting concept are not
matters of course, since the activists most often wish to stress the original aspects of their people’s culture, and the distinction between indigenous peoples and other minority groups is controversial and highly politicised. However, indigenous peoples were lumped together in earlier research by using such terms as *primitive peoples* or *tribal peoples*, and the forms of oppression they have faced have also been similar around the world. One shared experience that has had a tremendous impact on the development of indigenous studies is that of forced assimilation through schooling. Groups geographically as far from each other as the Māori, the Sámi and people belonging to the First Nations have all been forced to send their children to schools where their native tongue has been forbidden, and where the openly admitted aim has been to make the children forget their parents' culture. When the self-emancipatory movements stressing the importance of cultural identity have gained strength, one of their most important agendas has been to take control of the ways in which indigenous children and young people are educated. The aim is "the establishment of systems of education which reflect, respect and embrace indigenous cultural values, philosophies and ideologies which have shaped, nurtured and sustained our people for tens of thousands of years" (Seurujärvi-Kari 1996, 171–172).

This also includes higher education and research, and several colleges and research institutes, such as the First Nations University of Canada and Sámi Allaskuva (Sámi University College) in northern Norway, specialise in indigenous studies today. These institutes are not insignificant in size: for example, Sámi Allaskuva has a staff of nearly one hundred. The aims of the multidisciplinary research programme are overtly political. Its proclaimed aims are indigenous self-determination, identity building, mental decolonisation, knowledge building – and even nation building.³ The main audience of the research is the researcher's own people, so a Sámi researcher's work, for example, should be directed by Sámi interests and preferably published

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³ it must be noted that nation-building is here often understood as a process of social construction: the conscious building of an "imagined community" (Anderson 1983; Gaski 2008; Stordahl 2008).
In the Sámi language. As part of the mental decolonisation and indigenous knowledge building, researchers strive to use "indigenous knowledge", "indigenous knowledge systems" or "indigenous epistemologies", and to develop "indigenous paradigms" (Seurujärvi-Kari 1996; Porsanger 2004, 2010; Stordahl 2008; Smith 1999).

Indigenous studies belongs to the large number of new disciplines and programmes that were born in the final few decades of the twentieth century. These disciplines and programmes share the idea that research is always intimately connected to power, is therefore inevitably political, and should thus be political openly. In terms of theory, indigenous studies is currently still heterogeneous, and the theoretical discussion revolves mostly around the critique of earlier research viewed as oppressive. The methods used by indigenous scholars often resemble participatory research methods, and many research projects are very down-to-earth development projects that aspire to engage with the community (e.g. Porsanger and Østmo 2011). Nevertheless, much more controversial ideas have been promoted in theoretical discussions and academic tracts, such as developing shamanistic research methods (Kuokkanen 2000).

5.2. Collaborative and participatory methods in anthropology, archaeology and transdisciplinary research

As noted, especially in former colonial and settler states, people belonging to communities studied in anthropology and related disciplines have become critical of their own role in research, as well as that of the researchers. Anthropologists have reacted to this criticism in diverse ways. The development of different kinds of socially engaged, collaborative and participatory forms of research in current anthropology is a peaceful and often successful attempt to respond to it. However, sometimes things do not go that smoothly. A striking example of this are the disputes between Native Americans and archaeologists in the United States during the past few decades.

Many Native Americans have felt that their graves, sacred places and oral traditions have been treated as public heritage, and that archaeologists have assumed the right to treat these according to their
own wishes and needs. As a result, non-Native American human remains would be reburied if found, whereas Native American human remains have been taken to belong in laboratories and museum collections. These feelings have led to a strong political movement, which in 1990 resulted in changes to legislation. Thus, according to the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), "American human remains and funerary objects shall be expeditiously returned where the requesting Indian tribe or Native Hawaiian organization can show cultural affiliation by a preponderance of the evidence based upon geographical, kinship, biological, archaeological, anthropological, linguistic, folkloric, oral traditional, historical, or other relevant information or expert opinion". The changes in both the legislation and the discipline's ethical codes nowadays make it indispensable for archaeologists to collaborate with the tribes. Some archaeologists are happy to do so, but some see the new regulations as a threat to the objectivity of archaeological research, and the issue has evoked tense theoretical debates. (Zimmerman 2008; Biolsi and Zimmerman 1997; Ferguson, Anyon and Ladd 1996.)

Collaborative and participatory methods are not used only in cultural research. They are also strongly promoted in transdisciplinary research, which is the subject of my joint article (V) with Mäki. We focus on extra-academic forms of transdisciplinarity, where not only academic disciplines are transcended, but where extra-academic knowledge is integrated with scientific and academic knowledge.

Transdisciplinarity has become especially popular in development studies, where the knowledge produced by researchers is intended to benefit local communities. The aim is to solve problems and meet challenges too complex for any one academic discipline to tackle, and the result of a transdisciplinary project should ideally be an applicable solution to the problem at hand. Many projects focus on local problems, but transdisciplinarity is also promoted as a way to approach global challenges, such as biodiversity loss, climate change and global poverty. The research problems are not necessarily recognised within academic disciplines, but only by extra-academic stakeholders, such as

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public authorities, businesses, NGOs or local communities. These groups are often also included in the research process in some way. Transdisciplinarity has been strongly influenced by contemporary ideas about the proper relationship between academic researchers and the public, and by a normative urge to develop more socially inclusive research practices. When a research project aims to produce policy-relevant knowledge and to offer solutions to pressing real-life problems, it is now often thought that the people whose lives the problem touches should participate actively in the research process to ensure that their viewpoints and interests are taken into account. Due to such ideas, collaborative and participatory approaches are common in transdisciplinarity. (Brown et al. 2010; Hirsch Hadorn et al. 2008; Hirsch Hadorn, Pohl and Bammer 2010; Leavy 2011; Russell, Wickson and Carey 2008; Mobjörk 2010.) As we note, especially when the extra-academic participants in a transdisciplinary project represent a non-Western local community, theoretical ideas and conceptual tools are borrowed from anthropology and postcolonial literature. Importantly, the practice of avoiding the appraisal of alien knowledge systems appears to be sometimes adopted in transdisciplinary projects and participatory development projects. Thus the specific challenges related to the development of collaboration and participation in cultural research may also impact transdisciplinary research, as well as some other disciplines and research programmes.

6. Observed shortcomings in interactive objectivity

In the articles I examine the objectivity of emerging research communities in both activist research and participatory research. Collaborative and participatory approaches are adopted in many disciplines, as well as in transdisciplinary research; new disciplines and research programmes, such as indigenous studies, are also emerging. The research being conducted is bound to have difficulties and shortcomings, as research practices have not yet become established. I pay special attention to the social-epistemic practices of the new, emerging research communities. In this section I briefly describe some shortcomings that threaten to undermine the interactive objectivity of such communities. I distin-
guish between shortcomings in inter-community criticism and shortcomings in intra-community criticism, and point out possible connections between the practice of avoiding the appraisal of alien knowledge systems and the shortcomings observed in interactive objectivity.

6.1. Shortcomings in inter-community criticism

Indigenous studies is often represented as an outside criticism of Western science. Especially in programmatic texts, the aim of indigenous studies is described as twofold: first comes the mental decolonisation and self-determination of indigenous peoples, and then, partly in order to succeed in the first task, the critique of Western, allegedly ethnocentric research traditions (Smith 1999; Porsanger 2010).

I believe that the critical role which many indigenous scholars have adopted is epistemically useful for other disciplines that fall under the umbrella of cultural research. However, indigenous scholars have at times been reluctant to take outside criticism into account. In other words, the critical role they have adopted has not always been as reciprocal as would be desirable. Such a role resembles the one Wylie would give to extra-academic agents: they provide researchers with diverse, critical viewpoints. When arguing that collaboration with descendant communities may be epistemically beneficial in archaeology, Wylie invokes the fourth criterion formulated by Longino, the so-called tempered equality of epistemic authority: "the social position or economic power of an individual or group in a community ought not to determine who or what perspectives are taken seriously in that community" (Longino 2002, 131). Wylie suggests that the norm should be explicitly extended outside academia:

In order to counteract the risks of insularity and the effects of dysfunctional group dynamics that can insulate foundational assumptions and norms of justification from critical scrutiny, well functioning [academic] epistemic communities should actively cultivate collaborations with external communities whose epistemic goals, practices, and beliefs differ from their own in ways that have the potential to mobilise transformative criticism. (Wylie 2015, 207.)
The role Wylie suggests for descendant communities coheres with the one assumed by indigenous scholars at times. However, the descendant communities Wylie discusses are outside academia, unlike the research community consisting of indigenous scholars. In order to be objective, indigenous scholars cannot adopt only the role of critics; the research community must also listen to criticism and respond to it. The young research programme of indigenous studies has shown some signs of resorting to the exclusion of certain groups from the emerging research community, as well as to disregard towards dissenting outside perspectives. I however argue (I) that the exclusive practices are currently decreasing, and that outside criticism is now being taken into account better than earlier. The interactive objectivity of indigenous studies, or at least the community of indigenous Sámi scholars I study, is thus increasing.

There is however another shortcoming in inter-community criticism in indigenous studies. The extensive post-nationalist self-critique presented by disciplines that used to take part in nation-building in Europe around a century ago – like folkloristics – has not been applied in the critique of indigenous studies as strongly as it could be. The theoretical debates surrounding different forms of indigenous activist research are based mainly on postcolonial thought and reactions against it. Nation-building is one of the openly expressed goals of indigenous studies. The thorough post-nationalist self-critique presented in folkloristics (e.g. Wilson 1976; Anttonen 2005; Baycroft and Hopkin 2012) could also prove relevant in the case of indigenous studies. Adding it to the critical discussion would potentially increase the objectivity of indigenous activist research. However, the folkloristics literature on the contemporary cultural and political movements of ethnic minorities (e.g. Anttonen et al. 2000; Siikala et al. 2004) has rarely commented on activist research or indigenous studies. On the other hand, the social anthropologists and archaeologists who have criticised different forms

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4 The situation resembles the one Longino describes in her latest book (2013): approaches and disciplines that study closely linked phenomena do not engage in debates with each other, even though such debates would be beneficial for all.
of indigenous activist research (e.g. Kuper 2003; 2006; McGhee 2008), are typically not well acquainted with the post-nationalist literature, and thus rarely refer to it. Constructionist arguments similar to the ones used in the folkloristic post-nationalist literature have been made, and as I argue, indigenous scholars have even taken them into account, but a post-national, critical perspective would nevertheless enrich the critical discussion.

This second shortcoming in inter-community criticism is likely to have several reasons. I have no direct evidence to show that the practice of avoiding appraisal is one of those reasons. It is nevertheless a possible reason. If the indigenous activist researchers are taken to represent indigenous knowledge systems – as they often declare they do – then folklorists who are used to avoiding the appraisal of alien knowledge systems might be reluctant to engage in theoretical debate on indigenous activist research.

6.2. Shortcomings in intra-community criticism

In participatory research, observable shortcomings in interactive objectivity are often related to intra-community criticism. The ways of producing and justifying knowledge claims followed in extra-academic communities are not necessarily in accordance with Longino's norms. For instance, it is not unheard of in indigenous communities that epistemic authority depends on the speaker's age or status as an elder. This is of course inconsistent with Longino's (2002) fourth criterion: the epistemic authority of the elders is determined by their social position. As noted, as long as the community and its knowledge system or knowledge practices stay entirely extra-academic, this is of no concern to a philosopher of science. However, in participatory research the situation changes.

Researchers who adopt a participatory approach typically aim to dismantle power inequalities between the researchers and the extra-academic participants. As noted, sometimes this aim may lead researchers systematically to support extra-academic knowledge systems. They wish to increase the appreciation of local knowledge and to promote the knowledge systems of socially marginal communities.
Both in activist research and participatory research, there is typically a mismatch between visionary, programmatic texts and actual research practices. In the former the "equal validity" of diverse knowledge systems may be endorsed. However, one does not encounter academic researchers invoking their age to back up their arguments, even if epistemic authority is defined according to the speaker’s age in the community the researcher works with. Shamanistic research methods are not really used either. Nevertheless, in participatory research it is possible to encounter situations where the extra-academic participants embrace practices such as defining epistemic authority according to the speaker’s age or status as an elder – and this is not seen as a problem in the research community. In other words, some members of the research community are not criticised for social-epistemic practices that would be reprehensible in the case of other members. If this inequality is accepted in a participatory research project, and not criticised by the larger research community, the interactive objectivity of the whole research community suffers.

Here too, the practice of avoiding appraisal may be one of the reasons for such shortcomings. Instead of critical interaction, academic researchers in participatory projects may only choose to support (at least some features of) the knowledge system of the community they work with, without evaluating it critically – and thus to continue the practice of avoiding appraisal. This may lead them to treat some members of their emerging research team less critically than others. The same reason may induce the larger research community to accept the practice.

7. On methods

I believe that the work of a philosopher of science should be, at least to some degree, empirically motivated and informed. This does not mean that it could not be normative and evaluative; it should just focus on such errors and confusions as can be observed or are probable in scientific or academic research. Philosophers cannot spot them without acquainting themselves with the disciplines they focus on. As Miriam Solomon and Alan Richardson note, "'intuition' has a poor track record
in philosophy of science" (2005, 213, see also Hacking 2015; Kuorikoski 2010). It is not against mere intuition that philosophical claims should be tested.

To be relevant for the disciplines and research programmes I target in my philosophical, normative work, I have to be well acquainted with questions that arise in these disciplines and programmes. Theories, research subjects, environments, questions and research communities in cultural research have changed over time. The questions which philosophers of science can help with have also changed. The issues I discuss in this dissertation have not yet been systematically studied in the philosophy of anthropology or in the philosophy of the humanities. For this reason, I cannot merely take part in an ongoing philosophical discussion already ascertained as of being of interest to the disciplines it touches.

In order to be sure that the issues I tackle in this dissertation are currently relevant, and in order to define my arguments, I have read research conducted in the fields I discuss; attended symposia and conferences in anthropology and folkloristics; visited research institutes specialising in indigenous studies; interviewed researchers; and conducted case studies on a small scale. Nevertheless, this empirical work serves only as a means to ensure that my understanding of the phenomena I comment on – the changes in the respective roles of researcher and researched in contemporary cultural research – is adequate. Only if it is adequate, my philosophical work has the chance to prove useful in the future development of the new research practices I study.

I wrote one of the papers (II) for an audience of folklorists and not philosophers. The methods I use in this paper need to be discussed in more detail, as they resulted in a finding that surprised me, and consequently led me to explore certain themes outside the main scope of this dissertation.

My aim was to draw attention to the ways in which contemporary cultural movements, and the activist research grown out of these movements, have shaped theoretical concepts used in folkloristics and other cultural research. In the paper I focus on the concept – or rather
concepts – of culture. I hope to illustrate why it would be important for folklorists to participate more actively in the theoretical debates related to overtly political, activist research. As I show, these debates are reflected in the concepts folklorists use. Thus it would be in the interest of the discipline itself to participate in discussions of them. Moreover, the critical, post-nationalist theoretical work done in folkloristics during the last decades has put folklorists in a potentially valuable position with regard to the questions at stake in the discussions concerning activist research. The critical contribution of folklorists could be beneficial to the development of contemporary indigenous activist research.

To ensure the relevance of my arguments from the viewpoint of folklorists, I decided to gather some data. I gathered 83 journal articles and eight doctoral dissertations published during the first decade of this century. Using a concordance programme (software developed for text analysis and concordancing) I then searched all instances where the words "culture" and "cultural", as well as their Finnish counterparts, were used in these texts. To my surprise, I found not only the heavily politicised concept I was looking for, but also another concept of culture, quite distinct from the other one. I ended up analysing both. When examining the concept I did not expect to find, I discuss kinds as homeostatic property clusters – a topic quite unrelated to the rest of the work at hand. I nevertheless found this discussion to be necessary: to fail to have offered an analysis of the second concept which was clearly visible in the data would have been seen with justification as a serious shortcoming in the paper. Overall, this experience with capricious data was an instructive one.

8. Overview of the articles

The second part of this dissertation consists of five articles. They are not in the order in which they have been published or accepted for publication. Instead, I start with papers analysing examples from indigenous studies and folkloristics. I then move to the papers that touch on issues related to participatory approaches in ethnography and transdisciplinary research. The first paper introduces a comparison between
changing research communities

contemporary indigenous studies and early folkloristics, and asks under what conditions overtly political research can be deemed objective. The second paper has been published in a folklore journal. In it I analyse two concepts of culture used in contemporary folkloristics and argue that it would be worthwhile for folklorists to participate more actively in the debate on the relationship between activism and research. The third and fourth papers discuss relativistic research practices. In the first of these two papers I argue that the practice of avoiding the appraisal of alien knowledge systems is reasonable in conventional ethnography. In the second I lay out the reasons why the practice is nevertheless not viable in participatory research. The last of the papers is written jointly with Uskali Mäki. It moves from analysis of cultural research to the analysis of transdisciplinary research. We compare literature on extra-academic transdisciplinarity with philosophical, pluralist discussions on extra-academic participation and integration, and indicate in the first body of literature certain problems that the second body should take into account.

8.1. Researchers Building Nations: Under what conditions can overtly political research be objective?

Researchers Building Nations introduces the philosophical discussion on objectivity in which I take part, as well as two of the disciplines I examine. The paper uses Sámi indigenous studies as an example of overtly political, heavily value-laden research, and claims that such research can be objective in principle.

The idea that in order to be objective, research should be value-free, has recently been questioned in philosophy of science. Among others, Heather Douglas (2007; 2009; see also Longino 1990; 2002) and Philip Kitcher (2011) argue that researchers need to make some decisions at all stages of research that necessarily include value judgements, and Douglas notes that several senses of objectivity do not require the value-free ideal. I use two of these senses of objectivity, detached objectivity and interactive objectivity, to assess the objectivity of Sámi indigenous studies, and conclude that the young discipline is becoming more objective than it used to be during its first decades.
Nation-building is one of the proclaimed aims of Sámi indigenous studies. Therefore I compare the discipline to nineteenth-century Finnish folkloristics by drawing parallels with the nation-building ideologies in the latter. The comparison is used in the responses I provide to standard criticisms of indigenous activist research. In short, researchers who wish to use indigenous knowledge in their work have been accused of relativism (Boghossian 2006) and of reviving an old, essentialising image of the "Native" (Kuper 2003; McGhee 2008). I maintain that these critiques are not based only on the "value-free" meaning of objectivity, but what Douglas calls detached objectivity: "the prohibition against using values in place of evidence" (Douglas 2007, 133).

I am optimistic about the reaction of Sámi indigenous studies to the criticism presented, and believe that in time it will not be adhering to the kind of relativism and essentialism the critics worry about. My optimism depends on the preparedness of the research community to allow dissenting voices and to respond to criticism – that is, on the discipline's increasing interactive objectivity. Sámi indigenous studies has been prone to adopt a one-sided position with regard to criticism. The discipline has often been represented as criticism of Western science from the outside; in other words, indigenous scholars have assumed a role that resembles the role Wylie (2014, 2015) suggests for descendant communities in archaeology. However, unlike the communities Wylie discusses, the research community of Sámi indigenous studies is inside academia, and in order to be objective, it cannot adopt only the role of critics. In accordance with the norms formulated by Longino (2002), it must also listen to criticism and respond to it. My optimistic assessment in the paper is based on the observation that the interactive objectivity of the Sámi IS research community is increasing, and that outside criticism is being taken into account. As a result, the detached objectivity of the research conducted has also increased.

The two senses of objectivity used in this paper prove applicable in the assessment of Sámi indigenous studies. The capacity to detect advancement, and to note the increasing objectivity of the research community, is particularly important. The process the discipline is undergoing is not atypical of overtly political research programmes.
fact, young disciplines often go through a phase in which they define their agenda, and during which outside criticism is not taken into account as well as it should be according to Longino's norms. When discussing emerging research communities and young research programmes or disciplines, a social, interactive account of objectivity should take these kinds of developments into consideration.

8.2 At Least Two Concepts of Culture

This paper examines two concepts of culture used in contemporary folkloristics. One of them appears mainly in the context of archival work, while the other occurs chiefly in discussions of themes such as identity politics and ethnic minorities. The main difference between the two concepts is that one is used when formulating substantial theories related to kinds, while the other is a bone of contention in ongoing debates on the level of grand theories (see Merton 1968). Theoretical tools developed in earlier cultural research are taken in use by contemporary cultural movements, and this affects theoretical debates on the level of grand theories in folkloristics and in cultural research more generally.

I call the first concept of culture the kind-constructing concept. I analyse it as a way of naming independent phenomena that researchers find when studying their data: historically and locally limited, complex social mechanisms that construct and support kinds – such as the manuscript culture in Finland in the early twentieth century. The kinds in question can be understood as homeostatic property clusters (Boyd 1991; 1999). That is, several otherwise non-related properties cluster fairly reliably because of the culture that holds the cluster together, and inductive inferences can be made about the kind.

The second concept of culture I call the bone-of-contention concept. I analyse this by using the idea of contested concepts (Koselleck 1985; 1996). A given concept is necessary because the related theoretical debates cannot be conducted without using it, but at the same time it is unavoidably ambiguous and contested. The opposing sides in the debates express their differences through different ways of using the relevant words. In addition, the disagreements about culture may be
divided in two categories: the competing grand theories about culture and critical discussion about the acceptability of the very concept as part of a conceptual framework suitable for researchers. These debates are manifested in the ways in which Finnish folklorists use the bone-of-contention concept of culture, but they rarely make this explicit.

The current debates and tensions on the level of grand theories regarding the concept of culture are related to an important change in the subject of much cultural research. People whose cultures anthropologists, folklorists and ethnologists used to study, are now reviving their own cultures and cultural identities, and even conducting research on these. These contemporary cultural movements resemble the movements that led to the emergence of several European nation states 100 to 150 years ago. In those days, folkloristics as a discipline took part in nation-building, and in Finland it had a particularly important role. In other words, contemporary folklorists study cultural movements that resemble processes in which the discipline took an active part a century ago.

Especially in countries like Finland, folkloristics is in an interesting position regarding the above mentioned change. The discipline has gone through a post-nationalist self-critique comparable to the post-colonialist self-critique in anthropology (see e.g. Anttonen 2005; 2012; Wilson 1976). The politically motivated research that is part of the contemporary cultural movements can at times resort to problematic theoretical claims and research practices, such as the reification of culture. Some of the critique presented against earlier nationalist folkloristics is relevant in the context of contemporary cultural research too, when the latter takes an overtly political form. Contemporary cultural and political movements are studied by folklorists, but as yet the post-nationalist critique developed in the discipline has not been fully applied to the activist research grown out of these movements. It could prove useful if folklorists took part more actively in the debates on contemporary activist research. For instance, perspectives on the bone-of-contention concept of culture could be discussed more openly.
8.3. Seemingly Similar Beliefs: A case study on relativistic research practices

*Seemingly Similar Beliefs* is the oldest of the five articles. It introduces the theme of relativistic research practices, and argues that the kind of epistemic relativism often refuted by its critics is rarely if ever observable in actual ethnographic research practices. Instead, what can be recognised in many cases is methodological conceptual relativism. This has significant practical implications, as epistemic relativism, if rigorously followed, could lead ethnographers to conflate ways of argumentation accepted by their informants with ways of argumentation accepted in academia. The forms of relativism actually practiced do not have the same consequences.

Argumentatively the paper is structured around two examples mentioned by Boghossian (2006) as representing an allegedly alarming, "postmodern" form of epistemic relativism: the archaeologists Roger Anyon and Larry Zimmerman, who both collaborate with native American tribes and accept their traditional viewpoints on prehistory as valuable. My aim is to show that Boghossian is too hasty in his choice of examples, and that Anyon and Zimmerman are much more reasonably understood as methodological conceptual relativists than as epistemic relativists.

To illustrate the practical difference between methodological conceptual relativism and the kind of epistemic relativism Boghossian worries about, I present as a point of reference a case study from Finnish folkloristics: Anna-Leena Siikala's work in Udmurtia. Among Siikala's informants there are cultural activists whose views on their own cultures resemble certain theoretical views discussed by Siikala in her publications. However, she does not compare her informants' ideas with ideas presented by her colleagues. This is because methodologically, she questions the validity of such comparisons: propositions that seem similar to ones we could utter can in fact be considerably different from our ways of thinking when uttered within an unfamiliar conceptual framework. If we think we are able to understand them well enough right away to compare them with our own beliefs, or to appraise them, we might not just make a mistake, but in fact hinder our
own understanding of the differences in question. For this reason, ethnographers typically avoid the appraisal of alien knowledge systems.

The distinctions made by using a case study from Finnish folkloristics as a counterexample are also appropriate when trying to understand the cautionary examples Boghossian has given us: Anyon and Zimmerman. The views they have expressed are an example of methodological conceptual relativism rather than "postmodern" epistemic relativism. In neither Anyon's nor Zimmerman's work is postmodern epistemic relativism running rampant. They do not allow "ideological criteria to displace standards of scholarship", as Boghossian (1996) fears. Instead, they clearly distinguish archaeological epistemic standards from the ones followed in the descendant communities with which they work, and although they respect the views of the communities, they make it clear that researchers must stick to their discipline's own standards when doing research.

8.4. Critical Subjects: Participatory Research Needs to Make Room for Debate

*Critical Subjects* continues on the theme of relativistic research practices, and connects it to questions related to objectivity. In this paper, I argue that as the call for collaboration and participation is becoming common in cultural research, the practice of avoiding the appraisal of alien knowledge systems is becoming unpracticable.

Participatory methods in anthropology and other fields of cultural research aim to turn informants into collaborators or co-authors, and often to integrate extra-academic knowledge with academic knowledge. These disciplines differ in one respect from the other academic fields where participatory and collaborative approaches have become common. Particularly researchers engaged in ethnography have always interacted with how their informants conceptualise, understand and explain themselves and the world around them. They have developed a theoretical understanding of their informants' knowledge, and established research practices through which that knowledge is approached. When conducting participatory projects, cultural researchers today generally accept the idea of different knowledge systems, and often
continue the practice of avoiding the critical appraisal of alien systems
that is common in ethnography.

However, if informants are to be treated as collaborators, or ideally
as colleagues, they become effectively part of the research community.
Longino (2002) has formulated criteria for evaluating the objectivity of
research communities. These criteria rest heavily on the idea of effec-
tive peer criticism, and require the reasoning and background assump-
tions of all members of the community to be appraised. Avoiding the
appraisal of alien knowledge systems is problematic when the alleged
systems of researcher and researched are in constant contact. In partic-
ipatory research, where researchers work together with extra-academic
agents who allegedly represent different knowledge systems, avoiding
appraisal is eventually an untenable practice.

The avoidance of appraisal is related to two forms of relativism:
moderate conceptual relativism and "postmodern" epistemic relativism.
When former informants enter academia themselves, the limits of con-
ceptual relativism become clear. Relativists of this kind would consider
it a mistake to appraise claims made within another, non-academic
knowledge system, fearing that such appraisal would be based on a
mistranslation. Postmodern relativism does not fare any better, even if
many researchers interested in collaboration and participation have
been inspired by ideas that could be labelled as instances of it. Unfor-
nately, such relativism does not really challenge the already familiar
practice of avoiding the appraisal of alien knowledge systems. It only
transforms the practice from abstinence to acceptance. The risk is
recognised in the literature: the uncritical privileging of alternative
knowledge systems is untenable. If researchers are to integrate extra-
academic knowledge into academic knowledge, they must evaluate it
(Finnis 2004; Harding 2011).

The adverse consequences of avoiding appraisal are twofold, de-
pending on the form the practice takes. Researchers can simply avoid
taking any stand when faced with knowledge claims allegedly based on
non-academic knowledge systems. This is hardly constructive if the
aim is to integrate knowledge systems and blur the difference between
researcher and researched. It sustains the difference between the epis-
temic communities and shuts the extra-academic agents out of the research community.

The other option is for researchers to support the non-academic knowledge system and thus to risk being uncritical. In that case they do not pay enough attention to the fact that the better a participatory project succeeds, the more clearly the extra-academic agents become part of the research community. If the contributions of a part of the community are not met with the same critical attitude as those of other researchers, the objectivity of the entire research community suffers.

8.5. Extra-Academic Transdisciplinarity and Scientific Pluralism: What can they learn from each other?

The paper looks at two bodies of literature in relation to one another. Thus far these literatures have proceeded independently and within different disciplinary frameworks. One deals with extra-academic transdisciplinarity (TD) and is mostly authored by non-philosophers, while the other consists of work on scientific pluralism by philosophers. We propose to bring the two bodies of literature in contact with one another, paying special attention to the settings in which extra-academic participation occurs in TD projects.

The stated aim of extra-academic transdisciplinarity is to tackle complex real-life problems by integrating knowledge from many different sources. These include not only knowledge produced in different academic disciplines, but also varieties of extra-academic knowledge. The possibility that integration might turn out to be unfeasible is not discussed much in the TD literature, as integration is often seen as the *sine qua non* of TD. In philosophy of science, especially in debates related to scientific pluralism, integration has lately been the subject of lively discussion. However, here the setting where integration is supposed to happen is purely intra-academic and does not involve significant power asymmetries. Ideas developed in this literature thus cannot, smoothly and without modification, be transferred to bear on issues in a typical extra-academic TD setting.

Some philosophical advocates of scientific pluralism also favour the idea of extra-academic participation in academic research. Briefly put,
many pluralists defend the view that scientific and social values should be integrated; thus, for instance, Philip Kitcher (2001; 2011) stresses the importance of the interests and perspectives of extra-academic agents, and wishes to see more democratic knowledge production within academia. Moreover, knowledge and epistemic advantages are also at stake when philosophers defend the idea of extra-academic participation in academic research. Laypeople can be experts on an issue researchers wish to study, or they might be able to offer epistemically important criticisms from their unique standpoint (see Wylie 2015).

However, when philosophers discuss extra-academic participation, it too is typically thought to occur in a setting we find limited: scientific researchers, unlike the extra-academic agents, are taken to have a socially established role as producers of knowledge. In cases where there is a power asymmetry, the researchers are taken to be in a position of authority in relation to the extra-academic agents. And it is typically assumed that there is no irresolvable epistemic conflict between the academic and extra-academic agents; rather, their different approaches are likely to be reconcilable.

We will show that in extra-academic TD it is possible, even likely, that the power asymmetries between the different participants are complex and that some extra-academic agents have established roles as producers of knowledge, which has significant consequences for TD projects. In addition, the different approaches are not always reconcilable. One of the sources of these problems is the notion of knowledge systems used in the TD literature. This notion often comes close to an anthropological notion of comprehensive cognitive systems, which has not been developed for normative epistemological purposes. It differs from the notions used by philosophical pluralists, who typically put their ideas in terms of theories, models, research approaches and the like. In discussions of extra-academic TD, the epistemically non-normative concept is used in contexts where the epistemic norms, values and practices of the different epistemic communities may conflict with each other and where normative epistemic assessment is in-
dispensable. If knowledge systems are to be integrated, they must be assessed critically.

Pluralist views on extra-academic participation are thus far mostly concentrated on defending the idea of participation. In actual extra-academic TD projects, such participation happens in more complicated settings than are discussed in the pluralist literature, and this has significant consequences. The pluralist discussion related to extra-academic participation could do more than just concentrate on arguing why it is important to give extra-academic agents a role in academic research. It is equally important to ask how this can be done well.

9. Concluding remarks

Ethnographic research practices developed for approaching the knowledge systems of informants have been shaped by moderate forms of relativism. Insights related particularly to conceptual relativism, but also to cultural, as well as "postmodern" epistemic relativism, have pointed ethnographers' research practices in a direction where they avoid the appraisal of their informants' knowledge systems. Currently these practices are becoming outdated. Avoiding the appraisal of alien knowledge systems is no longer as practicable in cultural research as it used to be.

As noted, the underlying premise of this dissertation is that the emerging, more democratic forms of research should be objective; for instance, values must not replace evidence, and criticism must not be ignored (Douglas 2007, Hacking 2015). To assess the objectivity of collaborative, participatory and activist research, I have turned my attention to the changing research communities, and used an interactive account of objectivity – especially the four norms defined by Longino (1990, 2002).

As extra-academic agents join research teams in participatory projects, they become part of communities whose interactive objectivity can and should be assessed. The contributions of everyone belonging to a research community must be met with the same critical attitude, or the objectivity of the entire community will suffer. When indigenous activist researchers claim to represent indigenous knowledge systems
within academia, their work should similarly be approached critically. Otherwise the activist researchers will miss valuable criticisms, and the interactive objectivity of the larger research community suffers. Avoiding the appraisal of alien knowledge systems is no longer viable. In these research approaches, the only epistemically acceptable practice towards knowledge systems alien to the academic researchers, is critical interaction.

This dissertation focuses on a phenomenon that affects many fields of research, not just the ones examined here. It is common today to integrate extra-academic knowledge with scientific or academic knowledge, and to give extra-academic agents more active roles in research than has been customary. In participatory, collaborative and transdisciplinary projects, researchers use artistic knowledge, tacit knowledge, indigenous knowledge or the knowledge of "experts by experience". Often the aim is to produce policy-relevant results. For example, indigenous knowledge is used in the study of climate change in the Arctic, and experts by experience participate in projects that aim to develop more effective policies in mental health work. It is thus important that the results can be trusted. However, it is not obvious how objectivity is ensured when the research is partly based on knowledge acquired through extra-academic means.

The philosophical analysis of the "democratisation" of academic knowledge production is likely to reveal different questions and problems in different fields of research. However, there are good reasons to pay special attention to cultural research. As is illustrated in the joint paper with Mäki (V), similar issues as the ones examined here can also arise outside cultural research. This is because cultural research, especially ethnography, is in a unique position when facing the urge towards more democratic knowledge production. Ethnographers have developed a theoretical understanding of their informants’ knowledge systems and established research practices through which these are approached. These practices have not only begun to collide with new demands that arise from the now common call for collaborative and participatory research. They also affect the theoretical discussions on
collaboration and participation in disciplines that do not have similar theoretical resources for approaching extra-academic knowledge.

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