

## GUEST EDITORIAL:

## ANTHROPOLOGY AND IMAGINATION

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The concept of imagination has come to play an increasingly important role in contemporary anthropological praxis.<sup>1</sup> 'At its core anthropology demands an imaginative leap by comparatively challenging the naturalness of one's own cultural world,' wrote Catherine Trundle in describing the theme of the 37th annual conference of the Association of Social Anthropologists of Aotearoa/New Zealand (ASAA/NZ), hosted by Victoria University of Wellington's Cultural Anthropology Programme from 8–10 December 2012 in Wellington, Aotearoa New Zealand. 'But imagination also drives the transformation and reinvention of the discipline. Postcolonial and postmodern anthropologists, for example, sought to re-imagine anthropology, the politics of knowledge and the discipline's place in the world.' This project continues in the context of globalisation, and Arjun Appadurai (2000) has called on anthropology to reconfigure the research imaginary in order to capture emerging transnational flows and disjunctures. Recognising the role of imagination in both understanding and bringing about change, he argues, attends to 'a faculty that informs the daily lives of ordinary people in myriad ways: it allows people to consider migration, resist state violence, seek social redress, and design new forms of civic association and collaboration across national boundaries' (2000, 6). The concept of the Anthropocene (the hypothesis that a new geological era defined by evidence of anthropogenic global environmental change began with the Industrial Revolution) has also seen scholars reconsider the place of the non-human in the anthropological project. As Stuart McLean (2007, 5) points out, 'imagination has been added to the lexicon of the social sciences;' imagined communities, new social imaginaries, imaginary states, political imaginaries, the colonial imagination, and ethical, bioethical and moral imaginings are now familiar analytical terms.

Taking *Anthropology and Imagination* as its theme, the 2012 ASAA/NZ conference invited participants to explore the plethora of imaginative processes