

PREFACE

Megan Raschig

What a *heerlijke* happenstance that a red thread running through some of the following articles is subject formation, when our own editorial board here at *Amsterdam Social Science* has been experiencing its own remarkable transformation. The concept of subject formation is so amenable, so encompassing, that perhaps it is one of the best-traveled concepts across the social sciences. It becomes great fodder for interdisciplinary engagement. But when you catch yourself in the midst of 'forming' your own 'subject,' it can be even more fascinating. You see, we editors are not a gray and given body of 'acadrones' but a conglomeration of interdisciplined individuals, groping towards some sort of collaborative functioning in order to constitute a board of sorts and to realize the shimmering, papery product you hold in your hands right now.

Negotiating the kind of editors we want to be, and the kind of journal we want to produce, is implicit in our editorial practices and its division of labour; the processes of selecting and smoothing out articles, arranging them in some intellectually and aesthetically satisfying fashion, seeking out certain kinds of funding, and presenting ourselves and our journal to the world. And then there are the opportunities/crises/crisatunities to be explicit about such questioning; the meditative moments where decisions are demanded. The academic year 2010/2011 was full of such moments for our editorial board, as we wrangled with conditions both predictable and utterly random within a shifting social and institutional landscape. Problems with the

printer agency, designers and their templates inaccessible in Nepal, and the funding woes that we all know, and meanwhile a mountain of exciting scholarly writing accumulating in our inbox: these are just some of the behind-the-scenes banalities that influenced our constitution as a board and as a journal.

Simultaneous with all these other developments we also embarked on a bureaucratic march of independence, becoming a stichting. Such a distinction could be interpreted as finally staking coherence as a self-standing organization, and being recognized accordingly. In some contexts we became ‘officially’ a coherent body of editors, our subjectivities as such all but signed and sealed. But upon reflection, after becoming a stichting it was clear to me how dependent we still were, for that very coherence as *Amsterdam Social Science*, on the bodies and structures around us. Understanding subject-formation shouldn’t come at the cost of considering intersubjectivity, the way we develop in relation to others. We may have become independent in name, and with our own bank account, but our relationships with readers, writers, and funders were just as crucial, if not even more so, to realizing what we were, as a board and as a journal. It was the space between ourselves and other bodies, and the way we positioned *Amsterdam Social Science* vis-à-vis them, that made us who and what we were. This is not to deny our agency, but an alternative means of conceptualizing agency, as a potentiality which is dispersed among relationships and only enacted through some measure of collaboration.

I use the past tense here because I want to bring out last year’s contrast with this moment, characterized as it is by its futurity. You see, just as we became a stichting and found our footing again within the UvA, came the time to change again. In mid-2011, *Amsterdam Social Science* grew further into its name as its board expanded to include members from the Vrije Universiteit. And as old editors depart and new ones take the reins, so again we are called to reevaluate our relationships within and without the journal’s cozy confines. What the future holds for *Amsterdam Social Science* is still, as always, TBD; the subject is never fully formed but always in the dynamic process of becoming.

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And this is always in relation to other bodies, also engaged in their own processes of becoming: the readers, writers, reviewers and subscribers that keep the journal not only afloat but alive.

So keep that in mind as you engage with the following works, ranging as they do from Derridean mermaids to Indonesian matters, from Chechnyan Black Widows to African Vultures, from international students as the good migrants to informally aligned Kosovars: We're only who we are because of our relationships with others. As in life, as in interdisciplinarity.