

PREFACE

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Our last issue's preface addressed the topic of open access knowledge and asserted that *Amsterdam Social Science* is an earnest supporter of the recent initiatives for accessible knowledge. Taking this matter a step further, the question then becomes, what kind of knowledge is it that we want to provide our readers with and why? During *UNICA 2012*, an academic student conference I recently attended, 200 students put to question the knowledge we gain at university. The question of whether (formal) education is a goal in itself, a means to an end, or perhaps a means to no end was one on which the conference participants stayed divided, even after five days of pondering. Admittedly, skeptics might argue that universities are less so the engines of knowledge in the current age, for knowledge in the form of technological advancements is increasingly created in companies. However, we should not disregard the recent appreciation of certain disciplines of embodied knowledge. While *Amsterdam Social Science* does not have a definite answer to what the nature of education is, we would like to propose one way to look at it, inspired by the articles in the present issue.

Reading through our articles, we would like you to think about the kind of *subjects* that knowledge, be it provided within or outside university, molds us into. We would also like you to consider the role of social scientists and our journal in making society, put colloquially, a better place. The growing number of

university graduates might lead to an expectation that not only are technological advancements occurring, but also that education should deepen our empathic understanding of the other and hence make us more benevolent. Some of our articles might make you question this assumption: some social relationships seem to be becoming worse, besides the apparent increase in the number of educated people. Fortunately, I write, because I believe that it is solely by being exposed to evidence that something is not working that we are able to probe and enrich our knowledge.

The Netherlands and its Muslims: Contextualizing Dutch Islamophobia contextualizes the registered increased Islamophobia in the Netherlands. Particularly, the author relates the issue of Islamophobia to the process of globalization and elaborates on how globalization affects Dutch Muslims and non-Muslims, but also how these two groups respond to processes of globalization. This article personally makes me revisit the question of xenophobia: why do we increasingly fear difference if we are becoming more 'knowledgeable' about the other as we speak? This is certainly not to claim an absence of the other side of the story. *Constructing Islamophilia within the Muslim Community: The case of the Muslim Canadian Congress* presents an interesting contrast to the previous article as it discusses the development of Islamophilia as a counter-discourse to Islamophobia in Canada. We hope that the combination of these two articles will remind you to stay critical of single-sided accounts on societal phenomena.

Another topic which I believe closely relates to the rise of xenophobic feelings is that of rising anti-immigration sentiments. Amidst fierce contemporary discussions on the extent to which immigration should be allowed or encouraged, *'The easiest choice' or 'the search of normality'? : discourses of economic migration since EU accession and their constructions of ethnicity and national identity in Lithuanian emigrants public letters* addresses the dyed-in-the-wool companion of immigration – emigration – in Lithuania. Is this article about to increase your understanding of contemporary migratory flows? It is up to you to read it and unearth discourses that construct not only ethnicity and national identity, but also *your* own apprehension of migration.

Admittedly, regardless of how different or similar we are, the seemingly inevitable we-ness of humans ultimately places us in the same group. *Going with the Flow, Flowing with the Slow: Interpreting Togetherness at Amsterdam's Zwanenburgwal* explores the influence of music on interpersonal behaviour in public spaces. Read this article if you are curious to know whether music can bond us in public spaces, or as the author puts it, “how rhythm analysis [can] help us perceive the formation and enacting of intersubjective bonds in a public space”. Finally, the article *Where Religion and Medicine Meet: A Modern Explanation for Dissociation in Shamanism and Jung* makes a link not between two groups of people, but between shamanism and Jungian analytical psychology, arguing that besides the time period distance between these two approaches, there is much that connects them in contemporary times. There are multiple ways of understanding the somatic self, and sometimes these ways are not as different as they seem.

Reflecting on all of the above, what answers can we give to the questions posed at the beginning of this preface? While far from exhaustive, the short list of topics above is a call for rethinking the means by which we use knowledge to engage with society. How do we make education deliver what we would like to see in society? Or should knowledge be considered more informative than instrumental in its repercussions? *Amsterdam Social Science* feels strongly about being a platform where you can ask and provide answers to these kinds of questions. In line with this, a new advancement since our last issue has been the creation of a blog which you can use to come into direct contact with your colleagues and discuss your experiences from academic life, fieldwork and writing. The blog is the latest frontier of academic knowledge: will we think of and engage with each other differently through this popular medium, at once (supposedly) democratic and (potentially) inauthentic? Come and tell us what you think, at www.socialscience.nl.

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