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Just don't make yourself too comfortable in the chair: Curiosity in the academy

This issue of the GJSS seeks to explore and provoke the boundaries between science and society, focusing on the intersections between technologies and society and tracking the mutual influence of expectations and practices in technological developments and social change. It is a theme deeply involved with problematising one of the basic convictions of the GJSS, formulated by Sabina Leonelli in 2004 as “the conviction that different tools for the acquisition of knowledge should be confronted, compared and brought together in order to analyse the most complex aspects of our social reality”.

This is an issue acknowledged as deeply important today by a number of important actors in the academic sector, such as the European commission. It is nevertheless difficult to put into practice. Despite a widely spread official rhetoric on the importance of interdisciplinary work in diverse European academic contexts, it is seldom transferred into everyday-work in academia – resulting in obstacles when it comes to the distribution of teachers and of financial resources across disciplinary borders. The conviction of an interdisciplinary search for knowledge, as above addressed by Leonelli, has implications for several areas of academia, such as the organization of knowledge, the relation between science and society, and, not least, for the individual scholar's methodological decisions.

One of the motives behind the conviction that knowledge cannot fruitfully be discharged and obtained within the borders of one discipline is *curiosity*. As a cognitive occupation, pushing the limits of our understanding and of our methodological habits, curiosity is continuously busy with calling comfortable ignorance in the academy into question. This point of view is well framed by the Swedish postcolonial gender studies scholars Kerstin Sandell and Diana Mulinari in a reference to Cynthia Enloe's book *The Curious Feminist. Searching for Women in a new Age of Empire* (2006:10). “I've come to think”, Enloe writes, “that making and keeping us uncurious must serve somebody's political purpose. I have also become convinced that I am deeply complicit in my own lack of curiosity. *Uncuriosity* is dangerously comfortable if it can be dressed up in the sophisticated

attire of reasonableness and intellectual efficiency: ‘We can’t be investigating everything!’“ (2004:3).

This curiosity is one crucial reason to why the GJSS is devoted to interdisciplinary methodology, as an arena for young scholars to exchange knowledge and to develop a meta-level discussion of methodological considerations and their relations to and across borders of other disciplines.

This issue of the GJSS is composed by two thematic sections, occupied with investigations of the relation between science and society. Although addressing different concerns, both sections conceptualize scientific developments as inherent parts of the social process itself.

The first thematic section, titled *Genomics & Society*, is guest edited by Maud Radstake and Bart Penders. In this section, Wietse Vroom present technologies as value-laden aggregates of socio-technical ensembles rather than as neutral tools, thus stressing the idea that technologies cannot simply be handed over from one context to another. In the second article in this section, Bart Penders argue for an ethical agenda that addresses the politics of nutrigenomic practise, rather than merely focus on nutrigenomic expectations. He investigates “the personalized diet” as a specific controversy in nutrigenomics through a comparison between scientific and societal expectations and practices.

The second thematic section, titled Formal Methods of Temporal Analysis, is guest edited by Jeffrey Roberts. Via the example of a specific technological development, Gindo Tampubolon and Ronnie Ramlogan focus on social network development in their piece on radical medical treatment. Using a bibliographic database from the past 25 years of medical journal articles focusing the topic, they develop ideas around how main path analysis makes it possible to identify the problem sequence characterising medical innovation.

Tracking changes over time is also in focus in the article by Nicole Akai Hala, introducing two general patterns of postcommunist political change in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Hala presents political claims analysis as a formal method to track changes over time in the salience of different political identities. In contrast to linear and unidirectional socialization models, she present this coding as capable of giving a complex picture of political identities, among other things pointing out the connections between international institutions and the shaping of political identities.

The last paper in this section demonstrates the differences between environmental movement networks at visible and latent times. Here, Clare Saunders use data from surveys at two different points of time, in order to compare social movement dynamics. By that, she presents networking not only as an important precursor to effective environmental movement action, but also as an outcome of it.

Coming from the field of Gender Studies, I am particularly interested in the element of transgression in practises of interdisciplinary knowledge seeking, where scholars are occupied with serious and difficult research, showing complexities and non-linear stories. As being the new editor of the GJSS, I have the privilege to take over the editorship of a very well managed journal from Sabina Leonelli, whose intellectual integrity and curiosity have given its imprint on the GJSS as a scientific project ever since the first issue in 2004. I am convinced that she will make her next project a similar success as the GJSS. In addition, I would also like to acknowledge the interdisciplinary and multicultural teamwork, whose joint work brings the journal into existence. Without the dedicated hard work of this group of people, it would not have been possible to produce and develop the GJSS. Finally, I would like to thank all contributors for taking part in the making of this journal as a curious intellectual space.

References

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