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“To train our imagination to ‘go visiting’“-

Editorial

While working with the articles in the current issue of the *Graduate Journal of Social Science*, my thoughts turned to Hannah Arendt’s idea on the political and knowing subject as a *visitor*. My train of thoughts took this direction because all four articles in this issue in one way or another relate to the site of knowledge production, problematizing method/ological points of departure and theoretical positionings.

When Arendt compares the process of critical thinking with the idea of the visitor, she focus on the stories that constitute the official frame we inhabit, stories originating from different persons and their wide range of different perspectives. To be able take into consideration the standpoints of others, their acts and judgements, Arendt writes that we need to train our imagination to ‘go visiting’. As visitors, we are then ready to abandon our private and subjective conditions and will have the possibility to transform our individual perceptions to thinking from the standpoint of other persons in a common world (Arendt 1978: 50, Benhabib 1996: 187).¹

Similar to Arendt’s notion of ‘go visiting’, the authors to the articles in this issue of *GJSS* pursue inquiries of methods, methodologies or conceptual spaces. In various ways, all four present interdisciplinary knowledge production as a process where the lines between observer/observed, centre/periphery, society/policy and quantitative/qualitative are crossed, blurred or intermingled. Herewith, they also distance from the notion of the researcher as the subject of knowledge, and place an emphasis on the presence of discursive power, the need for theoretical synergies and the significance of multiple sites of knowledge.

In the opening article of this issue, Lee Wing Hin investigates the relationships between heterosexuality – heteronormativity – and the “heterosexual” institutions of marriage and

¹ In the uncompleted three-volume book *The Life of the Mind*, Arendt describes her notion of *judgement* as the ability to think from the standpoint of other beings. In her notion of judgement, Arendt was inspired by the aristotelian practical reason and Kant’s notion of reflective judgement understood as enlarged thought.

reproduction, in her study of Hong Kong-Canadian discourses surrounding institutions of marriage. Here, Wing Hin proposes a methodological opening where the “heterosexual” arrangements are to be seen as simultaneously crucial parts of colonial, capitalist, patriarchal and racist regimes at different historical moments. Through a case study on the role of tradition in discourses of heterosexuality in four Hong Kong sex and puberty education materials, she argues that a comprehensive understanding of the functions of “heterosexuality” in the materials require attention to Hong Kong’s colonial history and post-colonial present. Her methodological opening offers potential both to deconstructing the relationship between heterosexuality and heteronormativity, and to uncover implications of normalizing heterosexuality.

The combination of various perspectives is also the theme for the subsequent article, where Jonathan Stilwell argues for the need of a synergetic approach in research, that enables the explication of societal impacts on given policy devices, combining economic, ecologic and social aspects. With a purpose of unpacking the role of NGOs in international environmental politics, Stilwell responds to the request proposed in the first issue of the *GJSS* in 2006. In this publication, Denis Chartier identified the need to understand the role that NGO groups play in international environmental policy processes through examinations of the nature of their actions and the scales that they work at (Chartier 2006: 58). In the current issue of the *GJSS*, Stilwell focus on the spatial focus of actions taken by NGO groups and the relevance of these focused actions within a broader interdependent and inter-temporal policy discourse in the article *Beyond Rainbows and Butterflies: Environmental Politics and the Scale and Scope of NGO Activities*.

The interrelatedness between ontological, epistemological and personal perspectives and their impact on research design is the topic for the piece *Self-reflection on emergent research design*. With a background in mainly quantitative approaches, Martin describes his journey from a positivist move towards a phenomenological perspective as an effect of his experiences as a researcher. The different contexts of the study involve the educational outcomes and learning processes in the three different locations; New Zealand, Czech Republic and Australia.

With respect to the intertwining of the social, material and virtual environments in the process of knowledge production, Jennie Olofsson presents a manifest for the fl@neur in her piece *Negotiating figurations for feminist methodologies*. With genealogies dating back to the Parisian flaneur as it has been presented by a range of authors from Baudelaire, Walter Benjamin

and Zygmunt Bauman, but also the role of the female flaneur, the flaneuse, and Donna Haraway's cyborg, Olofsson investigates the links between ontology and epistemology. Here, Olofsson introduces the fl@neur as a feminist figuration, usable both a theoretical tool and methodological approach with the capacity to challenge notions of men and women, observer and observed as well as body and spatiality.

In the review section of this issue, Isaac Marrero introduces in his presentation of the volume *Michel de Certeau. Analysing Culture*, by Ben Highmore topics and issues raised in the works of Michel de Certeau, with a specific focus on the methodological engagement of moving closer to the world in order to change it for the better.

In her review of Anne Phillips *Multiculturalism without culture*, Khadija Abbasi shows how Phillips develops a cultural politics that further combines the aims and purposes of gender equality and multiculturalism. This review presents an interesting analysis on gender equality and multiculturalism concentrated on the collision between cultural traditions and women's rights.

Melissa Fernandez reviews the documentary film *Chocolate City* (2007), by Ellie Walton and Sam Wild, telling the story of the low-income public housing estate in Washington D.C and the systematic marginalization of black citizens and Latino immigrant population. In this film, art emerges as a powerful sphere of activism. As the new organizing medium for residents to powerfully engage in space, the film shows how the field of artistic production gives the residents a more highly developed social consciousness and new methods in claiming their own rights.

A knowledge seeking that transgresses the disciplinary agenda may offer possibilities for critical thinking, deploying other forms of method/ologies and other ways of theorizing taking into account the intertwinement of a wide range of areas, from social structures, to social, political and ideological discourses and theoretical genealogies to personal narratives. As further developed in this issue of the GJSS, this raises certain questions of relevance for the scholar, and especially the question of how to handle the combination of individual narratives, theoretical and method/ological frameworks, social and cultural aspects, policy discourses and ideological regimes.

References

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