

PREFACE

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When I timidly set foot in the University of Milan, at the beginning of my academic route in 2003, the very first class I attended for my Bachelor program was the introductory seminar of the course of Aesthetics. I remember quite vividly how the lecture briefly sketched on a couple of slides what was the core issue we would be dealing with that semester. Namely, the gradually changing role of the spectator in the reception of art, from mere observation by sight to an all-encompassing act of interaction, at times even involving the observer in a stage of ‘performance in the making’.

From that moment, my academic interests have moved far away from Aesthetics and Communication Sciences in general: yet, I still find this ‘boundariless contour’ existing between art creation and art consumption a very appealing oxymoron. A subject that represented a recurring theme in a number of other disciplines I encountered later on. The concept of ‘reception’ is inextricably intertwined with the question how a spectator makes sense of the outer world. It has been widely debated in the social sciences whether the world we experience is something out there that needs to be explored, or rather a reality that comes into being after a mutual exchange of practices involving both the observer and the observed.

When applied to knowledge diffusion, the boundariless contour between creation and reception transforms the act of knowledge consumption into a generative act, and consumers become active entrepreneurs in a process of meaning-making. Similarly, the dissemination of ideas that Amsterdam Social Science seeks to encourage finds its roots in a platform of debate and dynamic construction of knowledge, in which authors, reviewers and the public at large take active part. Reading generates new meanings, which in turn are negotiated with the ones origi-

nally produced by the authors. Reviewers find themselves in a somewhat privileged position, for they act as gatekeepers of what becomes the final product (i.e. the journal), by selecting and consuming the manuscripts, negotiating their structure and content with the authors and finally deciding which ones are worth being published. Therefore, being a reviewer implies being situated at the interface between production and consumption, something that makes this dynamic process all the more fascinating.

What constitutes this new issue of Amsterdam Social Science is the result of such a 'performance in the making', the reception of which has not yet been fully accomplished, nor has its creation been fully developed. As a reader, you are likely to be actively involved in the reception of this journal, as much as you are likely to engage yourself in the crafting of new meanings as a performer. This generative act will stretch out the process of knowledge creation towards new avenues of interpretation. On behalf of the editorial board, I would like to thank you for deciding to put yourself along this boundariless contour.