

Looking Back and Looking Forward

This issue of the journal covers an exciting range of topics related broadly to the concerns of cosmopolitan civil societies, as have previous issues, but it also differs from others in that it contains a number of articles which reflect back on key concerns of the Cosmopolitan Civil Societies Research Centre which publishes the journal, as well as two articles on issues which are fundamental to inclusive and just societies.

Cosmopolitan Civil Societies Journal is now in its sixth year of publication and the editorial committee asked researchers in the Centre to consider writing articles which could mark five years of successful publication of the journal and in some way record its contribution to the development of knowledge in the field or which could present a scholarly commentary on some key concept of significance to CCS's research agenda or outline and analyse a contemporary moment. The five papers which appear here were submitted for peer review in the normal way, and the reviews indicated both support for the intellectual agenda for CCS and the challenges of making accessible the local issues and concerns of members of a research centre to a globalized audience. Andrew Jakubowicz, a scholar with over forty years of research experience in migration, racism and multiculturalism, draws on his experience of the interaction between research, policy and politics to argue that independent research that tackles difficult questions can contribute to wider social understanding of complex issues. He demonstrates the impact both of the investment in and expansion of research, and the contrary contraction and deprivation of resources. In the context of National Disability Insurance Scheme which is being progressively rolled out in Australia, Jenny Green and Jane Mears review research and reports on the person-centred approach on which the scheme is premised. Bronwen Dalton took the opportunity to trace the evolution of the idea of civil society to its multiple guises in the present. She discusses prospects for developing agreed approaches to the study of civil society, exploring in the process different approaches to defining civil society taken by some of the major so-called centres for civil society in Australia and internationally. She concludes by reflecting on these definitional challenges as it has played out at one particular cross faculty research centre, the University of Technology, Sydney's Cosmopolitan Civil Societies Research Centre. Jenny Onyx, similarly, has explored

a concept which is at the heart of much of the work of members of the Cosmopolitan Civil Societies Research Centre, the concept of social impact. Using work done by some members of Cosmopolitan Civil Societies Research Centre, she demonstrates some of the approaches which have been developed and which run counter to the all too common so-called objective indicators of social impact, framed in terms of monetary cost and benefit. She notes the importance of these attempts to measure social impact in social terms rather than from a monetized perspective and concludes that exactly what we should be measuring remains contested and elusive. Michael Olsson's paper on information practices in contemporary civil society charts some of the concerns with the nature of an information society. He considers how the emergence of social constructivist approaches to information research drawing on discourse analysis, practice theory and ethnographic theories and methodologies has led to a have led researchers to a radically different understanding of central concepts such as: the influence of emergent information and communication technologies on contemporary society; the relationship between knowledge and power, the nature of expertise and authoritative information; as well as a re-thinking of community and consensus; a re-interpretation of notions of space and place in information dissemination, sharing and use and a reconsideration of the role of the researcher.

The issue also contains two other papers which emphasis key aspects of the research agenda of the Cosmopolitan Civil Societies Research Centre. Baxter's paper is concerned with the relationship between information access and environmental and ecological justice. He takes as his case studies two controversial coastal developments in Aberdeenshire, North-east Scotland. Megan Stronach and Daryl Adair describe how an Indigenous methodology known as Dadirri, which emphasises deep and respectful listening, guided the development of the research design for a study of sport career transition among elite Indigenous Australian sportsmen conducted by non-Indigenous researchers. The paper provides a model for non-Indigenous researchers to conduct qualitative research with Indigenous people.

Hilary Yerbury
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