

## A Note from the Editor

In this issue I am delighted to welcome our new Co-Editor, Tatiana Fumasoli of the University of Oslo, and Associate Editor, Tommaso Agasisti, of Politecnico di Milano. Both have already been very active on the Journal's behalf, and I am looking forward to working with them as the Journal develops. Tatiana has volunteered to write the editorial for this issue, which follows.

Dr Celia Whitchurch  
Editor

## Editorial

### The roles of the university in society

The common thread of this issue is the examination of the position(s), role(s), and contribution(s) of the university in the contemporary society. This topic is at the core of the on-going debate on higher education: it is multi-dimensional, relates to several stakeholders, and provides distinctive insights according to global, international, and national contexts. All the papers address, with different perspectives, research problems, and methodologies, the legitimacy of the university and how this legitimacy is constantly endorsed and challenged by changing societies.

Martyn Hammersley offers a critical examination on the conceptualization of academic freedom, contrasting views based on the inherent norms of professional autonomy and views founded on the democratic function of academia within the broader society. The author argues on the one hand that university internal governance might not be so relevant in fostering academic freedom, on the other hand, that the evolution of disciplines might affect more significantly its enactment. In their paper on performance indicators, Nurdiana Gaus and David Hall present a nuanced view on the principal-agent theory and, drawing on qualitative data gathered in Indonesian universities, provide a constructive discussion on how such indicators can be used more effectively. At the same time the authors warn against the neglect of employment conditions within incentive designs and illustrate the emergence of “nomadic traders” (*Pedagang Asongan* in Indonesian), or academics that have to work in several institutions and settings for economic reasons. University public engagement is investigated by Lesley Chikoore, Steve Proberts, Jenny Fry and Claire Creaser, who draw on a large dataset of academics in the UK and show the relevance of specific disciplines, as well as the level of (perceived) expertise as significant factors explaining the willingness of researchers to use social media and reach out to non-academic audiences. The authors also found that the autonomy of individual academics in deciding how to get involved with public engagement is crucial. The role of higher education in social mobility is addressed by Ilya Prakhov, who

analyzes the introduction of the Unified State Exam (USE) in Russia. Aimed to provide equal opportunities for all students to access elite universities (called “selective universities”), USE has allowed for a standardized evaluation of applicants based on their performance. However family characteristics, type of secondary school and pre-entry coaching, and geographical location still segment student enrolments, showing the limits of higher education in fostering social mobility, particularly when disconnected from the overall educational system. Finally Chun Cao, Chang Zhu and Qian Meng discuss the push and pull factors of international academic mobility of Chinese students and illustrate how quality of universities abroad and future career prospects combine with mobility costs and financial conditions in the host country. Interesting to note the role of gender and disciplinary fields, with female students and students in the social sciences more willing to move and study abroad.

Dr Tatiana Fumasoli  
Co-Editor