

EDITORIAL

Politics of the Low Countries Inaugurates the State of the Profession Section and a New Format for PhD Reviews

*Audrey Vandeleene, Maurits J. Meijers, Luana Russo & Min Reuchamps**

Over the past five years, the journal *Politics of the Low Countries* (PLC) has published original research articles (two of which are featured in this issue), research notes and literature reviews as well as PhD reviews. With this issue, PLC inaugurates a new section, entitled ‘State of the Profession’, and a new format for PhD Reviews. In this short editorial, we are delighted to present the readers these two promising sections.

1 State of the Profession

In the realm of academia, we often find ourselves immersed in the pursuit of knowledge, delving deep into our specialised fields of study and navigating the intricacies of our own academic institutions. Yet, it is crucial to remember that we are not isolated in our scholarly endeavours. We are part of a broader community, shaped not only by universal academic concerns but also by the unique landscapes and dynamics of our own countries and regions.

The Editorial Board of PLC, a journal dedicated to exploring the political landscapes of Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands, recognises the importance of acknowledging and engaging with both the commonalities and distinctions that shape the academic experiences of scholars in these neighbouring countries.

To bridge this gap and foster a deeper sense of community among academics in the BeNeLux region, we are introducing a new section in our journal: ‘State of the Profession’. This section aims to provide a platform for colleagues to discuss matters related to being an academic, encompassing both universal themes and specific national concerns.

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In State of the Profession, we will delve into broader academic discussions that transcend borders. We will explore topics such as the challenges and opportunities presented by digitalisation, the evolving role of universities in society, the ethics of research and publication, and the ongoing debates surrounding diversity and inclusion in academia. These themes are not confined by national boundaries, and we believe that a shared dialogue can enrich our understanding and responses to these crucial issues.

Additionally, State of the Profession will serve as a forum for addressing the specific academic matters that pertain to Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. While we share many commonalities, each country has its own unique higher education system, research infrastructure and academic culture(s). Our scholars often grapple with challenges and opportunities that are distinct to their respective nations.

For example, the intricacies of academic funding, the dynamics of university governance and the interactions between academia and politics can vary significantly from one country to another. By opening a space for discussion on these national matters, we hope to shed light on the experiences of our colleagues across borders and stimulate a cross-pollination of ideas and insights.

We believe that State of the Profession has the potential to foster collaboration and mutual understanding among scholars in the BeNeLux region. Too often, valuable insights and experiences remain confined within national borders, limiting our collective growth and impact. Through this section, we aim to break down these barriers and encourage an open exchange of knowledge and ideas.

We invite scholars, educators and researchers from Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and beyond to actively participate in this dialogue. Share your perspectives, challenges and innovations. Engage with your peers across the region, and together, let's strengthen our academic community.

We hope that the section 'State of the Profession' will be more than just a new section in our journal, but that it will help in fostering a vibrant and interconnected academic community in the low countries. We look forward to the insightful discussions and collaborations that will emerge from this endeavour, as we continue to explore the political landscapes of our countries and the shared journey of academia.

2 New Format for PhD Reviews

We are excited to introduce a new format for the PhD Reviews section of PLC. In our previous format, an independent reviewer summarised the main contribution of the PhD dissertation and offered a critical appraisal. While this approach has served us well over the years, we are constantly seeking ways to enhance the quality and relevance of the content we deliver to our readers.

As a result, we are now calling for PhD reviews to be published in our upcoming issues, featuring a twofold structure that we believe will provide a more comprehensive and insightful perspective on the doctoral research being conducted in Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands in the various subfields of political science research.

The new format consists of two key components:

- PhD Summary (approximately 1,000 words): This section will be authored by the PhD candidate themselves. It offers an in-depth summary of their thesis, highlighting its main points and contributions. This change allows the author to provide a first-hand account of their work, offering unique insights and perspectives.
- PhD Review (approximately 500 words): A critical review of the PhD thesis authored by a reviewer the PhD candidate proposes. While the reviewer cannot be the supervisor, reviewers are often members of the doctoral jury. This review will focus on the strengths and weaknesses of the thesis and its contribution to the existing literature. By separating the summary and review components, the reviewer can dedicate their attention to a thoughtful critique of the work, providing a more to-the-point assessment.

One key benefit of this new format is that both the PhD Summary and the PhD Review will be published as two separate articles. This means that the summary of the PhD can be cited independently from the review, enhancing the accessibility and usability of the content for researchers and scholars in the field.

We believe this new format will not only enhance the depth and quality of our PhD reviews but also provide a platform for emerging scholars to present their doctoral work in a more straightforward and engaging manner. We look forward to receiving many proposals and sharing these insightful reviews with our readers.

With a new section titled 'State of the Profession' and a new format for PhD reviews, the journal PLC wants to follow as closely as possible the most recent developments in the field and above all to offer a comprehensive appraisal. The publication of articles in these two sections, next to original research articles, research notes and literature reviews – often bundled in special issues –, seeks to perpetuate PLC's position as the reference journal for anyone who wants to follow and understand political dynamics in the low countries.