

## A socio-legal poem

*For the graduation ceremony for the master's programme Law & Society of Leiden University on September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2022*

*By Bettina Schmiedler*

Look at us, Master of Science in Law & Society  
Sounds important, right? But what does this mean in reality?  
How many times have we tried to explain it to friends and family?  
And how often have we done so successfully?  
Did we know ourselves and do we know it now?  
Let's try to answer that with this poem somehow:

Well, what we learnt through our education,  
There're always different angles to every situation,  
Diverse perspectives, approaches, and layers of any kind,  
And - important note - everything is intertwined.

Resembling this socio-legal nature as clearly as that,  
There's not this one explanation of the last year we had,  
Different highlights and learnings that each of us would name,  
Even though the classes we took were mostly the same.  
They rather set the context we aim to understand  
Contributing partially to the question at hand.

Let's acknowledge Chase's class as foundational corner stone  
Always patient with us, even if our minds were blown,  
Just mentioning institutionalism and legal consciousness here,  
learning that Hertogh is a scholar and not only a beer,  
Even if we might have forgotten much from all the texts we read,  
What remains is the question: What would Durkheim, Marx or Weber have said?

Meanwhile, LPS was more of a stress-test to the most of us,  
Writing blog articles until late, hoping to pass  
So many assignments, so little time,  
but we survived it, and that is divine.

Not to forget all the lessons  
That followed by classes with poetic titles and expressions,  
Outside our bubble, it might sound bizarre,  
Be it Legal Pluralism, Disputing Deconstructed or the Rule of Man in the Rule of Law,  
But it certainly broadened our point of view,  
Whilst I hope case studies and role plays do not trigger you

Two electives and loads of thesis preparation,  
And voila – here we are at graduation,  
But this does not reflect what we have become,  
There was so much more we were growing from.

Our outlook on future jobs might remain blurred and unclear,  
But we have more to be proud of than to seriously fear,  
Some already started working whereas others have no clue  
But luckily, our identity is more than the job we will pursue.

There's the question of belongingness that we encounter more often than not,  
Being asked about our discipline as if we were put on the spot  
Are we more law or social sciences, none of them or both of these two?  
You could say we're caught in the middle or that we are the glue -  
The glue linking disciplines to pursue great missions  
Embracing interdisciplinarity instead of strict divisions,  
Because in our world we need more bridges and less walls  
And that's what we stand for, graduating in these halls.

What we all share is that we've discovered things we cannot unsee anymore,  
We might have even more worries or questions than ever before  
But we know there are like-minded people who share this feeling  
Who can relate to the struggles with which we're dealing.  
Seeing so many problems in our world can weigh heavy on our souls,  
But we're also full of passion, dedication, goals.  
We all want to make the world a better place and promote the change that we desire  
Or at least to understand it, and to let us inspire,  
That's what brought us here and what made us endure  
And what will stick with us, that I'm pretty sure.

So many things that made us thrive,  
Are thus outside the classroom and working life,  
It's not only the methods and the academic know-how,  
Or the individual journeys we can look back to now,  
It's also the people, us classmates, new friends,  
Connections which will continue after the ceremony ends

It's the memories we will carry with us no matter what comes next  
Remembering pub quiz questions better than our thesis text,  
Or the hours spent with the LSA,  
And the intake of caffeine at the Wijn café,  
Rather than some precise definitions  
We might recall the countless beers and last-minute submissions,  
But we know what we are capable of in so many ways,  
Regardless of what the grade on our diploma says.

So, look at us! Master of Science in Law & Society,  
Rich of experiences of a vast variety,  
Maybe caught in the middle but with the world at our feet  
At least that's what we hope for and what the world might need,  
At least tonight, the world is ours and we should celebrate,  
All the achievements, memories, and friendships we made.