

## **Social Sciences at the foot of the Acropolis**

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Over the last years the Netherlands Institute at Athens has expanded its scope to Social and Political sciences and it in some cases has tried to bridge social anthropology, ethnography and history with archeology. Within this context we have established productive collaborations with various departments and scholars in the Netherlands and in Greece that sustain our projects. In this presentation I will present you the efforts of the Institute on an education level to contribute to the dissemination of new knowledge among students of various disciplines and nationalities, I will give a short account of some of our workshops and conferences and sketch some of our future plans and expectations.

Some of the driving ideas behind the program on social and political sciences have been the effort to bring together Greek and Dutch academia and students, the exchange and collaboration of scholarship, the exposure of international students to social life in Greece and finally the training of students in workshops and schools. All our winter and summer schools receive students not only from Greece and the Netherlands but also from the rest of Europe, Africa, North and South America and Asia, creating a very multicultural and diverse environment.

The oldest winter school we are running since 2011 is called **Migration in the Margins of Europe** and it has been a hub on research on migration studies and the anthropology-sociology of migration long before the so called “migration crisis”. It started as collaboration between the Institute of Migration and Ethnic studies of the University of Amsterdam, the department of Anthropology of the University of Amsterdam, the department of social Anthropology of Panteion University and expanded the collaboration with the department of social and cultural anthropology of Free University of Amsterdam. The school has also working collaborations with the Médecins Sans Frontières, the Greek forum of refugees and the Greek council for refugees.

The school takes place each year at the end of January for about two weeks and receives an average of twenty post graduate students. During these two weeks the students have the opportunity to do

fieldwork through participant observation and ethnographic methodology among the migrant communities and networks of Athens. The winter school has a contact list with organizations and persons that the students can begin their research and gradually build up relationships and new contacts. During these two weeks the students are divided in groups of three depending on their language skills and level in order to collaborate in their project. The students have to decide upon arrival the topic of their research and in consultation with their supervisors they conduct their fieldwork. The result of the fieldwork will be summarized in an essay in the form of ethnographic report and a presentation at the end of the school.

The topics that the students have been working on are very diverse: how people experience their journey and the conditions of being on the move, how precarity-discrimination or racism are affecting migrants or refugees, what are the dreams-expectations and possibilities about the future for those who have to leave their countries, and how the crisis in Greece has been affecting the perceptions of the country about refugees and Others or has turned some voters to far right extremism? Therefore, our topics range from questions on identity and culture to social policy, bureaucracy and perspectives of the state and law. In the past students have worked with Nigerian, Senegalese, Afghani, Pakistani, Tanzanian, Sudanese, Chinese, Syrian and Iraqi communities but have also conducted fieldwork among NGO's and neighborhood initiatives. One of our schools expanded also to Turkey and took place for one week in Istanbul in Koç University and carried on for a week in Athens.

In parallel with the winter school several workshops, lectures and international conferences that relate directly to the themes of the winter school have been organized. **Philoxenia, Xenophobia and Violence** took place in 2011 and had an impact on warning Greek public for a rising xenophobic violence and a distorted idea of hospitality that imposed hierarchical relationships in relation to migrants. Speakers had included Jane Cowan, Katerina Rozakou, Dimitris Christopoulos, Efthimios Papataxiarchis, Giorgos Tsimouris and Dimitris Dalakoglou. A second conference titled **Dawn of the Nationalists** dealt specifically with the emergence of far right extremism in contemporary Greece with a special focus on the political party Golden Dawn and tried to understand the history and success of the party in relation to the economic recession. Speakers included Anna Frangoudaki, Vasiliki Georgiadi with Lamprini Rori, Kosti Papaioanou

and Dimitri Kousouri. As a result of the expansion of the school to Turkey another conference in relation to the winter school emerged in 2017, **Turkey in transition: before and after the attempted coup**. The conference was co-organized with Nikos Christofis who received his PhD from Leiden University and included more than twenty presentations of international scholars and two keynote lectures, one by Joost Lagendijk and one by Hamit Bozarslan.

The second major activity of the Institute is the summer school **Visual Ethnography of Cityscapes** which runs for more than three weeks every July in the last four years in collaboration with the Ethnographic Film Festival of Athens and the departments of Anthropology of Leiden, University of Amsterdam and Free University Amsterdam. The summer school receives over 30 international students each year who are introduced to visual anthropology and visual ethnography and are given the opportunity to learn filming and produce a short film of about 10 minutes in the urban cityscape of Athens. Most of the students who arrive to our school do not have any idea about filming and within three weeks they have learned to use the camera as a major tool in their research, thus opening up the way for a multi-modal ethnography. The film results of the summer school are being judged by the ethnographic film festival of Athens and those that succeed in passing are presented each year in a special film session of the festival.

Except being a school of visual ethnography and anthropology, the summer school has also recorded through this collaborative endeavor with students various aspects of the city in crisis, social movements, neighborhoods, gentrification, heritage and perceptions about the past and the future thus putting the summer school at the threshold of ethnography, material and visual culture. Films of the summer school are also presented internationally in various festivals around the world. Our forthcoming collaboration with the department of archeology of Leiden University on collaborative filming might open up further possibilities for a new multimodal visual archeological ethnography. Also some of our films were presented in last year's archeological dialogues in a special section that was well received and discussed.

In parallel with the Summer school the larger interest on material and visual culture of the institute has been present since the first conference we had organized on **Social Matters, Anthropological**

**Approaches to Materiality on 2011** with the participation of Eleana Yalouri, Aris Anagnostopoulos Pieter ter Keurs, Elia Petridou and Elpida Rikou among others. The result of this conference was published in a book by LitVerlag in 2013, coedited by Pieter ter Keurs, head of collections and research of the National Museum of Antiquities of the Netherlands.

Therefore, I would say that the presence of the Institute in the last years at the foot of the Acropolis has opened up more possibilities to bring closer social sciences with archeology, anthropology, ethnography and material culture at large. The turmoil of the city in the last years, the deep crisis that Athens went through, the social inequalities and exclusion that many people face were transformed into a creative dialogue with students and academia and transplanted seeds for an experiential academic education through practicing and bringing together theory with practice, the visual and the material, the past and the present. There is no doubt that this creative and sometimes experimental mode is bringing new fruits that will hopefully inspire and open up new scholarship and methodologies.

Within this context this is a call to everyone who is part of our large company of the archeological schools and foreign schools of Athens to open up our research to the wider public, to try to include academic training and education into our program bringing together Greek and international students and to connect the past with the present, the material culture with the wider relationships and processes that give meaning to it, such as the national, the local or the global.