

The first discussions and reflections for an international student network, I remember, first occurred after the presentation of the network “Roaming Anthropology” at the Mediterranean Summer School MESS at Piran in 2004 – which is connecting young anthropologists of Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia/Montenegro. One year later, these ideas have grown into the creation of regional legal institutions. They are the pillars of the European network MASN, the “Moving Anthropology Student Network,” which now celebrates its first conference. It is remarkable how students from different institutions committed themselves to this endeavour, and with their enthusiasm succeeded in realising this project in such a short time.

The dimension and importance of this initiative becomes visible in the context of other projects, which are concerned with the production of wide networks, and the enhancing of mobility, reciprocity and equality. At a political level, these concepts have been central aims of the EC’s politics in education and research for years. Various Socrates and Marie Curie programmes had been developed in this spirit. Lately the “Bologna-process” should push these activities at another dimension. The programmes had started more than ten years ago, and reading all the related files to their implementation and their improvement only shows how difficult these aims are to be implemented at states’ levels.

In anthropology, Adam Kuper set the initiative for funding an organisation of professional anthropologists from all over Europe and beyond national traditions – the European Association of Social Anthropologists in January 1989. Today, we can observe and experience the results of these interconnections, among others at the biennial conferences, in EASA’s book series, or in the Association’s publication Social Anthropology/Anthropologie Sociale. One should however remind that what appears self-evident in these early years of the 21st century was not so some twenty years ago. Then, two traditions still dominated the scholarly discourse and the definition of the training of anthropology, while many others had been relegated to the peripheries.

The students’ initiative MASN is highly welcomed as it constitutes a splendid, new impetus to the endeavour of actively participating in the shaping of new conditions for studying, researching, and working within the field of anthropology. Further, such a network is important for facing the increasing social pressures and the tremendous lack of job opportunities in the field. These conditions are specific for the generations of early stage scholars. They need to be articulated, and to be considered within anthropology’s institutions.

The title of the conference, “Connecting Europe – Transcending Borders,” and the particular topics for each day appear as clear expressions of the concerns students and early stage researchers in anthropology nowadays have. Questioning Europe, the politics of cultural difference, systemic strategies of mobility and fixity, for sure will be reflected and debated inside the European context, and I may express the hope that they will be stretching out into the frame of a global anthropology.

I would like to express my congratulations to all those who participate in the creation and the success of MASN, I wish you all a fruitful and challenging conference, and may there also grow an intensive, reciprocal, and creative interaction with the many associations and institutions of anthropology.

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