

Teaching Anthropology to Artists: The Challenges of Trans-disciplinarity and Beyond

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Abstract

In this paper, complex issues of education are discussed in relation to research and activism in the humanities and contemporary art, cultural production and politics. The discussion is based on a re-examination of twenty years of teaching anthropology at Greek universities in light of a strengthening engagement in the practices situated between this discipline and art. The context, the content and the mode of this activity are considered, during an epistemologically composite and politically significant process of interchanging teaching and learning positions. The specificity of the conditions of one's own education needed to be acknowledged in the introduction to this retrospective survey. Teaching anthropology to professionals and students of different disciplines is also described as a period of learning how to place emphasis on practice, re-evaluate anthropological knowledge, combine diverse perspectives and negotiate power relations. Teaching anthropology to artists, however, particularly when the teacher also happens to be an artist, poses these and other challenges. Transdisciplinarity is sought, but only as something to surpass, eventually considering what it might mean to be "undisciplined." In any case, it is by now established that when anthropologists meet with artists, common interests become evident and a great potential for the renewal of research and theory is revealed, but diverging priorities and conflicting relations must also be addressed. Teaching and learning in such a context becomes more than an academic habit. It develops as a demanding, research-cum-art making activity, as shown by a number of collective projects that bring together students and teachers, on the fringes of the academy and social life during the difficult period of the so-called 'Greek crisis'.

Keywords: Contemporary art; humanities; power/knowledge; undisciplined; cultural production; education.

Introduction

Teaching anthropology to students in a variety of pre- and post-graduate programs in a Greek university, as well as to non-academics, is a most valuable learning experience. There is a constant need to re-evaluate anthropological knowledge, rearrange syllabi, combine diverse perspectives, negotiate power relations, and in sum deal with all the complex issues of 'multi', 'inter', or hopefully 'trans' disciplinarity in education. In this paper, an account of this process precedes and contextualizes the main issue, that is, the blending of anthropology with contemporary art, first during a course on Anthropology and Contemporary Art at the Athens School of Fine Arts [hereinafter A.S.F.A.], and then during several collaborative art research projects that developed on the fringes of the academy, taking place in Athenian social and cultural life in the years of the so-called 'crisis.'

Schneider and Wright's publications (2006, 2010, 2013) demonstrate that when artists and anthropologists come together, common interests and great potential for renewal in research and theory are revealed. This potential has already been acknowledged – although not widely recognized in the academy – mainly from the 90s onward, after the 'cultural critique' turn in anthropology (Clifford and Marcus, 1986; Marcus and Myers, 1995), as well as the emphasis on embodiment, the senses, material and visual culture, performance and so on. As far as the art world's relation to anthropology, nowadays, the discipline's influence on the practice of certain artists and curators may be traced in certain cases, but it rarely means more than their adherence to one of the many trends that shape the contemporary art world, where discourse is prolific, all possible loans from different domains of knowledge are encouraged and the connections between art and the academy, in general, are amplified (Elkins, 2009).

Moreover, education, learning and research, as such, have become topics of intense artistic involvement. The so-called 'educational turn' in the arts since the late 1990s has encouraged many artists and curators to experiment with educational forms and alternative pedagogical models as a means of artistic-cum-political intervention. Connected to this trend is the use of 'lecture-performance' and 'artistic research', which has currently also gained popularity in an effort to link professional art training with academic research.¹ In other words, in today's art world, learning and teaching are processes considered the central motive and means of art making.

One of the best examples of this tendency is the 14th edition of the international exhibition *documenta*, entitled *Learning from Athens*, which took place from April to September 2017, in Kassel, as usual, but also in Athens. According to its title and that of its art magazine (*South as a State of Mind*), the exhibition itself could have been expected to render what was 'learned' by its protagonists, the international (and certain local) artists and curators from a 'southern' city in 'crisis.' At the exhibition's opening presentation, however, the artistic director Adam Szymczyk stated that "unlearning everything we believe to know is the best beginning," and "the great lesson is that there are no lessons."² I, in my turn, must admit that by proposing the international, collaborative, long-term, art and anthropology research project *Learning from documenta*³ as a critical response to *documenta*'s enterprise, as well as by co-coordinating (with the anthropologist Eleana Yalouri) and participating in it as an anthropologist and an artist, I am still involved in a process of learning more than I ever expected from this exhibition.

The present paper, written one year after the closing event of our program, is still profoundly influenced by this unexpected confrontation with one of the most important institutions of the contemporary art worldwide. At the same time, the very existence of the journal to which the paper has been submitted, entitled *Teaching Anthropology*, seems to indicate that a critical engagement with teaching and learning, in specific sociopolitical contexts, is timely for anthropology as well.

How to always better explicate

"First things first"

I have tried my best to write the present paper in correct English, while I am not a native English speaker. I happen to have been born in Athens and this was a reason to start learning English even before I went to school. I remember that one of my English course books was entitled *First Things First*. Thinking of this title now, I find it rather revelatory. It actually commented on one major precondition of learning for any Greek student even today: the access to 'foreign' languages. In my case, after having graduated from a Greek university, the knowledge of French as a second foreign language permitted me to continue my post-graduate studies in Paris (a 'choice' that I was obliged to make, in a sense, for financial reasons, since it was more expensive for a Greek to study in the UK). The main bibliographical references continued to be in English, however, and sometimes I wonder what would have happened if I had chosen an English-speaking country. Would I have been informed in time about certain new tendencies that could have given another turn to my career? For instance, when I presented the first draft of my PhD thesis to my supervisor, she discarded my 'literary' digressions and my 'artistic' ideas of making a film about my interlocutors' life stories. At exactly the same period, "Writing Culture" (Clifford and Marcus, op.cit.) was already bearing fruit in the US. Meantime, I was strongly advised to rewrite a proper 'scientific' PhD thesis, which I did (without totally abandoning my initial perspective). Soon, I became 'disciplined' enough to learn how to rephrase my 'existential' quest (as a remnant from the less 'disciplined' Greek university) in more specialized language, in order to be able to find, if not answers, at least some erudite comments in the relevant literature. I wasn't ready to accept that this was all one could attain through university education, so I multiplied the post-graduate programs and read all I could, while I was also getting acquainted with French culture—a valuable learning experience, too. Upon successfully completing my studies, I was encouraged by my professors to return to my own country in order to find work in a less competitive environment than the French one (as it seemed back then) and, by the same token, transmit their ideas to my future students. Anyway, reference to any 'original' Greek bibliography in the domains that interested me was scarce, if non-existent, so I was mainly supposed to repeat and expand on what I had learned 'abroad,' while trying to subsist as a university teacher in Greece, under the by then internationally relevant 'publish or perish' imperative. All this comes at a cost; the less well-placed one is, the higher the price to pay. Some perish, indeed.

This brief account might serve as a personal perspective on typical issues a Greek student had to face in starting an academic career several decades ago. Certainly, it is only retrospectively that I can consider my own learning and teaching practice by situating it in a 'glocal' context. The deliberate use of specialized terminology, at this point, is meant to show that I have acquired certain tools by studying social sciences that can 'empower' me, by permitting me to reexamine my own biography in the light of 'power/knowledge' relations, 'post colonialism,'

'global capitalism' and other factors that are still fashioning my choices and expectations, thus making me act (and write) in ways that wouldn't have been possible otherwise. By stating these facts, I am also acknowledging my teachers' contributions to what I have learned, and in learning how to teach; and teaching becomes another form of learning that is passed on, ad infinitum. Does this process ever stop? Culture, language, gender, science, art...all is learned: this is probably the 'first things first' of anthropology. As far as I am concerned, it is true that during all the years of studying and teaching, an incessant questioning has persisted and obliged me to try and study even more, learn better. Is this only due to my personal need to make sense of the knowledge I have acquired and transmitted, conceiving it as a way of rendering life more meaningful, beyond or even against the requirements of a career? Is it simply a reminder of Socrates' maxim, "the only thing I know is that I know nothing?" Recently, I had the opportunity to read Jacques Rancière's book *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* (1991), which made me reconsider this constant need to become more educated, this impression that one remains inadequate and always tries to understand better, explain better. This might not be a personal shortcoming, after all, but the signal of an entrapment in the circle of power of a particular educational system:

...since the era of progress began, these explications have not ceased being perfected in order better to explicate, to make more comprehensible, the better to learn to learn—without any discernible corresponding perfection of the said comprehension. (...) Explication is not necessary to remedy an incapacity to understand. On the contrary, that very incapacity provides the structuring fiction of the explicative conception of the world. (...) Before being the act of the pedagogue, explication is the myth of pedagogy, the parable of a world divided into knowing minds and ignorant ones, ripe minds and immature ones, the capable and the incapable, the intelligent and the stupid. (Rancière, 1991, p.6)

How to make sense (or not)

For twenty years now, I have been teaching anthropology to different audiences, mainly on topics concerning culture and the stereotypes, the body, health and art (but the issues related to teaching art will be presented later on in this paper). My teaching assignments were at departments of anthropology, philosophy, psychology, cultural studies, at undergraduate and post-graduate programs of Greek universities in Athens and other cities and also at post-graduate programs of medical schools and programs of lifelong learning, sometimes with an audience of a certain age, unemployed or retired.

To respond to my students' different needs, I frequently had to design new syllabi, provide easily accessible bibliography, facilitate exams, introduce difficult subjects in simple language, constantly improve my performance as a teacher, always try to explain better. Furthermore, for most of my students, anthropology was totally unknown territory. In each course, we needed to start from scratch and make sure that certain fundamental concepts and methodological tools were on the table, before going into more specialized issues. But how adequately can one answer questions about 'what is' anthropology and 'how does it differ' from, let's say, sociology, and 'why' we need it, without being simplistic and didactic? And how can one present, for instance, the paradigm of social construction of reality, with its pro and cons, and remain convincing without entering into pseudo-philosophical debates on 'the nature of things' and the like?

These were challenges that made me gradually develop a teaching mode that proved effective in most situations, while the curricula varied according to the needs of the respective programs. To put it simply, teaching became a constant effort to demonstrate that theory and practice of anthropology are closely connected and can have an immediate impact on our everyday lives by providing us with a better understanding of the formative influence of culture, history and social relations on our bodies, identities, feelings and ideas, thus enabling us to adopt a more critical political stance. Concretely, it meant that the emphasis was given to the face-to-face relation with the students and our constant dialogue was fed with examples coming from ethnography but also from any possible field of cultural production (works of literature, cinema, music, art or other, which the students chose and presented). Emphasis was also given to practices and research, in that the students were encouraged to engage in projects, individually or in small groups, in order to inquire into diverse subject matters that interested them beforehand or discovered as interesting because of the course (common everyday activities as cleaning or gift-giving, for example). Thus, they were able to acquire a first-hand understanding of what it means to do fieldwork (even in a short and rather simplified version) and how bibliography is a prerequisite for it (for instance, 'classics' such as Mary Douglas' *Purity and Danger* or Mauss's *The Gift* would be amongst the references students would read while doing research on cleaning habits or a gift-giving occasion). The students who opted for this type of assignment were evaluated at the basis of a written text, combined with visual documentation of their research. The others passed oral exams. So, this project-based teaching model (quite unfamiliar to Greek

students because it was non-existent in secondary education at the time) gave importance to practice, dialogue and collaboration, while slightly prioritizing orality.

My teaching experience, addressing different audiences and always introducing the basics, as mentioned above, has taught me that a certain number of issues always come up and prove especially difficult for people to understand, not because of theoretical difficulties but because of deeply rooted preconceptions. It might come as no surprise that these preconceptions concern mostly questions of identity (national, gender, personal identity issues), ideas about progress (the 'primitive', 'otherness', evolution, civilization, technology and the like) and claims about the 'truth' (concerning science, metaphysics, objectivity, hierarchies of knowledge, etc.). It seems as if these issues give access to a nexus of conceptions taken for granted as to 'who I am' and 'in what 'reality' I live.' This is why a social constructionist, comparative, relativist, historicizing, post-colonialist perspective may provoke tenacious resistance. Moreover, these controversial issues seem to be connected to and more clearly expressed via topics related to the 'body,' in theory (anthropological perspectives on embodiment, gender, performativity, the senses, sexuality, health and so on) and in practice, as actual, embodied relations of power inside the classroom. Usually, my main concern was not to rely too much on the authority given to the teacher in a hierarchical educational system, nor take advantage of the mystifying effect of cryptic, erudite language, but rather to undermine all that with my performance. But I have also experienced the risk of the reversal of the situation, during what I have come to consider the most difficult of my teaching assignments, that is, courses at post-graduate programs addressed to medical professionals.

It is possible that certain authoritative ways of teaching medical sciences give the students the impression of having acquired all the 'correct' answers to how bodies function, what is 'healthy' or 'natural' and how the 'other' who 'deviates' from the 'norm' should be treated. In this context, theories about the social construction of the body were easily put aside, while ethnography was discarded as obscurantism, compared to the 'scientific truths' of biology and medicine. There were cases in which I realized that the best one could do to present anthropological knowledge as having some credit was to remind the students that health was a bio-psycho-social phenomenon (a perspective promoted also in medical handbooks) and therefore, anthropology could be useful to add in their medical suitcase. But, in my opinion, this would be avoiding the question of how exactly these hyphens work. In the social reality, there is no 'equality' in this lineup. So, although I could discuss, let's say, critiques of social constructionism, I opted for a complete invalidation of the multi-disciplinary approach, building my argument on the radical importance of 'culture,' followed by a harsh critique of 'Western' medicine as part of the colonial enterprise. Admittedly, this approach also invalidated dialogue; it became pure resistance on my part to a corrosive authoritarian discourse, and in these (rare) occasions, teaching – deliberately – did not make any sense at all.

Certainly, the students' responses are individualized and depend on many factors: their age, background, career choice, political awareness. This has also to do with my addressing a Greek audience (probably less habituated to discussing colonialism, migration or gender issues than students of other European countries), sometimes an older generation (in the case of lifelong learning, for instance) or professionals who are educated in a very different manner and feel that they have acquired social 'prestige' (health professionals, mentioned above). Sometimes, also, age and gender differences with my students (a younger woman teaching older Greek men) undermined the 'authority' of my teaching. On top of these situations, during the last ten years, the period of the so-called 'crisis,' there were important changes in Greek society, and people's attitudes were greatly influenced. This fact was expressed from time to time, inside the classroom, by a resurgence of nationalist ideology and far-right statements about the 'other,' the 'immigrant,' the 'homosexual,' and so on, attitudes that were extremely problematic and needed to be publicly deconstructed. I did so but not without creating tension in the relations between myself as the teacher and the – fortunately small number of – students who promoted these ideas. It was during this period that teaching about the foundations of anthropological thought acquired more of a political and ethical importance in my eyes.

Becoming undisciplined

'Cocktail party'

The course on anthropology and art that I started teaching first briefly at the Department of Anthropology at the Panteion University, and then for more than a decade at the Department of Theory and History of Art of the A.S.F.A. was the first course at a Greek university that clearly linked anthropology to issues of contemporary visual arts.⁴ At that moment and until very recently, when anthropologists thought about art, they didn't seem to

take into consideration the characteristics of today's art world. Furthermore, ethnographies of 'non-Western' or 'traditional' art forms still remained as main topics of the 'anthropology of art,' and were usually considered a branch of visual anthropology or material culture studies. In this sense, there were only a few suggestions in the literature on how to experiment with education on art and anthropology.⁵ From the artists' and art theorists' perspective, an interest in anthropology was eclectic and knowledge about this discipline remained rather lacking. In art education, which is usually practice- and project-based, what one could expect to find was mainly reference to fieldwork, mostly in programs of artistic research. Today, things seem to be rapidly changing. The growing interest in exploring the area between art and anthropology can be traced in the emergence of new educational programs, courses and masters on art and anthropology offered at universities both in Greece and abroad as well as in the rising number of PhD candidates attending anthropology departments.

When I was assigned the aforementioned course, I had just finished a degree in painting from the Visual Arts Department of the A.S.F.A.. Education there was still rather 'traditionally' organized, based on passing the practical knowledge of the Masters on, so during my studies I was rather anxious to find out more about contemporary art. Being a student again (at the same time as being a teacher at other universities) was not so much of a paradox per se as it was embarrassing because of the serious gap I experienced between my newly adopted artistic practices and my theoretical and scientific background—a gap that needed to be somehow bridged. Fortunately, at the same time, it had become quite clear to certain art professors and students at the school that new and informed approaches to theory and history of art, curating, museology, social sciences, and so on were indispensable for today's artists if they were to build careers in the globalized art world. A new department (of Theory and History of Art) was inaugurated, and a course on Anthropology and Art was included. When I got appointed to the position, I had to find the best way to set it up, given that it was offered to students of both departments at the A.S.F.A. and the difference between the artists' and theorists' modes of working, studying and teaching needed to be taken into consideration.

Three main directions proved helpful throughout: giving emphasis to practices, promoting collaborations, and teaching not (only) about art but with it. Thus, the project-based method became the rule, art and theory students collaborated with each other in proposing topics for research (based on the relevant literature and completed through a written text and a public presentation of the process), while learning about fieldwork by doing it expanded in understanding art by practicing it. In other words, the learning-by-research projects developed into art projects in which many contemporary art media were used (video, photography, performance, object making, painting, installations and so on) and frequently the art students expressed their opinions or actively helped their non-artists colleagues to complete the projects.

These directions were partly inspired by the core theoretical references of the course provided by Schneider and Wright's edited collections (mentioned above) where the importance of practices is underlined, but also by a collection of texts – mostly by anthropologists representing the cultural critique turn (Clifford, Marcus, and Myers) and others whose work is of importance in this domain (Morphy, Gell and others) – that I have edited for this purpose (Rikou, 2013), along with Eleana Yalouri's edited volume on material culture studies (including art) (2012) and others of the same sort on specialized issues (the body, gender, politics, etc.), coming from the fields of cultural studies, art theory, and so on.

The projects that were developed on topics chosen by the students throughout those years were numerous and diverse in content, media and techniques used. They can be summarized as follows:

1. Projects in which fieldwork remained the focal point (i.e., observation, documentation and participation in certain situations matter the most) and usually had to do with learning about 'others,' tackling identity issues and creating cartographies of a sort, to better understand social relations and the role of art, mostly in politically important matters during the period of the 'crisis'. At least four examples come easily to mind:

Among the first such projects was a collaboration between an art student and two students from the Anthropology Department of the Panteion University, with me participating in the group as a coordinator and researcher. We did research on the second Athens Biennale exhibition entitled *Heaven* and in particular its program *Heaven Live*, which exhibited public art in an Athenian suburb near the sea. The results included written texts composing the research diary of the group, photographic documentation and an artwork by the art student that represented a map of the important places and moments of the research.

A group of young women from the Theory Department of the A.S.F.A. needed to better understand the social construction of gender affecting their own sexuality, so they proposed a research project based on interviews

with representatives of the trans community, thus gaining a certain visibility and taking a political stance at a specific Athenian night club with drag shows, “Koukles.” Their collectively written essay was accompanied by a sketchbook in which passersby at a metro station expressed in writing and drawing their own conceptions of transsexuality, as well as a photographic essay of portraits of the members of their research group exploring gender stereotypes.

Art student Eva Giannakopoulou was interested in anthropology because she needed more specialized theoretical and methodological tools for her on-going research on minorities, foreign communities and cults in Athens. She proposed a project during which she got involved in a community of Old Calendarists and the outcome was a video documentation of her dressing up as one of them and participating in their demonstration, as well as an installation and performance in which sound, light and rhythm played an important role. Later on, this same student focused on the everyday life of the central Athenian square of Syntagma, where she produced video documentation and performances in situ.

Parallel to this initiative, a group of seven students – two from the Art Department and the others from the Department of Theory and History – did research on several Athenian squares and presented a series of video documentaries, interventions and performances in public spaces. This was a timely research project, partially inspired by the so-called “Movement of the Squares,” a new protest movement also known as the *aganaktismenoi* (the indignant) that emerged during the political upheaval of the ‘Greek crisis’.

2. Projects that relied less on fieldwork (although it did give the initial inspiration) and more on the elaboration of specific art forms, expressing a questioning of a more philosophical or epistemological kind, which, in most cases, also meant to criticize established power/knowledge relations in education and in society more generally. These projects were proposed by art students, who happened to prefer working on their own or occasionally collaborating with a colleague. A brief description of the following four examples may give an idea, but the actual aspect of the artworks themselves when performed or exhibited mattered the most (which is also true for the first category of projects but more so for the latter).

Art students Dimitra Kondylatou and Nikolina Bairaktari started a collaborative research project based on fieldwork, and chose as the topic, or rather, the concept of their work, a questioning of the ‘position’ one needs to adopt in life. Learning, during the course, that objects have biographies (a well-known perspective in material culture studies), they were interested in investigating old chairs as objects ‘materializing’ the act of taking a seat, or ‘positing’ in specific contexts. Their joint venture was rapidly divided into two parts, and each one pursued her own research. Bairaktari chose to comment on her relation, as a student, with her art professor, taking one of his sayings concerning the artist’s position as “cleaning the feet of the spectator.” Employing this as metaphor, she acted it out in her performance, involving her audience in the aforementioned ritual. Kondylatou, on the other hand, was more interested in how bodies are educated and disciplined in society. She presented a photographic essay that pictured chairs and tables of an abandoned school building near her home. In addition, she made an object to perform with, that is, a particular kind of seat she invented that attached to her body and obliged her to conform to certain movements, with a video projection of this performance.

Panos Sklavenitis and Kostis Sotiriou were two art students who decided to collaborate on *How to See the Acropolis Anew* (the title of their project). The inspiration came from the fact that one of them had chosen to live in the neighborhood of the Acropolis. In trying to perceive the materiality of the building per se, they strived to find ways to undermine its extreme power as a symbol of national and international importance, entrapping the thoughts and the senses of those who visit it. They made an archive of kitsch post-cards and other ‘tourist art’ and exposed it as an installation/collage of different objects, photos, notes, sounds, and so on, coming from the site and the surrounding area. Part of the installation was the projection of a video they had made in which they gave this famous monument a nonsense nickname and interviewed tourists and passersby as to their relations to it. Throughout their project that questioned the social construction of national identity and cultural heritage, they consciously adopted an ironic and iconoclastic attitude, using it as a ‘tool’ or rather a ‘weapon’ in order to deconstruct the stereotyped images that prevent someone from simply being near or enjoying the sight of the Acropolis.

At the same time, both Sotiriou and Sklavenitis found that this art and anthropology course gave them the context they needed to develop their own perspectives in art making more fully. Each one of them proposed an individual project that could combine references and comment on paradoxes of the new knowledge they were acquiring. It was their explicit need to converse with a larger audience of anthropologists that made me propose

to them to participate in the anthropology students' conference *Border Crossings*, hosted each year at a different university department around the Balkans. I also discovered that there were more students interested, which led to a large number of art and anthropology student projects being presented in three, in total, *Border Crossings* conferences.⁶

As far as the work of these two art students is concerned, Sotiriou, for his part, constructed and presented on several occasions, during a two-year period, an idiosyncratic account of a journey in space and time, memory and the senses. Driving alone around different areas of the Balkans, visiting towns and villages and meeting their inhabitants, getting lost in deserted areas and camping in the open air, he kept crossing borders of all sorts – physical, historical, national, disciplinary – not completely aware of the rich significance of his activity, and coming back, from time to time, to share the experience of his adventures via a poetic montage of images, sounds, objects, narratives and performances. Therefore, his was amongst the most relevant projects to be presented at a *Border Crossings* conference. His outlook might appear rather cryptic in the eyes of the anthropologists, but it could serve as a reminder (though not an illustration) of Clifford's ideas of ethnography as collage (1988).

Sklavenitis, on the other hand, persistently challenged anthropology as a discipline, as well as my authority as a teacher and my capacities as an artist, but in a manner that was at the antipodes of what I have experienced facing medical professionals (as was mentioned above). As an artist, his questioning was inventive and provoked interesting discussions and novel ideas to experiment upon, along with everyone else participating in the course. It was in this 'trickster' spirit that he proposed to put up a collective performance entitled *What is Man?* at the *Border Crossings* conference at Komotini,⁷ aiming at reversing the hierarchy of the teacher/student, anthropologist (theorist)/artist (doer) relation, as he perceived it.

These and other art students were particularly interested in anthropology and therefore, over the years, during their studies and after their graduation, we have collaborated many times in art research projects in between the academy and social life. Art is known to shape social relationships. Anthropology, on the other hand, is expected to observe those relationships but, through participation, it inevitably shapes them, too. Social relationships are the focal point of both my artistic and anthropological practice. Especially in the framework of the aforementioned collaborative projects that I (co-)ordinate and participate in, I predominantly deal with researching, proposing, and organizing connections and exchanges among people. Thinking about teaching through this prism, I could say that the meetings with the Anthropology and Art students (outside the official university schedule), in which we would further discuss their research and projects – most often sharing food and conversing in a non-hierarchical setting – were not merely educational; I also consider them as an early form of my artistic and research practice as well as a manifestation of boundary transgressions between my roles as a teacher, an anthropologist and an artist. It was through these roles and their transgressions that I became closely involved in all students' projects. And, by helping them clarify their ideas and find new ones, combine references from different fields (and not only from anthropology) and more generally, expand their possibilities in the making, exhibiting, reading and writing about their work, I was also clearly learning from them. Certainly, not all the projects with which the students fulfilled the requirements for this course on art and anthropology evolved around art making of the kind previously mentioned. Many students from the Theory and History Department preferred other types of research, for example, documenting and writing about exhibitions, finding and presenting ethnographies on 'non-Western' art, translating texts or discussing issues of aesthetics, embodiment, gender, the senses, comparing the perspectives of art theory and history with the one of anthropology and so on. But when art making as such came into the picture, things became more complex, and admittedly, more problematic.

This was unknown territory and it seemed to me as full of potential, although I wasn't able to define exactly what kind. The impression probably came from the unexpected combinations of things, feelings and ideas proposed by the artists; links that have become forbidden, unthinkable, due to the obligation to 'specialize,' to delimit and narrow one's perspective more and more in order to be considered a 'credible' scientist and academic. Sometimes, the blurring of boundaries felt like a real threat, probably because it disturbed embodied disciplinary principles. Was I doing my job properly or was I carried away by the joy of childlike creativity? Did I 'discipline' my students enough to make them correctly reproduce what they had been taught? Did I correctly evaluate all this experimentation which evaded standard academic criteria? At the same time, teaching with art was evidently more efficient in making the students 'open their eyes' and experience the transformative impact of supposedly 'abstract' ideas on their daily lives. And I have been 'disciplined' as an artist, too. Boundaries were there to be crossed, and nothing can get in the way of artistic freedom, so I have learned.

Inter-disciplinarity and how to achieve it preoccupied me the most at first (although art couldn't exactly be considered a discipline, and anthropology had some unresolved issues with science as well). So, I prized an epistemological perspective on the relations of art and anthropology on the one hand, and a more "formal" art making that could clearly indicate references to anthropology on the other. Even the fact that there are two categories of projects that I can distinguish retrospectively (see above), the one more 'arty' than the other (i.e., the second one), I think it demonstrates that, still, art didn't 'mingle' enough with anthropology in order to arrive at a new level of integration. Although there was no longer a question of multi-disciplinarity – in the sense of a simple addition of the parts – and the influence of the one field on the other was starting to show, trans-disciplinarity was what I was actually hoping for, that is, a completely new paradigm that could transcend their differences.

Students' projects, as interesting as they might be, and a teaching assignment for a university course, which wasn't even a permanent one, did not create the conditions for a more in-depth search of a potentially new mode of working between art and anthropology. A more long-term engagement was needed, one that could provide the necessary conditions for this. Collaborations were also important and there were certain colleagues, in art and anthropology, who were interested in similar subject matters and it so happened that most of them were working on sound at that moment. Meanwhile, the full force of the 'crisis' had an impact on everyone's life in Greece. People were losing their capacity to subsist and the voice to claim this right. It was happening inside the university as well. Job insecurity is a fearful experience, in the midst of a collapsing economy, and some of us had to live through it. "Voices" (Fonès), a collective art/anthropology research project was created under these conditions. As the initiator and coordinator of this project, which lasted almost four years and resulted in the publication of an edited volume (Panopoulos and Rikou, 2016), I also invited art students to participate. Horizontally organized, this coming together gave the opportunity to teachers and students to address one another on equal terms and to form new knowledge-producing relations with each other.

'Cocktail party' (used as the sub-title of this section) refers to a participatory action that took place during the presentation of the project *Fonès* at the Embros Theater in the spring of 2012. A text using this term, written by Nikos Bubaris, a member of the project, inspired artist Panos Sklavenitis to initiate the event, which was realized with my collaboration, since I had worked on similar issues as an artist in this project.⁸ There were many invited guests to the 'party,' theorists and artists, but also friends and the audience of the Embros Theater. I always refer to this event in my memory as a celebration of creativity, a corollary moment, open to all possibilities, where the combination of art and science, theory and practice, text, image, sound and performance brought people together, regardless of age, career and status differences, in search of new ways to relate to each other and act politically.

Falling from grace

Alfred Gell, an anthropologist well-known for his contribution to the study of art, preferred "philistinism" to the unconditional appreciation or 'belief' in art as a substitute for religion (Gell, 2006). It is difficult to keep one's distance, however, when one is equally involved in both domains. In any case, systematically privileging the artist's point of view because it seems more 'creative' or 'liberating' can deprive someone from a much needed, grounded critical stance on the role of art education and more generally the art institutions, the curators, the collectors and so on in defining what 'art' means in specific social contexts. Nowadays that artists become more and more involved in research and the academy, one may also wonder if this involvement does not only indicate connections between art and anthropology as I have approached them both up to now, as forms of doing and knowing with political importance (as they permit an uprooting of the stereotypes), but also as institutions that contribute, in their way, to a global economy and established relations of power and knowledge worldwide.

After the 'party,' disenchantment may follow. A systematic, long-term involvement in the space 'in between' art and anthropology may lead to gradually realizing the weight of the aforementioned nexus of institutionalized relations on one's own practices and ideas. This was the case as I was doing research and proposing interventions in the context of collaborative projects, not only within the university, but also in the Athenian art scene and social life, such as *Value*, an interdisciplinary workshop organized during the fourth Athens Biennale *Agora*, resulting in an edited volume (Yalouri, Lampropoulos and Rikou, 2018), TWIXTlab, a project space in an Athenian neighborhood, or *Learning from documenta* (mentioned in the introduction, see also Rikou and Yalouri, 2017). These complex issues that cannot be dealt with in the present paper are mentioned because they also have to do with teaching and learning. Not only do university students of art or of anthropology continue to be

invited to participate in these projects, but also education as such becomes a means of doing art and politics more systematically (particularly via the project TWIXTlab).⁹ In all these cases, where the context is not clearly academic and promotes horizontal relations, the ‘teacher’s’ ethical responsibility becomes even greater, about what is ‘taught,’ to whom and why.

During this long-term involvement in practices of the ‘in between’ of these fields, one can also attest to the differences that remain in the ways of doing and thinking when it comes to artists and anthropologists, and the conflicts that might result in the long run. This aspect needs to become more prominent in the relative literature but also in education. One example might be the different ways ‘research’ is conceived. In the case of anthropology or all other disciplines, research is more clearly organized, with specific hypotheses, methodology, techniques and so on, thus producing results that can be evaluated by peers. In artist research, on the other hand, all is permitted and nothing can be evaluated, at least as far as knowledge production is concerned. Another example might have to do with ethics. Anthropologists tend to follow certain rules of conduct with their informants or the community hosting them, as well as the use of images, recordings and information. Artists do not feel obliged by rules – although ethics are very important in their practice, too – and sometimes going against the socially acceptable code of conduct may be the aim of their work. A third difference concerns the activist role or a specific political agenda most anthropologists would refrain from adopting, due to ideals of scientific ‘objectivity,’ in order to facilitate fieldwork or for other related reasons. Due to the persistent reference of contemporary art to politics, artists, on the contrary, are almost obliged to maintain an activist profile and, often, the more extreme their political beliefs, the better for their work. Other differences, however, such as the characteristic long-term implication of the anthropologist in fieldwork compared to the usual short-term artistic one, tend to disappear, due to the need not only of anthropologists and artists, but of most professionals, to adapt to rapidly changing environments and the flow of information, precarious working conditions and other factors that privilege constant movement and brief in situ interventions.

Evidently, all these are not ‘fixed’ attributes, but are linked to the changing requirements of a career and certainly influence education in each field. Teaching students to take risks of an intellectual or a professional kind at ‘in between’ spaces creates even more responsibilities for the teacher who needs to fully render the social context and not refrain from presenting the specificities of each activity, given its history and contemporary practices, while proposing the search for a new paradigm. But in so doing, can the ‘transdisciplinary’ perspective be viable? Is it even desirable? What if all efforts to produce a ‘merge’ of anthropology with art are condemned to failure as long as ‘discipline’ continues to be valued as such? This question has been addressed to me more than once by artists, former students and later on collaborators, when I asked them to evaluate the outcome of various projects I have invited them to participate in.

“Becoming undisciplined” is what anthropologist Nicholas Thomas suggests as a way out of the impasse concerning the relations of anthropology with cultural studies. Thomas opts for a more ‘hesitant’ approach to the characterization of disciplines and a reluctance to “trade in reifications,” as he puts it (Thomas, 1999). Reevaluating ‘uncertainty’ and ‘ambiguity’ as concepts to work with in (social) sciences is also suggested by the long-term collaborator in research between art and anthropology, Eleana Yalouri (who refers also to Chris Wright, see Yalouri, 2018). Her point on the fact that being uncertain and ambiguous could also be “a way of reproducing rather than destabilizing or subverting dominant forms of knowledge and stereotypes” (Yalouri, op.cit.) finds me more in agreement however. This approach resonates better, for instance, with the introduction of the notion of ‘un-learning’ in the vocabulary of *documenta 14*, in order to redefine the intentions and outcome of its *Learning from Athens* edition. On the other hand, the prefix “un” posits the necessity of a form of resistance and in some cases – such as in the *Becoming Undisciplined* title of a zine edited by the University of California Feminist Studies graduate students referring to a collaborative project on what it means to be Black in the academy – demonstrates a kind of “‘situated responsibility,’ self-reflexivity and consideration of ethics” that Yalouri talks also about (op.cit.), an attitude all the more inspiring when it comes from students.

Concluding remarks

If we admit that anthropological knowledge is by definition critical and disturbs stereotypes, then we acknowledge that it cannot be ‘neutral’ from a political perspective. Teaching anthropology, especially if we don’t preach to the converted, can be used as a tool, and a rather effective one – legalized as it is by the academic character of this discipline – to destabilize established power relations.

Teaching anthropology to artists –while being one of them, too –may also lead to picking up the challenge of trans-disciplinarity, only to surpass it in search of an ‘undisciplined’ creativity: practically, constantly, and without particular respect to disciplinary canons, trying to find new ways to connect education with research and activism, anthropology with art and politics, in order to act collectively and to intervene critically in specific social situations.

Learning and teaching as such have been considered an artistic and political act by the artists themselves. In anthropology, there is ample fieldwork-based research and theory with political overtones, as well as an expanding activism on many issues, but maybe less elaborate thinking on this particular activity and the academic life in general. Job insecurity, increasing competition and the difficulties of studying in this context have already started to concern the less well-established in this environment¹⁰ and push in this direction. But is teaching and learning anthropology inside the academy enough to lead to self-reflexivity concerning the very relations of power/knowledge that have constituted and maintain anthropology as an academic discipline in today’s global capitalism? The relations of anthropology to art may open up new perspectives on this issue.

The conjuncture of writing a text on and for *Teaching Anthropology* after a long-term involvement in a project centred on ‘learning’ (from *documenta*, which was at the same time *Learning from Athens*) made me want to consider what ‘situated responsibility’ might mean. In this sense, I thought it best to re-centre my argument around a more general issue, rather than circumscribe it in questions of pedagogy in the lecture hall. Thus, what this paper is ultimately about is a re-evaluation of my own practice as a teacher, a researcher, an artist and – last but not least – a woman, working in precarious conditions, in a specific context, before and during the so called ‘crisis’ in Greece, as part of a collective, critical, knowledge-cum-culture producing activity with political implications.

Notes

¹ Since ‘educational turn’, ‘lecture performance’ and ‘artistic research’ are not discussed in length in this paper, for just a documentation of the educational turn see Allen (2011) and for an introduction on artistic research, Hannula, Suoranta and Vadén (2005).

² This citation comes from an interview of Adam Szymczyk (<https://news.artnet.com/art-world/adam-szymczyk-press-conference-documenta-14-916991>). The concept of ‘unlearning’ is a reference to the work of post-colonial theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1994).

³ *Learning from Documenta* is a research project aiming at critically observing and discussing aspects of *documenta*’s presence in Athens with reference to other artistic, economic and sociopolitical developments in Greece and internationally. For more information, see <http://learningfromdocumenta.org/>.

⁴ Prior to this course, there was another on Anthropology of Art at the Fine Arts University Department at Ioannina, taught by Prof. Dermentzopoulos, which focuses on more general issues of art as an anthropological and sociological phenomenon in relation to popular culture. A very similar perspective to the course at the A.S.F.A. is adopted by anthropologist and archaeologist Eleana Yalouri at the Anthropology Department of the Panteion University.

⁵ One may find inspiration from Tim Ingold’s ideas (2013) as does Eleana Yalouri, who has also initiated experimental modes of teaching art and anthropology.

⁶ For the Border Crossings Network, see <https://www.border-crossings.eu/student-conferences/>.

⁷ This performance was presented as a blog entry at the *Teaching Anthropology* blog <https://www.teachinganthropology.org/2018/12/02/what-is-man-art-challenging-anthropology/>.

⁸ The three projects related to the ‘Cocktail Party’, ‘Sklavenitis’, ‘Bubaris’ and my own are described in the edited volume *Φωπές/Fonés* (Panopoulos and Rikou, 2016).

⁹ TWIXTlab is a project space and a long-term project situated ‘between and betwixt’ contemporary art, anthropology and social reality. It was founded in 2014 by the author and partners and adopts the form of a laboratory in order to propose or to support interventions in everyday life. TWIXTlab’s activities (art and research projects, seminars, workshops, screenings, presentations, discussions etc.) address anyone wishing to participate without any prerequisites on background knowledge of contemporary art and/or anthropology (see <http://twixtlab.com/>).

¹⁰ For instance, Precanthro, founded in 2016, is “a space to organize collectively toward a transnational anthropological union before neoliberal changes make professional solidarity impossible” <https://tinyurl.com/y7ljfek>.

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