

Practicing Anthropology in Greece: Knowledge, Skills and Rights in the Labour Market

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Abstract

In this paper we explore which kind of knowledge and skills developed by anthropology students through higher education are applied in the Greek labour market and how they are received by different professional sectors, such as central and local administration, private companies or NGOs. We also examine how professional rights of social anthropologists are being established, creating academic qualifications, lobbies and competitive relations among anthropology and other relevant disciplines. Furthermore, we illustrate the birth and establishment of practicing anthropology in Greece as it is being practiced in civil society institutions, local and international governmental and non-governmental organizations, especially since a proportionally big number of anthropologists are being employed in this field due to the recent European refugee crisis and the state of emergency that it brought to Greece and Europe. Through our analysis we wish to show that during the last three decades anthropology is gradually becoming socially and politically relevant in Greece. This process has started with the integration of the country in the core of European Union institutions and through the coexistence with diverse populations of migrant origins. The popularity of anthropology has been accelerated by the economic and refugee crisis of the last decade that multiplied the numbers of anthropologists working in the humanitarian sector. The discipline seems thus to come of age, with academic teaching and practicing anthropology being increasingly intertwined.

Keywords: practicing anthropology, higher education, European refugee crisis, anthropological skills, labour market, Greece.

Introduction

During the last two decades numerous scholars (Agelopoulos 2013; Gefou-Madianou 1993, 2000; Papataxiarchis 2005, 2013) have explained the reasons for the long and delayed institutionalization of Greek anthropology, and have analysed the difficulties anthropology has been facing to connect to both society and the state (Angelidou 2018; Dalkavoukis & als 2010). However, there are not many publications focusing on the applications of anthropological knowledge outside academia even if practicing anthropology is fast-growing. This paper is thus an attempt to fill this gap by exploring the relationship between anthropology and the labour market as well as the specificities of practicing anthropology in Greece today.

Departing from the analytical notion of 'skills' we investigate the relationship between academic teaching and the labour market. We do not conceive and use this term as a fixed and preconceived category but as a flexible one, the social and cultural context of which we seek to unravel. In this sense, we discuss the type of knowledge and skills students are acquiring during their studies, and how these knowledge and skills are being transferred in the workplace in different professional sectors, such as central and local administration, private companies or NGOs. We also examine how professional rights of social anthropologists are being established creating academic qualifications, lobbies and competitive relations among anthropology and other relevant disciplines. We then illustrate the birth and establishment of practicing anthropology in Greece as it is being practiced in civil society institutions, cooperative enterprises, local and international governmental and non-governmental organizations, especially since a proportionally big number of anthropologists are being employed in this field due to the recent economic and European refugee crisis and the state of emergency that it brought to Greece and Europe. Through our analysis we discuss that during the last three decades anthropology is gradually becoming socially and politically relevant in Greece. This process has started with the integration of the country in the core of European Union institutions and through the coexistence with diverse populations of migrant

origins. The popularity of anthropology has been accelerated by the economic and refugee crisis of the last decade that multiplied the numbers of anthropologists working in the humanitarian sector. The discipline seems thus to come of age with academic teaching and practicing anthropology being increasingly intertwined.

Our analysis is based on our long-lasting implication as founding and/or board members as well as active participants in the Social Anthropology Alumni Society – Panteion University (SAASPU). It is also based on our first-hand experience as anthropology students, researchers and academics in Greek tertiary education, and on our experience in working in the NGO sector or participating in social enterprise activities. We draw on material based on two seminar series organized by SAASPU in collaboration with the Department of Social Anthropology at Panteion University in 2014 and 2016, regarding the professional trajectories, rights and prospects of anthropology alumni in the Greek labour market¹. In addition, our material comes from the analysis of the curricula of the anthropology departments. Finally, between October 2018 and March 2019 we conducted interviews with alumni employed in different professional sectors and with Human Resource Officers from six of the most well-known NGOs in Greece where numerous social anthropologists are actually employed.

Academic Teaching and Professional Qualification

Professional orientations in anthropology education

Career opportunities and prospects for students graduating from anthropology departments have been vague for many years (see also Bakalaki 2006: 270; Dalkavoukis 2010: 24; Panopoulos 2004: 197, 200). This is partly because of the long-standing orientation of Greek higher education in general, and of social sciences in particular, in theory and the lack of applied courses in most university curricula. The three departments that deliver undergraduate, MA and PhD degrees in anthropology make no exception to this rule². BAs and the majority of MAs in Anthropology offer broad-spectrum studies covering wide-ranging anthropological topics, methodologies and theoretical views, but few career-oriented matters. Moreover, none of these three university departments offers distinct courses in business, public or applied anthropology, although dispersed lectures on such topics are occasionally given by various teachers. At the BA level, internships are applied in all anthropology departments giving the opportunity to students to have hands-on experience in the labour market. In a few cases, such internships have led to a job position. However, they are not obligatory, last only a few months and often students have to attend lectures at the same time. One should also mention that, until recently, praxis-based work or applied anthropology has been seldom applied by university-based anthropologists in Greece. However, since the outbreak of the European refugee crisis in 2016, students become exposed to more practical paradigms from faculty members on how anthropology can be applied outside the university environment and get more opportunities to work in projects related to refugees and coordinated by the universities.

Moreover, in the past few years, gender studies in Greece have become very popular and have attracted many students. Today, two MA programs offer specialization in gender studies and equip students with transferable skills which are attractive to employers in a wide range of occupation areas³. Again, the humanitarian sector is the largest employer. Numerous students graduating from these two programs are currently employed in institutions and organizations providing services to vulnerable female groups with refugee and migrant background. At the same time, the reception of anthropology among practitioners from other disciplines becomes wider. Especially practitioners working in the domains of education, social work and health, that are in daily contact with immigrants and refugees, are increasingly eager to pursue MA studies in anthropology. However, anthropology departments have not yet seized this moment to develop or provide needed specialization through their programs, whilst other departments have devised postgraduate programs producing specialized knowledge needed and required by the job market that transforms due to the refugee and economic crisis⁴.

Skills' acquisition through higher education

It has been generally acknowledged that the main skills that anthropology students gain through their education are research and communication skills and skills that enable them to understand cultural differences. According to the American Anthropological Association:

Anthropological training concentrates on three broadly transferable skill areas: understanding human diversity, building research skills for collecting and making sense of information, and communicating effectively⁵.

Ferraro and Andreatta believe that while studying anthropology a number of skills and capacities can be attained that 'are considered essential for effective living and working in the twenty-first century' (2011: 21). These include communication, creativity, critical thinking, flexibility, adaptability, problem solving, and cross-cultural skills (Brandt 2010). In some way, these skills are cultivated by the three anthropology departments in Greece. While they vary in terms of their curricula and overall theoretical and epistemological orientations (Bakalaki 1993 2006; Gefou-Madianou 2000: 264; Panopoulos 2002: 198–200; Papataxiarchis 1999: 233–241) it appears that there is a consensus about the skills students need to develop during their undergraduate studies. 'Oral and written communication', 'analytical, synthetic and critical thinking', 'qualitative research skills', 'comparative and cross-cultural understanding' and 'ability to diagnose and solve problems', are among the core values stressed in all three curriculums of the anthropology departments.

Critical thinking is considered essential, as conceptual knowledge of anthropology - historical trends, theoretical perspectives, major concepts - is inextricably linked to it⁶. Moreover, challenging common places and learning to take a distance from one's point of view are particularly facilitated by anthropology curricula. Furthermore, acquaintance with human diversity and the understanding of behaviours, values and beliefs of others, whether they live inside or outside the borders⁷, are skills that anthropology students attain through their various ethnographic readings and discussions during their courses. By trying to understand other cultures from within, students open up to new ways of thinking which are vital to ever changing environments. This makes them learn to accept different points of view and perspectives. Also, to cope with differences and contradictions for the sake of achieving common grounds of collaboration and understanding (Ferraro and Andreatta 2011: 21). In the same vein, some of the Greek students grasp the opportunity, offered by many universities, to learn non-western European languages.

The biggest challenge in Greek undergraduate education is the large number of students⁸. This often hinders teachers to develop oral and written skills. Anthropology classes are lecture-based, giving opportunities to few students to get involved in the learning procedure, and making most of them merely receivers of information. This situation seems to impede the goals of the anthropology curriculum to develop written and oral communication skills of all students. As Angelidou notes, 'passive ways of teaching predominate where students do not have active participation' (2018: 15). In addition, written end-of-term paper exams are the main means of assessment, making student put in little effort during the term and memorizing just a few days before their written exams with primary objective to get a pass grade⁹. Despite these difficulties that characterize Greek academia more generally, students are often given the opportunity in the classroom to analyze data, synthesize their ideas, formulate arguments, debate, make oral presentations and/or submit research-based essays. The most engaged students are often given the opportunity to present their research in student conferences or simply raise their opinion in seminars, public talks or conferences, and thus in such a way they take the opportunity to develop their written and oral communication skills.

Throughout their education students become acquainted with the use of technology and they have growing opportunities to engage with visual material, electronic research tools and research methods¹⁰. However, hands-on and practical training-orientated courses - involving conducting interviews, doing field research, keeping field notes, designing or implementing surveys, running a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) - are considerably far lesser than conceptual and theoretical courses. Furthermore, in many courses, ethnography, both as research process and as a written or visual product, is more about reading rather than doing, absorbing rather than producing, and understanding rather than experiencing¹¹. These trends have been though somewhat reversed by a handful number of anthropologists who promote ethnographic research in undergraduate anthropology courses and believe that doing ethnography constitutes a practical and experiential learning and a method of understanding better societal problems (Dalkavoukis, Manos and Veikou 2010). Such endeavours, although still fragmentary, become gradually more wide-spread and systematic practices. For example, numerous undergraduate and postgraduate Summer Schools are organized every year, where more experimental modes of writing, filming and/or field research are proposed¹².

One could say thus, that despite the structural difficulties of the Greek educational system the study of anthropology prepares students to attain the skills needed for living and working in the complex globalized world of the 21st century. Anthropology programs in Greek universities teach fairly complex skills giving opportunities both in and outside the classroom to practice them and prepare students for independent inquiry. This is especially true for the students who are really engaged with the discipline and attempt to either pursue postgraduate studies or to use their undergraduate degree in their professional career.

Graduates' perceptions on the competencies acquired in higher education

Due to the large number of graduates from anthropology departments and the big unemployment rate in Greece, the majority of anthropology students cannot find a job related to their field of studies. Nevertheless, we see a tendency today whereby a gradually bigger number of anthropology graduates are employed among many types of organizations, such as non-profit, government, research institutions, small or medium businesses, cultural centers, museums, education and hospitals. These are mostly graduates who were engaged in their studies, who are aware of what anthropological knowledge can offer in the labour market and are eager to search for jobs where they can put in practice the skills they have acquired at the university. These graduates also search to remain in contact with other alumni and the anthropology departments in order to promote the visibility of anthropology in the labour market and collectively claim professional rights for the discipline.

No matter the sector they are working, most graduates acknowledge certain skills they possess and recognize their value in the labour market, such as analytical thinking, research skills, cultural competency, interpersonal skills and self-reflexivity. Although they recognize that many of these qualifications are nurtured in higher education generally, they believe that anthropology combines them in a particular way and provides a general mode of thinking and acting that can be applied in various professional domains. As they often admit, what they gain throughout their education is flexibility and openness that make them critical of ethnocentric ideas, more comprehensive and ready to adapt to different cultural environments. With the cross-cultural, comparative and self-reflexive perspective they develop during their studies, they also feel well armed to face the 'glocal' and increasingly multicultural world in which they live¹³.

Sophia, a 42 years-old accounting assistant working in a small accounting office, stresses the importance of understanding the context in which the business operates and the socio-cultural background of her clients and colleagues:

Anthropology gives me a better understanding of human and work relations. I better comprehend my working environment because I observe it in a wider context and understand the social and economic conditions in which it operates. Anthropology has also helped me to manage our clientele from other cultures: I am communicating with them better as I try to understand both their socio-cultural context and their business culture.

And Christina a 35 years-old anthropology graduate, now training in psychotherapy observes:

The values I gained through anthropology are acceptance and understanding ... anthropology has made me more open, willing to grasp the different points of view of my patients. Understanding my own cultural context, I understand the cultural context of my patients and their frame of reference. This makes me empathize (*synaisthanomai*) with them.

Roxana, an anthropologist working as cultural mediator/translator for the last several years in various NGO's says that anthropology has taught her 'not to take things for granted'. According to her:

As Iranian working with Iranian refugees, I am a cultural insider but at the same time, as an anthropologist, I question my knowledge all the time in order to better help the people we are serving. Often I even question my own understanding of my culture of origin. For example, I came to realize that the Farsi word *tajavoz* that literally means 'rape' is being used by Afghans to denote a simple sexual act.

Petros, an administrator in the NGO sector, stresses a variety set of skills gained during his tertiary education which he applies in the workplace:

I am able to design questionnaires, to take interviews, to give presentations, to write project proposals and donors' reports, to design cultural orientation and training material for newly recruited staff... In the workplace I realized I have analytical skills that helped me identify security gaps in the field, sooner than my managers.

However, what an anthropologist has to offer as a practitioner is still conjectural and fragmented in terms of how it has been conveyed to other stakeholders, with university departments taking minor initiatives in this direction. Most anthropology graduates admit that they found their job by their own efforts and that their ability to articulate to a potential employer how their particular competencies can be applied in the workplace has been more important for their recruitment than their resume or CV. Promoting anthropology as a profession and

oneself as a practitioner is thus a recent venture in Greece¹⁴ and seems to require more systematic and collective actions to take place.

In this direction, the first organizations promoting anthropology as a profession were two alumni societies existing in Greece, each belonging to a different department: the Social Anthropology Alumni Society – Panteion University (SAASPU) and the Alumni Society of the Department of History, Archaeology and Social Anthropology (University of Thessaly). Their main goal has been the creation of a community of anthropology graduates and the dissemination of information regarding professional rights and job opportunities. However, the idea for the creation of a single professional and scientific association has been maturing for a long time. Finally, in November 2020 a professional association was founded, the Association of Social Anthropologists Greece (ASAG) that aspires to put together all individual and institutional forces of anthropologists in Greece and abroad. The main goal of this new association is the dissemination and promotion of the discipline of anthropology, the assertion of the professional rights of social anthropologists and the public and active participation and intervention with a focus on promoting respect for otherness, raising social awareness and defending democracy freedoms.

Anthropology and the Labour Market, a Relationship to Grow

In the past, the public sector used to be considered the most attractive professional path for graduates, with the state developing since the 1980s a wide range of social services and giving opportunities to social scientists to get a job related to their degrees. However, the economic and refugee crisis has reshaped job opportunities and career paths. Austerity measures have importantly diminished social services and the number of social servants. As a result, during the last decade, the public sector employment decreased in size in favour of the private sector and, mainly, the non-governmental organizations. Regarding the private sector, anthropologists work mostly in private cultural institutions and in the solidarity economy or in general administrative posts. As Greek economy relies much on services and few big industries exist, there are very few opportunities for anthropology graduates to get employment in the business sector, in contrast to what happens in other European countries or the US that dispose of a much more robust industry employing business or design anthropologists (Jordan 2012). In all cases, nowadays the non-governmental organizations working with refugees are by far the biggest employer for anthropology graduates.

The state as employer

In Greece, professional accreditation and recognition of professional rights in the public sector are regulated by the state. Therefore, professional accreditation and the basic recruitment criterion for all graduates are based on the curriculum of each department. However, the three anthropology departments have different curriculums, and thus different professional rights¹⁵. This makes difficult a common pursuit of professional recognition for anthropologists graduating from all three departments. Additionally, anthropologists don't dispose of any practitioners' certification that describes their skills and possible domains of employment as do psychologists, social workers, lawyers and other professions. This situation has negative aftereffects for the recognition of anthropologists as legitimate practitioners in areas such as 'social services' or 'cultural management', where they compete with other university graduates with better established professional rights. Social workers for example have better accredited professional rights, which is largely related to their powerful long-standing and sizable professional associations, as well as lobbying strategies within the state administration.

The Greek public sector, the major employer of graduates for many decades, plays a decisive role in sustaining imbalances and conflicts among professional categories through the accreditation (or not) of their professional rights and their access to public job applications. There has rarely been specific job description for anthropologists at central and local government job announcements and sometimes anthropology degrees fail to be included in such public announcements. Furthermore, organizational charts of the ministries and other public services often lack the field of anthropology. This is because most institutions involved in the recruiting process ignore the discipline and what it can offer, while privileging other disciplines that are better established both in the Greek academia and the job market, such as psychology, social work or sociology.

An example of such exclusions happened in October 2017, when a job announcement for a large vacancy of 221 Advisors for Unemployed Workers did not include graduates from the MA in Social and Cultural Anthropology. This was brought to our attention by a graduate student who sent a bitter letter to SAASPU. According to her:

(...) the postgraduate program of Social Anthropology includes lessons such as Anthropology of Migration or Medical Anthropology in which social exclusion is being studied. Also, lessons such as Political or Economic Anthropology can make a significant contribution to understanding phenomena such as social exclusion or unemployment. [...] On the basis of the above, I consider that the exclusion of the Department of Social Anthropology constitutes an unfair decision that leads to unequal treatment of social scientists depending on the department they graduate from.

Other anthropologists working for the government complain that they work in positions inappropriate to their qualification:

It is very disappointing to have a social service in our municipality and instead of working there to be placed in the accounting sector!

explains Dora, a 47-years old alumni. The placement of social scientists to non-appropriate jobs is a general phenomenon in Greece in the last several decades (Glytsos 1990). According to Labrianidis, a characteristic feature of the Greek labour market is its failure to absorb educated and highly skilled workforce: 'the country's development is based today on a model which does not promote the production of high value-added products and services and, thus, it does not also allow the utilization of highly skilled labour force' (2013: 15). This often forces graduates to migrate, provoking an important brain drain, or to remain in Greece and take jobs unrelated to their field of studies in both the public and the private domain.

Moreover, when anthropologists occupy a position more appropriate to their qualification, their conduct, as for example the tolerance and openness towards migrants, is often judged negatively by their colleagues. Lina, a 33-years old employee in the Ministry of Agriculture, with a PhD in anthropology, working in a position offering services to migrants, narrates:

My colleagues are looking at me strangely because I smile and I am polite with the migrants that I serve, they do not understand why I do that.

Furthermore, there are not many anthropologists in decision making posts and social policy planning. This seems to be slowly changing in the last few years as anthropologists are more frequently solicited for their expertise in several domains. In 2013, for example, the Greek Asylum Service in the context of a large restructuring, decided to employ civilian personnel, consisting of lawyers, anthropologists and sociologists, in issuing decisions for asylum claims. Five years later, though, the Ministry of Migration Policy changed the synthesis of the committees and replaced anthropologists, sociologists and lawyers with juries, in order to reassure the implementation of the EU-Turkey deal for the management of the refugee issue. However, anthropologists continued offering their services to the Greek Asylum Service as they were recognized as more appropriate to clarify specific socio-cultural aspects concerning asylum claims, such as religious or ethnic group participation that are crucial in the recognition of the refugee status. Anthropologists were recently included in other national institutions such as the Naturalization Committees of the Ministry of Interior examining migrants' applications for the Greek citizenship or in the National Commission for Human Rights, an independent consulting institution of the Greek state.

Thus, although the public sector has been the main employer for anthropologists during the last three decades, different state and local government institutions still know little about the discipline and the professional skills of its practitioners. This knowledge is rather fragmentary and relies mainly on the conjectural familiarity of some state employees about anthropology and on their initiatives to include it in the job applications or in the organizational charts. As we will show further, this lack of recognition is much less apparent in civil society and in the humanitarian sector.

The European refugee crisis and new career paths in the humanitarian sector

Due to the lack of a colonial past in Greece, anthropologists do not have many opportunities, or even the willingness, to make a career in NGOs outside the country. On the contrary, they have growing opportunities to be involved in the numerous NGOs that arrived in Greece after the massive influx of refugees. During the first years of the economic crisis, growing unemployment has forced many university graduates to accept lower wages and work in non-related jobs. Notwithstanding, these trends were reversed some years later with the mass arrival of refugees in Greece in 2015 and onwards, and the outcome of the European refugee crisis that gave opportunities to many social sciences to work in the humanitarian sector with relatively well-paid salaries¹⁶.

Local humanitarian organizations expanded their projects and staff with thousands of job calls¹⁷. New local humanitarian organizations emerged and many foreign and international organizations came from European countries and the United States of America. While other stakeholders, providing also humanitarian help to refugees and migrants¹⁸, such as governmental organizations¹⁹, development agencies, philanthropy and religious organizations (Catholic, Islamic, Orthodox and Protestant) also became important players and employers. Thus, the humanitarian field, that has access to important resources²⁰ could offer thousands job positions, in order to address further humanitarian needs, including shelter, primary health care, psycho-social support, improved hygiene conditions and education, and since 2017 integration of refugees in Greece. Most of these job positions have been taken by social scientists, such as social workers, psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists and educators.

Generally, there are various career paths in an NGO that require a different set of skills, capacity and expertise. Koons (2013: 143) is among those practicing anthropologists working in the humanitarian sector who believes that

Anthropologists are versatile and adaptable. Therefore, they are able to learn, as I have, a number of additional (or revised) skills for the NGO environment.

According to him such a range of skills and capacities include: technical skills (such as program evaluation design and analysis), speed, multidisciplinary teamwork, precision, responsiveness, compliance, management, marketing, public relations, representation, diplomacy and negotiation as well as stress control.

We interviewed six Human Resource Officers from the most well-known NGOs in Greece in order to understand what skills and competences they are looking for. All of them mentioned intercultural communication, analysing, adapting and responding to change, coping with pressure and the competency to work with other people and relating with them. Generally, NGO's never advertise specifically for anthropologists but use the general category of social scientists. According to Yannis, a 43 years-old HR Officer:

We search for candidates with excellent organizational and time management skills, who can work effectively in high-pressure, and in rapidly changing environments, as the everyday routine and the needs of the refugees change very quickly.

Yannis also mentioned personal traits needed for these posts such as taking initiatives and keeping emotions under control during difficult situations (domestic violence, riots or security events). According to another HR officer, the skills that anthropologists lack are similar to the graduates of other Greek social sciences departments: 'the ability to think creatively, innovatively on a business, economic and funding scale'²¹. Nonetheless, HR officers seem to recognize several characteristic attributes common among anthropologists. Antonis, a recruitment officer says:

Most of the anthropologists that I have recruited have the ability to work effectively and harmoniously with colleagues from different ethnic and social backgrounds and can deal with internal conflicts in a multicultural team, such as cultural disagreements among interpreters and social scientists.

The skills and core values that NGO's are looking for in candidates differ depending on the position. The ones that 'make a difference' as stated by the HR officers, are gender sensitivity, respect towards cultural and religious differences, accepting new ideas and adapting to changing circumstances, as well as ability to work effectively with people from different backgrounds. All these skills are traits that anthropologists admittedly attain through their studies. According to Ferraro and Andreatta (2011: 21) there is no better discipline than anthropology that equips its graduates with cultural awareness and cross-cultural teamwork skills. Similarly, Nolan (2017: 37) mentions that anthropologists as practitioners tend to be more attentive to multiple viewpoints of members who think and act differently. And for them it is important to reconcile these worldviews and integrate into solutions that are good for everyone involved.

Perhaps the most important trait of practicing anthropologists is the obvious statement that they work in the field on a full-time basis. Of course, as Holmes and Marcus (2005) note, anthropologists are not any more the only ones who work in the field, do participant observation or use ethnographic research. In Greece this is also the case for other specialists, such as psychologists, who use 'qualitative research methods' in their work in the humanitarian sector. However, anthropologists do so in a way that other disciplines usually lack: they attempt to

acquire experiential understanding of how things work in the particular setting. Most often they accomplish this by 'deep hanging out' (Geertz 1998), that is by immersing oneself in the lives of the informants and building trust and rapport with them (Howell 2017). Additionally, as Nolan pinpoints, practicing anthropologists put anthropology in practice to bring changes and improvements, taking responsibilities for the impact of their actions (2017: 37, 38). And they do not use ethnography simply as a field method, but as a way to develop self-reflexivity, critical views on the hierarchies established in the field and an ethnographic sensibility defined as 'an attunement to worlds shared via participant-observation' (McGranahan 2018: 7).

Anthropologists in Greece seem also to be more open in acquiring language skills (especially Farsi, Arabic, French, Turkish, Kurdish, Pashtu), considered also a very good asset when working with migrants or refugees. It has been more than a century that our discipline has shown that the Other can be better understood through their native language. Similarly, in the humanitarian field, anthropologists have realized that communication with refugees is better achieved in their languages rather through the hegemonic languages of the hosting country²².

With regards to recruitment practices in the humanitarian sector, SAASPU members narrate different experiences. Vana, for example, mentions:

I was lucky because the director of programs in the NGO I applied was an anthropologist, so she knew very well the competences anthropologists have and preferred to recruit an anthropologist for the position of job counselor for vulnerable people.

In the case of Alexandra, one of the writers of this article, her knowledge of Farsi language was essential to get hired by a big humanitarian NGO. As she notes, her recruiter was not interested in her PhD or academic skills at all, he valued only her Farsi language skills. But Alexandra recounts exactly the opposite experiences as well, that recognized her scholarly skills. Her academic writing skills were essential to get two other job positions in the humanitarian sector, one as communication officer, in charge of generating high quality internal and external communication material, and one as fundraising officer, responsible for writing project proposals, grant applications, concept notes and donor's reports.

Other graduates mention that a lot of changes have happened in the humanitarian sector in the last few years. Before the European refugee crisis, it was somewhat mandatory, especially for young anthropologists, to offer unpaid voluntary work, in order to gain working experience. Rena an alumni member of SAASPU describes her experience on this matter:

As a third-year university student I decided to offer volunteer work at the Hellenic Red Cross. I also did my internship there in order to gain working experience and familiarity with an NGO, but still, I could not find any work in this field. So, I decided to do a MA in Ireland in humanitarian affairs and upon returning I continued working as a volunteer in UNHCR. Nobody likes unpaid work but this gave me access to the humanitarian field and I learnt many things about the refugee issue. This volunteer experience opened doors to my recruitment in an NGO a few years before the outbreak of the refugee crisis.

Koons confirms the above-mentioned situation in the international humanitarian field as well, describing volunteering or internship, as a way to gain access in an NGO.

Many NGOs use trained volunteers for particular assignments. This is an opportunity to gain valuable technical and field expertise while also providing an inside track to networking and mutual familiarity within an NGO (Koons 2013: 139).

Nowadays volunteerism is still appreciated by NGOs in Greece, but is not mandatory, as the urgency of humanitarian interventions lead to very quick recruitments of numerous young practitioners. Still, anthropologists in the beginning of their working career are quite open to move out in another city or in border areas in order to gain working experience. They easily accept positions in the periphery and reception fields, such the Aegean islands and the Evros region, near the borders, unlike those who have families or well-established careers in the capital city.

The humanitarian field today, besides being the main employer for social scientists and anthropologists in Greece, gives also the opportunity to anthropologists to reconsider their research methods and gain new research and working skills. NGOs and other organizations operating in the humanitarian sector, apply various methods that give good and fast-driven results from which anthropologists can learn, considering balance between

convenience, data quality, personal preference or research situation. NGO work is always to a deadline and there is little opportunity for time-consuming in-depth analysis such as ethnography, and normally there is little time for extensive surveys or research. However, the quality of outputs and deliverables must be high as often funding proposals and reports include field research.

One such research tool used by NGOs, based on field research in a short amount of time, is the Focus Group Discussions (FGD), an in-depth method borrowed from social marketing. FGDs can be used for many purposes, to study knowledge, attitudes and beliefs in a certain situation or by a certain group. FGDs are normally used by Greek NGOs when considering the introduction of a new program or service. FGD is a small group discussion, guided by a group facilitator, used to learn about opinions on a designated topic, and to guide future action. The strength of the FGD is that it can yield a lot of information in a relatively short time²³. In about two hours a range of opinions and ideas about an issue can be heard, and a variation of opinions that exists in a particular community in terms of beliefs, experiences and practices can come to a surface. Sonia, as a FGD facilitator, recalls:

I was amazed by the amount of information I could gather in just few hours from conducting FGD in the camps of Elaionas, Schisto, and with refugees living in the urban setting on topics related to their integration in the job market, livelihoods, women's needs and activities in the camps, and urban accommodation.

However, while she noticed that the benefit of this tool is receiving fast information on specific topics, the quality of the FGD outcome was based by and large on her familiarity with the refugee community, specific individuals and her personal relationship with them. Thus, while methods such as the FGD give valuable information in a short period of time, the FGD as a method is much more effective when applied by persons who possess other qualities that normally anthropologists possess, such as prior cultural knowledge of the population at hand and good rapport with them. Therefore, Greek anthropologists while enriching their research methods towards a new direction could seize this moment and put practicing anthropology in dialogue with academic anthropology.

To conclude, at a time when Greek graduates appear to be weak in problem-solving, creativity and teamwork anthropologists are in a position to exhibit skills set needed by the labour market, and especially the humanitarian sector.

Social economy, entrepreneurship and community-based projects

During the last ten austerity years various collective, horizontal, cooperative and other enterprises flourished all over the country, driven by people skeptical both to the state and private sector, as well as to the NGOs. In order to control and help to grow this new prolific sector, the Greek state has voted in 2016 a law on 'Social and Solidarity Economy', but still many initiatives operate out of this law and do not wish to benefit from the technical and financial prospects it offers. One can locate some anthropology graduates as the initiators of diverse new forms of social entrepreneurship, especially social groceries, collaborative schools or consumer movements without intermediaries. Some seek to make a living through such activities, whilst others participate on a voluntary basis. Many are involved in community-based projects either as founding members and/or as staff.

Responding to our question about their involvement in such endeavours most advance different reasons: 'generating new working positions', 'originating new models of social entrepreneurship that is self-sustainable', and 'creating local and sustainable ownership'. Rather than bringing to the fore pure economic motives, they underlay the social and political relevance of their projects:

I find that nowadays engaging in public affairs through social economy is a more effective way, we need more than ever an economy that is socially relevant

notes 26 year-old Stefania, co-founder of a cooperative café in the city centre of Athens, where staff is composed of people with disabilities.

Another example is two community-based kindergartens and one primary school generated by neighbourhood or teachers-family initiatives soon after the economic crisis. Federica, founding member of one of the kindergartens recalls:

This is a grassroots-driven kindergarten project born by concerned parents in my neighbourhood, where all families and teachers participate equally in decision making processes with an education philosophy that stresses creativity, game, non-competitive relationships and, most of all, deep experiential learning.

And Aliko, a founding member of the primary school says:

In such small scale endeavours, it is easier to experiment with different ways of working together and developing democracy at a grassroots level. Additionally, we can provide to our children lived experiences of human qualities, such as solidarity, collective action and acceptance of any kind of otherness, that balance competition and excellency that are one-sidedly promoted by the Greek educational system. Anthropological theory is full of counter examples of mainstream economic and political organization and it can be inspiring for such collective attempts.

As noted previously, anthropology departments in Greece still lack courses in business anthropology, thus such initiatives by anthropologists initially seem not to be linked to their curriculum. But one cannot neglect that they are linked to anthropology, as a specific way of looking at and understanding the world we live in. The majority of our informants underline that these projects seek materializing ideas and values that go beyond the hegemonic neoliberal emphasis on individualism, competition or maximization of profits, and promote novel modes of participatory collaboration. These horizontal enterprises and community-based projects show that anthropologists are interested in developing economic, business and entrepreneurial literacy and stress the ability of anthropology in action to address particular needs of the rapidly changing society and job market. Moreover, anthropology attracts people working in such collaborative endeavours who seek theoretical tools that can help them in this direction.

Conclusion

As we have argued, in Greece anthropologists acquire during their studies skills and worldviews that are more and more in demand in the diverse and complex worlds we live in. While on the teaching level most Greek university departments remain sceptical about connecting universities with the labour market, in fact they nurture students with skills and social knowledge that are appreciated in the job market. The tension between academia and practice is not unique and exclusive to Greece (see Nolan 2013a). According to Nolan, both in Europe and the United States, 'bringing the academy and the world of practice together will involve conscious recognition of the professional, as opposed to purely disciplinary, face of anthropology' (Nolan 2013b: 394-395).

This tension between academic and practicing anthropology seems to have a better balance in Greece today, although a lot of work is still needed with the public appearance of the discipline. After thirty years of institutional presence inside the Greek university, anthropology becomes more and more present outside academia and in various professional sectors that acknowledge the importance of critical thinking and problem-solving skills and need practitioners like anthropologists, who are adaptable and think across cultural boundaries. Today, following some more general trends in the European labour market (Podjed, Gorup and Mlakar 2016), practicing anthropologists in the business and for-profit sector are still very scarce in Greece and Greek anthropologists are mainly active in state, non-governmental and non-profit organizations. The rapid development of the humanitarian sector due to the European refugee crisis has been an accelerator of the exodus of anthropology outside academia, leading to the employment of many anthropologists in diverse humanitarian fields such as cash assistance, education, integration, and health.

The economic and the refugee crisis proved thus an opportunity for anthropology in Greece to become much more involved with public life and as Nolan says to transform 'the public face of anthropology into something that looks more like a profession' (2013b: 393). What needs to be further elaborated in anthropological education, in Greece and abroad, is helping students develop the mindset that they can continue to draw on their anthropological theory and method in diverse career realms (Briller and Goldmacher 2020: 8-9).

Notes

¹ In spring 2014 were convened at Panteion University the Wednesday Seminar Series 'Anthropology in Action: The Anthropologist's Profession in Greece Today'. Alumni were invited to present their working experience in the public and private sector. They spoke about the difficulties they had to establish themselves as practitioners in their relative working area and they reflected on the anthropological skills and methods they utilized. The seminar has been filmed and all the lectures were uploaded on SAASPU you-tube channel. Link:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCWhoiwMDhDiIsHID3CrIaCw> (last accessed 28/04/2021). Two years later, the one-day workshop 'Voluntary Work: Faith to a Better World or Abuse of the Good Faith?' was organized at Panteion University. During this workshop many alumni expressed their concerns about the practice of volunteering as an entry point into the Greek job market. Aliko Angelidou and Alexandra Balandina were involved in the organisation of both events. In addition, for the purpose of this article we have returned for further analysis to the filmed material.

² Department of Social Anthropology at Panteion University, Athens; Department of Social Anthropology and History at the University of the Aegean, Lesvos; Department of History, Archaeology and Social Anthropology at the University of Thessaly, Volos. There is also a considerable number of anthropologists teaching in various departments all around the country.

³ The 'Gender, Culture and Society' at the University of the Aegean and the interdepartmental postgraduate program 'Gender, Society, Politics' at Panteion University.

⁴ For example, the Department of Social Policy at the University of Peloponnese offers MA in 'Social Discrimination, Immigration and Citizenship' and the Nursing Department at Kapodistrian University, Athens offers MA in 'Management of Crisis, Mass Disasters and Emergency Situations' with two directions: 'Emergency Health Care' and 'Organization and Management', that are very much in demand by people working in the humanitarian field. Also the Greek Open University offers an MA in 'Social and Solidarity Economy' and the University of Piraeus an MSc in 'Bioeconomy, Circular Economy and Sustainable Development'.

⁵ See the Anthropological Skills section of the AAA website <https://www.americananthro.org/LearnAndTeach/ResourceDetail.aspx?ItemNumber=13046> [Accessed on 22/02/2019].

⁶ Brandt (2010) mentions that in other disciplines, for example history and literature, there is an ongoing debate whether emphasizing skills such as critical thinking or problem solving will erode the teaching of important content.

⁷ There has been a lot of discussion about the dominance of 'anthropology at home' among Greek scholars with relatively few anthropologists conducting research outside Greece (Angelidou 2018; Gefou-Madianou 2000; Papataxiarchis 2005). However, there is a growing body of ethnographic work on ethnic groups and minorities, refugees and immigrants that represent the Other within Greek borders, as well as a growing number of anthropological research abroad.

⁸ The most eloquent case is the anthropology Department at Panteion University in Athens with around 200 students entering each year.

⁹ It is the overall education system, going back to high school that is not helping students to acquire further skills. Memorizing rather than understanding, analyzing and interpreting is the basic requirement that students are called to satisfy during their university-entry exams. For an anthropological reading on rote memorization and plagiarism among Greek students as 'means through which students navigate in and cope with the university environment' see Bakalaki 2021: 29.

¹⁰ This trend has further accelerated with the COVID-19 pandemic that has moved all classes on-line, and has prompted both students and teachers to use and rely on technology.

¹¹ See Dalkavoukis 2010 who discusses the pros and cons in doing ethnography at undergraduate level and who believes that introducing ethnographic research in BA programs is vital for becoming an anthropologist.

¹² This is the case of the 'Konitsa Summer School in the Anthropology, Ethnography and Folklore of the Balkans', organized by the University of Ioannina and the academic Border Crossings Network, the 'Culture, Migration, Borders Summer School' of the University of the Aegean, the 'Pelion Summer Lab for Cultural Theory and Experimental Humanities' organized by the University of Thessaly and the 'Athens Summer School in Ethnographic Filmmaking' organized by The Netherlands Institute at Athens in collaboration with the Athens Ethnographic Film Festival - Ethnofest.

¹³ See for example Bakalaki 2006 and Gefou-Madianou 2000 who attest that students at that time were more interested to learn about their own society and the 'modern' world rather than developing countries or distant cultures.

¹⁴ For the recent 'marketing' of practicing anthropology worldwide see Butler 2013.

¹⁵ The professional rights of the three aforementioned anthropology departments are to some extent different. Only the department at Panteion University offers a fully anthropological curriculum. The anthropology department at the University of the Aegean offers a diploma in anthropology and history; and at the department at the University of Thessaly students select a specialization in their majors in anthropology, history or archaeology.

¹⁶ More precisely, in 2015 and 2016 Greece experienced an unprecedented influx of migrants and refugees fleeing war and deprivation in Syria, as well as from Afghanistan due to the ongoing unstable security situation in the country, in search of a safer life in the EU. Close to one million people transited through Greece in 2015, while in 2016 more than 173 000 people arrived by sea alone. With the closure of the so-called 'Balkan migration route' in March 2016, around sixty thousands of refugees were left stranded in the country. The humanitarian response to the refugee and migrant flows was also rapid.

¹⁷ In 2016 and 2017, NGOs like Metadrasi, Praksis, Arsis, IRC and Solidarity Now, among others, recruited three to four times more personnel, counting more than 300 employees each, among which the majority were social scientists selected through more flexible and less homogenized job calls than the ones at the central level.

¹⁸ The humanitarian field in Greece, depending on factors such as flow of refugees and access to resources, is rapidly changing with new NGO's arriving and other NGO phasing out their activities or leaving the country. Currently there are around fifty (50) organizations included in the National Register of Greek and Foreign NGO's that are active in the mainland and the islands, and dealing with international protection, migration and social integration issues. Many other NGOs are active in the field without being registered fully by the state.

<https://ngo.migration.gov.gr/registered.php> [Accessed 13/12/2021].

¹⁹ Such as the Center for Control and Prevention of Diseases (KEELPNO), now called EODY (National Public Health Organization) in the domain of health and the MoE or the Institute of Educational Policy (IEP) in the educational one.

²⁰ Most humanitarian organizations are funded mainly by different European states and the European Union, but also from the USA. Since 2015, more than €3,5 billion of funding support was granted by the Commission to address migration challenges in Greece. A big amount of money has been contracted to the EU's humanitarian aid partners in Greece such as United Nations bodies, the Red Cross/Crescent movement and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). See: https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/news/greece-significant-cuts-refugee-funding_en [Accessed 13/12/2021].

²¹ To the same conclusion regarding the skills missing to the graduates of the Greek universities leads the research analysis by the Hellenic Federation of Enterprises (SEV) 2017. http://www.sev.org.gr/Uploads/Documents/50407/Weekly_29_06_2017.pdf [Accessed 22/02/2019].

²² In the humanitarian field, English has become the dominant language both in the workplace as well as in communication practices among various stakeholders imposed on refugees as well.

²³ For the benefits and shortages of FGD and its use by social anthropologists see Russell 2002.

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