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To all PhD students of OIKOS,

Groningen, 26 September 2024

Subject: 'masterclass' 2025: invitation and change of concept

Dear PhD candidates,

From **16-23 June 2025** OIKOS will be organizing a PhD 'Masterclass' (in a new format and with the new name *Oikos Ancient World Spring School*) at, and in cooperation with, the Netherlands Institute in Athens (NIA). The leading expert will be Prof. Richard Alston, professor of Roman History at Royal Holloway, University of London. He will guide the participants through the theme **'Connectivity'.** On behalf of OIKOS, prof. Onno van Nijf, professor of Ancient History at the University of Groningen will be present as the second leader of the Spring School. Upon successful completion, the participants will be awarded 6 ECTS.

Connectivity is a way of thinking about communities and community development. Connectivity is a flexible conception that can be used to explore a range of issues across the disciplines of the classical world, from the archaeological to the historical to the linguistic to the literary to the philosophical. Please find attached (Appendix 1) a more elaborate description of the theme and the new design of the *OIKOS Ancient World Spring School* written by Richard Alston, in cooperation with prof. Onno van Nijf (on behalf of the board of OIKOS), dr. Nathalie de Haan (chair of OIKOS educational committee) and Gerry Wakker (scientific director of OIKOS). The theme Connectivity can be studied from any of the disciplines represented within OIKOS. This Spring School will replace the former PhD Masterclass, as explained below.

About

The OIKOS PhD Masterclass was held every two years and was part of the OIKOS PhD curriculum. Since the design of the 2025 version has been fundamentally changed, the name has also been adapted: **Oikos Ancient World Spring School.** The participants will critically study a reading list in preparation of

the Spring School. The reading list will contain literature on 'Connectivity in theory', to be discussed during the Spring School. As to the aspect 'Connectivity in Practice' the PhD students will look at discrete pieces of evidence and seek to explore connectivity as a way of engaging with that evidence. The material will be developed and modified in engagement with student interests and the profile of the group. Finally, students will work in (group-)projects to build a short outline of a project presentation within the framework of the theme 'connectivity'. This should address a discrete question, have a quantity of source material and engage with issues and problems of connectivity. Input from the PhDs' own research is desirable. The aim of the Spring School is for the participant to gain experience in multidisciplinarity, in team work and in presenting a joint draft paper, responding to those of others and participating in discussions (all in English). The Spring School is explicitly meant to expand one's topic of research, and challenges its participants to look at their own subjects from various angles (multidisciplinarity) and in connection with the theme 'connectivity'. Students are explicitly invited to discuss and to think 'wildly' and be taking 'intellectual risks'. Apart from the theoretical discussions and the preparation of the (group)presentations, there will be a varied program of theme-focused excursions in (and around) Athens, during which each of the participants will be presenting on site.

Beforehand, in April or May, there will be a first online meeting of Richard Alston, Onno van Nijf and all participating PhD students to get to know each other and to match expectations. When applying PhD students are asked to write a short narrative CV (max 1 A4) in which they explain their fascination for research and their PhD project and explain their motivation for participating in the Spring School.

Please keep in mind that, first, the narrative CV's and motivations of the selected participating students will be discussed at the online welcome meeting in April/May. Secondly students must read literature on connectivity ahead of the Spring School and prepare a short reflection on the literature in connection with one's own research, and, third, that all other work will take place on site. Discussions and studying at the NIA will be combined with excursions, so that days may sometimes be long and busy. It will be an multidisciplinary event in which students are challenged to come out of their comfort zone, but also to connect the central theme of connectivity with their own discipline.

Participation

The Spring School of 2025 is primarily meant for OIKOS PhD students who have not participated in one of the previous Masterclasses organized by OIKOS. There will be a maximum of 12 participants. In case these vacancies cannot all be filled by full members of OIKOS, the remaining places will be filled by associated PhD students or those who have participated in one of the Masterclasses before.

Costs

Each participant will have to pay €100,00, which is due straight upon admission to the course. OIKOS will pay for breakfast, entrance fees at museums/sites, excursions and maximally €150,00 travel costs The students have to pay for transportation and travel to/from Athens (apart from the maximum reimbursement by OIKOS of €150,00).

Registration

For those interested, please send an email to oikos@rug.nl by **1 December 2024** at the latest with a narrative CV and a short motivation why you would like to participate (about 250 words, not more than one A4 in total). Please also indicate in which year of your PhD-trajectory you are. This information might be used to make a selection. At the end of December OIKOS will inform you whether your application has been accepted, and if so, you will be asked whether you are interested in being member

of the organizing team (3 PhD students), that helps Richard Alston and OIKOS to draw up the program (January/February 2025). In March/April 2025 the reading list will be distributed and an online meeting with all participants will be organized to get to know each other.

Kind regards, also on behalf of Richard Alston,

Gerry C. Wakker

(Director of OIKOS)

Appendix 1

Oikos Ancient World Spring School

Connectivity

Only Connect

Only connect! That was the whole of her sermon. Only connect the prose and the passion, and both will be exalted, and human love will be seen at its height. Live in fragments no longer. Only connect, and the beast and the monk, robbed of the isolation that is life to either, will die.

E.M. Forster, *Howard's End* Ch.22

Challenge

Connectivity is a way of thinking about communities and community development. Its value as a theme is to focus on the fundamental processes of community formation. Society is based on connectivity; if humans are social animals, then society emerges through individual connectivity. Without connectivity, we are monks and beasts. Connectivity is a flexible conception that can be used to explore a range of issues across the disciplinary of the Classical, from the archaeological to the historical to the linguistic to the literary. Controlling connectivity is an act of power, a way of bordering communities and establishing particular identities. Since the self is established in a range of social interactions that reinforce and perform the self, connectivity, either through face-to-face or imaginary interactions determines selfhood.

Connectivity is needed to perform basic social functions. These include identity formation and social reproduction. Social interactions affirm identity through status assertion and recognition. Social reproduction requires reliance on others. Economics requires connections. Families use connectivity to form marital alliances. The advantage of connectivity is its simplicity and its flexibility. Whereas sociological models would tend to emphasise the immediacy of socio-cultural relationships, connectivity can operate symbolically, through religion and literature and across time and space, connecting individuals within immediate communities and imaginary communities in the villages and across the empire of antiquity. Connectivity can also operate across cultural markers through individuals' facility at code switching, both linguistic and cultural. Multilingualism and multiculturalism offer individuals a range of connective strategies. Since connectivity is essential to community formation, connectivity is always political.

As an analytical tool, the focus on connectivity moves us away from macro-level societal forms to the individual connection: how does that connection work for an individual? How do the varied social circumstances of an individual limit or provide opportunities for connectivity? How is connectivity policed? We often circumvent precision through reference to those macro-structures (institutions, collective memories and traditions, ethnicities, identities), but all depend on the process of connection. How do we understand the processes of connection in the ancient world and how might focusing on connectivity change how we approach antiquity?

The aim

The aim of the school is to explore a common issue across disciplinary, regional and period divisions. Working together, the school will

- Inculcate a better understanding of interdisciplinarity through a practical engagement in interdisciplinary study.
- Encourage and develop skills of team-working transferable into research project development.
- Enable students to draw skills, knowledge and experiences from a range of disciplinary perspectives.
- Encourage the planning, development and delivery of interdisciplinary research projects.
- Encourage the analysis of fundamental problems and the breaking down of complexity into core issues.
- Encourage innovation and risk-taking in research projects.
- Encourage and develop skills in goal-focused project design and the consequent design of responsibility.
- Develop experience and skills in delivering and receiving constructive critical feedback.

Outcomes

The school is designed to foster skills and build confidence. The school will
- Increase familiarity with a range of interdisciplinary issues and approaches.
- Encourage participants to assess critically both disciplinary and interdisciplinary norms.
- Encourage methodological rigour within an interdisciplinary format.
- Provide experience of developing and working through an interdisciplinary project while working with colleagues.
- Build reflexivity within a team-working environment, through evaluation (self and group), and sharing of responsibility and achievement.
- Developing the confidence of participants in taking intellectual risks

The outcome of the project will be an outline project/paper/presentation jointly constructed on an aspect of connectivity as related to the work and interests of the students.

Interdisciplinarity

Connectivity traverses the main disciplinary areas of Classics. It is key to understanding the flows of power, ideas, goods, and cultures with which all disciplines in the Classics portfolio are engaged. The connected Mediterranean and the movement of people within the region is crucial for our understanding of cultural formations from the Bronze Age to Late Antiquity. Languages and ideas moved through connections and multilingual and multicultural individuals can access cultural and community resources in different ways from the monolingual and monocultural individual. In political history, connectivity is crucial for the formation of political and cultural groups, and the exclusion and inclusion of persons within a political community is a central element of culture. Such processes can operate face-to-face or symbolically. In intellectual history, connectivity has been central to studies of intertextuality, which is a form of imaginary connectivity. Different forms of connectivity are themselves subject of ancient philosophical reflection. Connectivity is central to the movement of people: migration tends to depend on connectivity even as it establishes and enhances connectivity. Tools for communication include individual flexibility in the use of cultural codes and facility in multiple languages. Empires can be seen as needing and generating systems of connectivity.

Focusing on the connection, shifts attention from the macro-structures (cultures, polities) to the individual's specific engagements. It allows us to ask how this connection worked in this instance, in this place, for this individual.

An understanding of these processes central to the critical engagements of the various sub-disciplines in Classics benefits from an interdisciplinary perspective. Connectivity is a way of understanding the world-view of individuals and their access to culture and ideas.

The core questions in the approach are:
- How does connectivity operate at the micro-level?
- How is connectivity generated?
- How is connectivity managed?
- How does connectivity generate culture?
- How does connectivity connect to macro-level structures?

These questions can be applied to a range of materials and issues.

Delivery

The aims will be delivered in a tripartite scheme. Each of the three parts will be delivered each day. Under each heading, a capacious list of possibilities is included which will be refined and reduced as the planning develops. It is expected that 4-5 of the sessions under each category will be developed.

Timings will allow for an intensive half-day (5 hours), site visits either in the morning or the late afternoon. Allowing for flexibility sessions will be 80 minutes with two 30 minutes breaks. There will be flexibility in the scheduling, with day 1-2 having more emphasis on Connectivity in Theory and more time given to the student-led projects towards the end of the School. The final day will be structured around the students' presentations.

Sessions

1. *Connectivity in Theory*: This section will think about connectivity within a particular area of study, very broadly defined. There will be a critical engagement with the concept leading to a theoretical discussion of the application of the conception to our understanding. The focus will be on themes. Discussion will be mainly through a seminar format. It will build on the prior reading of the students and be led by the academic experts. Indicatively, themes may include:
   - Connectivity and the Political Community
   - Connectivity and Literary Communities
   - Connectivity and Ethnicity
   - Connectivity and the Formations of Traditions
   - Connectivity and Migration
   - Connectivity and Language
2. *Connectivity in Practice:* This section will look at discrete bodies of evidence and seek to explore connectivity as a way of engaging with that evidence. The material listed here is indicative and will be developed and modified in engagement with student interests and the profile of the group. They will also be modified in relation to expertise that may be available outside the group. Each of the sessions will be based on a portfolio of evidence. These may include:
   - Artefactual and cultural exchange in the Bronze/Iron Age Eastern Mediterranean
   - Jewish and Christian Connectivity and Identity Formation: Letters and Inscriptions
   a. Multilingualism: North Africa (Libyan/Punic/Latin) or the Aramaic World (Aramaic /Arabic/Hebrew/Greek)
   - Cultural languages: Etruscan and Roman
   - Diasporas of Cults
   - Languages of Christianity

- Imperial networks: Greece and the Romans or Jews and the Romans or Persia
- Egyptian Letters and Community Formation
- Anatolian villages
- Feeding the People: The Oxyrhynchite Corn dole and urban connectivity
- Alexandrian Connectivity: Philo and the Failures of Connectivity in an Urban Community
- Pliny and Marriage Planning
- Lucan and literary connectivity
- Alexandrian literary communities
- Augustan literary readers
- The migration of drama
- Libraries, Books and Readers
- Symbolic Connectivity: Imperial Cult or the Roman People
- Trade and Traders: The North and West or Greek islands
- Festivals in the East

2. *Student projects*: Students will be encouraged to work in groups to build short presentations on a theme around connectivity. These should address a discrete question, have a quantity of source material and engage with issues and problems of connectivity. The session will have time for the students to build their projects and get preliminary feedback around their plans and presentations. These projects may focus on issues such as:
   - Migration
   - Language groups
   - Colonisation
   - Intellectual groups
   - Literary Traditions
   - Bilingualism and/or biculturalism
   - Large-group formations
   - Communities and Community cohesion
   - Families and family formation
   - Group identities including
- Religious groups
- Slaves
- Military
- Minority groups
i. Women's groups and society.

Groups will be provided feedback in outline during the school, allowing them to identify issues and improve approaches. On the last day, each group will present their materials.

Evaluation

As part of the commitment to constructive criticism, participants will be encouraged to develop evaluative criteria throughout the process. Such self-reflexivity will encourage the determination of goals, directed analysis, and an understanding of what needs to be done to meet the objectives of the product. Such critical engagements will also allow the modification of project design.

The school will conclude with an evaluation of the event, in a focus-group format. This will focus on assessment of skills delivered, success of outcomes, unexpected benefits, and planning for future cohorts.