

Institution: University of Oxford
Unit of Assessment: 28 Modern Languages and Linguistics
Title of case study: Framing and advancing social, cultural and political debates on gender, sexuality and identity in contemporary Greece
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Papanikolaou's regular writing in mainstream media and public speaking on queer theory, Cavafy, the history of the gay movement and cultures of sexuality in Greece, have aroused public interest, improving understanding and liberalising attitudes. In Greece a dynamic queer movement is emerging, but in the current crisis, homophobia is also increasing. His insights have attracted wide attention on the internet and social media, with gay activist groups using his research to further their debates. He has affected policy, notably proposals for a gay marriage bill and legislation against homophobia, by advising policymakers. Publishers have consulted Papanikolaou to expand their lists to include queer theory; and he advised the Greek Ministry of Culture on cultural and educational policy.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Dr Dimitris Papanikolaou is University Lecturer in Modern Greek Studies at Oxford University. He has done extensive research on discourses about sexuality in modern Greece and in particular on the major poet C.P. Cavafy (1863-1933), from the perspective of queer theory.</p> <p>Since 2001 Papanikolaou has been working on a new approach to Cavafy's work, informed by the history of sexuality and new queer theories of desire^{[1][2]}. His research, within a well-defined theoretical framework, has refined and re-defined aspects of Cavafy's work that were hitherto silenced or overlooked by academia. By placing Cavafy within a theoretical background of queer theory and histories of sexual subjectivity, Papanikolaou has revealed the relevance and importance of Cavafy both synchronically and diachronically.</p> <p>Moreover, Papanikolaou has underlined the hitherto disavowed impact of Cavafy on the formation and development of queer identity within and beyond Greece, and has proposed Cavafy as a prime example for new debates on queer theory. As one academic reviewer put it, his work presents 'a highly original, convincing, timely and potentially paradigm-shifting argument on Cavafy's position in the history both of Greek literature and of the queer imagination' (blind peer review for ^[2]). Papanikolaou has published several articles^[3] on Cavafy and sexuality in this period, and given a number of presentations on the topic, in universities and conferences worldwide. A monograph on Cavafy and queer theory is to be published by the major Greek publisher Patakis in late 2013.</p> <p>Throughout his time at Oxford, Papanikolaou has also been collecting material on 20th-century Greek cultures of sexuality (film, literature, art) and offering new theoretical tools for a critical reappraisal of Greek cultural texts related to sexuality. He has conducted research on Greek queer authors Capetanakis^[4], Scouffi, Dora Rozeti, Lapathiotis, Taktsis, Tsarouchis, Ioannou, Angelakis, and examined the Zorba archetype in relation to homosociality and its impact on concepts of heteronormative national identity and masculinity^[5]. He published an influential essay^[6] arguing that Elias Petropoulos's popular books about Greece have impacted on Greek sexuality by inadvertently cementing stereotypes and perpetuating the imbalances and injustices they purport to rebel against. Papanikolaou re-edited the classic queer short story cycle <i>Ta Resta</i> by Taktsis, providing a well-reviewed essay as afterword. He also wrote the chapter on Athens in a forthcoming book on <i>Queer Cities</i>, charting the history of sexual subcultures in the city since the 1950s.</p> <p>In addition, Papanikolaou has carried out extensive research on contemporary Greek cultural texts from the perspective of gender and sexuality, aiming to bring queer theory into closer dialogue with contemporary Greek cultural production, while popularising a critical vocabulary not until that time widely adopted in Greek media. He has written on queer filmmakers Giannaris^[7] and Koutras and reviewed works by, among others, Dimitriadis, Tsiolkas, Dimitrakaki, Corteau, Tzoumerkias. Being mostly the first commentaries to address these works with a critical and analytical vocabulary based on gender studies, these essays have exerted a wide influence.</p>

3. References to the research

- [1] 'Words that tell and hide: Revisiting C.P.Cavafy's Closets', *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, 23 (2005), 235-260. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/mgs.2005.0021>; translated and expanded version published in Greek as the opening article of *Poietike*, 11 (spring-summer 2013), pp. 9-42 (Available on request) [Peer-reviewed; leading journals in the field]
- [2] 'Days of those made like me: Retrospective pleasure, sexual knowledge and C.P.Cavafy's homobiographics'. *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, 37:2 (2013), 261-277. [Peer-reviewed] <http://dx.doi.org/10.1179/0307013113Z.00000000031> In REF2.
- [3] «'Η νέα φάσις του έρωτος': Ο νεοτερικός λόγος της σεξολογίας και ο Καβάφης» ['C.P. Cavafy and the modern discourses of sexology, ca.1900'], *Epistemonike Epeterida Philosophikes Scholes Thessalonikes*, 12 (2010), 195-211 [Peer-reviewed] In REF2
- [4] 'Demetrios Capetanakis: A Greek Poet (coming out) in England', *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, 30:2 (2006), 213-235 [Peer-reviewed; leading journal of the field] <http://dx.doi.org/10.1179/030701306X115823>
- [5] «'Αφεντικό, άνθρωπο δεν αγάπησα σαν κι εμένα': Ο Αλέξης Ζορμπάς και η ποιητική της ομοκοινωνικότητας» [Zorba the Greek and the poetics of homosociality], in *Ho Kazantzakes ston 21o aiona*, ed. S.Philippides (Herakleion: Crete University Press, 2010), 435-75 [peer-reviewed]. In REF2
- [6] «'Ομιλείτε την καλιαρνήτην;» Ο Ηλίας Πετρόπουλος, η δεκαετία του '60 και το αντισυστημικό μας απωθημένο» [Elias Petropoulos and the study of Greek subcultures], *The Books' Journal*, 7, 62-69. Available on request.
- [7] 'New Queer Greece?: Thinking identity through Constantine Giannaris's *From the Edge of the City* and Ana Kokkinos's *Head On*', *New Cinemas*, 6:3 (2008), 183-196 [Peer-reviewed] In REF2

4. Details of the impact

Recent years have seen a growing interest in issues of gender, sexuality and identity in Greece, and an expanding and dynamic queer movement; in the meantime, under the pressure exerted by the recent socio-economic crisis, there has been a rise in homophobia and racism that makes informed discussion and gestures of consciousness-raising not just necessary but urgent.

Papanikolaou's research is helping to improve public understanding of international gender debates, setting policy agendas, and feeding into legislation in Greece. His work has been used to legitimize and empower groups (especially lobbyists and activists) interested in progressing these debates, nationally and internationally.

Broadening public understanding of gender, sexuality and identity issues in Greece and internationally

To contribute to ongoing public debate and to widen public understanding of the gender issues explored in his research, Papanikolaou has been commissioned between 2008 and June 2013 to write more than 40 reviews, essays and opinion pieces, published in the leading Greek national newspapers *Ta Nea*, *Avgi* and *Kathimerini*, as well as the leading essay magazines *The Athens Review of Books*, *The Books Journal* and *Unfollow*, with topics ranging from debates on sexual citizenship, to reviews of queer theory texts. Many were republished by websites and organisations, demonstrating their impact on the newspaper audience and reaching further audiences beyond the original beneficiaries.^{[1][i]}

Through writing much circulated articles and giving public lectures Papanikolaou both contributed to public debate and raised awareness of homophobia, racism, biopolitics and thanatopolitics. He wrote, for example, a short article commenting on a homophobic demonstration organized by the neo-Nazi party of Golden Dawn, and tackling for the first time the party's homophobic agenda from the perspective of institutionalized homosociality and national gender stereotypes. Published on 21 October 2012 in *Avgi*, it was then republished by at least 30 news sites, blogs and other websites e.g. *Enthemata*, *Left.gr*, *Seisaxthia*, *Biblioteque.gr*, *Friktoia*^[ii]. It was retweeted widely on Twitter and on 22 October 2012 was one of the most re-tweeted articles in Greece. "If you haven't read it already, you ought to read this piece" said one of the most popular re-tweets [Alina A. @purplina: "Είμαστε όλοι ξεσκισμένες αδερφές;" <http://enthemata.wordpress.com/2012/10/21/papanikolaou-3/> Αν δεν το έχετε διαβάσει ακόμα, διαβάστε οπωσδήποτε]. A reader of the article on *Enthemata* with username 'geosoi' adds that "these very good thoughts and analysis [give us a sense of] the big

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picture of our society as a whole and [show us] those things that have to be changed from the roots”.^[iii]

Similarly, on 26 February 2013 in the Cultural Centre of the Athens Municipality Papanikolaou delivered a lecture to a capacity audience of 200, entitled ‘Racism, homophobia and thanatopolitics in the current crisis’. A podcast of the lecture has been posted on Vimeo and at least 10 other websites since 28 February and watched by at least 1200 unique viewers. A summary was published in *Avgi* on 10 March 2013, and has been republished by at least 20 websites and blogs since then, viewed by at least 30,000 readers/visitors, widely debated on social media.^[iv]

Papanikolaou has also influenced international audiences, broadening understanding of the theories of sexuality and their significance for a new analysis of Greek culture. He has presented his work in cultural and community events in Britain, the US, Russia, Switzerland and most recently in specially organised community events in Australia^[v]. As part of the world celebrations of the poet Cavafy, Papanikolaou organised a successful ‘Cavafy week’ in Oxford (3-8 June 2013) comprising public events and an interactive Facebook page. One attendee from Athens wrote that “[*After my return*] I kept talking to everyone in Athens about the Cavafy Week and its impact”. The London correspondent for *The Nation* and the BBC, said: “*to open up the way the poetry works inside people’s lives, to bring together the heart and the body and the head like that, was an absolute triumph*”^[2]. The event attracted a broad and international audience and generated significant publicity and social media attention.

Supporting activist and lobbying groups

Many of his pieces have become core reading and debating material for queer activist groups and lobbyists. Such groups use Papanikolaou’s work as an enabling platform, in order to pursue new agendas on gender and sexuality in Greece.

For instance, the internet forum of the collective ‘queertrans’, a radical transsexual and gay rights activist group, discuss in their forum a lecture Papanikolaou had given: “*his lecture was amazing... a very strong lecture; I will look into his work further*”^[iv] says one post; further posts contain links to his other articles and references to his work. The group invited him to speak to one of their closed meetings (6 March 2013) where he shared his research insights with the members. Similarly, an article on archives of sexuality and lesbian literature was distributed and discussed among members of the Lesbian Group of Athens (LOA; the core Greek lesbian activist group), who also commented on Papanikolaou’s work in their publications. Papanikolaou has also spoken in meetings with queer activist groups in Athens and London (throughout 2011-13).

Papanikolaou’s reflections on Greek new queer cinema (and in particular the film *Strella: A Woman’s Way* (2009)) have raised awareness of trans-sexual politics. He was invited to speak on queer cinema at an activist event held by the LGBT publishing venture Polychromos Planetes (2011)^[vii]. Last, but not least, a documentary on ‘Racism, Homophobia and Thanatopolitics’, expressly influenced by Papanikolaou’s recent work, is in production by a group of Athenian-based investigative journalists headed by Augustine Zenakos.

Influencing policy-makers

Papanikolaou’s writings on queer theory and politics (including an article charting the gay marriage debate from theoretical and political angles, published in *Ta Nea*, 14/6/2008) have led to Papanikolaou being consulted by lobbyists and political advisers working for policy change^[3]. As a result, Papanikolaou was consulted, in 2013, by a group led by MP Vassiliki Katrivanou, working on the proposal for a bill on gay marriage and new legislation on homophobic crimes^[4].

Moreover, in May 2013 Papanikolaou was invited to participate in a consultation event on the gay marriage bill, gender politics, and the new policy agendas needed to combat homophobia, organized by the main opposition Greek party SYRIZA in the Greek parliament. According to shadow minister Rena Dourou, who was present in the event, Papanikolaou’s articles “*are currently having an immense educational impact on MPs, political activists and policymakers; he is providing us with a new vocabulary to tackle very important challenges.*”

Influencing policies of educational and cultural institutions

Papanikolaou’s work on the poet Cavafy, has led to a reconsideration of the queer aspects of the author’s work in Greece (where this issue is still treated as taboo), and impacted on the official

cultural policies of Greek cultural and educational institutions regarding this central Greek author. In January 2013 Papanikolaou was appointed by the Greek Ministry of Culture to stand on its Cavafy Committee advising on and distributing funding for new media and performance activities for the 150th anniversary of Cavafy's birth. His input induced the Ministry to adopt 'Cavafy and communities of readers' as a central policy priority. Moreover, the Onassis Foundation, which acquired the Cavafy Archive in early 2013, has appointed Papanikolaou as an advisor, and used his work in the promotion of their celebration of Cavafy's poetry. *'Dr Papanikolaou's academic work [...] has inspired and influenced how the Cavafy Archive approaches the legacy it plays host to and the events of the Onassis Cultural Centre relating to it.[...] This report and Dr Papanikolaou's overall advice have been stimulating, invigorating and inspiring. They have given us important directions and impacted upon the way we planned our big campaign...'*^[5]

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

Testimonials

- [1] Testimonials can be provided by journalist, Newspaper Efimerida Syntakton
- [2] Email statement from London Correspondent for the Nation and the BBC
- [3] Testimonial can be provided by Professor of Law, Director of the Birkbeck Institute of the Humanities, Birkbeck University of London
- [4] Testimonial can be provided by MP for the Greek Parliament
- [5] Email statement from Executive Vice-Director, The Onassis Cultural Centre

Other sources

- [i] Evidence of Papanikolaou's writing in the Greek national press http://www.biblionet.gr/author/51708/Παπανικολάου,_Δημήτρης,_λέκτορας_νεοελληνικής_λογοτεχνίας
- [ii] 'Είμαστε όλοι ξεσκισμένες αδερφές; Ομοφυλοφιλία, Χρυσή Αυγή και Ομοκοινωνικότητα' ['Are we all fucked queers? Homosexuality, homosociality and Golden Dawn'] published 21 October 2012 in Avgi <http://archive.avgi.gr/ArticleActions/show.action?articleID=722396>
- [iii] Alina A tweet on 22 October 2012 <https://twitter.com/littledirigible/status/260304283256356864> with link to article here <http://enthemata.wordpress.com/2012/10/21/papanikolaou-3/> and 'geosoi' comment is in the reader comments on this page.
- [iv] [Ρατσισμός, Ομοφοβία και Θανατοπολιτική] ['Racism, homophobia and thanatopolitics in the current crisis']. Public lecture delivered on 26 February 2013 in the Cultural Centre of the Athens Municipality <http://vimeo.com/60753243> Summary in Avgi 10/02/2013 <http://www.avgi.gr/article/101935/omofobia-ratsismos-kai-thanatopolitiki>
Examples of social media influence: <http://rednotebook.gr/details.php?id=8958>;
<http://lgbtgreece.wordpress.com/2013/03/10/omofobia-ratsismos-thanatopolitiki/>;
<http://artfullyonsaturday.wordpress.com/2013/03/10/ομοφοβια-ρατσισμος-και-θανατοπολιτι/>
- [v] The Cavafy Symposium, 18-20 June 2013, University of New South Wales, Sydney <http://au.greekreporter.com/2013/06/03/unsw-pays-tribute-to-cavafy/>
Antipodes Writers Festival: Celebrating Constantine Cavafy, 22 and 23 June 2013, Melbourne <http://www.antipodesfestival.com.au/antipodes-writers-festival/antipodes-writers-festival-celebrates-constantine-cavafy/biographies/>
- [vi] Queertrans internet forum (in Greek) excerpt of comments following Papanikolaou's lecture and sharing of work <http://queertrans.espiv.net/forum/index.php?topic=866.0>
- [vii] «Στρέλλα: Μια ταινία για όλη την οικογένεια» [Essay on the film *Strella: A Woman's Way*, first published in *The Athens Review of Books*, December 2009 http://www.booksreview.gr/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=65:-3-2009&catid=39:-3-2009-&Itemid=55, and republished together with the film's screenplay in the book *Strella* (Athens: Polychromos Planetes, 2010), pp. 9-24. <http://www.colourfulplanet.com/searchresult.php?id=4632&product=%D3%D4%D1%C5%CB%CB%C1> Video of the event: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jD-liXX4nW4>
- [viii] Ministry announcements regarding the 'Cavafy committee' http://www.yppo.gr/2/g22.jsp?obj_id=53292, including the announcement about 'Communities of readers'. <http://www.enet.gr/?i=news.el.article&id=347259>