

## Reflection on the 2018 LOVA International Summer School

**Emily Zinkin**

When I arrived for the 2018 LOVA Summer School (2-5 July in Amsterdam) I was both excited and nervous. I had never formally studied anthropology before, but had seen it in every facet of what I had; from history to literature and everything in between. I needn't have worried. The very first day of *Unschooling the Anthropologist* was about unschooling education, and how the strict divides and formats of traditional academia need to be examined. Already interested in the subject, this put me in the right frame of mind to make the most and feel like I could contribute to the rest of the week.

Having been unschooled about education, we started the second day of the Summer School, rethinking gender and sexuality: ready to re-examine another supposedly fundamental part of the way we perceive the world. Alex Thinius' lecture about different meanings and definitions of gender was a helpful dissection of terms and schools of thought around the topic, whilst also breaking down each one to show there is no clear or perfect definition of gender for all that it is often treated as clear cut. Minds still reeling we then went to a nearby park for a more physical workshop on gendered, or ying and yang, movement with Jethro Rahajaan. The workshop looked at the strengths and weaknesses of each type of movement and physically demonstrated how both are needed. The final lecture of the day was by Marijke Naezer on

'sexy anthropology', where she went through her research on digital youth cultures. Looking at the way young people view sex and relationships and how changing technology and platforms interact with that was fascinating and showed the complexities of such thought patterns and how different gendered standards still exist. Even more importantly, it demonstrated the gap between Western media's panic and portrayal over sharing explicit material and the complexity of the sexual and digital lives of youth.

The next day we made our way to Café OKO to rethink the development sector, starting with a lecture by Hanneke Pot and Marielle le Mat on education and development goals. We began by going through the changing role of NGOs from representations of the grassroots, then as service providers and now as designers and implementors of global policy priorities. Through this we could better understand how they work with local communities and where the various brokers come into the system, from local development brokers and translators, to 'knowledge brokers', norm entrepreneurs and public servants. This showed us how concepts such as empowerment are translated differently at different levels and in different countries, and how this made it difficult to understand if goals were being met, or even if they were effective goals in the first place.

It also brought on an excellent discussion of culturalism, and how culture is dynamic and intersects with social and economic structures. But because culture is not uniform it is difficult to grasp and often blamed for everything in terms of project failure: from gender-based violence to HIV and teenage pregnancy. Because of this, there is a need to look at the broader development industry and mindset effect, as

culturalism travels from policy to classroom and blamed for why change is difficult to make.

After this we did a street exercise to show how we could apply these concepts to everywhere, and we went out to look at gender norms in the surrounding area and discussed them after lunch. The final workshop of the day was on humanitarian communications, where Wouter Oomen discussed how the way humanitarian organisations used communications was directly connected to their work. We looked at ‘good’ and ‘bad’ charity communications and talked about how it was imperative these organisations considered the agency, dignity and voice for the people they claimed to be helping in their campaigns.

On the penultimate day we focused on rethinking health, stress and emotions, beginning with a lecture by Kathy Davis on unschooling emotions and their relationship with academia. Due to the perceived divide between emotions and rationality there is mainstream idea that one cannot study what one is passionate about because it ‘infects’ subjectivity and neutrality. However, we examined how Gender studies had begun to critique this concept, though this had also brought about the concept of ‘good’ and ‘bad passions’. Ultimately, Davis believes we need to put that aside and look at why people have passion and why these passions are important in their lives, including all the contradictory thoughts and ideas this brings with it.

After this we had a stress workshop with Daniel Eagles and Emmy de Wit, where we planned our perfect day and then examined what we could do to make our lives more like that to minimise stress. We also looked at different diet models and discussed trying out different things to find out what works for

us as individuals. Finally, we had a live theatre workshop with Frank Kupper where we made scenes which individuals had to interpret and then remake to deal with what they saw.

We spent the last day rethinking history, beginning very aptly in the grounds of the Tropenmuseum. In a workshop by Abhishek Thapar we were given several historical photos with no context and discussed the immediate presumptions we had about them based on historical narrative. We then created new narratives for them that broke with these prescribed moulds and had a storytelling session based on these.

Afterwards we returned to CEDLA for an incredibly useful session on fundraising by Somaye Dehban, where she discussed various non-traditional fundraising methods and places to look, including how to combine projects to maximise funds. Finally, we had a fascinating gendered tour of the Rijksmuseum by Carola Lammers. Here we examined the historical symbolism and context of some of the most famous paintings and contrasted them with the 19<sup>th</sup> century descriptions, which had changed them because of more recent sensibilities.

Finishing with a picnic, we spent the rest of the afternoon discussing our experiences and impressions of the summer school with our convenors Emmy de Wit and Irene Arends, and were lucky enough to be joined by LOVA chair Marina de Regt. It was a brilliant week that challenged us with what we needed to unlearn to properly examine the world around us and made us think in different ways. But more importantly, it made me realise that multiple forms of examination – from holistic to academic – are needed, and it was the support of everyone and openness to new ideas and

discussion that stays with me. And for that, I would like to thank LOVA and everyone involved.

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**Nine de Jonge**

During the summer, I attended LOVA's International Summer School on Unschooling the Anthropologist. We spent one full week with an international group in Amsterdam. The program was just as diverse as the group. There was a good balance between listening and discussing, and more physical activities. Instead of starting with an introductory round, everybody was encouraged to host a session. This is a more unschooled way of getting to know each other, as it puts all the individuals in charge. Where one group would walk through the garden and observe, I opened my session with a discussion on what gender means to everyone.

Particularly fun was the water and rock exercise. We went to a park in Amsterdam, where we practised several contact exercises. One of these was an exploration of force and flexibility. The goal was to push the other away, whilst not moving your feet and staying balanced yourself. With this exercise you learn that the key is to be flexible. Not just force, but flowing with the movements of the other is just as important



We were leading each other through the park, while the other person was blindfolded. We needed to lean into someone else, while around this person, who needed to stay grounded. Such physical exercises are also used for teambuilding, as you come close to people, need to collaborate and trust each other. We needed to lean into someone else, while walking around this person, who needed to stay grounded. Such physical exercises are also used for teambuilding, as you come close to people, need to collaborate and trust each other.

Marijke Naezer presented her research findings about sexting at Dutch schools. One finding was that sexting itself is not bad per se, because it is just exploratory behaviour. When these pictures become public, people often turn to victim blaming. There is a tendency to blame the person that is portrayed in the picture, whereas the person who forwards the picture should be held accountable. Marijke argued that it is important to talk more openly with the pupils and don't prohibit this behaviour. Because in fact, adolescents are waiting longer with practising sex due to the online activities. There is a larger barrier to intimate relations in real life.

One other perspective-shifting activity was called 'decolonisation', where we interpreted colonial pictures. One's first response is most probably 'this is a priest visiting a tribe in Africa, to preach Christianity and therefor poses on the picture with the chief'. The exercise was to create a different story to the picture. The story could just as well be, that the two men on the picture are the parents of two people who are getting married. They might wear their traditional clothing and just met each other because of the wedding. This exercise makes us aware that we think we know what we see, but that it is important to look beyond stereotypes.

For our final activity we visited the Rijksmuseum, where we had a gendered tour. We learned very interesting details on the symbolism of paintings and the story that the objects and the colours of a painting tell. The symbolism in the painting 'Love letter' from Vermeer shows that the lady is not that pleased with the letter of her husband who will come back home after being at sea, because she has a lover. Another interesting fact was that the under chin of women was highly eroticised in certain paintings.

LOVA's International Summer School covered many different subjects and perspectives. Our anthropological souls were fed.