



– Institute's Colloquium –

Prof. Dr. Ioannis Manos
(University of Macedonia)

Dancing on the Border in Northern Greece: Politics of Identity and Culture in Southeast Europe

This presentation explores the political dimensions of cultural performance and contributes to the understanding of the ways in which dance, as a form of expressive culture, is employed by the state and non-state agents in engaging with politics at local, national and international levels. The ethnographic material derives from a long-term fieldwork in the Florina region, a border area in north-western Greece, at the international borders with the Republic of Macedonia and Albania.

In the post-1990 era, the increasing importance of the global discourse on the protection of cultural difference and minority rights and the political activity of the then established (1994) Macedonian minority political party transformed folk dance performances into the means and the context in which various agents employed ideas of authenticity and cultural purity to construct and demonstrate mutually exclusive identities and cultures and achieve specific political, cultural and/or economic goals. Minority activists exploited dance and its practices in their struggle to legitimate their cause. These developments generated counter-actions which caused the Greek official position to be promoted even more intensely. Dance events were presented and perceived as visualisations of the supposed groups' 'cultures' in which their members performed their identity and, thus, proved the existence of a different collective identity.

Dance events are dense and highly politicised, transformative cultural practices. They are embedded in power relations between collectivities and individuals as they have been configured by the state, and by current transnational forces and discourses. Dance performances are seen as intensely generative spatiotemporal fields for the construction and reformulation of discourses, identities, memory and historicity. Examining the construction of identity at the collective and the individual level, the presentation demonstrates the ways diverse social actors consciously reject subject positions and identities assigned to them and shift from one possible position to another. In this process, they draw on local, national and transnational discourses and use cultural institutions as vehicles for promoting their agendas.

Wednesday, June 14th 2017

4-6 p.m.

**Institute of Ethnology
Stuttstraße 21, Raum STU 105 (2.10)**

Everybody is welcome!