

Marble brochure 2020-2021

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1. On Expedition – Travels into the Unknown

Reading travel books is fascinating. They tell us about other countries, other cultures, other times, about unknown if not unattainable worlds. In this Marble-project, students can read from within the safe confines of a library about the often risky adventures of travellers in ‘other’ regions and amongst ‘strange’ peoples. In this era of increasing globalization, growing mobility and cultural exchanges, the interest in travel books and travel accounts is at least as strong as it used to be in Europe’s former empires. These books are full of stories of encounters with the ‘Other’, thus touching on issues related to the interplay of ‘other’ *and* ‘own’ identity, of cultural differences *and* similarities. Travel descriptions do not only provide insight into other peoples and cultures, but have as much to say about the person who writes about them, notably his or her perspective, norms, values, assumptions and biases.

The hybrid genre of travel writing is interesting because it potentially covers a multitude of subjects: (natural) history, religion, geography, economy, natural science, ethnography, anthropology and so on. The travel books are selected from the University Library’s ‘Jesuits Collection’. This collection consists of some 260,000 volumes and comprises many lavishly illustrated travel books, most of which date from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The books not only address Catholic missionary zeal, but deal also with trade missions and scientific expeditions. Students *and* supervisors – On Expedition is a collaborative project – are challenged to make their own way in the vast field of travel treasures. Careful interpretation is needed.

During the project students are challenged to broaden their mental maps. The thematic focus is not fixed. Once a joint decision is made about the theme, we

create 'common ground', so that a more comparative perspective between the students' research endeavors becomes possible. Do you want to join us with a focus on the intentions and effects of 'Othering' or with a focus on the exchange / transmission of (scientific) knowledge, for example in connection with the political structure of the unknown society that is explored? Or would you rather familiarize yourself with missionary projects to convert 'the natives', including indigenous children?

The sources in the library are in Dutch, French, German, English and Latin, so students can choose books that match their language skills. Moreover, many books are accessible via Google (often in English). This Marble-project values societal impact. So, results of the research project will be added to Wikipedia / Wikimedia. Putting together an exhibition in the Administrative Building is another possibility.

Coordination:

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Prof. dr. Lies Wesseling (FASoS) (Lies.Wesseling@maastrichtuniversity.nl)

2. Investigating the 'coronacrisis'

Break-downs of society such as the 'coronacrisis' make visible and challenge what is taken for granted and regarded as normal. They offer opportunities to study how societies deal with (uncertain) risks and about their resilience. When is something called a crisis, which metaphors are used, and which effects does this have? How does a crisis confirm or challenge (relations between) the domains of science, politics, technologies, nature, climate and societies? How was the relationship between science and politics continued, changed and presented in different countries? How did citizens deal with conflicting scientific expertise? How are ideas about climate and nature challenged? How does the search for vaccines and medicines and collaborations between scientists and nations differ from 'normal' trajectories? What role do and did (for some ordinary, for some new) technologies play in (coping with) the crisis (e.g. computers, online teaching, facemasks)? Which (new) normative questions are raised, e.g. in the global context and with regard to inequalities? And how can we draw which lessons from such a crisis?

This Marble project will engage with such questions. It will investigate the 'coronacrisis' in light of other crises. Students will read common literature related to crises, disaster management, science and technology studies, and other issues and fields. As the corona crisis is continuously evolving, no overall research direction is set at this stage. Students develop a common research question with sub-questions for individual sub-questions which together help to answer the main question. Individual projects may well explore different aspects of the 'coronacrisis'. A number

of methodological approaches relevant to the sub-projects will be discussed (e.g. discourse analysis, interviewing, ethnography, boundary work).

We aim to actively engage with other relevant researchers (e.g. those who are funded by the 'societal dynamics' program of the COVID-19 Programme of the Dutch Research Council (NWO)) and societal actors. We will present our work to those (external) parties who have engaged with our research project in a form to be decided (e.g. presentation, exhibition, online platform).

Coordination

Dr. Ragna Zeiss (r.zeiss@maastrichtuniversity.nl)

3. History on Trial. Seeking truth and reconciliation after historical trauma

Over the last few decades, various attempts have been made to recover from major historical traumas resulting from war, genocide, mass violence and gross human rights violations. To that end, historical investigation commissions have been established, tasked with revealing past wrongdoing by previous political regimes and other institutions, in the hope of resolving conflict and lingering injuries left over from the past. Commissions that deal with the investigation of the past commonly serve a wider political agenda. By determining 'historical truth' they generally aim to contribute to reconciliation and justice, in order to heal the wounds of the past. Over the years, the list of historical investigation commissions has unremittingly been growing. In her pivotal study *Unspeakable Truth* (2010), Priscilla Hayner listed at least 40 truth commissions worldwide. A great variety of commissions has been established with different goals, ambitions and targets. Some commissions served a broad political agenda, such as the transition to democracy, the addressing of the legacies of slavery, or the recovering from war, political persecution and mass violence. Others operated with more targeted mandates related to the treatment of indigenous peoples or the compensation for financial or moral mistreatment. A more recent trend is the widening of thematic scopes: besides issues related to politically motivated mass violence, other wrongdoings and human right violations such as sexual abuse and the maltreatment of women and children in the past have become subject of growing attention.

Students taking part in this MARBLE project will study the various dimensions related to the institutional attempts to turn the spotlight on historical grievances. For that purpose, general literature on historical investigation commissions will be scrutinized. In addition, each student will study a particular case study. Students might be interested in looking at rather successful and well documented models over the last two decades (such as, for instance, the Enquiry Commission on the GDR past in Germany, or the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa), or they might prefer to study one of the more recent and lesser known examples (such as, for example, the Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Canada, or the Deetman Commission on Sexual Abuse in the Roman Catholic Church in the Netherlands). The list of potential topics is extensive (see

Hayner). In all case studies, at least four critical dimensions will be discussed: what are the specific political arrangements enabling the establishment of investigation commissions; what is the wider societal relevance and outreach; what are the specific legal ramifications; and what is the role of professional historians and historical research? Opportunities and challenges, as well as controversies and limitations will equally be discussed. Finally, the project will invite students to reflect on potential new scenarios to address the legacies of violent conflicts around the globe that have still not terminated yet.

Students with an interest in political history, transitional justice or international human rights are welcome to apply. The project is aimed at BA students from the Faculties of Arts and Social Sciences, Law and the University College Maastricht (UCM).

Coordination:

Prof. dr. G. Verbeeck, (Georgi.Verbeeck@maastrichtuniversity.nl)

4. We need to talk about the member states

The idea that the EU can make decisions against the national interest, stokes fear of sovereignty loss. Judging by the rise of Eurosceptic parties across Europe, this fear resonates increasingly well with a broader public. Past reforms to address the democratic deficit of the EU focused on the empowerment of the European parliament. Yet, how can an institution populated by a majority of 'detached europhiles' assuage the concerns of the Eurosceptic voter?

We often forget that most of the EU's contested policies have been shaped within institutions where national governments represent their electorate with a quasi-veto right. Moreover, it is widely known that national governments scapegoat 'Brussels' when a decision is domestically unpopular and claim the credit for EU decisions if they prove popular at home. But how do we know whether a country was indeed outvoted by other member states or whether our ire should be directed at our own government which was 'sleeping on the job' e.g. by failing to identify and defend key national interests during Council discussions? Or worse, that government officials make false statements about their actions at the EU-level? Here, questions of public accountability of national governments come into play. Do we know what our governments are doing in Brussels on our behalf? Who represents our country in the Council and its preparatory bodies? What position do they defend, and is this subject to democratic scrutiny?

This Marble project starts from the observation that we know far too little about the extent, frequency and mechanisms by which such information is made available. During last year's Marble, students developed a framework to identify different channels and (public) mechanisms through which national governments are held to account. Their fieldwork in nine different member states point primarily towards a lack of transparency and accessibility of information. In our project, we build on these insights and seek to develop a toolkit that empowers citizens. We will need to assess which information is crucial to enhance accountability, what data is missing and how we can realistically procure it in the time-frame of the Marble. The

primary deliverable (besides the thesis) will be a public website to host the developed material. Pending expertise, time availability, and interests from the students, we can also consider other initiatives to meet our objectives such as a series of blogposts and op-eds, organising a public debate, or a training session. The final grade for the project, however, will be solely based on the quality of the thesis. Skills taught can range from manual data coding, interviewing, experiments, webdesign, academic and popular writing, event organisation and document analysis.

The project is aimed at BA students from the Faculties of Arts and Social Sciences, Law and the UCM. A strong interest in member states' role in the EU, audio-visual and online media, and democratic governance are required from students.

Coordinator:

Dr. Johan Adriaensen (j.adriaensen@maastrichtuniversity.nl)

5. River Care in Europe: Policy, Participation and Protest

The European Water Framework Directive published in 2000 is far from being 'acqua passata'. Its main aim – 'good status' for all water bodies – is not likely to be achieved in the years to come. Moreover, the answers to questions as what a good status is, a good practice, or a sustainable river, are divergent and contested. Our project, therefore, looks into past, present and future relations with rivers in Europe in order to find out whether it is possible to ensure sustainable living along rivers in the face of rising water levels, continuing pollution and conservation demands.

We are especially interested in how to take care of rivers' natural and cultural heritage in the context of the 'Anthropocene', the geological period during which everything in the world is said to have a human fingerprint. Our MARBLE project seeks to identify and define the transformations needed for a river system that ensures the increased well-being of humans and non-humans.

The project looks at rivers throughout Europe and allows individual projects on every river, from the Rhine to the Jeker, from the Wolga to the River Laune in Ireland. Our starting point, however, will be the Meuse, the river you see or cross almost every day in Maastricht. Imagine walking along the Meuse and when you feel thirsty, drinking directly from the river, as people in the past. What would have to change to make this possible? What does a potable riverscape mean in terms of human-nature relations? What does it mean to balance old and new, integrate nature and culture, and allow cities and villages to enjoy the river throughout the year, in all its stages? Against the backdrop of shifting values, climate change, declining biodiversity and energy transition, this MARBLE-project focusses on heritage questions, environmental challenges, and policies as drivers of change.

Students will work on case studies based on what rivers have left behind, in terms of interventions in their course, bridges, archives, art, policies, theme parks and other

'collections'. Whereas the point of departure is multidisciplinary, individual projects are free to choose a path, within the requirements of your study program. You could engage with policy and media archives, archaeology, photography, people (through interviews) and publications related to rivers and river management, but you can also work on the study of the built environment, heritage sites, sediments, drift matter, rewilding efforts, and histories of pollution of the river. As part of this MARBLE-project students and coordinators will go on a series of river walks in order to draw inspiration from the physical space the Meuse valley occupies.

This MARBLE-project will be led by two coordinators – Nico Randeraad and Christian Ernten – who are both currently involved in a project on the Living History of the Meuse. Students can make use of their network of relevant societal and political organizations such as the International Meuse Committee, Rijkswaterstaat, Ark Nature, Natuurmonumenten and the Province of Limburg.

Coordinators:

Dr. Christian Ernten (c.ernsten@maastrichtuniversity.nl) and Prof. Dr. Nico Randeraad (n.randeraad@maastrichtuniversity.nl)

5. We need to talk about the member states

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Coordinator:

Dr. Johan Adriaensen (j.adriaensen@maastrichtuniversity.nl)

6. How the EU makes its legislation work

One of the main rationales of European integration has always been to help member states solve societal problems they cannot effectively tackle alone. In making its legislation work, the EU is strongly dependent on member states when it comes to implementation, as the EU does not have its own administrative machinery to put the pieces of legislation adopted in Brussels into practice. Crucially, the member states are responsible for policy delivery: making sure that the legislation works as intended by securing effective implementation and compliance at the national level.

The EU's system of decentral implementation creates manifold obstacles to effective policy delivery. Many EU directives leave member states leeway in adapting the rules to local circumstances. This not only results in considerable differences in legal settings between member states within the leeway allowed by EU law-makers, but also often enough in insufficient or incorrect transposition. The open resistance of several Eastern European governments against compliance with EU refugee quotas is just one highly visible example of what usually amounts to much less easily detectable forms of resistance or neglect. Even more troublesome is the stage of practical implementation. The norms contained in a European regulation or a transposed directive need to be implemented in practice. Public authorities may be unwilling or unable to monitor compliance, as evidenced by the Dieselgate scandal, which identified national authorities as unwilling to enforce European emission standards.

In sum, the EU faces a wide gap between the law on the books and the law in action. This policy performance gap poses a serious problem for the EU's mission to solve problems that have outgrown domestic governance arenas. Few observers would dispute that environmental problems with trans-border characteristics are best addressed at a European or even global level. But if domestic bureaucracies do not

adhere to these, or are unwilling or unable to impose effective sanctions against norm violations, the underlying environmental problems cannot be tackled. The same is true for other EU laws in fields ranging from security (e.g. drug trafficking) or workers' rights (e.g. guaranteeing fair employment conditions for posted workers) to consumer protection (e.g. ensuring high standards of data protection) or public procurement (e.g. making sure that public authorities do not unfairly advantage national companies over companies from other member states when buying goods or services). In all these cases, solving common societal problems depends on policy delivery at the national level.

This Marble project allows students to select their own policy case study to further explore the potential problems to policy delivery in that particular field. Using the various theoretical approaches of the enforcement school, the management school, and the legitimacy school, we explore the underlying reasons for problematic policy delivery in the EU, and aim to provide potential solutions to solving such problems.

Coordinator:

Prof.dr. Esther Versluis (e.versluis@maastrichtuniversity.nl)

7. The Illiberal Turn in Post-Communist Societies: Comparative Democratization and De-democratization of Eastern Europe

The unification of Europe symbolised by the EU's enlargement to Central and Eastern Europe in 2004-7 has been celebrated as one of the biggest achievements of the European integration project in its recent political history. Not only did it bring peace and prosperity to the continent, but it also exemplified the most successful external democracy promotion project in history. Fifteen years after the EU's eastern enlargement and thirty years after the Fall of the Berlin Wall, the optimism of these early assessments has given way to a sobering political reality characterised by steady democratic erosion in the eastern EU member states and a declining potential of the EU to inspire democratic change further East, in particular in the candidate countries from the Western Balkans and the partner states from the Eastern Partnership. This has further undermined the internal cohesion of the EU and the external credibility of its foreign policy.

This project is designed to examine the internal challenges to the EU democratic acquis arising from the democratic backsliding in the eastern EU member states and the implications for the EU's external democracy promotion role, most notably in the context of the EU enlargement policy and the Eastern Partnership. It will first explore the theoretical debates about democratic transition and consolidation focusing on the domestic factors conducive to democratization. It will then analyse the external dimension of democratization, notably the EU's policies and mechanisms of promoting political change beyond its borders. It will finally examine case studies from three groups of countries from Eastern Europe – the eastern EU member states, the candidate countries from the Western Balkans and the partner states

from the Eastern Partnership – in order to gain an understanding of the democratization and de-democratization trends, the domestic obstacles to democratic change and the EU's role in influencing democratic governance in different domestic settings. The course thus acquaints students with the most recent literature building on the seminal works in democratization studies and offering a comparison of the EU's varied impact on democratic progress and regress across Eastern Europe.

The project has five distinct components: 1) Seminars devoted to discussion of the relevant literatures; 2) Skills Training on research design and methodology during which students are guided to develop an original research paper; 3) Independent research leading to a research paper/ BA thesis during which students help each other progress on their research projects via peer-review exercises in class; 4) Collective source gathering of academic literature, official documents and policy reports leading to the assembling of an Online Resource Portal on democracy in Eastern Europe; 5) Final conference during which project participants will share their research findings with each other and with invited guests.

The project is aimed at BA students from the Faculties of Arts and Social Sciences, Law, Economics and the University College Maastricht. It is required that students have a good knowledge of European institutions and policies and an interest in the international role of the EU.

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8. Internet Freedom and Digital Rights

The idea of the Internet as a place of freedom is closely connected to its development. From its inception, the Internet aimed to facilitate access to and free exchange of information among networks of computers. It is a decentralised network, meaning that there is not a single entity (for example, a country or company) controlling every aspect of it. In its early days, it was furthermore argued that, by providing access to otherwise inaccessible information, increased Internet access could serve as a democratising force, for example in non-democratic countries. Yet, as Internet access across the globe has surged, so have efforts to condition what we are allowed and able to do and say online. As a result, Internet freedom today has come to denote both freedom of access and online freedom of expression.

Building upon democracy and press freedom indexes, the level of Internet freedom across the world is actively monitored by various international (non-profit) organisations. But how are these rankings actually formulated? How does the concept of Internet freedom relate to civic freedoms and human rights, and to what extent is this connection effectively represented in Internet freedom rankings? Is there a need for states to recognise *digital* rights, and if yes, how should these rights

be formulated and protected? In this Marble project, students will collectively seek to answer these and related questions by developing a joint research aim and relevant sub-projects. The students will benefit from and be able to contribute to an ongoing research project conducted by the coordinator, Mariëlle Wijermars, in collaboration with Tetyana Lokot (Dublin City University) that critically assesses the conceptualisation of Internet freedom and how it is measured in International freedom rankings. The aim of the project is to move away from currently used metrics, that, in effect, tend to replicate how the degree of democratic/non-democratic governance is measured, by developing an alternative framework for assessing freedom and rights in the digital domain.

In this Marble project, students will collectively study relevant literature on Internet freedom, human rights and the politics of rankings. Students subsequently define their own research focus within the topic of Internet freedom and digital rights and the overarching research objective formulated by the group. Final papers may employ, e.g., historical, philosophical, political, legal, cultural studies or STS approaches.

The project is aimed at BA students from the Faculties of Arts and Social Sciences, Law, and the University College Maastricht. An interest in digital technologies, governance and/or human rights is required.

Coordinator: Dr. Mariëlle Wijermars, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (m.wijermars@maastrichtuniversity.nl).