

**Seminar on Anchoring Innovation – Ineke Sluiter ([i.sluiter@hum.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:i.sluiter@hum.leidenuniv.nl)).**  
**Berlin, May 2013.**

**Anchoring innovation** is the overarching research theme of OIKOS, the national research school of the Dutch classicists. We investigate the phenomenon of ‘innovation’ in the ancient world, and are particularly interested in the way innovations are embedded in and attached to what is older, traditional, known. We also look into ancient attitudes towards innovation. OIKOS feels that this research agenda is timely because ‘innovative societies’ are high on our contemporary societal agendas.

Innovation may apply to different domains, not always separated in classical antiquity: linguistic, literary or otherwise cultural, intellectual, religious or ritual, political or institutional, technological. The process or activity of attaching the new to the old can be identified in all of these. We will use the term **anchoring** for this. This concept of **anchoring** will be used to synthesize knowledge and terminology currently employed in different disciplines and theoretical frameworks, apparently without a realization of important common ground. The theory of **anchoring** will make it possible to study these different phenomena from a common point of view and consider them as aspects of a whole.

In this seminar we will look at different aspects: ‘agents’, devices, strategies, and practices’, and ‘nodes’.

Both in the coming-into-being of innovation and in its anchoring different kinds of **agents** play a role, e.g. rulers, inventors, cultural brokers or mediators, early adopters, different social groups.

The process or activity of anchoring itself makes use of different **devices, strategies, and practices**. A modern example is the design of an app to download a digital version of a newspaper: the user is invited to click on an icon showing a ‘paper’ newspaper displayed in a traditional kiosk. An ancient example of a similar strategy is the imitation in stone of the wooden pegs attaching roof beams on a temple, which had become redundant when stone replaced wood as a building material: like the newspaper in the kiosk, this would make the new structure look familiarly similar to the old. Literary examples also come to mind easily: a whole series of ancient authors manage to present themselves somehow or other as the new Homer (Simonides, Herodotus, Ennius, Vergil, to name just some of the obvious contenders).

Apart from agents and practices, a third way to research **anchoring innovation** is through the identification of ‘**nodes**’, places or times that are either especially symbolically charged, or at which especially concentrated innovation took place so that their need for anchoring is palpable. As an example of the former, we may think of famous temple complexes such as Delphi or Eleusis (both internationally known and with rich symbolic associations in the ancient world), or places at which decisive battles took place at a historical junction of particularly vivid impact on cultural memory, such as Marathon. Nodes of concentrated innovation can be identified in the major transitions in fifth-century Athens, or in Augustan Rome, both sites of ‘global’ interaction in all domains of innovation. Finally, the ancient world itself is an obvious anchoring device or storehouse of different anchoring devices in the modern world.

Contributions are invited that address some aspect of the phenomenon of Anchoring Innovation.

