



**H.F.R.I.**  
Hellenic Foundation for  
Research & Innovation

**Description of the funded research project  
“Contextualizing biobanking in Greece: histories,  
practices, discourses — BIO-CONTEXT”**

**2nd Call for H.F.R.I. Research Projects  
to Support Post-Doctoral Researchers**

**Title of the research project:**  
Contextualizing biobanking in Greece: histories, practices, discourses



Source: THE LANCET, 2015  
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**Principal Investigator:** Katerina Vlantoni

**Reader-friendly title:** BIO-CONTEXT

**Scientific Area:** Humanities & Arts

**Institution and Country:** National and Kapodistrian  
University of Athens, Greece

**Host Institution:** Department of History and  
Philosophy of Science, School of Science, National  
and Kapodistrian University of Athens

**Collaborating Institutions:** Maastricht University  
(NL) & University of York (UK)

**Project webpage:** *under construction*

### Research Team



Katerina Vlantoni | Yulie Foka-Kavalieraki | George Zoukas  
(PI)

**Postdoctoral researchers**

**Budget:** 134.714,00 €

**Duration:** 30 months

## Research Project Synopsis

Drawing on approaches from the History of Biomedical Science and Technology, and the interdisciplinary field of study known as ‘Science, Technology, Society’ or ‘Science and Technology Studies’ (STS), we will contextualize the emergence of biobanks in Greece by addressing three interrelated questions: *How were biobanks introduced and developed? How do they actually work? How are they being communicated?*

BIO-CONTEXT aims at an understanding of biobanks through a focus on their histories, practices and discourses. We will examine biobanking practices in relation to the collection of biological material and data of relevance to it. BIO-CONTEXT studies how biobanks/biorepositories are positioned in a biomedical/research/clinical landscape formed by publics, patients, researchers, regulators, research institutions, clinical facilities and industries. We are especially interested in the role of biobanks as enterprises of the so-called “bioeconomy”. BIO-CONTEXT includes a detailed study of two representative Greek biobanks: a hospital-based (disease specific) and a research-based (providing bio-samples and bio-data for research).

## Project originality

**Our theoretical approach is inspired by work that understands the contents of biobanks as “bio-objects”, as new living materials that disrupt formerly established boundaries and modes of ordering. We consider biobanks as contested sites of collection of human biological material. The innovativeness of the BIOCONTEXT approach is based on the emphasis on the engagement of the bio-object with regulations, its manipulation and standardization, and potentially, its usability as a stabilized technical object.**

**Designed as a historical/STS study of past and present biobanks/biorepositories, BIO-CONTEXT will identify the continuities and changes that problematize the notion of “new” and its attributes, rhetorical and material. The project will cover a gap in regards to studies of biobanking in Greece. BIO-CONTEXT will, more generally, help in advancing the scholarly study of critical fields of biomedical science and technology from History of Science and Technology and STS perspectives.**

## Expected results & Research Project Impact

**The BIO-CONTEXT research will take place just as biobanking activities are expanding in Greece. Large biomedical projects are advanced in the country, alongside their linking to European, and global, infrastructures. Our project will provide a better understanding of the ways in which populations are brought into global systems of tissue and information exchange and flows. At the same time, it will provide a more sound basis for developing regulatory and other public policies for the biobanking sector. Moreover, it will also provide a framework for understanding the role of the science communication in the case of a critical field of biomedical science and technology. This can be used to develop guidelines for journalists and all those involved in media policymaking. Last but not least, BIO-CONTEXT can provide critical input to ethics/bioethics discussions that take place in the context of relevant committees and regulatory authorities.**

**BIO-CONTEXT promises to add substantially to the historical and STS study of biomedical science and technology in Greece, while, at the same time, offering a basis for comparisons that will be of interest to the international scholarly community.**

## The importance of this funding

**The three postdoctoral researchers of the BIO-CONTEXT team will have a unique opportunity to undertake socially useful and innovative research, and to enhance their academic careers through academic publications and research networking opportunities.**

**The knowledge to be produced through BIO-CONTEXT will be disseminated broadly so as to bring in direct contact research on biomedical science and technology and research on the historical and STS study of biomedical science and technology.**



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