

### **Anthropology and Culture: a Key to Several Doors**

Some days ago I received a friend's CV who is a PhD student in anthropology at a university in Netherland. I was astonished by the number of international conferences, workshops and events she had participated in; and honestly I got a little jealous. Taking part in international events is a useful and interesting experience. As well as sharing ideas with a group of scholars, getting to know new people, broadening one's social-scientific network and putting one's ideas in to test and getting feedback, visiting academic and collegial atmospheres in a foreign country university can also be motivating. My experience is that Iranian academic arena and atmosphere, except for the order and environmental beauty, is not much different from foreign universities. I am not claiming that we can compete with high quality universities of the world; however, my perception is that most of the problems of the Iranian academia have an external source and are not generated by academics or students. This is an idea I expressed also at the closing session of ISA 12<sup>th</sup> international laboratory for PhD students in sociology; that Iranian social science scholars are not weak but marginalized by some structural factors.

Taking part in international events is an experience which many Iranian students and academics are deprived of for several reasons. Maybe the most important reason is not having substantial financial resources; as Iranian universities do not sponsor such activities appropriately. Taking part in such events mostly costs a lot. Asian events usually cost less than events held in rich western countries. Participating in an event held in countries such as India and Malaysia are much easier because of less expenses as well as not being imposed to go through complicated procedures of getting a visa. Some Iranian academics prefer to participate in events with cheaper registration fees; the decision may be good for their budget but it usually affects the expected outcome of the event. Many cheap events do not have proper proceedings and don't add weight to one's CV. Such difficulties have affected Iranian scholars' participation in the international academic dialogue in many disciplines such as social sciences.

One of the current disputes in contemporary social science studies is how to move towards a global social science. The aim of such debates is to distribute scientific findings regardless of where, when and by whom they have been produced and make them available for all. Foundation of multi-language databases such as the Global Dialogue (<http://isa-global-dialogue.net/>) by the ISA is a move towards formation of such global social science by surpassing the hegemony of a few languages and the scientific colonialism.

Iranian scholars' contribution to such a movement is still very little. Contribution can be elevated by publishing scientific achievements in internationally accessible articles, taking part and holding international or regional events, becoming active members in scientific networks and associations and etc. The hegemony of English language has also played a key role in the underdevelopment of Iranian contribution in global scientific activities. This problem is not limited to Iran; but in other countries similar to Iran in which there is no vigorous formal English training and students have very little or no knowledge of language when they enter university, there is a much lower chance of scientific production in English language.

In the current context, a quick and easy solution for the previously discussed problems seems out of reach; but Iranians can construct similar networks and relations that we lack inside the country. We can hold workshops and provide courses and conferences with similar themes as a substitute to international events we cannot participate in. We can also form groups of translators to make it possible for Iranian scientific community to have

access to fresh scientific materials. We can construct working groups with several themes and subjects and by holding orderly sessions and writing and publishing the outcomes get closer to the dynamic current of global social science.

This is what I think *Anthropology and Culture* (<http://anthropology.ir/>) has been trying to get done in the last eight years. Culture and anthropology is not only a website but an inter-related network of scholars and people interested in anthropology and social sciences. The institute has tried to work in the framework of what is called public sociology by distributing knowledge by and for the people and has established connections with the random readers. One of the most outstanding achievements of *Anthropology and Culture* is to make good use of students' scientific and executive capacities. The student community gathered by the institute is shaped and based on mutual trust on the value of works done by other colleagues and commitment to punctuality.

In the beginning of the ninth year of its activity, *Anthropology and Culture* is planning to go beyond the country borders and tighten its connections with international scholars, students and academics. This is an effective step in our goal of approaching to a global social science. Increasing interactions with foreign scholars would also help develop the contribution of Iranian scholars in the global current of knowledge formation.

The institute is also planning to hold weekly scientific sessions, courses and workshops to compensate for the gap which Iranian students usually face in this sphere.

After referring to the contributions of *Anthropology and Culture* to the contemporary social science in Iran, it is only fair to point out its weaknesses too. One main existing issue is that all activities of the community are located in the capital city. This problem may have arisen from other sources; laziness of social scholars in other locations or lack of facilities to handle such activities in those universities might have played a part in keeping them away from the current; wherever the source lies, the problem stays the same. Centralization of the activities in the capital has limited them to a smaller audience. Increasing interaction between the universities located in Tehran and those in other cities can multiply the voices and contribute to the formation of a more vigorous scientific network.

*Anthropology and Culture* is celebrating its entrance in to the ninth year of activity. Let us hope that the huge community of students, academics and interested audience will lead it to a better position in the future.

Ladan Rahbari

PhD candidate in sociology

University of Mazandaran

[Rahbari.ladan@gmail.com](mailto:Rahbari.ladan@gmail.com)