(RE)CONNECTING GLOBAL AND LOCAL ANTHROPOLOGIES – MINUTES FROM A PANEL

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The panel '(Re)Connecting Global and Local Anthropologies: Debating UNESCO's World Social Science Report 2010 and the World Anthropologies Network' was held on October 5, 2010 as the closing event of the 'Globalization and Anthropology' session of the IUAES Inter-Congress held in Antalya, Turkey in October 3–6, 2010.

Before proceeding with the panel, I would like to say a few words on the session 'Globalization and Anthropology', which was one of the most popular themes of the Inter-Congress, drawing 27 (accepted) submissions. Hence, it had to be divided into three parts. The first part of the session, entitled 'Globalization and Anthropology: Clues for a Global Ethnography' was devoted to empirical work undertaken in global settings and it included papers by distinguished anthropologists such as Ceres Brum (Brazil), Laurence Bakker (Netherlands), Rosita Dellios (Australia), and Halasur Matt Maralusiddaiah (India).

In the second part, 'Problems of Epistemology for a Global Anthropology', the questions on epistemology were debated. Papers by Cristina Amescua Chávez (Mexico), Henk Pauw (South Africa), Leonid Grinin (Russia), and Andrey Korotayev (Russia) were presented in this part.

The second part was closed with the above-mentioned panel, organized by Gustavo Lins Ribeiro (Brazil) and Yasmeen Arif (India) and chaired by myself.

UNESCO's World Social Science Report released in June 2010 has, as its central theme, the 'knowledge divides' between the English-speaking developed countries and 'the perspectives and paradigms that are embedded in other cultural and linguistic traditions'.

This is a theme which has long been on the agenda of most non-Western anthropologists (and of the World Anthropologies Network [WAN]), who favor the formation of horizontal links between non-central anthropologies that do not pass through an 'epistemological center'. In this panel we wanted to further the discussion, in view of searching new ways for creating an eccentric epistemology for the discipline, an epistemology which is dominated neither by the mainstream traditions of the discipline, nor by English as a mono-language. We also emphasized that such a search must at the same time distance itself from the logic of the market, aiming instead to a free, liberating and humanizing dialogue between diverse participants.

The panelists were distinguished anthropologists coming from different backgrounds and anthropological traditions. Most of the contributions furthered and refined the distinction raised by the UNESCO's report, warning against the essentialising tendencies inherent in most of the 'indigenist' anthropologies, as well as providing us with fresh insights as to the formation of a global and non-excluding cartography of knowledge-production.

The first speaker was Petr Skalník from the University of Pardubice and the Vice-President of the IUAES. In his paper 'Globalizing Anthropology: How to Proceed', Professor Skalník seemed to mostly draw upon his definition of globalization, as 'a process whereby multiplicity of free and active actors and factors are at play and whose direction and quality can be adjusted and perhaps even redirected if necessary' in his treatment of the terms 'the globalization of anthropology'. In his intervention during the panel, he appealed to the globalizing capacity of anthropology to save the discipline – which is considered 'useless' at best, and 'dangerous' for worse, by the power holders – from the threat of being obliterated or even destroyed. For Professor Skalník, international organizations such as the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (IUAES) and the World Council of Anthropological Associations (WCAA) 'as well as continental, regional and national associations of anthropologists' are appropriate vehicles to carry on the process of globalizing anthropology, while keeping the discipline's pluralism, and the anthropologists' freedom of speech. Such organizations may be instrumental in demonstrating to the public, governments and NGOs that there is a science of humanity that produces knowledge 'which has to be respected and utilized for the benefit of better governance, more democracy and less oppression and poverty'.

Professor Skalník insisted that the globalized anthropology should be 'decentralized, though coordinated'. In order to overcome traditional hierarchies of knowledge/power within the discipline, he suggested that anthropologies of former colonies should be encouraged to study the former metropolitan countries.

Professor Skalník's proposition is that only a multi-faceted (and non-hierarchical) globalized anthropology, which 'not only points at problems and wrong decisions but by detailed research suggests feasible solutions' will be able to overcome its own doom to obliteration while helping to create a more equitable, peaceful and prosperous world.

The second interlocutor was Dr. Gregory Acciaioli, Assistant Professor of Anthropology and Sociology in the University of Western Australia. In his paper 'Situating Australian Anthropology with regard to "Knowledge Divides": Epistemological Bases of Tensions in the Academic/Applied Nexus' Dr. Acciaioli preferred to probe into the epistemological roots of the 'knowledge divides' within Australian anthropology, which common sense identifies as the conflict between 'academic' and 'applied' anthropology. His case was based on the differential positionings of Australian anthropologists, both academic and applied, vis-à-vis the state intervention to the Northern (Aboriginal) Territory by the forces of government, instigated by the Anderson/Wild report 'Little Children are Sacred' (15 June 2007), issued by a Board of Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse, which documented cases of child sexual abuse and health-care neglect in remote Aboriginal Australia.

The 'intervention' which entailed police and military 'invasion' of the aboriginal quarters, the sequestering of a proportion of welfare payments, issuing of a card allowing restricted purchasing at licensed stores (limitation of alcohol), massive increase of settler bureaucracy to administer remote settlements, albeit agreed upon by Australian anthropologists as being 'heavy handed', nevertheless divided them on the subject of its aim. Some (most being academic anthropologists) qualified the intervention as being a measure to control the aborigines' lives. This Foucauldian interpretation was rejected, though, by most of the applied anthropologists along with some Aboriginal leaders who stood in favor of an intervention.

Dr. Acciaioli, rather than settling for situating this debate within the traditional dichotomy of 'academic *vs*. applied anthropology', probed into a deeper divide of epistemologies, powerfully demonstrating that the Foucauldian approach of the first group was motivated by an epistemological relativism which negates the existence of an 'external world (signified) independent of any defining discourse'; whereas the second group drew upon the acceptance of the existence of a signified, independent of but in relation with the signifier. He further related these two approaches to

1) the French tradition of *semiologie* where the signified is purely conceptual and the sign has no necessary link with an external world; and

2) the Germanic tradition of *Semiotik*, continued in the notion of *Semeiotic* of Charles Sanders Peirce, where the sign is represented as a triadic relation: the representamen (= signifier), the object (= referent) and the interpretant ('signified' or 'sense', linking the representamen to the object).

Dr. Acciaioli's final comment was both a question and an appeal to the world anthropologists regarding the relevance of this epistemological divide to making sense of other non-metropole anthropologies.

The third panelist was Dr. Yasmeen Arif from the Department of Sociology of the University of Delhi. Her presentation, 'Between Us and Amongst Them: Towards Other Encounters and Epistemologies', was an effort to formulate a new and non-hierarchical epistemology which moves fluidly enough to evade strict categorizations, striving to get over the traditional binaries such as North/South, center/periphery. In this presentation, through her multi-sited fieldwork in crisis-recovery in Delhi (India), Beirut (Lebanon) and Ahmedabad (India) relocation camps, her theoretical aim was to look for the possibilities to connect the traditionally subaltern loci through free-flowing and self-defining individual encounters that reject such restricting labels as the aforementioned binaries. Her case in point was the displacement of hegemony from state to religion through the efficient ways faith-based humanitarian aid outdoes the state intervention in the relief works. Her quite interesting leaning towards a new global epistemology for anthropology denies hegemonic privileges, one-sided classifications, hierarchizations, impositions; as also parochialisms and essentialisms that relativisms may engender can best be formulated in her own words:

> My proposal is that the mappings I have enacted, or the social imaginary I have tried to trace with my assemblages can themselves suggest a shift, a potential in knowledge production. It is a social imaginary which, when routed through connections and analytical jumps between cultures, locations and places, can perhaps change the original encounter between the west and the rest and simultaneously dismantle the original self/other dynamic into an interface, collaboration, negotiation and interaction of historically *different* others. What then, emerges is a political sense of *intercultural* interfaces – in other words, a coherence between and amongst multiplicities that are not seen as isolated *diverse* wholes but rather as *different* interconnected nodes which are either integrated or expelled by global discourses. *In my own work, I have tried to show how such negotiations and encounters could create a process, a path towards building up continually developing large narratives of recovered life which redistribute epistemic privileges in ways that displace the solipsistic centrality of 'western' critique as well as insularity of multiple parochialities.*

The fourth panelist was Andrew Spiegel from the Department of Social Anthropology, University of Cape Town. His intervention was titled 'Conflict, Resolution and Further Conflict in South African Social-Cultural Anthropology'.

Dr. Spiegel's presentation also addressed the problem of 'Knowledge divides' raised by the UNESCO Report, within the context of a dispute in a local setting – South African anthropology. He insisted that 'in South Africa, virtually all anthropology has been motivated by applied or at least public issues – for the main part those driven by political concerns'.

His focus was on the possible re-emergence of an approach in anthropology that worked to legitimize the now defunct Apartheid regime on the basis of a commitment to ethnos theory. This approach was used by 'a cohort of primarily Afrikaans-speaking anthropologists/ethnologists whose work was described as *volkekunde*' as opposed to a 'social anthropology' propounded by a mainly English-speaking cohort and it built on works such as Max Gluckman's, who insisted on seeing the region in unified terms. The opposition was reflected in the existence of two professional associations.

'*Volkekunde* drew heavily upon German *völkerkunde*, and cherished a political stance in support of Apartheid and its policies and theory of "separate development" – an idea that there should be distinctive development paths and territories for distinctive ethnes within apartheid South Africa's national state boundaries...'

The *volkekunde* position considerably weakened with the demise of the Apartheid regime and its replacement by a democratic and participative one. By 2001 the two associations that had represented two local anthropologies had merged to form a new association which was dominated by social anthropologists who by then were using neo-marxist theories.

However, the situation seems to be changing now as the *volkekunde* approach is re-embraced – this time by black anthropologists, who accuse the social-anthropological 'establishment' with discriminating against young, black and the female anthropologies in favor of the anthropology of the white, male elders.

Dr. Spiegel ended his presentation with a call for caution against attempts 'to valorise indigenous knowledge' if doing that essentializes a kind of ethnos-based set of ways of knowing the world and capacities for engaging with it, rather than as perceiving it as a contingently evolving/changing local knowledge.

The last panelist was Dr. Gustavo Lins Ribeiro, from the Department of Anthropology of the University of Brasilia and a prominent figure of the World Anthropologies Network. His presentation 'The Problem of Hegemony, Flows and Equity in World Anthropologies' was centered on the unequal exchanges among different communities of anthropologists at the international level. The set of inequalities were stemming from the authoritative position of the scholars of core countries in knowledge production and dissemination, even though the anthropologists in the periphery now outnumber those in the center. Stating that 'the sources of inequality production are manifold, complex and intermingle in diverse ways', Dr. Ribeiro pointed out that they are reproduced not only on the international but also on the national, regional and local (and even departmental) levels.

According to Dr. Ribeiro, the struggle for a more egalitarian world among anthropologists requires 'going beyond the power effects and apparatuses that are responsible for the discursive and material (re)production of hegemony in our own milieu'. Since

access to information is a critical part of the power effects and apparatuses, he expressed his optimism on the advent of internet 'as a sort of global library, bookshop, encyclopedia and data basis' – available to researchers almost anywhere – creating a potent leveling mechanism. And who knows, maybe the younger generation of anthropologists immersed in cyberspace may indulge in creating an 'anthropological wiki', without need for authors and individual figures.

Dr. Ribeiro has pointed out the paradox of the use of English as the global language and as a means to talk about diversities and drew attention to the hegemonizing role of the monolanguage within the academy.

His final remarks were a warning against the metaphors of 'centers and peripheries' and 'flows' which he claimed to obscure and obliterate the transformability and the fluidity of the actual global anthropological encounters for the first, and the power structures that underlie the existing relations of globalization for the second.

NOTE

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