**Where do we go from here? Envisioning the Future for European Psychological Anthropology**

**Comments for the ENPA Roundtable (EASA August 2018)**

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More than twenty years ago I took my first interdisciplinary course as a student at Heidelberg University which was offered by an anthropologist, who later became my doctoral supervisor, and a psychologist. Such seminars were rare at that time in Germany. Indeed, anthropologists who dared to work with colleagues from the psy-disciplines were considered somehow subversive, if not unethical, within the anthropological circle. We, of course, all know that, in their search for universals, psychologists tend to disseminate a hegemonic stance and generalize matters in methodological as well as conceptual terms!

Still, I followed my supervisor’s advice of making attempts at collaborating with colleagues from other disciplines if our goals or the questions we seek answers for were similar or even the same.

Today, I am part of an interdisciplinary team of three anthropologists, two psychiatrists, and one psychologist. We jointly explore the affective efforts in the lives of elderly German Vietnamese migrants in order to foster a “person-centered medicine” within Berlin’s carescape. We do so by conducting research in the clinic and beyond via a multiperspectival approach: the ethnographic observations made by the team’s anthropologists in different social, spatial, and structural environments outside the clinic complement insights gained in psychotherapeutic encounters and regularly feed the development of an innovative affect- and emotion-focused group therapy as developed by the psychiatrists and the psychologist. Also, our team has been active in solidifying an engaged network of helping professionals in Berlin.

Interdisciplinary work is at times arduous for various reasons: we spend a lot of time for team intervisions, during which we merge our individual findings, debate the concepts and methods that we employ in our respective disciplines, and even try to come up with our own concepts. When it comes to scientifically publishing together, we face the dilemma that a paper becomes either too *anthro*- or too *psy*-oriented in terms of the overall approach, content, or style as both sides have to comply with disciplinary publication rules. Also, tensions between the different kinds of researchers might arise because while clinicians are required to maintain a professional distance, anthropologists usually delve into their interlocutors’ lives as deeply as possible to achieve an “ethnographic closeness.” This, in turn, enables us to take on a decided position as engaged anthropologists between different professionals, in-/formal caregivers and persons concerned.

Still, we are all convinced that our joint efforts are worthwhile because of our common goal as an engaged team of researchers who seeks to contribute to the improvement of migrant health-care services.

Based on our team experience, let me now try to envision where we may go from here:

1. We should continue interdisciplinary collaborations despite potential hazards in order to address both human universalities *and* human particularities; for, how can both sides of the interdisciplinary divide know what is universal without knowing what is particular and vice versa? Psychological anthropology, of course, has a long history in detecting cultural particularities in assumed universalities.
2. Institutions of psychiatry and psychology are products of history that emerge and re-emerge in relation to spatiotemporal, social, societal, and political transformations. Therefore, there is, I positively imagine, the chance that the psy-disciplines will move closer to ethnography. Think, for instance, of the cultural phenomenology strand within psychiatry. Moreover, rather than just blaming psy-colleagues to be ignorant of what ethnography has to offer, we have to critically assess the structural constraints of what counts as knowledge in the psy-disciplines as well as in other disciplines including (psychological) anthropology.
3. As psychological anthropology involves research with people who experience vulnerability and suffering, I strongly recommend *intra*disciplinary collaborations! I believe that anthropological team research increases the chance to responsibly assess difficult situations and that it refines emotional attunement in the field. In contrast to the majority of individually conducted anthropological research, the anthropologists in our team also benefited from *intra*disciplinary multi-perspectivity. We systematically cooperated in the contextualization and interpretation of situations, especially if they were charged with uncomfortable affects, and sometimes we joined each other in the field. In combining these exchanges with the regular intervisions of the entire team, we were able to contextualize both our interlocutors’ as well as our own affective resonances.
4. While I am convinced that theoretical and methodological impulses will come from the newly established *European Network for Psychological Anthropology*, I also truly hope that with the onset of the network we will also find strategies to make sure that a critical psychological anthropology will be heard in Europe’s societies and healthcare policies.