

“Representing the Other: A Case for Interdisciplinary Clinical Legal Education: Example of the Human Rights and Migration Law Clinic”

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From January 2018 until late July of the same year, I had an opportunity to participate in the Human Rights and Migration Law Clinic (hereafter HRMLC or ‘the Clinic’) in Torino, where I got a chance to experience working with the asylum seekers, interviewing them, writing their Legal Memo as well as preparing them for the hearing in front of the Territorial Commission (Italian First Board Commissions). An important aspect of the Clinic in question is the fact that it is conducted in cooperation with the Department of Anthropology and it involves anthropology students in the work with the asylum seekers. From the very beginning, it was apparent to me why they have opted for the involvement of anthropologists. I was surprised to see how much anthropological training in recognizing and being aware of Eurocentric (or any other kind of) presuppositions can be useful in recognizing and understanding cultural misunderstandings that happen on a daily basis in the asylum claiming process, as it is now in Italy. Even so, the idea for this paper became clear to me only when I attended the first meeting anthropology students had with their supervisor, Professor Beneduce. The feedback students gave to their professor and in turn, his observations made me inspired to write the paper that is before you. It will consist out of two main and mutually connected parts.

First of all, a short insight into the way the Clinic is organized will be provided, with the main focus on its interdisciplinary character. The main argument will be that this kind of

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clinical education is potentially of equal value for both students of social sciences as well as for students of law (who are traditionally the ones that get to take part in it).

Starting from there, my own experience, as well as the reflections anthropology students had regarding their involvement with the Clinic will be used to argue that the field of asylum represents a potentially fruitful field for collaboration between law and anthropology, while the self-professed experience of the students will be understood as an indicator of the main issues that would arise as a consequence of potential implementation of anthropology in the asylum system as it exists today in Italy.

Although from the beginning unintentionally, the paper is a product of a participant-observer method, as I was at the same time participating in the work of the Clinic, but also conducting interviews with the students and staff.

I. Human Rights and Migration Law Clinic: Origins

The Human Rights and Migration Law Clinic was established in 2011 through collaboration between Ulrich Stege and Maurizio Veglio, as the first legal clinic in Piedmont region and one of the first law clinics in Italy; It is closely connected to the masters program at the International University College of Turin and mainly financed through funding dedicated to this institution (Stege and Veglio 2018, 1).² Besides the IUC, it is conducted with the cooperation and support of Departments of Law of the Universities of Turin and Eastern Piedmont, with the participation of students from all three faculties.

² All the information is based on my own experience with the Clinic, the interview I have conducted with Maurizio Veglio on 28.07.2018. as well as on information provided in the article written by Stege and Veglio (2018).

The students' backgrounds are various and they come from all levels of higher education (except for the Ph.D.) which gives a general variety, multidisciplinary and international character to the entire experience.³

According to its founders, the Clinic represented a response to a particular situation in Italy when the country experienced significant increase in number of migrants and asylum seekers; According to Stege and Veglio:

“All this created, in a very short time, the need for quick legal, social and political responses, for which authorities were not entirely prepared. In addition, Italy lacked and still lacks well-prepared professionals, who are capable of dealing with such situations, and is a significant deficit of targeted educational programs” (Stege and Veglio 2018, 6).

It is therefore that the Clinic was conceived as a response to two separate needs: one of students to “experience gaps between the law in the books and its implementation in practice, especially in the context of human rights and migration law practice” and the one that existed in the broader social context, where an increasing number of asylum seekers was in need of legal assistance with the support of the governmental institutions being insufficient (Stege and Veglio 2018, 2-6).

It was in 2015 that HRMLC established a collaboration with Turin University's Department of Anthropology when students from this discipline became involved in the work of the Clinic, with the main role of “supporting clinical students in interviewing asylum seekers and researching relevant Country of Origin Information” (Stege and Veglio 2018, 11). It is on this aspect of the Clinic that the special emphasis will be made later in the paper.

³ As the IUC students are mostly coming from foreign countries. More about the IUC: www.iuctorino.it

Educational structure

The Clinic consisted of three semesters; the first one is dedicated to the theoretical lectures about International and European migration law, together with preparation for practical activities that take place in the second and third semester. Especially in the latter part, it was apparent how the different backgrounds students had added and enriched the problem-solving process, in which we were all invited to take part in and actively contribute to.

In the academic year of 2018, the offered practical activities consisted of Refugee Law Clinic, Strategic Litigation, Human Trafficking Clinic and ILO/access to work and social protection for migrants. For the purpose of this paper, the focus will be on the Refugee Law Clinic, since it is the one I participated in and also the one in which the presence of anthropologists is highlighted the most.

Students taking part in the Refugee Law Clinic were divided into five pairs and each of them has been assigned one of the anthropology students. During two semesters, each group had been given a case of an asylum seeker and a supervising ASGI lawyer.⁴ Their task was to conduct interviews with the asylum claimers, prepare them for the hearing in front of the Territorial Commission and then write a Legal Memo that would, after being reviewed by the lawyer, be presented to the Territorial Commission. The way they divided work amongst themselves was left to them to decide.

⁴ Associazione per gli Studi Giuridici sull'Immigrazione, an Italian network of legal professional working in the area of asylum and migration. For more information: <http://www.asgi.it/>

II. Interdisciplinarity and Clinical Legal Education: Refugee Law Clinic as a meeting point

In the past decades the idea of interdisciplinary education has become exceedingly popular. Scholars have observed emergence of new 'hybrid fields', comparative studies and holistic perspectives that are challenging traditional division of knowledge or as Clifford Geertz noticed, "there is something happening with the way we think about the way we think" (Thompson Klein 1990, 11).

Although the importance and potential of interdisciplinary education have been recognized, the consensus about what it actually represents and what is the proper way to be achieved is still lacking. As Harvey Graff states,

"Interdisciplinarity's proponents and critics talk past each other. Seldom do they seek common terms; typically, they mean very different approaches when they refer to interdisciplinarity. They erroneously dichotomize disciplines and interdisciplines, confuse specialization and synthesis, and misconstrue "integration" (Graff 2016, 1).

Even though it is apparent that there is still a 'general confusion' about what the interdisciplinarity is, educators still employ this approach in order to deal with range of issues with some of the examples being:

*"to answer complex questions,
address broad issues,
explore professional and interdisciplinary relations,
to solve problems that are beyond the scope of any one discipline,
to achieve unity of knowledge whether on a limited or grand scale"*

(Thomson Klein 1990, 11).

Whatever the definition we choose to employ might be, the proponents of interdisciplinarity recognize a need for a more holistic approach that will surpass the traditional division among disciplines. The way this will be achieved, as we have seen, is still undecided which leaves space for experimentation. However, what seems important is not to limit the scopes of interdisciplinarity just on 'theoretical' domain in which practitioners of two or more disciplines would work together, but also to transfer it into the field of practice, where, through mutual engagement, interdisciplinarity would be naturally achieved. Legal clinics, I believe, have potential for such endeavor.

Clinical Legal Education

As much as I have gained insight into legal clinics, firstly by taking part in one and then by attending a conference organized by the European Network for Clinical Legal Education (Torino, September of 2018), it would seem that this form of education has a similar status as the concept of interdisciplinarity. Its benefits are widely acknowledged, but a general consensus about how they should be organized, as well as a well-defined framework in which they should operate is still missing.

Even so, European countries have experienced an increase in numbers of such clinics in the past decade and as the driving reason could be perceived inadequacy of the usual model of legal education (Stege and Veglio 2018, 8). As the same authors observe, this comes down to the separation of education on theoretical and practical part, and maybe consequently, to the fact that "both law students and new generations of law teachers are unsatisfied with the way law is traditionally taught and how they are prepared for their professional career" (Stege and Veglio 2018, 8).

When it comes to context of Italy, clinics represent a relatively new occurrence in legal education, with the first one being established at the University of Brescia in 2009, and first CLE program dedicated to migration and asylum conducted at University Roma Tre in 2011 (Stege and Veglio 2018, 6).

For comparison, the situation is similar in Germany where, until 2008, Clinics were not allowed by law but now represent “a fast developing field within German jurisdiction” (Hannermann and Dietlein 2018, 2).

With the big influx of asylum seekers entering Europe in recent years and with a great many of them finding themselves in a completely alien situation, where they require help not just with some common issues such as finding their way in an unknown environment, but also often need legal assistance, Refugee law clinics have emerged as new type of legal clinic, with potential of breaching the gap between the actual need for different legal services asylum seekers have and the capacities of the authorities to provide them (Hannemann and Dietlein 2018).

Especially because beneficiaries of these kind of Clinics do not require just legal but also more general type of help, Refugee Law Clinics represent a good setting for involvement of students or professional practitioners of other disciplines.

In the example of the Refugee clinic of the HRMLC I would like to demonstrate how interdisciplinarity within the legal clinics could show potential and need for broader collaboration between disciplines; in this instance, I will try to demonstrate how the asylum system on a larger scale could potentially benefit from the mutual collaboration between law and anthropology. Furthermore, I will argue that the Human Rights and Migration Law Clinic’s

practice has already shown a potential for such an endeavor and will try to analyze how to expand this practice further.

III. Anthropologists and the Clinic: A Way of Doing Ethnography

Apart from attending the supervision meetings of anthropologists and listening to their discussions, I have also conducted interviews with some of the students for the purpose of determining their opinion and overall experience of the Clinic. What will follow, therefore, represents my understanding and observation of their involvement in the entire process.

Supervision meeting notes

Since the first meeting it has become apparent to me that the experience anthropology students had was significantly different from my own, but, in a way, very 'anthropological' in nature. The main concerns they have expressed came down to reflecting on their own role within the Clinic, the purpose and usefulness of their anthropological knowledge, their role in 'discovering the truth' (in terms of truthfulness of asylum seeker's narratives) as well as reflecting on the asylum system on a larger level. It is in these meetings that I started to realize how much the experience of the Clinic is valuable for them as anthropologists, as it provides them with the opportunity to apply the knowledge they are acquiring in the course of their studies, but also experience some of the main, primarily methodological and ethical, issues that exist within the discipline. In order to better understand the doubts and struggles anthropology students had, it is useful to have an insight into two major parts of 'doing anthropology': fieldwork and the issue of representation.

Fieldwork

Fieldwork is one of the most important parts of anthropological research and it could be said that it is the discipline's distinguishing characteristic. As Orin Starn in 'Writing Cultures and Life of Anthropology' states: "...the premise that fieldwork is our distinguishing bedrock remains as powerful as ever a century now since its original mythical character in Malinowski's sweaty, disgruntled, libidinous Trobriand tenting" (Starn 2015, 5).

Traditionally, an anthropologist would go to 'exotic', non-western countries and do the ethnography there. At the time existed a prevailing idea that it is possible to understand and describe a 'character' of the non-Western populations. This could be observed just by reading titles of classical anthropological monographs, such are: "Coming of Age at Samoa: A Psychological Study of Primitive Adolescence for Western Civilization", "Balinese Character: A Photo Analysis" and maybe most famously "Argonauts of the Western Pacific: An account of native enterprise and adventure in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea".⁵ The produced ethnography would always as an audience have Westerners; it could be argued, therefore, that what anthropological work at the time came down to was speaking in the name of their 'exotic' informants (who did not have a voice of their own) and representing them to the Western public, which in that historical moment practically meant acknowledging their existence (see: Clifford and Marcus 1986).

⁵ In the order in which they have been listed: Mead (1928), Batson and Mead (1942) and Malinowski (1922).



Bronislaw Malinowski is considered to be a pioneer of the participant observant method; The photo was taken during his fieldwork in the Trobriand Island.⁶

The crisis of representation

“Representation and the epistemological problems inherent to it are key anthropological problems of the twenty-first century. Local people everywhere feel betrayed by anthropology. Instead of studying identifiable, rooted communities, anthropologists have turned their attention to the theoretical construction underpinning the very ideas and practices sustaining the experiences of rootedness” (Vargas-Cetina 2013, 3).

A big turning point, however, happened with the process of decolonization that took place in the second part of the 20th century; people anthropologists used to see as their informants started getting their own voice and speaking for themselves; it seemed there was no more

⁶ Source: <https://www.ecosia.org/images?q=bronislaw+malinowski#id=FE953759F605F29C2E6EC00946CF967A755A465E>

need for anthropologists to “act as representatives” (Vargas-Cetina 2013, 4). Apart from that, they have started voicing their opinion on the way they have been represented so far and making way to what is going to be known as ‘postcolonial critique’. This period of time has left a huge impact on anthropology as a discipline, as its traditional fieldwork has become out of reach and a large part of its body of knowledge has become compromised. It is during this time that the discipline experiences the so called ‘crisis of representation’. Anthropologists prompted by postcolonial critique started questioning the power relations within their field, examining their own standing point. As Vargas-Cetina explains,

“The representation crisis turned out to be more a moment of reflection (and, yes, a very important one) than a true crisis of the discipline. It has now resulted in new representation standards, self-monitoring practices, a higher awareness of the diversity of perspectives within anthropology, and the understanding of the ethnographers as themselves cultural beings, whose views are always colored by personal and epistemological circumstances” (Vargas Cetina 2013, 4).

Having this background in mind, I came to believe that the reflections the students have shared about their own experience with the Clinic represent, in a way, textbook examples of the impact the above-mentioned crisis and the postmodernism have left on anthropology as a whole, and have continued to shape the generations of anthropologists years ahead. It is also what made me understand how authentic experience of conducting interviews with the anthropologist’s ‘traditional subjects’ (coming from radically different cultural backgrounds) Clinic represents for them, with the main difference that before anthropologists would be the ones going to overseas countries and conducting their fieldwork there, while now the informants are coming to us, but we are still, in a way, the ones who are representing them.

As introduction to the next chapter it is important to stress that I understood my role in the Clinic as twofold; I had an anthropological background, but I was involved in the process as an IUC student that got a certain amount of training in International and European migration law; The work with asylum seekers I approached from this perspective, which might be the reason why I did not experience the Clinic as other anthropologists did. I believe that this 'dual position' enabled me to experience both legal and anthropological approach, which in turn made me realize the existence of similarities between the two disciplines when compared in the context of asylum system.

What I would like to argue, therefore, is that the work legal professionals are doing with the asylum seekers (coming from the non-Western countries) has certain similarities to the one anthropologists were traditionally conducting, and comes down to 'representing the Other'.

IV. Representing the Other⁷: Legal versus anthropological approach

Represent- (used with a verb)-

1. *to serve, to express, designate, stand for, or denote, as a word, symbol;*
2. *to stand or act in the place of, as a substitute, proxy or agent does;*
3. *to speak and act for by delegated authority⁸*

⁷ The concept of the Other in this instance should be understood as twofold: 1) in relation to the fact that a great number of asylum seekers today is coming from non-Western countries and has radically different socio-cultural background from the European one; 2) In terms of Edward Said who uses the opposition between Orient and Occident to describe the power relations in which the West is superior and the East inferior. The concept of the Other, similarly, is connected to the idea of rationality of the West and irrationality and the general inferiority of the East (Shahinaj 2012).

⁸ Retrieved from an online dictionary available at: <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/representing>

The notion of representation bears significantly different connotation within law as compared to the one we saw it has in anthropology. Within the legal field, to represent someone carries a certain well-established set of rules, obligations and protocols that all have legal consequences. When signing a Power of Attorney, a person gives his or her consent to another to speak or act in their name, again, within the defined set of rules. Anthropological version of representation, as we have seen, carries a somewhat less strict code of conduct and it is more symbolic in terms that it is not legally abiding. Another difference could be that in the first instance, lawyers are usually not concerned with cultural dimension in which the representation is taking place, whereas anthropologists, in order to make their 'traditional exotic subjects' understandable to their (western) audience need to make a certain amount of cultural translation, however loosely we understand the term.

Where anthropological and legal representation come in line is, I believe, in the very context of the asylum system, where the majority of asylum seekers is coming from non-Western countries and is trying to get international protection based on western legal concepts (Veglio 2017).

It is then, I will argue, that lawyers intentionally or not need to make a certain amount of adjustments to the original narrative or story they get from their clients in order for it to fit the legal context and be more comprehensible to the Territorial Commission.

Based on my experience with the Clinic, I will shortly outline the main similarities and differences that I have experienced through my above-mentioned 'dual role' in conducting interviews with the asylum seekers and producing a legal memo.

Interview

The feeling of conducting interviews with asylum seekers versus doing the same as a part of anthropological research comes with the main difference, which is the purpose. While talking with the asylum seekers I remember clearly trying to focus on the elements of the story that will be useful in relation to the principles of international protection. The questions that I have chosen to pose were the ones I considered important in determining the basis on which the protection could be potentially claimed. In other words, although the asylum seekers did get the chance to tell their story the way they chose to, we have been focusing on the elements that are in line with the legal requirements. On the other hand, the approach I used to employ while conducting anthropological research was somewhat different. I knew the topic that I was interested in, but the level of my interference with the narrative was less apparent; I would leave bigger freedom to the informant to choose what he or she considers important and relevant answer to the posed question.

This becomes even more apparent in relation to the fact of how we use the given information. In the case of anthropological research, the outcome can be more than one, but what usually happens is that ethnographic material will be used to produce a paper or a book. The goal should be to stay truthful to the original narrative that has been acquired during the interview. On the other hand, in the asylum process there is already fixed form that needs to be respected. The legal memo, although until certain extent left to lawyers to decide how it will be conceptualized, represents already given framework in which the narrative needs to be situated. What is happening essentially is that the life story of the asylum seeker, that has been shaped in a context completely different from our own, needs to be adjusted in order to fit the western legal framework. One of the telling examples that we have experienced is that the asylum seekers do not think chronologically as it is expected in European context, or they do not give the same significance to years. In order for the claim to be credible (which is the key word in the asylum application), the story needs to

be coherent and linear; It is in this instance that I see the legal representation encompassing its boundaries and crossing into the field of cultural translation. In order to represent their client justly, the lawyers need to be sensitive to cultural backgrounds they are coming from, as well as to the way their story will be received and interpreted by the Territorial Commission, who, despite its presumed training, is thinking in European terms. Therefore, while trying to make the narrative the most credible they might end up inevitably changing it.

Based on my observations during the work with the asylum seekers, I would like to demonstrate that there is a space within the Asylum system that can be explored in two ways: one is in terms of role that anthropologists could play within it; and the other in terms of potential collaboration between anthropological and legal approach in rethinking the process of asylum application.

V. Asylum System in Metamorphosis: The (potential) role of Anthropologists

If the Asylum system is going through a change then what could be a potential role that anthropologists could play in it? I believe that the practice of this Clinic has pointed out several directions in which the discipline could contribute to creating a system that is more comprehensible and appropriate for the seekers coming from different cultural backgrounds. In this case, I will just shortly outline the main ways I see this potential use of anthropology could happen:

Country of Origin Information

'For claims under the 1951 Convention to be fairly evaluated, applicants' stories must be placed within their cultural, socio-economic, and historical contexts.'

(UNHCR 1992: ¶42; Barsky 2000: 58)

In the setting of the modern asylum system in which, as it has been already mentioned, a great number of asylum seekers are coming from the non-Western and, to the decision makers unknown cultural systems, the COI is one of the pivotal elements to the just assessment of the asylum claim, as it helps to contextualize the asylum seekers story (see: Good 2006). In countries with common law systems, such are the UK, Australia and Canada, there are some instances of anthropologists being employed as “country of origin experts”, but this is limited in scope, as it mainly refers to the judicial part in which they are invited to “testify” as experts (Kalin 1986, 230).

When it comes to the broader European context (mainly the Common European Asylum System), the COI is considered as equally important and usually provided (by combining and systematizing already existing rapports) by different governmental institutions, or by several existing NGO’s that provide systematized country of origin information to the relevant governmental bodies.⁹ What they have in common, however, is that their rapports are very general and focus on certain key points considered as relevant for the asylum seeking process (human rights climate, detention procedures, conflict etc) which leads to there reports being limited in scope, and sometimes, hardly connectable to the asylum seekers individual life story.¹⁰

Anthropology as a discipline that has been historically involved in studying, understanding and comparing diverse cultural systems has built a significant body of knowledge as well as methodologies that could be potentially used within the asylum system today. The

⁹ Researching Country of Origin Information: Training Manual. ACCORD, 2013. p 11.

¹⁰ Additional limitations of the country of origin information that is produces in this manner is that “the evidence is often inconclusive, often too generic or doesn’t exist at all.” For more information: Researching Country of Origin Information: Training Manual. ACCORD, 2013. p 11.

biggest potential applicability of anthropology in this instance could be regarding the research of the “country of origin information”, as one of the basic principles on which the discipline is postulated presupposes conducting the fieldwork and creating a more specific and usually descriptive body of knowledge, that could be used to encompass the perceived limitations of the current COI system.

In practical terms, one of the ways in which this could be achieved is either by anthropologists becoming ‘specialized’ for certain countries from which a large number of asylum seekers is coming from (by conducting a fieldwork there) or by using already existing body of knowledge that can account more for different cultural aspects that could be relevant in determining the *credibility* of specific asylum applications.

Cultural expertise and mediation

An interest for cultural expertise in legal proceedings comes in the time when academic community is expressing deeper interest in the study of law and culture (Holden 2011, xvii). The book “Cultural Expertise and Litigation” edited by Dr Livia Holden shows examples of several first hand experiences of anthropologists taking part in civil as well as criminal proceedings, with the focus on interaction that is taking place “between the legal practitioners, the people involved in the case and the expert or cultural mediator” (Holden 2011, xviii). At this moment, Dr Holden is supervising a European level research project titled “Cultural expertise in Europe-what is it useful for?” which aims to assess the use and impact of cultural expertise in fourteen European countries, with the aim of creating an “integrated concept of cultural expertise by adopting a historiographical perspective which opens up anthropological and socio-legal discussions”.¹¹

¹¹ See: <https://www.law.ox.ac.uk/research-and-subject-groups/cultural-expertise-europe-what-useful>

Even closer to our area of interest is the research conducted by Anthony Good within the UK, that investigated “legal process of claiming asylum from anthropological perspective” (Good 2006, 2). His book titled “Anthropology and Expertise in Asylum Courts”, based on field observation of more than 300 asylum hearings, provides an insight into the way anthropologists could contribute, apart from the above mentioned role in providing expertise on ‘country of origin information’ (Good 2006). As he states,

“even though anthropologists are, according to one very influential view, first and foremost interpreters of cultures (Geertz 1973), the instructions they receive are usually concerned more with exploring the histories and politics of applicants’ countries of origin than with eliciting insights into their particular cultural backgrounds. By contrast, virtually every asylum hearing requires interpretation in a narrower and more literal sense” (Good 2006, 153).

In the asylum hearings in which the asylum seeker is speaking language different from the one of the Commission, interpreters are also present; what is very often happening, however, is that these interpreters need to take upon roles of cultural mediators as well, in the cases when they observe there is a misunderstanding between the participants in the hearings (Good 2006, 153-188). However, as official guidelines on this kind of mediation do not exist, interpreters involvement in such mediation is left to their own assessment as well as actual expertise, which might not be adequate and can lead up to making bigger confusion (Good 2006, 171).

Although, as Good remarks, “This is an area where one might expect anthropologists to come fully into their own, their role is normally limited to commenting on any such matters...” Further he claims, “Even if they attend hearings to give oral evidence, the exigencies of procedure may prevent them from addressing fully, if at all, any cultural misunderstandings arising during the hearing itself” (Good 2006, 170). Consequently, by creating space

for anthropologists within asylum hearings, the perceived cultural misunderstandings could be potentially reduced.

Academia

Finally, anthropologists and other practitioners of social sciences do not need to necessarily become involved in the very system of asylum in order to improve it and/or change it. Academic work still represents an area through which social change can occur, although this seems to be difficult without the existence of political will. Also, knowledge and insights produced through academic work do not necessarily need to be applied in order to be valuable, and the current 'refugee crisis' provides great potential for different theoretical and intellectual endeavors.

In any case, with the popularity of the topic, the body of knowledge related to it continues to grow. For instance, some approaches being already employed by anthropologists go in line with describing "politics of trauma within political asylum system" (see: Das 2007), assessing narratives of the asylum seekers (Beneduce 2015) or imagining space for anthropology within asylum proceedings (Sorgoni 2015), just to mention few examples of a very diverse area.

More ambitiously, if broader geopolitical context ever allows for rethinking and changing the basis of the international protection as it exists today (as there is an opinion that its cornerstone, the Geneva Convention Related to Status of Refugees, needs to account more for different reasons people would need or seek international protection), using anthropological, as well as input of other social sciences, that are already producing knowledge about the field, could contribute to creating more just and appropriate system.

VI. Anthropology and Law - Expanding the scopes of interdisciplinarity: A proposal

At first hand, the connection between law and anthropology does not seem obvious; however, as Good observes, many of the ‘first’ anthropologists were lawyers by profession, “Lewis Henry Morgan, Henry Maine, John McLennan – and there is an obvious overlap between law and an anthropological interest in ‘custom’” (Good 2006, 15). Moreover, the area of comparative law, for example, could be argued is very close to the anthropological field (see: Frankenberg 2016).

The long history, therefore, that law and anthropology had, has created a broad and interesting area that can still be explored and expanded (see: Good 2006, 15-14; Frankenberg 2016).

However, the perspective for which we will be interested in here concerns the legal and anthropological representation or the anthropological analysis of legal representation. Apart from my own reflection on the process of providing legal services to the asylum seekers that has been outlined in the fourth part of this paper, there are also some academic papers written about the same issue.

Dr. David Zammit, from the University of Malta, for example, has conducted his doctoral research on the “daily practice of Maltese lawyers and the representation occurring in courts” (Zammit 1998, 13). As he states,

“studying legal representation means looking at the relationships and activities through which the stories initially told by clients to lawyers are translated to ‘facts’ during litigation”

(Zammit 1998, 13).

Moreover, he claims that,

“Lawyers can be seen to occupy a culturally intermediate position between their clients and the courts and their legal representation as the attempt to symbolically mediate between these two charged pools. This is, in short, the zone of intersection and confrontation, where legal rules produce their social effects and social processes animate and reinterpret legal rules”
(Zammit 1998, 14).

It is in the scope of this perceived mediation that I would like to situate a proposal for a new practice within the Clinic, as I believe that this observed mediation that lawyers are doing is even more apparent in the area of asylum system and that the Clinic could be used as a means of testing how much legal representation in this field is similar to the anthropological one.

Interdisciplinary work, so much discussed these days, is not about confronting already constituted disciplines (none of which, in fact, is willing to let itself go). To do something interdisciplinary, it is not enough just to choose a subject (a theme) and gather around it two or three sciences. Interdisciplinarity consists of creating a new object that belongs to no one.

The way the HRMLC is organized now already represents a step in the right direction in terms of interdisciplinarity. Recognizing the need for cultural mediation organizers have decided to involve the students of anthropology. However, I believe this involvement could be extended and expanded, and the potential of this should be exploited further.

Anthropologists in the Clinic already reflect on their own role and examine in a way the power relations that exist with the representation of this kind. It has been argued that their way of thinking is part of anthropological training that is, in turn, a product of a specific

period in the development of the discipline. It is in this instance, that this thought could be explored further.

The way it is postulated now, the Clinic does leave a lot of space for reflections of different kinds. Each group has had several supervising meetings during the course of their activities in which they could elaborate on their experience, and talk about eventual difficulties they would encounter. Anthropologists, as it has been already mentioned, had separate meetings with their professor; if I did not decide to attend them, I probably would not have an insight into their experience as I do now. And it is my impression that it is the same with the rest of the students. Interdisciplinarity exists, but the students still in a way stay in their own 'lanes' and do not try to explore each other viewpoints and approaches to the same issue.

It is, therefore, that I would suggest creating a special group or a type of supervision in which both students of law and anthropology would participate. They would be encouraged to reflect on the way each of their disciplines is approaching the work with the asylum seekers and to try to understand and embrace the viewpoint of the other. It could be expected that, for example, students of law become more aware of the cultural representation that they are maybe unaware doing an anthropologist to get a certain structure and limit their thinking within a certain scope.

The main goal would be to try and test the two above-mentioned hypothesis: first of all, that this kind of interdisciplinarity is beneficial for students with both backgrounds (by assessing, for example, how much students of law feel the contribution of anthropologists, and if). And secondly, maybe more ambitiously but potentially more rewarding, to get the students to work together, to delete the division between them and to really put in practice

the above-mentioned opinion that the asylum system could potentially benefit from a collaboration between law and anthropology. The students could be encouraged to try and think about the way in which their approaches could be merged into one and to see how they can benefit from each other.

Without trying to be overly ambitious, this kind of endeavor could be a good next step in the Clinic's practice. It could show how interdisciplinarity can be achieved, not just through theoretical, but also practical engagement and maybe read some new and interesting insight into the way we approach work with the asylum seekers. The proposed meetings should be monitored and final rapport should be made, indicating whether this kind of engagement can have a positive impact on students as well as, potentially, offer an alternative way for approaching work with asylum seekers within Refugee Law Clinics.

VII. Concluding Remarks

The idea that this paper tried to convey is twofold: First of all that traditionally understood clinical legal education should not be reserved just for students of law, but should also involve students and practitioners of other disciplines; this kind of practice can yield positive result for all parties involved and also benefit the entire performance of the Clinic in question.

Secondly, the paper was based on the particular example of the Human Rights and Migration Law Clinic of Torino, that employs interdisciplinary approach and involves students with different backgrounds. The special emphasis was put on the fact that it is conducted in cooperation with the Anthropology department of the University of Turin, and that anthropology students also play part in the work. The reflection students had, as well as my own experience of working with asylum seekers within the Clinic, have made me realize

the potential that exists within the system for a more systematic involvement of anthropologists, which I have shortly outlined. Moreover, based on my dual role within the Clinic, I have tried to convey the idea that legal and anthropological representation have certain common elements, especially when it comes to working with clients/informants coming from different cultural systems. Finally, a proposal for expanding and exploring further this kind of interdisciplinarity was made, with the overall goal of providing students with the opportunity to broaden their experience and while doing so, potentially participate in creating a new approach that would encompass traditionally divided disciplines and cross into the domain of true interdisciplinarity.

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