

Report

Present and Future of Spanish Social and Cultural Anthropology: From thoughts on levels of scientific-academic association between areas of knowledge*

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The role that Social and Cultural Anthropology¹ is playing in the current Spanish academic context is an essential concern for the discipline. There are many reasons that motivate its approach as well as considering where its future should be directed. While, as it occurs with so many other aspects, what has given impetus to our efforts in this complex issue has been a very practical matter: to prepare a catalogue of affinities between disciplines. And why not, we thought that we could use this ‘excuse’ to provide an opportunity to reflect on the present and future of Anthropology. As we were saying, one thing led to another. In the University of Murcia (UMU), as in others, the number of resources related to the recruitment of new teachers is increasing. Related key aspects are who may participate in a selection committee and whether merits that candidates have obtained in neighbouring disciplines have been properly evaluated. Because of this reason, UMU’s rector has taken the initiative to prepare a catalogue of relationships and affinities between the academic disciplines in order to set up an objective register for the assessment of candidates for new faculty positions. However, the rector’s initiative is not new; there are some precedents such as law 774/2002, the law 1312/2007 and the proposal on levels of association developed by the Agency for the Quality, Accreditation and Prospective of the Universities of Madrid (ACAP).

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This process to prepare a catalogue of affinities that is currently being carried out by UMU was the first reason to deal with the issue and write this short reflection on the place of Anthropology within the academic disciplines. We have developed this reflection among some UMU teachers who are also anthropologists but other anthropologists from the neighbouring university, UCAM (Catholic University in Murcia), and from other universities have joined us. The preliminary result of this process is this document. We expect, as a main purpose, to start a debate in the field of Anthropology on the disciplinary identity and on its relationships with other disciplines more or less close, recognising that the limited space does not allow the explanation of all ideas with the desired detail.

1. BACKGROUND

The need and urgency of a reflection on the role of Anthropology in the academic field becomes clear when the so-called UNESCO Code, a classification of academic disciplines frequently used by the Spanish institutions linked to the scientific world, is revised (Annex 1). In the case of Anthropology the description of work areas is limited as it only reflects a part of the areas included in the discipline and does not consider others. Besides, it should be added that the characterization is obsolete given that, since it was presented in 1974, there have been profound changes in the discipline. Code 5103 for Social Anthropology only considers as work areas: chiefdom and royalty; descent, family and kinship; nomadism; slavery and bondage; war; others. Accordingly, except for the field related to family and kinship, the vast majority of activities currently made by anthropologists in Spain are not reflected in these classifications.

It seems that the document *Propuesta de niveles de asociación científico-académica entre áreas de conocimiento* (Proposal about levels of scientific-academic association between areas of knowledge), published in 2011 by the Agency for the Quality, Accreditation and Prospective of the Universities of Madrid (ACAP) is used at present as a reference. This document can be very useful when starting the debate, but in the specific case of our discipline (Anthropology) its contribution is questionable. It is limited in the assessment of Anthropology because it takes Royal Decree 774/2002 of July 26th as a reference point. This lays down the different areas in Annex II, also mentioning the Social Anthropology Area, but Annex V, which establishes affinities between the areas, does not contain any reference to the discipline at issue.

Another document taken into consideration by ACAP when drafting the proposal is the list of «Related Areas» of the Board of Universities. But the value of

this source is also relative since, beyond the academic proximity, it applies «pragmatic criteria of academic management, because such affinity was not always mutual between both areas»,² as the Proposal states. And also, «in some occasions the decision taken was based more on the criterion of availability of teachers than on that of a strict scientific association».³

Furthermore, none of the people on the working committee that drafted the ACAP Proposal belong to a discipline that, according to the classification, is related to Social Anthropology. The only one who is part of a related discipline is the coordinator Pedro Chacón Fuentes, who is a philosopher and psychologist. Two other members are economists, mentioning here only those who may have more affinity with Social Anthropology, pursuant to the criterion.

The level of scientific-academic association that the document *Propuesta de niveles de asociación científico-académica entre Áreas de Conocimiento* establishes for the Social Anthropology Area indicates Sociology in level I, the nearest one. Social Psychology as well as History of Thought and Social and Political Movements are in level II; and Physical Anthropology, Human Geography, Philosophy, Social Work and Social Services, and Prehistory in level III, as the diagram 1 shows (capture of the aforesaid document).

Area of Knowledge 30 Social Anthropology						
		<table border="1"> <tr> <th>Branch of Knowledge</th> <th>UNESCO</th> </tr> <tr> <td>CSJ (Law and Social Sciences)</td> <td>51</td> </tr> </table>	Branch of Knowledge	UNESCO	CSJ (Law and Social Sciences)	51
Branch of Knowledge	UNESCO					
CSJ (Law and Social Sciences)	51					
Related Areas Board of Universities						
Associated I	Associated II	Associated III				
775 Sociology	740 Social Psychology 475 History of Thought and Social and Political Movements	28 Physical Anthropology 435 Human Geography 375 Philosophy 813 Social Work and Social Services 695 Prehistory				

Diagram 1: Areas related to Social Anthropology according to *Propuesta de niveles de asociación científico-académica entre Áreas de Conocimiento* by ACAP.

1 In this text, from now on, Anthropology and/or Social Anthropology.

2 Agencia de Calidad, Acreditación y Prospectiva de las Universidades de Madrid (ACAP): *Propuesta de niveles de asociación científico-académica entre áreas de conocimiento*, Madrid, 2011, p. 11.

We argue here that this list of associated areas contains some valid information, but it is partial as it only reflects a disciplinary situation that seems to correspond to the 1970s of the last century. Since then, the anthropological research, as well as that of other disciplines, has undergone significant changes that must be taken into account in contextualizing Anthropology in academic life. For example, the anthropological study in cities and neighbourhoods, the study on the postcolonial migrations in European countries, the Anthropology focusing on gender issues or moral Anthropology. These are just a few examples showing that the need for updating is even more evident, if we want to address, besides, the international field of anthropological research.

In this new context, in order to draw an updated map of Anthropology and its neighbouring disciplines, it is necessary, in a first step, to briefly define what anthropological activity consists of and what it should consist of. And in a second step, changes that the discipline has undergone in the last decades must be included, in the international sphere as well as in Spain. We draw a rough outline very concisely.

2. THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL PANORAMA

Anthropology can be defined as the discipline that investigates sociocultural processes and patterns developed by individuals and groups in connection with social, political and economic structures. In principle, it may study all human activities in the societies of the whole History. Nevertheless, in recent decades it has mainly focused on the study of current phenomena.

Due to the holistic nature of the discipline, which is reflected in our definition, the legislative authorities have pigeonholed the discipline, Social Anthropology, into two of the five branches of knowledge. Royal Decree 1393/2007 includes it in the branch of Arts and Humanities and in the branch of Social Sciences at a time.⁴ This link with both branches is a clear sign of the broad proximity of Anthropology to other disciplines.

Regarding changes that have taken place in the discipline, it can be noted that Anthropology is traditionally represented in Europe by two disciplines. One of them has studied cultures of the so-called ‘complex societies’, European⁵; and the other one has been devoted to research the so-called ‘primitive societies’, in

3 Ibidem, p. 9.

4 Real Decreto 1393/2007 de 29 de Octubre which lays down the organisation of official university education in Annex II, Basic subjects included in each branch of knowledge.

5 Depending on the country, it is called *Europäische Ethnologie*, *Volkskunde* or *Folkelivsforskning* or disciplines have been created to cover part of their scope such as Folklore in Spain.

regions outside Europe. It is a division of labour prevailing in the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, in which non-European Anthropology is dominant especially in countries with colonial activity.⁶ With decolonization and in particular after World War II, extra-European Anthropology has largely lost its subject of enquiry, and researchers are increasingly focusing on the study of European societies. This involves not only that non-European Anthropology and European Anthropology begin to ‘compete’ in the same field of study, but also a new panorama of links with other disciplines is gradually being shaped. The most obvious example is the relationship with History. Traditionally, non-European Anthropology was defined as a discipline of synchronic studies because its object, tribal societies, did not have any written sources that allowed a historical view. By increasing the studies in societies with writing, Anthropology has increasingly been receptive to a diachronic dimension in which historical argument is a key aspect.

Nonetheless, in Spain it is possible to note that in 19th and early 20th centuries Anthropology was deemed as a discipline that included a very broad field of study, from Physical Anthropology and prehistoric studies to non-European and European Anthropology. During the period of Franco’s regime, Anthropology did not play an important role, and it was rather a ‘discipline in the service of the State’.⁷ However, since 1950 and as a result of the crisis faced by non-European Anthropology (especially in Anglo-Saxon countries), English anthropologists and from USA were carrying out the anthropological works in the Iberian Peninsula. Such studies are currently deemed as the start of contemporary Social Anthropology in Spain.⁸ These and the initiatives of Spanish researchers who were trained in the scope of Anglo-Saxon Anthropology firmly establish Social Anthropology as a university discipline in the 1970s of the last century. At that

6 This perspective onto Anthropology is the same in the documents about the history of the discipline. Some of many reflections in this vein: F. BARTH (coord.): *One discipline, four ways: British, German, French and American anthropology*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005. Th. SCHIPPERS: «A history of paradoxes. Anthropologies of Europe», in H. Vermeulen & A. Álvarez Roldán, (eds.): *Fieldworks and Footnotes. Studies in the History of European Anthropology*, London: Routledge, 1995, pp. 234-246.

7 L. Á. SÁNCHEZ GÓMEZ: «La antropología al servicio del Estado: El Instituto ‘Bernardino de Sahagún’ del CSIC (1941-1970)», *Revista de dialectología y tradiciones populares*, 47, 1992, pp. 29-44.

8 K. SCHRIEWER: «From the disciplinary legacy towards Europe. Prologue for a European Anthropology / Desde el legado disciplinar hacia Europa. Prolegómeno para una Antropología de Europa», in K. Schriewer & S. Cayuela Sánchez (eds.): *Anthropological Perspectives. Tools for the Analysis of the European societies / Perspectivas antropológicas. Herramientas para el análisis de las sociedades europeas*, Murcia, Münster: Editum, Waxmann, 2014, pp. 267-321.

time, the ties to Physical Anthropology and Prehistory studies were broken. Thereafter, the primary focus is greatly on Spanish society and, to a lesser degree, on non-European societies; although anthropological studies concerning Latin America keep on playing a relevant role. With this background it is not surprising that, up to the present, Spanish Anthropology is mainly aimed at non-European Anglo-Saxon Anthropology (and also, although to a lesser extent, at French Anthropology). Today it is possible to note tendencies to free themselves from this predominance of 'northern' Anthropology in favour of an approach towards Spanish society and, thus, towards the complex societies,⁹ promoting an increase in specialised anthropological fields where each of them has affinity with other disciplines.

3. ANTHROPOLOGY IN THE ACADEMIC CONTEXT

In order to draw a relationship of association levels between the Social Anthropology Area and other disciplines, it is necessary to consider these changes undergone by the discipline and the approaches that it has developed in recent decades.

Consequently, and respecting ACAP terms, we propose to keep the positions of Sociology and Social Psychology because, in our opinion, each of them has the level stated by ACAP proposal.

As to other areas we propose to consider the following thoughts:

We can say that closeness to Physical Anthropology and Prehistory has been inherited from 19th century and it is no longer so evident. Anthropology is seen, both internationally and in Spain, as a discipline oriented towards the study of current events and contemporary history. Although popular perception links the discipline with the origin of humanity, today it is not an issue mentioned by the representatives of the discipline. Therefore, it would be appropriate to delete both from the list of associated areas.

There are several disciplines that must be included because, within the scope of Anthropology, subdisciplines particularly devoted to related topics have been developed. It is the case of Anthropology of Education, Economic Anthropology and Anthropology of Law. Nevertheless, the connection with them is not very close either in theoretical or methodological terms. That is why, level II of association for Education, Economics and Law is proposed.¹⁰

9 S. NAROTZKY: «Las antropologías hegemónicas y las antropologías del sur: el caso de España», *Antipoda*, 6, 2010, pp. 241-258.

10 We consider as non-appropriate, at the beginning of this discussion, to distinguish between levels II and III of association.

Nursing case is special. A close relationship was built because for years Bachelor's degree in Anthropology was the only way for the holders of a three-year-diploma in Nursing to attain a second-degree course. In some universities, such as UCAM, there is profuse cooperation that has been strengthened, in particular, through the development of Anthropology of Health. However, the theoretical interrelationship between both disciplines is similar to the one of the mentioned above.

For level II of association we propose, beyond these disciplines, Social Work and Social Services as well as Criminology (linked to Criminal Law area) as, in UMU and UCAM, Anthropology is represented with a weight exceeding 6 ECTS credits in their corresponding degrees. Therefore, there is a high collaboration in Murcia, despite the fact that their theoretical approaches, up to now, have not been sufficiently reinforced in mutual processes. Nevertheless, beyond the local reality, it can be noted that, in Criminology, subdiscipline Criminal Anthropology has gained importance showing a significant link with Anthropology.

Also for Human Geography we apply for including level II of association, although at present there is not a high degree of correspondence between both disciplines, except in the field of Cultural Landscapes. It should be noted that, at an international level, more and more geographers are using the ethnographic method of research, and more and more anthropologists are using Human Geography categories such as 'space' or 'place'. Likewise, Urban Anthropology is one of the branches with an increasing importance in the discipline. Bearing in mind these relationships and given that they appear in the branch of Arts and Humanities as well as in Social Sciences, we propose level II of association.

For level I of association we propose, in addition to Sociology, the disciplines that for decades have played an important role as close and inspiring fields. And these are Contemporary History, History of Thought and Social and Political Movements as well as the two philosophical areas, that is, Philosophy and Moral and Political Philosophy.

In the case of Contemporary History it can be noted that it is a neighbouring discipline that belongs, like Social Anthropology, to both branches of knowledge: Arts and Humanities and Social Sciences. Therefore, it is not surprising that there is internationally a great inspiration that, *inter alia*, becomes evident with the *Annales School* (with representatives such as Marc Bloch, Lucien Febvre, Marc Ariés...), or the English *School of Social History* (with Edward P. Thompson or Eric Hobsbawm). In the Spanish academy, moreover, there has been a concurrence of researchers of History and Anthropology devoted to oral sources (Koselleck, von Plato...) that has led to the launch of the influential journal *Historia*,

Antropología y Fuentes Orales (History, Anthropology and Oral Sources). The close link between both disciplines is patent in other European countries. Thus, the German anthropologist Albrecht Lehmann declares that it is indispensable that anthropologists try to analyse current cultural phenomena by using a ‘historical argument’ (i. e., to base their research on an analysis of the historical development of the phenomenon). In the University of Murcia, this link becomes visible in the fact that, over the last two decades, the *Revista Murciana de Antropología* (Murcian Journal of Anthropology) is published, in a constant collaboration between *History* and *Social Anthropology*. Also, we must mention that closeness becomes evident in the competitive examinations of Geography and History speciality in Secondary Education that includes Anthropology as one of the grades that allow the access. Because of all this, we propose to categorize Contemporary History as an associated area at the highest level.

The case of Philosophy is similar to History. First and foremost, it must be mentioned that Philosophical Anthropology (which is a subject always attached to Philosophy) deals with topics that are also included in Anthropology, such as religion, values or justice. In this way, it represents the great closeness between both disciplines. Additionally, there is an undisputed influence of classical and modern philosophers in the anthropological works of the last decades, and even from the beginning of the discipline. It is particularly obvious in the case of Michel Foucault and his concepts of governmentality and biopolitics, Pierre Bourdieu with his concepts of capital, or authors such as Kant, Hegel, Latour, Cassirer or Simmel (only mentioning a few of the most distinguished). Philosophy has influenced anthropologists not only in this way but also it has become more and more open to socio-cultural analysis. These two tendencies (closeness of Social Anthropology to Philosophy and vice versa) are very important in the University of Murcia. Subjects in the grade of Philosophy such as ‘Philosophy and Globalization’, ‘Philosophy of Gender and Equality’, and ‘Philosophy of Culture’ reflect this ‘cultural turn’ in the field of Philosophy, and the offer of two anthropological subjects in the grade of Philosophy reveal philosophers’ interest in anthropological knowledge. This strong cooperation also occurs in several subjects of the new interuniversity master’s degree in Philosophy. In the Social Anthropology area, this closeness to Philosophy is manifested in the fact that three out of the four tenured lecturer (and/or professors) anthropologists, who practised for the last decade, have a philosophical education. Therefore, it is not surprising either that in the University of Murcia, the Social Anthropology area was linked to Philosophy’s Faculty and Department for twenty years. Because of all these arguments and based on authors such as Leif Korsbaek (who declared that «the relationship between Anthropology and Philosophy is perhaps one of the closest and

most continuous»),¹¹ we believe that it is more than justified to classify Philosophy as associated in level I.

With the proposal that we submit, emphasis is placed on the disciplines that (in our judgement) have closeness in the theoretical field, as it is the case of Sociology and Philosophy; and we also propose to enforce the historical dimension when we defend the closeness to Contemporary History. The disciplines that we group in level two (and three) are mostly fields of an Applied Anthropology that, in their theoretical corpora, have closeness to Anthropology, but at a lesser degree.

Taking into account these reasons, which are incidentally based on the experience of the two universities of Murcia and which may differ from that of other Centres, we propose the following composition of Associated Areas for the discipline of Social Anthropology:

Area of Knowledge 30 Social Anthropology		Branch of Knowledge CSJ (Law and Social Sciences)	UNESCO 51
Associated I	Associated II or III	Associated III	
375 Philosophy (area), Moral and Political Philosophy 450 Contemporary History 775 Sociology 475 History of Thought and Social and Political Movements	435 Human Geography 740 Social Psychology 813 Social Work and Social Services 805 Theory and History of Education (Social Education) 170 Criminal Law and Criminology Sciences 465 History of Art 125 - 180 Law 225 Economics 255 Nursing 625 Research and Diagnosis Methods in Education		

4. IDENTITY OF ANTHROPOLOGY AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

The reflection that we submit here partly explains the current situation of our discipline in Spain. We are aware that there are some points outstanding and a great need for a discussion especially on the categorization of the disciplines in levels II and III of association. Therefore, we believe that this document is a first step to put this disciplinary reflection into action. At the same time, we must take into account that this is a much broader issue than we are explaining here. On the one hand, it is a debate about the approaches and the contents of the discipline:

¹¹ L. KORSBAEK: «La Antropología y sus disciplinas vecinas (Primera de dos partes)», *Ciencia Ergo Sum*, 6 (1), 1999, pp. 76-82, p. 77. In this text, from now on, Anthropology and/or Social Anthropology.

What is Anthropology? Which are its tasks, perspectives and (also) responsibilities in the society we live in? How do we define ourselves as anthropologists?... and on the other hand, it is a debate that we want to launch, and that will unavoidably be about the future that we search for our discipline: Where do we want Anthropology to go? Which work areas do we see in the nearest future and long term? Which role can and must it play in society and in all academic disciplines?

We finish this modest document with plenty of questions. These are open questions that need to be addressed; and the main purpose of the proposals that we are submitting is to stimulate a discussion, a necessary discussion.

Murcia, December 2017.

ANNEX 1: Extract from UNESCO CODES

UNESCO CODES

NOMENCLATURE FOR FIELDS OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

2402 Anthropology (physical) (see 51)

240201 Anthropological Archives

240202 Anthropological Genetics

240203 Anthropometry and Forensic Anthropology

240204 Body Composition

240205 Body Constitution

240206 Ethnology

240207 Medical Anthropology

240208 Nutritional habits

240206 Osteology

240210 Population Biology

240211 Primate Behaviour

240212 Primate Somatology

240213 Racial Biology

240214 Somatic Growth

240215 Somatic Ageing

5100 ANTHROPOLOGY (see 2402)

5101 Cultural Anthropology

510101 Adornment

510102 Clothing

510103 Dances, Feasts (see 6203.06)

510104 Ethnomusicology

510105 Ethnolinguistics

510106 Museology

510107 Myths

510108 Magic

510109 Poems, Stories

510110 Religion (see 5403.04, 5506.21, 5601, 5906.05, 6301.10, 7102.05 and 7204.04)

510111 Sorcery

510112 Symbolism (see 6308.03)

510113 Traditional Medicine (see 3209.04)

510114 Tradition

5102 Ethnography and Ethnology

510201 Agriculture

510202 Arms

510203 Barter

510204 Exchange

510205 Habitat

510206 Handicraft

510207 Hunting

510208 Fishing

510209 Foraging

510210 Metallurgy

510211 Stockbreeding

5103 Social Anthropology

510301 Chiefdom and Royalty

510302 Descent, Family and Kinship

510303 Nomadism

510304 Slavery and Bondage

510305 War (see 6304.03)

5199 Other Anthropological Specialities (specify)