

Editorial

Open-Themed Issues

There are virtues in having themed issues for a journal, and there are merits in being totally open and choosing articles on the basis of their excellence. In the former, we present to the reader a number of views on the same theme and offer comprehensive reference materials on the topic. In the latter, we allow new themes to appear. For example, the field of sports in the Middle East has not yet been studied enough so that we could offer a special issue on this theme, nor have topics related to war that include forced migrations, women in war, children in war zones and prisoners of war. We have therefore decided that every third issue of *Anthropology of the Middle East* (AME) will be an open-themed issue so that new topics, theoretical expressions and areas of research can be presented to our readers.

This space also allows us to be reflexive: Are we responding to the need for which we created AME? Is it reflecting the reality of everyday life in the area? Is every article in some way portraying the millennial culture of the region? Are we conveying the infinite sufferings of war and the existence of refugees, the ambiguous identity of children brought up in exile, as well as the literature and films on the topic? Are we depicting the life of the affluent as the result of petrodollars, the possibilities and the aspirations that have been created, shared by a few and imagined by many? Are we offering accounts of herders and peasants whose lives have changed through the education of their children, land reforms, changing economic infrastructures and other modernising measures?

The negative and positive poles of these developments are integrated through the native wisdom of every country. The commonsensical approach of coming to terms with reality and the search for comprehensible grounds that have made survival possible are found in the differing cultures of the region. References to some of these factors have been made in various AME articles, but more remains to be done.

We need to make our methodologies more refined and capable of discerning the essential aspects of our infinitely rich everyday life. It is this very everyday life, the topic of anthropology, which has become at times stifling, repetitive



and cynical – and, at other times, full of creative possibilities which should be explored by theoretical and analytical means. Are our theoretical preparations sufficient and appropriate in expressing these experiences in writing? Are the methodologies taught and used in academia adequate to respond to the realities of this area's complex and subtle experience?

A principal goal is that our articles become increasingly reflective of this existing present, and this issue addresses significant aspects of our everyday lives. Health, marriage, sports and war – these are key topics that cover important grounds in which present research is taking place and may trigger ever more enlightened reflections.

– *Soheila Shahshahani, editor*