German-Iranian Workshop
Resource-Based Perspectives on the Good Life
(Buen Vivir) in the Humanities
25 – 29 June 2018, Goethe University, Frankfurt, Germany
Max-Horkheimer-Straße 2, 60323 Frankfurt Main

Book of Abstracts
# Table of Contents

**Working group I “Culture and Identity”**  
Chairs: Asst. Prof. Dr. Azra Ghandeharion, PD Dr. Sophie Roche

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>When “The Conference of the Birds” Travels Between Iran and the West: The Space of Translation and Resource Creation in the Pursuit of Good Life</em>, Azra Ghandeharion* and Fatemeh Sarvghadi (FUM)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Moral Identity as a Resource Culture for the Good Life For Adolescents</em>, Sara Madanian (UI)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Reading Fiction and the Pursuit of the Good Life. Persian Literature as a Methodological Resource for Anthropology</em>, Stella Dietrich (GU)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Qualitative Study of Cultural Wealth as Resource for the Pursuit of the Good Life Among Afghan Students and University Graduates Residing in Isfahan</em>, Sahar Faeghi, Vahid Ghasemi and Ehasan Aghababaee (UI)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Going for a future? Migration as an Ambivalent Resource for Iranian Afghans in their Pursuit of the Good Life</em>, Anna Degenhart (UT)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Working group II “Innovation and (Dis)Empowerment”**  
Chairs: Asst. Prof. Dr. Azam Naghavi, Dr. des Baktygul Tulebaeva

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Telegram-based Qard-al-Hasanah Fund as a Resource of Good Life: A Field Research in Iran</em>, Ahmadreza Asgharpourmasouleh and Masoud Fattahzadeh (FUM)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Disability and Empowerment: The Role of Science and Technology</em>, Azam Naghavi (UI)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Spotify’s Corporate Structure and the Cultivation of Good Life: A Resource-Based Approach to Analyzing the Innovative Capacity of</em></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Start-Ups, Jakob Famulok (GU)

“Nature Schools” (Madresseh-ye Tabiat) as a Resource for Children’s Good Life: An Ethnographic Study in Isfahan City, Behjat Hajian (UI)

In Search of a Good Life: Resources and Agency Among Involuntarily Returned Migrants in Bamako, Mali, Katharina Forster (GU)

Working group III “Morailties and Ethics”

We are also Civil Society: Public Morality and Resources in Indonesian Muslim Conservative Communities, Ario Seto (GU)

Landscapes of the Soul: Spirituality as a Resource to the Good Life, Nastaran Ameli and Masoud Kianpour (UI)

Contemporary Reception of Rumi in the West as a Space for Pluralism and the Promotion of the Good Life, Azra Ghandeharion* and Fatemeh Khajavian (FUM)

Living Well While ‘Doing Good’ and the Resources It Takes: Perspectives From Local NGO-Actors in Burkina Faso, Kathrin Knodel (GU)

Aberu as an Intangible Resource Culture, Ehsan Aqababaee (UI)

Religion as a Resource Culture for Peace: Comparative Dynamics among Muslim and Christian Communities in Mashhad and Paderborn, Rasool Akbari (FUM, University of Paderborn)

Working group IV “Regimens and Their Subjects”

A Qualitative Study of an Informal Telegram-Based Charity in Mashhad, Ahmadreza Asgharpourmasouleh and Atiye Sadeghi (FUM)

Body Management as Resource Culture to Achieve the Good Life, Masoud Kianpour and Nastaran Ameli (UI)

Resource-Based Perspectives on Good Life and Wellbeing in a German Refugee Camp, Anne Grothe (GU)

Psychological Resources for the Transition From School to Work Environment, Shiva Sharifi and Azam Naghavi (UI)

Tribal Land Rights and the Governmentalization of Indigenous Life and Resources in Northern Philippines, Macario Lacbawan (GU)
Working Group I
Culture and Identity
When the Conference of the Birds Travels Between Iran and the West: 
The Space of Translation and Resource Creation in the Pursuit of Good Life

Azra Ghandeharion* and Fatemeh Sarvghadi 
Ferdowsi University of Mashhad

The Conference of the Birds by Farid Ud-Din Attar is one of the masterpieces of classic Persian literature. It is about all birds of the world undertaking a tortuous journey to seek out their perfect leader, Simourq, which in Attar’s view is an allegory for the pursuit of good life. In this study, Conference is examined as a resource which is defined as the means to “create, sustain and alter social relations, units and identities within the framework of cultural ideas and practices” (Hardenberg et al 2017, p. 8). We treat Attar’s story as a resource to sustain and enrich the social identity of Sufism within the framework of heterogeneous cultural ideas, and to alter social relations of materialists who do not kindle their inner spirits. In this regard, Attar presents a symbolic plan of good life involving moral refinement, abandonment of earthly attachment, and self-discovery through the arduous journey. Likewise, Edward Fisher (2014) defines good life as “the arduous work of becoming, of trying to live a life that one deems worthy, becoming the sort of person that one desires”. Thus, going through difficulty and forgoing the hedonistic pleasure lead birds to discover their true Self which is deemed to be worthiest issue in the life.

Despite the Eastern origin of Sufism, the environment from which this resource emerged, Conference has been translated and adapted repeatedly in the West since the 19th century. The text can therefore be considered a resource for the pursuit of the good life in the real world. Its value in this regard is affirmed by the importance attributed to it by the readers, translators, and publishers of Conference in both the East and West. Regarding the West’s reception of this Eastern resource, the award-winning Western director, Peter Brook, claims that Conference is “a very rich piece” due to the theme of “how to live”. Moreover, Schoch, in his book entitled The Secrets of Happiness (2006), considers this story as one of progress “toward perfect happiness” which is introduced by Sufi mysticism. This study aims to examine how this text functions as a resource in the West by investigating the value attributed to it by translators and publishers, academic papers, and readers’ comments. Then, it scrutinizes what cultural and social practices turn Conference into a universal resource of good life. At the third level, the study analyzes how translation of this work affects the source culture, Iran, by examining the number and quality of the published books and adaptations of the story after having become popular in the West. Further, it analyzes how the popularity of the story in the West has shaped Iranians’ conceptions toward their masterpiece, and how this has made them conscious of this text as a resource in their own culture. The final part of this paper analyses how this resource relates to actors’ pursuit of good life. Reading of Conference offers a symbolic plan of living good life to individuals. Thus, the universal circulation of this resource in the translation space expands the horizon of human as actors toward the new plan of good life.
A society with people who believe in moral principles and who act morally is more likely to experience development in its different aspects. But how can we encourage people to act in a moral way? For years, scholars have discussed the relationship between moral reasoning and moral action, but soon it was clear that moral reasoning does not necessarily lead to moral action. Therefore, they introduced the idea of moral identity, which draws on identity theory. In this approach, the importance of the self as an agent of moral action is highlighted; when people define their self as a moral entity, they act morally in different situations because they want to verify their identity.

People in contemporary Iran, like other societies that are in the process of transition, face a situation of moral plurality and uncertainty, which can pose challenges to the formation of moral identity. This has negative consequences for people’s quality of life. According to Edward Fischer's (2014) definition of good life, this “incorporates material as well as immaterial elements [...]", while material privileges and products are necessary for having a good life, they are not sufficient enough to guarantee it". In other words, for people to have a good life, they must be "more than self-interested agents concerned only with material gains". They also need to experience aspiration and opportunity, dignity and fairness, and commitments to larger purposes or pursue "moral projects [that] impart a sense of larger purpose to one’s life" (2). In this paper I therefore consider achieving "moral identity" as a path to a good life.

One way to identify ways in which this is achieved is to re-examine moral identity and how it supports the pursuit of the good life from a resource perspective. Hardenberg et al (2017) have emphasized that "a resource is not a thing or matter but a means related to certain cultural ideas and practices" and "resources are the means to create, sustain and alter social relations, units and identities within the framework of cultural ideas and practice"(14). Moral identity entails resource-like elements in so far as it can affect social life by sustaining, altering, or creating social relations and identities. Further, moral identity entails the means of living life and dealing with one’s surroundings that are related to certain cultural ideas and practices.

In this research, because of the importance of the period of adolescence, I will investigate the resources that are effective to cultivate moral identity in adolescents. For this, I used qualitative methods such as in-depth interviewing to understand how adolescents’ moral values are created. The research field is the city of Isfahan, and the research subjects include high school students. My main research questions are: How the idea of good life gets defined and followed by having a moral life, and in particular, a moral identity as an intangible resource? Which resources (like social capital, cultural capital, and religious concerns) are helpful in this regard, and which particular social spaces (like schools, homes, neighborhoods) can provide an atmosphere that fosters moral values in adolescents?
Reading Fiction the Pursuit of a Good Life.
Persian Literature as a Methodological Resource for Anthropology

Stella Dietrich
Goethe University Frankfurt Main

Fictional work is rarely considered to be ethnographic source because it is not bound to academic standards regarding objectivity and adherence to empirical truth. It is however known that writers expressing themselves in fictional works often include very accurate descriptions and interpretations of social situations. Therefore in terms of searching for new resources, one might argue that fictional work can be a resource for its ethnographic counterpart. This might prove true especially in the case of contemporary Iran where fictional work is of great social importance, and reading and discussing fiction is common social practice. On the one hand writing and reading is historically embedded in Iranian culture, on the other hand it is a form of empowerment and aspiration of a good life in a context where individual agency is relatively limited in the public sphere (Fischer 2014: 5-6).

The first part of the paper presented at the workshop will concentrate on methodological findings pertinent to the relationship between anthropology and fictional work. Particular challenges will be how to consider fictional work “as ethnographic source material, not as ethnographic evidence” thus reflecting on the difference between source material and evidence (cf. Eriksen nd: http://hyllanderiksen.net/Authoranthrop.html). Moreover current discourses on resources may be considered in order to situate the findings in a broader discourse.

The second part of the paper will focus on a specific piece of contemporary Iranian literature, namely the novel Tarlan by Fariba Vafi. The methodological findings from the first part of the paper will be put to test and an ethnographic research setting will be drafted giving special attention to elements of empowerment and aspiration of a good life in the novel.
Cultural Wealth as Resource for the Pursuit of the Good Life
Among Afghan Students and University Graduates Residing in Isfahan

Sahar Faeghi, Vahid Ghasemi and Ehsan Aghababaee
University of Isfahan

People with different cultures behave in different ways, and these differences lead to diversity in society. Often, prejudices and judgments about the validity of membership in a particular culture result in adverse reactions to such diversity, leading to racism, or discriminatory and egotistic behavior. This situation is more acute for immigrants and minority communities. Iran is a land of different ethnic and religious groups. Since the Islamic Revolution, and with implementation of modernizing projects and urban planning, Isfahan has welcomed a lot of immigrants from different parts of the country and even from neighboring countries, such as Afghanistan.

Afghans who migrated to Iran are considered to be a deprived community and a minority. Despite some limitations and difficult conditions, some Afghan students and university graduates have become cultural/scientific elites in Iran. The researcher’s concern in this study is to identify the cultural wealth that this minority group has used as a resource to promote and elevate its members in the larger society, allowing them to achieve a good life (Fischer 2014), despite coming from a marginalized community. One of the most important questions is therefore how Afghans have been able to successfully adapt to the rules and conditions of the Iranian society. Further, one needs to ask how Afghan immigrants have managed to achieve effective interactions with respect to the cultural differences from Iranian mainstream society and their different needs.

One of the theoretical concepts associated with the indicators of good life is cultural wealth. The theory of cultural wealth is taken from racial critical theories, with concentration on middle-class culture, deprived communities, and minorities. Tara Yosoo (2005) has defined cultural wealth as a set of knowledge, skills and communications that deprived communities possess and use in order to survive and resist micro and macro forms of suppression. According to this definition of cultural wealth, it can be considered as an intangible resource (Hardenberg et al 2017) that works to change a person or a group’s state from a not so good life towards a better one. As Fischer (2104) argues, while material privileges and goods are necessary for having a good life, they are not sufficient to it. We should thus pay attention to such intangible and immaterial elements that contribute to a good life. What matters here is not material gains promised by a consumerist lifestyle, but rather, achieving socio-cultural as well as psychological satisfaction.

This is happening when Afghan refugees successfully use their cultural wealth in the form of familial, linguistic, aspirational, social, navigational (strategic), resistant resources at the community level. In such a context, they redefine their cultural resources and develop new social technologies. When studied from a “resource culture” (Hardenberg 2017) perspective it leads us to ask: How can the Afghan elite students and graduates in Isfahan benefit from their cultural resources in achieving good life?

Using a qualitative approach I conducted in-depth interviews with Afghan students and university graduates in Isfahan who actively use their cultural wealth and define specific resources for their social and cultural wellbeing in order to have a good life.
Going for a Future?
Migration as an Ambivalent Resource for Iranian Afghans in Their Pursuit of the Good Life

Anna Maria Degenhart
University of Tübingen

Drawing on a sociocultural understanding of resources as means for altering social relations and identities, as conceptualized by Scholz, Bartelheim, Hardenberg and Staecker (2017), as well as Fischer’s anthropology of wellbeing (2014), this contribution analyses the role of migration as a resource for achieving the good life among Iranian Afghans. Assuming that particular socio-cultural and political contexts influence ideas of the good life and related migration imaginaries, a grounded theory methodology is used to explore the subjective meaning of migration among Iranian Afghans living in Mashhad. Because a snowballing approach was used to find contacts, the respondents were mainly Hazara and Tajik students, artists, and writers who were all inclined to migrate. Drawing mainly on participant observation and qualitative interviews, the paper proposes that they imagine migration as a means for gaining control over life and self. Part of a generation of Afghans being born and educated in Iran, they demand the right to inclusion, recognition, and personal growth in society but experience daily exclusion as socially and legally marginalized migrants and non-citizens. Against this background, they regard going to Europe, in the hope of gaining an inclusive legal status there for themselves or their children, as a means of escaping their existential state of “conviction” in Iran and thereby opening up a future. Despite this, migration is seen as a morally ambivalent resource because it is deemed fundamentally uncertain, dangerous, and it comes at the cost of tearing apart families.
Working Group II
Innovation and (Dis)Empowerment
In this study we examined how a popular social networking tool, Telegram, and an Islamic economic tradition, *qard-al-hasanah*, connect in an innovative pattern to form a new ResourceCulture in a religious group in Mashhad. The pattern of this connection is significantly related to actors’ social definition of the good life, which is in our case defined more or less as material welfare. Interpreting actors’ conception of the good life requires qualitative methods. Hence, over the course of two years, we conducted participant observation and semi-structured interviews with founders, administrators, and members of a *qard-al-hasanah*, which provides interest-free loans to its members. In our case, membership in such a fund derives from regular participation in women’s religious gatherings called *rowzeh*. While *rowzehs* have been traditionally oriented to religious rituals, recently many of them include a *qard-al-hasanah* fund as well. By contributing to the *qard-al-hasanah* fund people (in this case women) can expect in turn to receive a loan. Therefore all eventually have the opportunity to alleviate or solve their economic problems.

However, the fund has a meaning that transcends its monetary functions, because it is believed that it is God who contributes to the solving of people’s financial problems. The *qard-al-hasanah* fund is therefore blessed, and receiving a loan through it is analogous to receiving a blessing from God. Interviews showed that among members, the definition of the good life is so close to material welfare, which is very concrete. This indicates how important the fund’s material/financial aspect is to actors’ pursuit of the good life.

However, the main focus of our research was not so much the actors’ conceptions of the good life. Rather, it is the peculiar pattern of ResourceCulture they employ to realize their conception of the good life. Recently members have begun to organize *qard-al-hasanah* funds via Telegram. This messaging service, widely used by Iranians in everyday life, allows people to form groups in which everyone can post messages and pictures. While a Telegram group has many similar functions to offline social groups, it allows people to overcome the limitations of time and place. It therefore prevents wasting time and facilitates honest interactions. The paper discusses how actors’ profane meaning of the good life is inter-related to the sacred context of *rowzeh*, and how they find it more trustworthy and efficient to move their *qard-al-hasanah* fund to a Telegram group.
Disability and Empowerment: The Role of Science and Technology

Azam Naghavi
University of Isfahan

According to the latest world report on disability (WHO, 2011) approximately 650 million to 1 billion of the world’s population suffers from some kind of disability. Fischer (2014) has pointed to the subjective domains in wellbeing and good life, including aspiration and opportunity, dignity and fairness as well as commitment to a larger purpose. The first category, aspiration and agency and sense of control over one’s destiny, which is also called empowerment in the literature, are important factors in creating sense of wellbeing and good life. People with disabilities, however, often are deprived from experiencing a sense of empowerment. Manderson (2011) states that people with disabilities have limited opportunities for decision-making and directing a desirable life, leading to sense of disempowerment. Recent studies have shown that technology can be one influential factor in creating a sense of empowerment for students with disabilities and enabling them to enjoy a higher level of wellbeing (Clouder et al, 2018). Studies to explore the experience of empowerment among Iranian people with disabilities, especially among university students with disabilities, are in their initial steps. A literature search in three Iranian scientific databases (SID, Magiran, and Noormag) with key words including empowerment or disability separately found over 4,000 published papers. However, when one searches the terms rehabilitation, disability, or impairment AND empowerment this number sharply drops to around 37 papers. The majority of these papers studied the effects of family center empowerment programs on different issues that people with different chronic illnesses face. Only one study has quantitatively investigated empowerment’s components, such as self-efficacy and self-care among people with chronic illness (Royani, Rayyani, Vatanparast, Mahdianfar and Goleij, 2015); and the research done by Ghasemzadeh et al (2009) about the experiences of people with disabilities concerning their rights seems to be the only qualitative study that explores people’s views on issues that are related to empowerment. More research in this area is needed in order to reach a better understanding around empowerment for Iranian people with disabilities. Accordingly, the main aim of the research done for this paper is to explore the experiences of university students with physical disabilities in the context of empowerment. We will discuss the material in light of these questions:

How do students with physical disabilities experience empowerment and resources or challenges in empowerment in their lives? And what role do science and technology play in empowering or disempowering university students with a disability?
Spotify’s Corporate Structure, Innovation and the Cultivation of Good Life: A Resource-Based Approach to Analyzing the Innovative Capacity of Start-Ups

Jakob Famulok
Goethe University Frankfurt Main

Innovations are one of the biggest challenges in markets today. They help to improve products, processes, or to even create completely new business areas. Especially nowadays, when new generations of technologies get released every year, it often is a requirement to be able to innovate and react in a very short time.

While twenty years ago companies could take their time in developing new products and release it when they were perfect, today’s firms often choose to release “beta editions” and improve them after they have been released. For this reason, many startups challenge the long-held reign of companies in certain fields with disruptive ideas. But how do they do that?

The creativity and ideas for those innovations have to come from the people working in the firm. This requires a shift in the perception of resources that are integral to the making of products (cf. Hardenberg et al. 2017). From the viewpoint of “traditional” industrial production, resources, included factors of production such as machines, factory halls, or patents. Startups, on the other hand draw on resources such as new concepts, structures, and cultures of work, thereby intensifying the involvement of their employees. Through the cultivation of social networks and relationships, as well as the wellbeing of the employees, firms create valuable additional resources that contribute to their innovative edge. Seeing this, traditional companies try to catch up. They also begin to value the creativity of their own employees and come to appreciate new social groups as a valuable resource, oftentimes trying to copy concepts of work like Agile and Scrum as well as flexible social networks into their existing corporate structures and processes.

But not only do firms profit from these new approaches. Employees themselves are able to experience a new kinds of work. They have more self-determination in their work life and can directly make changes in the product without having to consult the corporate hierarchy. There is a high tolerance for mistakes and great willingness to test new ideas and technologies without having to produce a finished product. All this contributes to a more satisfying and creative work environment.

We spend one-third of our adult life working. So, our work is crucial to our well-being. Under the right conditions, work can allow a person to achieve the key qualities of a good life/wellbeing mentioned by Edward Fischer (2014), namely: “aspiration and opportunity, dignity and fairness, and commitments to larger purposes”. Pioneering the changes in classic working structures is the start-up Spotify. By structuring their whole company into social groups and networks, they have not only become the most successful streaming platforms worldwide, but also have helped their employees to attain a higher degree of satisfaction in their jobs and hence wellbeing.
"Nature Schools" \textit{(Madreseh-ye Tabiat)} as a Resource for Children’s Good Life: An Ethnographic Study in Isfahan City

Behjat Hajian

University of Isfahan

The aim of this research was to study a recently introduced form of school – the so-called nature schools \textit{(madreseh-ye tabiat)} – in the city of Isfahan. The purpose of these schools is to educate children so that they have a friendly relationship with nature and the environment, away from the technological world and electronic devices (such as computers games, tablets, and smartphones). While at a nature school, children are supposed to explore the natural world, getting familiar with different creatures, and getting involved in tasks such as milking a cow or lighting a fire for cooking. At these schools, facilitators define children’s good life as being happy and calm. To achieve this they involve children in nature and see it as a resource for increasing wellbeing. In fact they believe the experiences that children gain by exploring nature and playing with other children, animals, and plants is the best resource for expending excess energy, promoting happiness, becoming more responsible, independent, and creative, that is, enabling children to achieve a good life (cf. Fischer 2014).

The facilitators of these schools believe that instead of occupying children’s minds with stressful and competitive thoughts and concerns, which negatively affect their mental and physical health, it is necessary to familiarize children with nature from childhood up to the beginning of teenage years, so they become interested in exploring nature and the environment, knowing the world around them, and enjoying more health and wellbeing. As Hardenberg et al. (2017: 14) suggest, for cultural studies resources are not only a naturally existent potential, but defined by cultural concepts and accompanied by culture-specific actions. Plays and activities in nature schools can be seen as cultural resources that create social and friendly relationship, promote responsibility, encourage independence, foster creativity and skill learning in children. The purpose of this research has been to understand how nature schools help to promote the good life for children. How do these schools approach the emotional, psychological, and physical wellbeing of children? How do they function as resources to empower children in having greater wellbeing? What resource culture can be identified as related to nature schools?

The material in this research was collected in an ethnographic study for which the researcher conducted participant observation at these schools to get a comprehensive understanding of their cultural life. This was complemented by in-depth interviews with facilitators, students, and their families.
The presentation is based on field research undertaken from August to November 2015 in Bamako, Mali. One of the aims was to study the situation of involuntarily returned migrants after their return to Bamako. A common narrative is that money and material resources play a very important role in Malian society, as they enable people access to good education, to a decent life without poverty, and to participate in social life. A second, common narrative is that travelling and migration – often referred to as l’aventure, the adventure – are a historical component in West African life. So those who cannot attain money and material goods often decide to migrate outside the country – carrying the families’ hopes and expectations for a successful journey. Thus, the extended family and society generally consider being returned forcefully to be the migrant’s personal failure. At the moment of return, a lot of migrants experience a feeling of being trapped and without agency, that is: without the means to become active, to improve their situation, and, more generally, to achieve their goals. But a closer look shows that after a period of recovery, involuntarily returned migrants find they have valuable resources they can use to regain agency. This may, for example, be knowledge: somebody who has spent more than ten years in France will know about living and working there (as a migrant). Similarly, somebody who has experienced l’aventure will be able to share his knowledge of the journey with others and to provide advice. A second resource many find they have is social relations: either with locally operating NGOs who may enable access to aid programs and educational training; with European NGOs who may provide funding; or with European or North American activists who may help the former migrant to extend his network to further NGOs and give other kinds of assistance. Through these kinds of resources it is not unusual that former involuntarily returned migrants who have found themselves in a situation without agency regain it and recapture their potential to pursue a good life, not through money and material values, but through high social status – due to their important relations and useful knowledge. This is crucial to participate in social as well as political and economic life.
Working Group III
Moralities and Ethics
As secularization never took place in the history of Indonesia, religion continues to be present as a dimension in the everyday life of the world’s most populous Muslim country. With such a background, religion is discussed in both the private and public sphere as the source of common good and wellbeing. Maintaining the importance of religion, however, requires regular creative tapping of both material and immaterial resources. Examining examples from several Islamic conservative communities, my paper describes how these communities are searching for new religious practices as resource to strengthen their interpretation of Islam. The new observed practices include sports, halal-medicine, media production, cooperative farming, and home industries. These production and consumption practices eventually become signifiers for political Islam and public morality. While the nation’s large population provides a significant pool of potential new adopters, conservative communities still have to face two challenges: the inter-generational transfer of practice and resource tapping, and the justification of its made-in-China products.
This study is about an immaterial concept called spirituality. It examines how it can be introduced as a cultural resource in pursuit of the good life among young Iranians. In addition to such intangible aspects of the good life as a sense of aspiration, dignity, or fairness, spirituality can be also important especially to emotional wellbeing. As human beings, we are threatened by anxiety, pain, illness, and death. Surrounded by these imposed sufferings, the way we organize our inner world and, thus, the external world is particularly important. Spirituality is the path for contemporary human beings to look for the meaning of life and to find a balance between their inner world and the outside reality. As a phenomenon, spirituality is subjective, experiential, non-rational, and intuitive. In other words, it is the feeling of having a connection with something beyond our material existence as human beings. In fact, spirituality is a new temple for the soul’s survivors who travel outside organized religion in order to reach the unknown landscapes of their souls, in the hope of giving meaning to their life and making their restless spirits full of tranquility.

According to Edward Fischer (2014: 2), there is a sense of life satisfaction in this ongoing aspiration for something better (meaningful, peaceful) that is judged by the criteria of wellbeing and the good life. This is where spirituality becomes relevant to the good life, as a resource that gives meaning to life’s pursuits.

The main question is: How are different visions of spirituality at work in people’s daily life to obtain a meaning that they value? These different sorts can be related to the perception of good life among different individuals, especially the younger generations whose attitudes and values towards life and things which make it good are drastically different from the previous generations. Thus, in order to understand perceptions of the good life in the eyes of young Iranians in the city of Isfahan, this study is focused on in-depth interviewing to see how they experience spirituality, what resources they use in this regard and what are the implications of this process for their definition of the good life.
Contemporary Reception of Rumi in the West as a Resource in Creating Space for Pluralism and the Promotion of the Good Life

Azra Ghandeharion* and Fatemeh Khajavian
Ferdowsi University of Mashhad

The presence of universally accepted and revered personages and their teachings, which are appreciated by a diverse range of individuals around the world, can be of great benefit to societies. From the perspective of the “resource turn”, it can be said that these personages and their teachings represent a form of intangible cultural asset, or to be exact, ‘Resource Culture’ (Hardenberg et al. 2017) that can function as bridges or social links between different groups of readers/actors. One such personage is Jalal al-Din Mohammad Rumi (1207-1273).

In this study the 13th century Persian, Sufi poet Jalaladin Rumi’s life and works serve as a model. A wide range of musical, media, and literary productions with Rumi as their focal point bear witness to his appeal in both East and West. Rumi’s realization that spiritual values are also necessary to be able to live a good life and his turn to Sufism therefore reflect the point made by the American anthropologist Edward Fischer (2014) that the necessary criteria for the attainment of the good life “cannot be reduced to material conditions alone [since] key non-material qualities define the good life” (p. 2). Both Rumi’s life and Fischer’s statement confirm that the non-material qualities are crucial for the attainment of the good life as well. Rumi’s collections of poems Masnavi and Divan-i-Shams-i-Tabrizi provide fitting contexts that show how a new definition of the good life can be formulated.

The purpose of the first part of this paper is to portray how Rumi’s fame travels between East and West by examining the views of prominent intellectuals, popular culture figures, musical, media, and literary productions on Rumi and his work. This will elucidate the heterogeneity of Rumi’s worldwide audience and hence the universality of his definition of good life. Then a number of Rumi’s most popular poems and quotations, selected from his aforementioned opuses, are examined in order to extract the different themes that can be helpful in the formation of his definition of the good life. These themes can be placed under the three domains introduced by Fischer (2014): aspiration and opportunity, dignity and fairness, and commitment to a larger purpose. Thus, Rumi’s definition of the good life, communicated through his texts to his worldwide audience, can be summarized as: firstly, humans can live the good life, if they are able to benefit from the possible opportunities to improve their personalities and thereupon to change their fate. Secondly, humankind can live the good life, if they treat each other equally and with respect. Finally, mankind can attain the good life, if they acknowledge their individual differences, disregard their narrow self-interest, and instead to focus on common ground and larger interests. This last condition paves the way for the second part of this article that argues the case for the creation of a pluralist, tolerant, and respectful atmosphere through universally accepted and revered personages such as Rumi.

Despite their differences, readers around the world have a shared interest in Rumi’s lessons for life. Here, the universal acceptance and fame of Rumi serve as a resource to facilitate the promotion of the lifestyle he regards vital for the achievement of the good life. Rumi’s pluralist views toward life can promote not only universal peace and love but also dialogue between the West and Muslim world.
‘Living Well’ While ‘Doing Good’ and the Resources It Takes: Perspectives from Local NGO-Actors in Burkina Faso

Kathrin Knodel
Goethe University Frankfurt Main

Actors in development cooperation are always automatically affected by good life issues; more precisely, answering these questions is part of their job. However, this paper does not focus on the resources needed for societal development (such as financial support, food, clothing, seeds, wells, etc.), but rather on the local NGO-actors themselves and their use of resources that they seek to obtain during asymmetric negotiations with international donors. For some time now, the bottom-up approach has been the focus of the lenders. In this context, NGOs have become important pillars in the setting and implementation of development programs. Within this framework, the actors try to realize projects by a predominantly tactical approach and at the same time to achieve their own professional security.

The resources they manage include: a) for the acquisition of their projects: infrastructure, a good reputation, and internal knowledge of operations within development cooperation, and b) for the implementation of projects: technical skills and access to competent people. Resources such as infrastructure and networks are formed, which strengthen their position as partners, but also contribute to the formation of a specific role and identity. If you have more knowledge, skills and networks, you will also succeed in attracting material resources more often. Being successful and leading a good life, means to implement many projects at the same time and in succession; to stand out through an above-average lifestyle, and to have personal contacts abroad and to travel there. With changing guidelines in development cooperation or damage to one’s reputation, the flow of resources can quickly come to an end. This ends the opportunity to realize projects and to maintain one’s financial security. Good resource management determines the success and longevity of the NGO-structure.

The result of this resource management is an ambivalent figure who for his immediate environment is a broker and mediator of local needs to the outside, but who is also often subject to the generalized accusation and the submission to enrich himself. He demands an own African way of development and stylizes his own culture as the only right path, while at the same time being dependent on external support, which is partly linked to very strict requirements and stipulations from the donors.

Taking a resource-based perspective, we not only learn a great deal about the working world of NGO-actors and its effects in society, but also their lifeworld and position in society. We can describe them as a group of people for whom a good life is defined by the management of a very specific ResourceComplex, in which material and non-material resources mutually condition each other.
Aberu as an Intangible Resource Culture

Ehsan Aghababae
University of Isfahan

The concept of aberu (loosely defined as prestige, reputation, credit) in Iranian culture means we try to be recognized by others as perfect, honorable, and respectable individuals. Following Hardenberg, et al (2017), aberu can be considered an intangible resource culture, because, first, aberu is defined as a cultural resource within the Iranian cultural system of meaning. Second, the use of aberu means its production, distribution, and consumption in the Iranian cultural context is unique. Third, aberu is exploited by the actors' relationship for culturally constituted interests. Fourth, aberu affects the social life of Iranian people. At the same time, Iranians have certain ideas and assumptions about the good life (for example, being healthy and secure, or living in peace and prosperity). According to Fischer’s definition (2014: 6) mental domains such as passion, dignity, and freedom are important in defining the good life, but in Iran structural opportunities are limited. In this study, it is claimed that aberu is a structural constraint that affects the agency and understanding of actors in their pursuit of the good life. The aim of this study is to use ethnography as methodology to see how Iranians construct the meaning of aberu specifically in wedding ceremonies, and how actors use aberu to pursue the good life.
In an attempt to address the gaps in current descriptive and interpretive knowledge about the underlying dynamics between religion and peace, the present research argues for a shift of perspectives toward the cultural character of the intricacies involved. In fact, such an academic project at the intersection of religion, peace, culture, and society needs most appropriately to employ a multidisciplinary approach to its agenda, informed by theories and methods of research pursued in corresponding and neighboring domains in the study of religion. Therefore, a number of methods for data collection and description, as well as conceptual frameworks for data analysis are adopted from a diverse range of academic domains, especially including cultural anthropology, comparative religion, theology, and peace studies. To delimit the scope of research, the religion-and-peace dynamics is addressed here as a case study for comparative religion; one that collects its data from Muslim and Christian communities in Mashhad (Iran) and Paderborn (Germany).

In fact, the interpretive nature of this project calls for an ethnographic fieldwork that can facilitate greater insights into the ambivalent complexities within the sociocultural dynamics of religion and peace. This type of research practice is also inspired by the recent experience of Bräuchler’s ethnographies of peace and reconciliation in Indonesia (e.g. 2015); as ‘an ethnography of a topic’ that calls for a multi-sited and multi-temporal fieldwork approach. In addition, where Bräuchler (2015) speaks of an emerging ‘Cultural Turn’ in peace research, Hardenberg et al (2017) highlight the ‘Resource Turn’ in sociocultural studies. Indeed, to understand what cultures of peace are at work and how they are shared or contested by people throughout the religious communities under study, individual experiences and meanings of peace as produced by the use of resources from their indigenous faiths or religions need to be followed with serious concern. Therefore, the present research seeks to delve into the sociocultural dynamics of religious peace by approaching religion as ‘a cultural system’ (Geertz 1966) as well as a ResourceCulture (Hardenberg 2017).

The questions pursued alongside the collection and analysis of the research data include, but are not limited to, what peace means for Muslims and Christians in Paderborn and Mashhad; what the values and symbolic meanings and resources are in the interplay of religion and peace in those contexts; how these resources of/for peace are produced, distributed, contested, negotiated, and consumed in the societies under study; and where the corresponding resources and processes reside within a dimensional framework of comparative religions. To investigate these questions, the present project draws on four complementary paradigms: Religion as a Cultural System (Geertz 1966), Resource Cultures (particularly advanced by Hardenberg 2017), Dimensions of the Sacred (Smart 1996), and contemporary peace theories including those proposed by Johan Galtung (1990). This project can potentially inform policy and procedure when it comes to planning for peace and social integrity and development, especially in diasporic settings; with emphasis on religion as a sociocultural phenomenon that most crucially exerts far-reaching impacts on contemporary society.
Working Group IV
Regimens and Their Subjects
How Does a ResourceCulture Serve to Motivate Less Engaged Donors to pursue the Good Life?  
A Qualitative Study of an Informal Telegram-Based Charity in Mashhad

Ahmadreza Asgharpourmasouleh and Atiyeh Sadeghi  
Ferdowsi University of Mashhad

Generosity presents a paradox. It is obvious that generosity imposes a net cost on the giver since it involves a loss of things that are valuable to him, such as money, possessions, time, attention, aid, encouragement, emotional availability, and more. At the same time, the more generously people give, the more they receive in return, as generosity can increase happiness and health; the elements which are representative of a good life. Hence, people willingly incur the costs of helping for the sake of the good life, which in Iran has specific meanings in the context of both its pre-Islamic Iranian and Muslim heritages.

For the study, we selected a charitable “group” on the popular messaging service Telegram, whose members are mostly young and middle-class people. We participated in this group for two years, starting from the time of its establishment. We also interviewed eighteen people, including administrators and donors. Our results show that participants have conceptions of the good life that mostly refer to happiness, personal identity as a Muslim, the sense of blessing in one’s life, a close relationship with God, and moral development. At the same time, these generous people are not interested in participating in any real-world meetings or being a member of a team to help the needy in the field. In fact, they prefer to donate money but not energy or time.

Telegram is very useful in this regard, since it provides the means for fast, efficient virtual interaction. Further, according to the philosophy of the group, donations are not substantial. Rather, collecting small sums can make great changes in the lives of few people. However, due to the expertise and skills of the channel administrators donations are efficiently used.

Although there are many formal charity organizations in the country, many people often trust informal groups like the Telegram group studied in this case. Due to legal deficiencies, unclear licensing authorities, and lack of monitoring mechanisms over official charities, some of them have been misused, and the reputations of otherwise credible charities have also suffered. On the other hand, the informal charities are managed by a few administrator-trustees who are at the center of the network of donors. Members vouch personally for their honesty. Moreover, reports on previous donations are accessible to everyone, which creates a high degree of transparency as to their use and efficacy.

By this meaning, these people have employed Telegram as a ResourceCulture for achieving the good life according to their own preferred style of cooperation. People ascribe to the importance of generosity for good life, but they are not ready for intense engagement with poor people.
We live in an age when science and technology are the two fundamental pillars around which human life is organized. Not only do they dominate different aspects of society, but they also tell us how we should spend every second of our daily life by using the products and benefits they provide for us. It is assumed that science and technology make life more pleasant, comfortable, and secure, leading to a happy and fruitful existence. This can be studied under the concept of good life as elaborated by American anthropologist, Edward Fischer (2014), whose definition of good life incorporates material as well as immaterial elements of the concept. While material privileges and products are necessary for having a good life, argues Fischer, they are not sufficient to guarantee it. We should thus pay attention to intangible and immaterial elements that contribute to a good life. When it comes to eating habits and health-related behavior, for example, a great number of nations across the globe are enjoying an abundance of food and material products. However, consuming a lot of food and buying different products is not necessarily associated with happier states of mind. What matters here is not material gains promised by a consumerist lifestyle, but rather, achieving physical as well as physiological satisfaction by optimum consumption.

Iranian society is also influenced by this phenomenon at various levels and in different fields, including physical health. While a majority of the Iranian population deals with health problems such as obesity and diabetes as a result of overconsumption, there is growing interest in having a healthy lifestyle in order to increase one’s quality of life. In this presentation we will see how this approach has influenced people’s perceptions of the good life. We would like to investigate different measures people take in order to manage their physical wellbeing and health in order to move towards a better life. While some people turn to specific physical activities, others are careful about the quality of their food and daily nutrition. We can thus, talk about a culture of health and wellbeing in which different rituals, technologies, and practices are employed to help people have a good life. This process can be studied from a “resource culture” (Hardenberg 2017) perspective, according to which “a resource is not a thing or matter but a means related to certain cultural ideas and practices” (14). In this sense, “resources are the means to create, sustain and alter social relations, units and identities within the framework of cultural ideas and practices”. Using a qualitative approach and in-depth interviewing, we spoke with individuals who actively participate in a culture of healthy lifestyle and define specific resources for their physical wellbeing by, for example, body management techniques, certain diets, and rituals in order to have a good life. The research field is Tehran and research participants are followers of a ketogenic diet. Our main research questions are: what resource cultures can be distinguished as relevant to physical wellbeing and health in this context and how they can be related to the ideas of good life by followers of the above practices?
Resource-Based Perspectives on Good Life and Wellbeing in a German Refugee Camp

Anne Grothe
Goethe University Frankfurt Main

Working in a refugee camp as an anthropologist raises questions about the role of tangible and intangible resources in the life of the people living in this camp and the influence on their well-being.

After a short presentation of refugee aid as a field of work, my talk will discuss the conscious and unconscious use of resources by consulting Aaron Antonovskys theory of salutogenesis, the counterpart of the prevalent pathogenesis. This theory does not construct a dichotomy of health and disease; it rather defines health as a life-time continuum. Within this continuum, people have to deal with stress, and their ability to do so leads to a better or worse state of health. This ability is influenced by resources acquired in the past or present of a person’s life. Resources acquired in the past cannot compensate present resources, but they are strongly influenced and by the “sense of coherence”: the comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness of one’s living situation. In my presentation I want to show, with the help of a few examples, how existing resources, e.g. social relationships, (legal) status, material goods, and empowerment play an increasingly important role in the pursuit of wellbeing and content in the refugees lives, even if they cannot compensate resources that were gained or lost in their past.
Transitions are an integral part of human life. They are often life-changing events that require one to re-think life roles, responsibilities, or even life’s meaning. In a life transition event, one moves from one social space to another, such as from childhood to adulthood or from school to work. This latter transition from academic to work space seems to be one of the most important life transitions. This makes it a great challenge and major source of stress for many students after graduation. Considering the unstable economic situation in Iran, the importance of finding employment is doubled. Iranian graduates face serious challenges in their transitions from university to work and in redefining their roles from that of student to that of employee.

Previous research has indicated unsuccessful transitions from university to work result in mental health issues (McKee-Ryan, Song, Wanberg, Kinicki 2005; Paul and Moser 2009; Wanberg 2012), and unemployed people experience lower levels of wellbeing and report higher levels of depression (McKee-Ryan et al 2005; Paul and Moser 2009; Wanberg 20012).

According to recent research, a successful transition requires the existence of social, cultural, psychological, environmental, and even economic resources. According to Hardenberg et al., (2017) all of these resources (except economic and environmental ones) can be assumed as part of an intangible resource culture that helps individuals search, identify, and find appropriate employment. Achieving a suitable position helps people promote self-confidence, self-efficacy, self-esteem, identity, and sense of being and agency, and also allows individuals to achieve the financial means to experience and build a better life.

In this research we aim to analyze which psychological, psycho-social, and contextual resources affect individual transitions. How do people who have a good school to work transition define their resources, and how do they describe the level of those resources? The study is based on data obtained through qualitative research done with young employees that were successful in finding employment after graduation.
In this paper, I discuss how the recent promulgation of the Indigenous Peoples’ Rights Act (IPRA) by the Philippine government should be interpreted as an increasing attempt to governmentalize indigenous life and resources. I argue that while the formalization of the customary resource allocation as a pivotal instrument to realize an equitable and just life for minorities ushers a new opportunity for indigenous peoples’ rights, the IPRA’s unbending definition of what constitutes a customary system and the ensuing legal subjectivity expected of tribal communities impute a precarious condition. Using two cases of indigenous clans with existing applications to acquire a land title, I present how the IPRA forces tribal minorities to build their land claims according to what it strictly defines as an indigenous resource and a proper customary practice on land ownership even when such definitions imagine an idealized subject position, based on notions of the wellbeing of indigenous persons, and a fetishized tenure relationship. I end this discussion with a reflection about the need to be suspicious of claims about *buen vivir* and the empowerment of indigenous communities to life by affording them legal rights to acquire and use their tribal resources. With the cases under study, I present how the state’s official project to care for the wellbeing its indigenous population may spiral into a precarious form of life as it imposes new external regimes of resource use and indigenous subjectivities for tribal minorities to fulfill.