

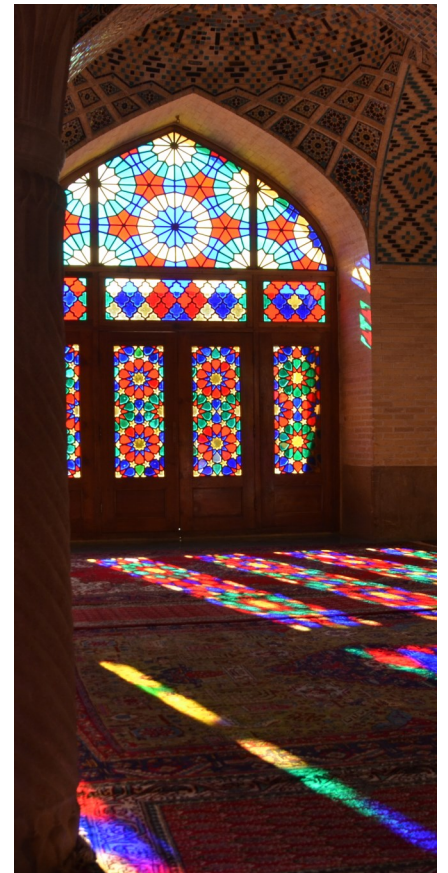
Erasmus University College & School of International Relations digital exchange programme

In June and July 2020 the School of International Relations in Tehran (Iran) and Erasmus University College in Rotterdam (the Netherlands) organised a digital academic exchange programme.

Whilst initially planned to include physical travels from and to Rotterdam and Tehran, the Covid-19 pandemic made this impossible.

Instead, the decision was taken to pursue the programme through a 22-hour online 'digital mobility' where, for 7 days spread out over several weeks, 19 EUC and SIR participants took the lead in hosting digital sessions focussing on specific topics within five themes:

- 1- Governance – [hokoumrani] (state formation, domestic affairs, rule of law)
- 2- Economy – [eqtesad] (trade, un-employment, environment)
- 3- Society – [jamou'a] (religion, gender, identity, social change)
- 4- Culture – [ferhank] (media, architecture, art & heritage)
- 5- Geopolitics – [geopolitik] (diplomacy, int'l political economy, regional dynamics)



Values

Process-wise, this programme is rooted in five distinct values aimed to guarantee a genuine exchange that goes beyond a classic country profile or a passive sightseeing exercise. In doing so it is rooted in 5 distinct values:

1: Critical world citizenship

Allowing students to reflect critically on their own actions and society with a sense of cosmopolitan belonging and responsibility. This exchange serves as an exercise in critical world citizenship, where participants explore the potential of this notion but where they can also experience some of its limits.

2: Cross-cultural communication

Working together with peers from different cultural, educational, and language backgrounds. Deconstructing misunderstandings about the EU or the Middle East in general or about the Netherlands or Iran in particular and critically addressing what contributes to political miscommunication about the respective countries.

3: Two-way exchange

The novelty of this programme is its intention to go beyond a one-way classic study visit towards a two-way exchange that allows participants to learn from (instead of about) each other and critically reflect on the other as well as about oneself.

4: Diversity

A cornerstone of both participating institutions and this programme as a whole. We regard diversity as a strength allowing for better understanding and reflection. This programme intends to introduce participants to tools and techniques to handle situations marked by cultural diversity as well as diversity in opinions and arguments.

5: Employability

By exposing participants to an environment representative of their professional future, i.e. marked by human diversity and multiple, apparently contradictory preferences, this programme allows students to experience the complexities of organizational efficiency. Working within a spirit of solidarity and reciprocity across cultural boundaries, will challenge participants to apply knowledge and develop problem-solving skills helpful for their future careers.

"Critical World Citizenship is a learning process. It's a sense of understanding among shared humans rather than among fellow citizens. It is also about self-criticism."
- Student participant, June 2020



Teaching format

This course made explicit use of an innovative small scale teaching format characterised by two innovative features:

First, a project-based learning method that fits the liberal arts and science (LAS) approach of EUC well. It has taken EUC's signature problem-based learning one step further by offering participants a unique opportunity to practice what they have learned in an exchange format with their Iranian peers.

Second, the exchange component has been student-led. Students were the main actors as they were in the lead in selecting relevant topics, presenting these topics to their peers, inviting guest speakers, and moderating discussions. This flipped classroom configuration enabled students to take ownership of their education and learn and teach about what they themselves believe is most important to tackle contemporary challenges.

Critical world citizenship—From classroom to practice

This programme has aimed to fill a perceived gap in the EUC curriculum by allowing students to practice Critical world citizenship, one of EUC's core values, in real-life circumstances.

It has brought critical world citizenship into practice though mobilising students' knowledge and competences in a real-life cross-cultural setting.

As a whole, the programme's goals were to:

- Build knowledge of the other's society, state and culture
- Facilitate a genuine cultural exchange that places both hosting societies and cultures on genuine equal footing with one another
- Critically engage with the knowledge and opinions of the other and ourselves
- Develop intercultural communication skills

Dutch vs. Iranian energy transition (7)


There are differences:


- ❖ Resources
- ❖ Technology
- ❖ Policy
- ❖ People

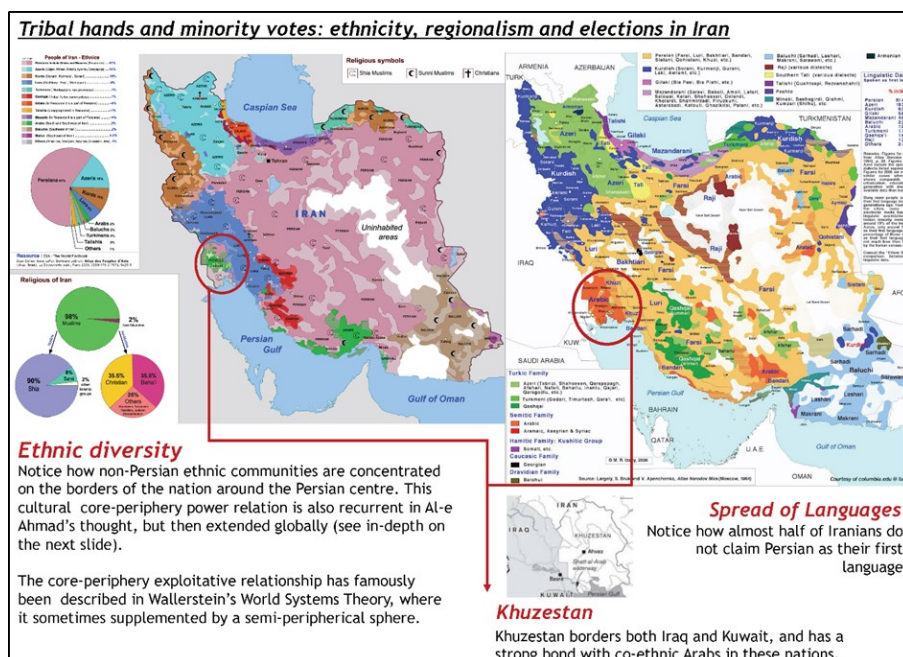
There are similarities:

- ❖ Fossil fuels
- ❖ Targets
- ❖ Looking for new opportunities
- ❖ People

Higher levels (international, regional, national) are more different, in comparison with local level are more similar







Why Iran

During almost four centuries of bilateral relations, Iran and the Netherlands have been of great importance to each other. Forty years after the revolution of 1979, Iran remains a critical actor in world politics. Its military, demographic, cultural and economic strength lend Iran a geopolitical influence that deserves to be understood in depth. The often antagonistic media narratives that dominate Western press coverage regarding Iran turns it into a fascinating case study for students in the Netherlands.

Deliverables

EUC participants were asked to prepare a 'collaborative reflection' assignment.

This reflection required students to reflect on one of the five values of the programme and produce a creative product in which, together with one or more Iranian peers, they addressed what this value means for them, how this value matters for them, and where they encounter it in this programme.

