



Centre for

**Global
Cooperation
Research**

Diaspora as Agents of Global Cooperation

Workshop April 21-22, 2015

Centre for Global Cooperation Research

Käte Hamburger Kolleg, Duisburg

Purpose

The purpose of this workshop is to examine the interplay between individual and communal identity construction on the one hand and the political dimensions of diaspora in homeland and host states on the other. The workshop will bring together 15-18 scholars from various disciplines, working on questions regarding the role of diaspora in identity politics and ambivalences of belonging. Papers will focus on comparative case studies, theoretical orientations, as well as the impact of diaspora formation on policies in homeland and host states. Case studies will include diaspora from Iran, North Africa, South Asia, Central and Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. Comparative studies of diaspora host and home state policies will also be considered (e.g. Canada, Russia, Gambia, UK, Holland).

Participants have been selected for their subject matter expertise as well as their awareness of policy relevant research. It is expected that contributors to the workshop will prepare a draft paper in advance of the workshop. Participants will benefit from peer review during the workshop, and will be given an opportunity to revise their papers following the workshop with a view to publishing the best of the papers as a collection.

Rationale

The growing prominence of diaspora communities around the world has led to increased recognition of the role they play in the domestic affairs of their respective homelands and as global actors, agents of change and knowledge brokers in their own right. The term diaspora is derived from Greek, meaning "dispersal or scattering of seeds." However, today "diaspora" and "diasporic communities" are increasingly being used as a metaphoric definition for expatriates, expellees, refugees, alien residents, immigrants, displaced communities and ethnic minorities (Hall 1990).

The term diaspora has also been used to describe the experience of movement of displacement and to analyze the social, cultural and political formations that result from this movement of displacement. Since the early 1990s diaspora studies have promoted non-essentialist conceptions of identity, culture and belonging that exceed the framework of the nation-state and explore new connections between global and local contexts (i.e. Safran 1991).



To be sure, “in the late 20th century, all or most communities have diasporic dimensions... some are more diasporic than others” (Clifford 2004: 254). We therefore neither resort to an overt celebration of the notion of hybridity, nor contrast diaspora to the “center,” insisting on a (forced or voluntary) dispersion and a continued longing for “home,” rendering the diasporic situation primarily oppressive.

When we speak of diaspora we refer to transnational and flexible identities and allegiances; people who have not completely left their homeland, but serve as the bridge between homeland and their host state. This link to the “homeland” however does not only have to be physically, but also includes imagined representations of a time and space, to which an actual return might not be possible.

Linkages to the homeland may include activities that are political (for example lobbying), economic (remittances and investment or brain drain), social (such as the promotion of human and other rights of the transnational group within different societies) and cultural (media production, the creation of subcultures, etc.). These linkages may take place at the individual level or through institutional channels (ranging from grass-root initiatives to international organizations). The engagement in these activities and affiliation with the respective social contexts is a crucial element of identity formation in the diaspora since it often includes conflicting allegiances, rendering the process of identity formation quite ambivalent. These situations have been well documented and explored through both the case study literature and large sample techniques (Brinkerhoff 2011, Lum et al. 2012).

Understanding diaspora as a space characterised by the intersection of economic, political, cultural and psychic processes (Brah 1996), thus makes it necessary to consider factors such as global inequalities, modern information and production technologies, foreign policy agendas as well as multi-national cooperation in the analysis.

Against this background, this workshop is primarily interested in diaspora as promoters of cooperation. From the perspective of global cooperation it can be stated that diaspora communities who “wish to continue living on their own terms without becoming fully a part or entirely assimilated to their host society (...) may ultimately move the society towards a greater acceptance and recognition of difference” (Levy and Weingrod 2005: 17).



Research Agenda

Despite a growing body of research on diasporas, more information is required to answer the following questions ranging from policy related issues to cultural identities:

- What are the implications of diaspora processes, linkages and relationships for global cooperation?
- What is the precise influence of diaspora groups on civil society, cultural production and the polity and economy of homeland states?
- How can positive contributions and activities of diaspora groups be supported through effective host state policy?
- How do transnationally informed popular cultures shape local communities?
- Is religious affiliation promoting or hindering the construction of “successful” identities among diaspora groups?

There are a variety of positive contributions that diaspora populations can and do make; community based NGOs, professional networks and political entrepreneurs all have the potential to bring about positive change. Such cooperation can come about through diaspora members who physically return to their country of origin to provide expertise in the homeland, business investors, or to work with local NGOs.

Those who do not return may serve as a source of guidance, information, new ideas, best practices, and appropriate technologies. In both cases, diaspora represent identity formations that continue to evolve in a space *in between*. How this space is constituted and which resources it offers to different members of diaspora communities are both crucial to understanding how processes of homogenization and heterogenization, as well as micro- and macro-politics engage with one another.

Diaspora are also key drivers of development, through remittances, the transfer of human and social capital, and through direct support for democracy processes and peacebuilding in fragile states. But there remains a knowledge gap regarding best practices when it comes to programmes and policies that facilitate diaspora contributions to development. Graham's contention (2010) that the presence of migrant networks enhances informational access and Brinkerhoff's (2008) argument that diaspora are most effective when they invest in social capital rather than consumption are both worth consideration.

Finally, barriers to international engagement of diaspora groups can also be due to personal factors such as the aforementioned lack of economic resources. Although not all diasporic communities arrive economically unstable, many of those leaving their homelands do share this characteristic. Their capacity to be politically involved while at the same time trying to establish a home is compromised by a lack of resources and time.



Looking at diaspora as a productive and positive condition will allow us to understand how different nation states and their respective foreign policy agenda shapes individual subjectivities among diaspora groups. It will highlight how national, ethnic, class-based, or religious aspects are not fixed and stable but evolve differently depending on the social context. By looking closer at these “internal” variations among diaspora communities, we will be able to capture the mutual interdependencies of today’s global communities.

References

Brah, Avta (1996): *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*. London and New York: Routledge.

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Safran, William: “Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return,” *Diaspora* 1:1 (Spring 1991): 83-99.



Programme

21 April 2015

Morning

- 8:30 Registration
- 9:00-09:15 Welcome – Tobias Debiel (Centre for Global Cooperation Research)
- 9:15-09:30 Introduction – Ariane Sadjed and David Carment (Centre for Global Cooperation Research)
- 9:30-11:15 **Panel 1 – Global Networks and Transnationalism**
- [Dietrich Reetz](#) (Zentrum Moderner Orient) – “Alternate Globalities? Muslim Networks from South Asia as Global Actors”
- [Claudia Derichs](#) (University of Marburg, KHK) – “The Power of Rasulullah’s Leadership”: Localized Arab and Islamic Thought in Indonesia
- [Walter Sperling](#) (Ruhr University Bochum) – “A World Wide Net of Nostalgia: Memory and Politics of Belonging to the Multi-Ethnic Community of Grozny”
- Chair: David Carment
- 11:15-11:25 Break
- 11:25-12:30 **Panel 2 – Transnational Social Movements from North Africa**
- [Angela Suarez-Collado](#) (University of Madrid) – “Being Amazigh in Europe: Looking for a Place in the Host Countries”
- [Lenie Brouwer](#) (University of Amsterdam) – “Transnational protest in the Netherlands and Morocco”
- Chair: Milana Nikolko
- 12:30-1:30 Lunch – Centre for Global Cooperation Research



Afternoon

1:30-3:15

Panel 3 – Secularism and Diasporic Religious Identity

[Reza Gholami](#) (Middlesex University) – “The ‘Sweet Spot’ between Submission and Subversion: Diaspora, Education and Identity among UK Iranians”

[Ariane Sadjed](#) (University of Vienna) – “Narrating (Non-) Iranianness: Shifting Ethnic and Religious Identification among Iranians in Germany”

[Karen Koerber](#) (University of Marburg, Jewish Museum Berlin) – “Contested Diaspora: The changing image of the Jewish community in Germany”

Chair: Angela Suarez-Collado

3:15-3:25

Break

3:25-5:10

Panel 4 – Diasporisation at the Local and Regional Level

[Paolo Gaibazzi](#) (Zentrum Moderner Orient) – “Diasporic Homes Inside Out: Household Heads in a Migrant-Sending Community in the Gambia, West Africa”

[Tunc Aybak](#) (School of Law, Middlesex University)- “Turkey’s Russian Diaspora”

[Latif Tas](#) (Max Planck Institute)- “The Influence of Diaspora Politics on Conflict and Peace: Transnational Activism of Stateless Kurds”.

Chair: Ariane Sadjed

5:10-7:00

Dinner – Centre for Global Cooperation Research

7:00

Keynote Speaker Käte Hamburger lecture, University Duisburg-Essen

Identity and Political Mobilization of Diasporas: A Gendered Perspective

[Nadje Al-Ali](#) (SOAS- University of London)



22 April 2015

Morning

9:00-10:45 **Panel 5 – South-East and Central European Diasporas**

[Neo Loizides and Djordje Stefanovic](#) (University of Kent) – “The Way Home: Forced Migration and Peaceful Voluntary Return”

[Milana Nikolko](#) (Carleton University) – “Political narratives of victimization in Ukrainian diaspora's identity construction process”

[Marija Grujic](#) (Goethe University Frankfurt) – “Who are the ‘Kosovari’? Boundaries and Politics of Belonging in Contemporary Serbia”

Chair: David Carment

10:45-10:55 Break

10:55-12:40 **Panel 6 – Diasporas in the Context of Policy Making**

[Daniel Naujoks](#) (Columbia University) – “The Political Effects of Diasporic Citizenship: Overseas Citizenship of India and Political Participation in the United States”

[David Carment](#) (Carleton University) – “Diaspora and Fragile States: Beyond Remittances”

Chair: Ariane Sadjed

12:40-1:15 Open Discussion and Next Steps

Chairs: David Carment and Ariane Sadjed

1:15 End of workshop



About the Centre

Käte Hamburger Kolleg / Centre for Global Cooperation Research is an interdisciplinary research institute of the University of Duisburg-Essen. The Centre provides a framework for internationally renowned fellows from different disciplines and world regions to pursue research on the opportunities and challenges of global cooperation amidst political-cultural differences in the world society.

Käte Hamburger Kolleg / Centre for Global Cooperation Research was co-founded by the German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE), the Institute for Development and Peace / Institut für Entwicklung und Frieden (INEF), and the Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities (KWI) in Essen.

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