Centre for
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# Workshop Report

## Diaspora as Agents of Global Cooperation

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**Workshop organized by:**
Käte Hamburger Kolleg /
Centre for Global Cooperation Research
(KHK/GCR21)

The Workshop entitled '*Diaspora as Agents of Global Cooperation*' took place at the Käte Hamburger Kolleg / Centre for Global Cooperation Research (KHK/GCR21). The two-day event, which encompassed the 11th Käte Hamburger Lecture in the evening of the first day, was organized by David Carment (KHK/GCR21, Carleton University Canada), Ariane Sadjed (KHK/GCR21, University of Vienna), Research Unit 2 and Research Unit 3 of KHK/GCR21.

During the two intensive days, invited scholars from various disciplines and countries examined 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. In preparation for the workshop, contributors drafted papers addressing questions on the role of diaspora in identity politics and ambivalences of belonging. Comparative studies and theoretical orientations on the impact of diaspora formation on policies in homeland and host states looked into diaspora from Iran, North Africa, South Asia, Central and Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. The workshop also featured comparative studies of diaspora home and host states' policies in Canada, Russia, the Gambia, UK, and the Netherlands.

Introducing the workshop, Volker Heins (KHK/GCR21) honoured the creative and vibrant cooperation of fellows at the Centre that led to the exciting event. Alumni fellow Ariane Sadjed and current fellow David Carment, the two initiators of the event indicated their specific interest in the conceptualization of diasporas and what characteristics they have in common. Convinced of the diasporic potential to shape nation states for own interests, the organizers emphasized that there are differences and homogenizations in the same time. Thereby, they called the participants to rather raise content-related comments instead of formal or methodological considerations.

## Global Networks and Transnationalism

Opening the first panel, **Dietrich Reetz** (Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin) gave deep insights into the interaction of Muslim networks originated in South Asia, which he identifies as global actors and "alternate globalities". Reetz accentuated that not every actor in our globalized world connects with others in the same way or because of the same purposes. Considering that 80% of Muslims live outside the Arab world, due to Colonialism and various other motives, he identified main diasporic ideological streams that are competing but also building alliances with each other. According to Reetz, those networks are progressing independently and their institutions are proliferating in any social setting of the world. Moreover, they would have the most modern, most militant and most secularized institutions with own publications, TV channels and additional materials. At the end, Reetz challenged the definition of the term diaspora by arguing that diasporic people themselves can

be considered as actors in a larger scale, but that those networks with a mission or project are real global actors. They would be factors able to shape the world and would have to be taken seriously in prospect of global governance.

Taking up Reetz provocation about the overall understanding of the term diaspora, **Claudia Derichs** (KHK/GCR21) raised crucial interrogations with her deliberations on '*Rasulullah's Leadership: Localized Arab and Islamic Thoughts in Asia*'. As the localized way of Islam takes place in several shapes, could we say that diaspora can be a political force? Are there any repercussions? And what does it mean to be Muslim? Capturing immediate comments of participants, Derichs argued that attention must be given to the centre and the periphery, whereby the centre would be the Arab world and the periphery is migration and Islamic intelligence in authoritarian states. Derichs discovered an antagonism in the circumstance that the state claims intervention into private affairs, but the state opposing activists are those who are calling the state. Leaning on Anderson, Derichs invented the term "imagined diasporas", and argued that the outcomes and projects of the Muslim majority in South Asia are constructing certain identities. Supporting Reetz argument, she specified that the networks' transnational politics would be visible through institutions and learning networks. For instance, women in Musawah are minorities in their own country where gender equality is not appreciated for minorities. But by connecting with women in other countries, they feel as being part of a global community. Transnational connectivity can create a felt majority.

**Walter Sperling** (Ruhr University Bochum), who presented his paper '*World Wide Net of Nostalgia: Memory and Politics of Belonging to the Multi-Ethnic Community pf Grozny*', identified nostalgia as unifying element for diasporas by arguing that there is no diaspora without nostalgia. Introducing the case of Grozny, the former capital of the autonomous Chechen-Ingush republic in Northern Caucasus, he revealed how and why the people of Grozny are re-assembling since the early 2000 in "virtual" and "real" spaces. The shared experience of destruction of their hometown and scattering of the communities in the four winds, as well as post-socialist and post-soviet nostalgia helped them re-identify themselves as a multi-ethnic community. Researching the internet, he started to have the impression that the old city is actually alive. People with different backgrounds and cultures come together and memory old Grozny, their home, how it was before the war.  Their new homes - e.g. Moscow and St. Petersburg – are experienced as strange, as places where people lack good behaviour, places without good food and lacking mountain views. The internet helps to link the former community members and brings the multicultural and multi-religious diaspora together again. Sperling concluded that the impetus to remember comes from the people themselves, who – in the case of Grozny - recall the Soviet Union.

The first panels' presentations lead to a vibrant discussion about how far states can regulate and interfere into diaspora affairs. For this purpose, Reetz argued it is

decisive if the Diaspora supports a state structure or nation state, or at least that there exists some kind of hierarchization of privileged and unprivileged. Some nation states feel challenged by diasporas, others try to incorporate them. Sperling argued that diasporas are very heterogeneous spaces and members want to keep unity and differentiation from each other. Al-Ali opposed Sperling's deliberations with the argument that for Iraqi refugees, for instance, nostalgia is about future and access to resources.

The discussion of the first panel left the participants with many open questions about a definition of the term diaspora. This triggered their need to answer them in upcoming debates.

## Transnational Social Movements from North Africa

Taking up considerations about periphery and homeland, the second panel started with the research titled '*The Political Agenda of Diasporas: Entanglements between Immigrant and Homeland Politics in the Amazigh Diaspora in Europe*' presented by **Ángela Suárez-Collado** (University of Madrid). Suarez-Collado analyzed the Amazigh (Berber/indigenous people from North Africa) diaspora from two perspectives. On the one hand, as struggling actor searching for identity in the home society, and on the other hand as builder and agent for change for its original homeland. Thereby, Suárez-Collado discovered a two-fold agenda: First, to improve social, economic and political rights in its host countries, as well as to receive recognition for the diasporas particularism from their hosts; second, to influence and support change inside the homeland. According to Suárez-Collado, diaspora operates within a dimension of space, in which immigrant politics and homeland politics do not necessarily operate separately. They can constitute the political agenda of the Diaspora. Identifying three periods of Amazigh diaspora activism in Europe, Suárez-Collado differentiated several types of activists: visible members, epistemic members, dormant members and silent members. While Amazigh Diaspora performed the role of an identity mobilizer (e.g. rescuing their original language) from the 1960s to the 7190s, an independence process followed in the 1990s, when activism within immigrant associations was on the rise and new members invented new strategies. Suárez-Collado recognized a huge diversification and specialization of the Amazigh Diaspora's political agenda from the year of 2000 onwards. Impact in the homeland and identity construction abroad would be evident.

Investigating the Moroccan Arab spring, **Lenie Bouwer** (University of Amsterdam) underlined Suárez-Collado's evidences by giving insights into the collaboration and support of activists from the provincial town of Tetouan in Northern Morocco, and Moroccan diaspora in the Netherlands. Presenting her paper '*Transnational protest in the Netherlands and Morocco*', she unveiled the indignation about Western media's

ignorance of rural Arab spring related activism in Morocco as well as activism of Moroccan diaspora in the Netherlands. Focusing on demonstrations solely in Rabat, the outside world would have overlooked the transnational realm between diaspora and more rural activism on a larger scale. The Moroccan Arab spring on 20th February 2001 enabled Moroccan people the first time to raise their voice and criticize their corrupt government. Although living physically in another country, Moroccans worldwide have been able to support their homeland society by using new communication and information technologies like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Especially video uploads of protests from various regions of Moroccan countryside proved the common demand for freedom of the press, democracy and social justice. Thereby, Bouwer identified that, while homeland activism was dominated by youth. The activists in the Netherlands were characterized by first generation of migrants. Although the media lost interest very quickly, activists would be convinced that something changed in a positive way. This assumption would be mirrored in the ongoing fight for releasing the prisoners of the 20th February movement.

Reflecting on the two presentations addressing diasporic entrepreneurs structures that have been identified as political opportunities, the participants agreed that diaspora can be extremely diverse and is not at all homogenous. Very often, migrants would be seen as a threat to their home country, especially if the home country is an authoritarian state where certain dates or places can have triggering effects for positive change. Tunc Aybak (Middlesex University) argued that being diasporic would be personally significant for those affected. Scholars would look at activities but would not be necessarily aware of this significance. Reetz responded that scholars tend to recreate diaspora as a normative situation while it has to be seen as an exception. The final discussed question was why there is differentiation between the two groups, diaspora and nation state, since everything is interrelated in the globalized world? The participants agreed that this respective space would be the area scientists could start from.

## Secularism and Diasporic Religious Identity

The third panel commenced with the presentation of **Reza Gholami** (Middlesex University), who presented his paper entitled '*The "Sweet Spot" between Submission and Subversion: Diaspora, Education and Identity among UK Iranians*'. Identifying the diaspora concept as a challenge to the logic of the nation-state, but also as indicative of ethnic absolutism, Gholami examined the role and nature of diasporic praxis. By asking how diasporic communities can resist and challenge national and diasporic structures while maintaining a relationship with them, he argued, they would facilitate cosmopolitanization (according to Gholami: globalization from within). Thereby, he considered a 'Sweet Spot' as a space, where human practices can be reclaimed or redeployed while cultural specificities can be 'stripped away' (i.e.

'loosened'; made to seem illogical) if this is more convenient. For instance, supplementary schooling in the UK has changed rapidly during the last ten years due to new businesses, funding requirements (by e.g. British Council) and increasing diversity. Conclusively, Iranian diaspora in the UK replete with 'excessive diasporicity' (mainly related to Islam and secularism) and engage with wider British society in significant ways. In this turn, 'Sweet Spots' are proliferating, especially through educational/cultural activities. Today, mother tongue teaching turned to be secondary while transnational pedagogy and teaching materials are presupposing permanency of residence and were adjusted to 'British-Iranian' ways of living (i.e. a re-imagination of both). Gholami concluded  that nation states as well as diaspora communities have to make concessions in order to create such potential spaces, which is fundamentally human and rationally.

**Ariane Sadjed** (University of Vienna) carried Gholamis points forward by talking about the changing patterns of belonging among Iranian exiles in Germany. Her study '*Narrating (Non-) Iranianness: Shifting Ethnic and Religious Identification among Iranians in Germany*' offers pioneering empirical evidence regarding the interaction between global politics and (religious) subjectivities focusing on Iranian Baha'is and Jews. Sadjed explored how religious minorities from Iran experience identitarian changes due to the problematic status of Islam in the Western world. Thereby, compared to Muslim faith, Baha'is faith considered as more modern, revolutionary, reformist and believers generally restrained from political activism. Depending on one's religious affiliation and religiosity, the performance of being Iranian has shown to unfold differently. While the first generation of migrants with Jewish-Iranian background expressed pride of being Iranian, the second generation considered themselves as primarily Jewish. Versus within an Israeli or US-American context, Iranian aspects of identity are discarded or selectively conceptualized. Sadjed argued that, compared to Iranian Muslims, Baha'is and Jews have the possibility to tap into a wider repertoire of identities which allows them to render their Iranian background invisible. Connected to normative secularism and islamophobia, although conceptualization of secularism is ambivalent, its positive affirmation is important for social acceptance.

With her presentation '*Contested Diaspora: The changing image of the Jewish community in Germany*', **Karen Koerber** (University of Marburg, Jewish Museum Berlin) put forward the Jewish case and elaborated on the tensions between different communal identity constructions due to the immigration of Russian-speaking Jews to Germany since 1989. In Germany, she argued, the symbolic image of a community of victims would risk clashing with the actual heterogeneity of Jewish lives in Germany today. The organization of the Jewish community through Jewish institutions would tend to be fragile because of lack of new young members with proper incomes. But more than 50% of Jews in Germany described their Jewishness as secular and liberal. 'Piraten-Partei'-politician Marina Weißband, for

instance, is Jewish, a German citizen and a Russian-speaking Ukrainian citizen participating in the democratic movement. Today, individuals can inhibit different worlds at the same time and are able to position themselves quite comfortably within this perpetual being-in-motion. These transformations would indicate that prevalent images in Germany are increasingly in conflict with a diversity of narratives that have gained in importance, and have resulted in a shift in the identity of Jewish community. Furthermore, Koerber argued, prevalent images tend to collide with the process or transnationalization and multiple forms of belonging that are definitive for the future of the Jewish diaspora in Germany. In general, the changes in the Jewish community of Germany would document tensions and struggles that are typical of diaspora communities.

## Diasporisation at the Local and Regional Level

The fourth and last panel of the first day started with **Paolo Gaibazzi's** (Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin) presentation of the paper entitled '*Diasporic Homes Inside Out: Household Heads in a Migrant-Sending Community in the Gambia, West Africa*'. Gaibazzi highlighted that stayers (family members who are left behind) are important actors of the politics of home-making in diasporic groups. He emphasized that, for scientific literature on the topic, it is essential to look closer on how their households have actually adapted to a migrant economy and the diasporization of their families. By identifying certain reciprocity of mobility and immobility, he discovered that men (young and adult) who are left behind are expected to preside over their migrant household. Thereby, such households can be very heterogeneous and very often also include the extended family which can make up to 100 people, Gaibazzi argued. The left behind ones (e.g. because of money, visa, etc.) would receive the chance to perform as the household head, which implied the shared responsibility for the survival and prosperity of all households members. It depends on the household heads' capacity to construct the household as social and cultural "homes" for diaspora family members. Furthermore, the household head is responsible to provide subsistence and food. The extended family abroad is expected to send remittances to cover their loss of labour back home. Gaibazzi observed that, since households are houses with many homes inside, competing claims for the financial sources and the demand for autonomy by different family units (for instance, if nuclear families want to move to urban areas because of better education) can destabilize the household structure.

Within the subsequent discussion, the participants wondered about the role of the state. In the Gambian case, the state would hold a very ambivalent position, denies double citizenship and enacts an anti-migration policy towards the educated Gambian diaspora. However, while opposing migration and diasporic relations, the government promotes the image of modern middle class family life by creating

urban real estate areas for nuclear family housing. Wives might not be able go abroad, but they are pressured to construct nuclear family households in cities, which also enables them to control their budget (remittances from diaspora) by themselves.

Talking about '*Turkey's Russian Diaspora*', **Tunc Aybak** (School of Law, Middlesex University) concentrated on the diasporic experiences of Russian speaking migrants, refugees and travellers in the context of geopolitical, cultural and historical relations between Turkey and Russia. Assessing the evolving trajectory of Russian diasporic communities, he identified different kinds and degrees of hostility and hospitality towards the Russian speaking diasporic communities. Aybak unveiled two major migration flows, initially post WWI and secondly after the end of the Cold War. In both cases, highly gendered Russian speaking migrants flooded the cities of Antalya and Istanbul. In response to this influx, the Turkish state adopted different strategies of diplomatic state craft to manage the formation of Russian diaspora through the techniques of governmentality. The first wave of Russian migrants might have left their financial wealth behind, but most Russian refugees brought with them highly distinctive cultural and social skills (e.g. opened restaurants, schools, taught the rich Ottomans to play tennis). Constituting a rather unsettling experience for the receiving population, Turkish nationals appealed to the government to intervene. Most of the Russian speaking refugees left after a few years. However, after the end of the Cold War, Istanbul became a diasporic space again. But this time, the government implemented state propaganda for Russian wives in order to foster Russian-Turkish relations. Thereby marriage is showed to serve as threshold for diasporic identity. Aybak concluded that the formations of transnational communities are inherently tied to diplomatic statecraft of bio-politics.

Giving the last presentation of the first workshop day, **Latif Tas** (Max Planck Institute) presented his paper on '*The Influence of Diaspora Politics: Transnational Activism of Stateless Kurds*'. He outlined how the condition of statelessness has affected the Kurds, and how Kurdish migrants have constructed and experienced statelessness at the individual and collective level in the diaspora. According to Tas, the concept of 'diaspora' can encompass more than one place, including their land of origin. Tas suggested the concept of 'double' or 'multiple' diasporas, where stateless people do not feel that they belong either to their home country or to the country in which they now live, regardless whether or not host country citizenship has been obtained. Furthermore, Tas stated that people do not have to physically cross a border to be in a diaspora. Therefore, he differentiated *de jure* statelessness (persons who do not have any legal documents to prove their citizenship), *de facto* statelessness (persons who are unable or unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of a specific country) and invented a third category of statelessness: *socially stateless persons.* Tas stressed that, indeed, the circumstance that legal

status with secured nationality would not necessarily be associated with the feeling of being part of a state per se. Insecure relations with the state may be a key reason for moving abroad and living in the diaspora. By taking to the Kurdish diaspora in London as an example, Tas cited a Kurdish interviewee stating "We have several diasporas. … I will be in the diaspora until I have my own state. Diaspora is part of my skin; it follows us wherever we go, where we live. Until we have our own state." (Tas p.19) Tas argued that statelessness, diaspora and nationality are strongly connected, especially when a community has not been successful in establishing its own state. Recent events would indicate a shift in Kurdish nationalism from localized and weak nationalism to a collective stronger form of nationalism. Implementing diverse instruments (Kurdish and political protest movements in Europe, fundraising events, statements to world media, hunger strike), individuals would try to establish a common movement influencing homeland politics. By creating their own legal institutions (e.g. Kurdish peace committee-KPC) the Kurdish diaspora would demonstrate that it can easily become an agent for change towards peace.

Ariane Sadjed, who chaired the last session, led a short concluding discussion about the possible impacts of cosmopolitanism from below and the changing image of Russian women in Turkey today. Following the last session of the day, **Nadje Al-Ali** (Gender Studies, SOAS University of London) delivered a keynote speech at the 11th Käte Hamburger Lecture titled '*Identity and Political Mobilization of Diasporas: A Gendered Perspective*' in the Jewish Community Centre, Duisburg. The Lecture was chaired by David Carment (Carleton University, Canada) with Jochen Hippler (University of Duisburg-Essen) and Ariane Sadjed (University of Vienna) as discussants (please see a separate report on the Lecture).

## South-East and Central European Diasporas

On the second day, the fifth panel of the workshop focused on diaspora in Southeast and Central Europe. In his presentation '*The Way Home: Forced Migration and Peaceful Voluntary Return*', **Neo Loizides** (University of Kent) mapped the determinants that influence the decision of internally displaced diaspora in the post-1974 Cypriot conflict to return or not to return home. According to Loizides, the data suggested the significance of age and gender dimension of the diaspora which influence the decision to return. While the most determined to return tend to be older men, Loizides drew attention to other factors including preparedness to start a new life, memory of home and trust in the family at home. In contrast to general expectation, Loizides concluded from the data that economic advancement and social integration increase willingness to return home as both imply the safeguard of the returning process and rebuilding communal life. Referring to the theme of the workshop 'Diaspora as Agents of Global Cooperation' Loizides stressed that the presented data reflected the clearly different characteristics of staying and

returning diaspora. These identified differences should help facilitate the design of policies concerning diaspora community.

Examining shared memories and experiences of the Ukrainian diaspora in Canada, **Milana Nikolko** (Carleton University) argued how common trauma and experiences i.e. the Great Famine (Holodomor) became shared narrative in diaspora and contributed to mobilization initiatives in the 21st Century. History of Ukrainian diaspora reveals that the symbolic representation of Ukrainian diaspora in Canada was transformed from cultural/religious domination to the political manifestation of the Holodomor. While these changes were mainly influenced by the activity of third wave Ukrainian diaspora which comprised mainly political immigrants, the transformation also took place within the changing international agenda, heightening tensions of the Cold War and the process of creating a Canadian multicultural nation. However, this narrative despite being a vital mobilisation factor is fixated on problems and questions of interpretation, rather than on the structural problems of Ukrainian society, Nikolko concluded.

Also addressing the importance of discourse derived from collective experience, **Marija Grujic** (Goethe University Frankfurt) presented how a racialized and gendered term "Kosovari" creates the boundary of belonging for the Serbs migrating from Kosovo and residing in Serbia. By investigating spatial, discursive and affective meanings of 'homeland' and 'home', and how these echo in the understanding of national belonging, Grujic suggested that cultural representation of "Kosovar" produced a new form of diasporic spaces in Serbia. Kept in the stage of being-in-between, Serbs from Kosovo is regarded as 'internally displaced' and belong to the post-home-land or imagined community. At the same time, discursive creation on co-ethnic Serbs from Kosovo ("hybridity" and ambivalence") by local Serbian nationalism has led to the justification and the othering effect on the co-ethnic.

In the discussion that followed, participants proposed additional facets for the analysis on diaspora. While the individual factors in the presented papers were interesting and led to an thought-provoking conclusion, intersection between factors could further reveal fruitful implications. This includes a closer look into the juncture between age and social class and its effect on diaspora's decision making; the hetero/homogenisation across generations within diaspora; the overshadowing official identity over local identity of diaspora; and the individual level within collective suffering.

## Diasporas in the Context of Policy Making

The sixth panel featured the presentations by **Daniel Naujoks** (Columbia University) and David Carment. Presenting his paper '*The Political Effects of Diasporic Citizenship:*

*Overseas Citizenship of India and Political Participation in the United States*', Naujoks showed that citizenship or membership policies (both in the country of origin and residence or dual citizenship) pose different effects on the diaspora community and consequently influence the willingness to integrate or participate in political advocacy. Conducting field research on overseas citizen of India and their acquisition of U.S. citizenship, Naujoks drew from his data that Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) brings about naturalization effect, the identity effect, and the good-will effect to diasporic citizen. While the availability of dual citizenship (provided by OCI) leads to higher naturalization rates in the country of residence, it also contributes to a higher political leverage as the Indian community enjoys a stronger social standing in US. By creating a space for a continuation of relationship with the country of origin and for a network to interact within Indian community, OCI gives incentives for the diaspora to identify itself with the group. This identity also led to stronger commitment of diasporic community in US towards India as well as towards Indian affairs. Political efforts are collective actions which are managed by elites, who in the case of Indian diaspora earned credibility after OCI was successfully introduced. Their good will for India, in turn, gives them additional momentum for further political advocacy efforts.

In response to the presentation, participants suggested the inclusion of state perspective in the analysis both for state of origin and residence: what contributes to the changed position of Indian government towards diaspora? What role does the political system in the host country (US) play? How does dual-citizenship affect self-identification of the diasporic community within the host country?

**David Carment** in his presentation '*Diaspora and Fragile States: Beyond Remittances*' criticised the counterproductive focus of research on negative impacts that remittances pose on fragility of states. On contrary, he explored further linkage between diaspora and their country of origin and how diasporic community is a crucial player to improve state fragility. Based on the theory of fragile state, Carment identified three fundamental sovereign functions that contribute to the stability of a state namely authority (enacting legislation and providing a safe and stable environment); legitimacy (generating domestic support for its legislation); and capacity (mobilising resources). He then elaborated on how diasporic communities have improved or strengthened these functions and consequently helped their home state exit or step away from fragility. In terms of authority, diaspora is exposed to norms of good governance and democratic development in the host country. They often export such establishment as well as regulatory frameworks to support positive diaspora activities in the country of origin. Carment stressed that diaspora financing in some countries could enable governments to leverage small amounts from individual into substantial resources for development and hence increases the domestic support. With regard to the 'capacity' function, the often-overlooked impact of immigrants on trade flows between host and home

countries was discussed. The comments from participants concentrated on the question of homeland political structure and therefore its capacity of change. Further comments urged that researches should avoid the overestimation of diaspora's actual contribution to the home country.

## Next Steps

In the last session of the workshop, participants discussed the next steps that could be taken. Although the interdisciplinarity of the participants might pose challenges in identifying a field for future joint efforts, participants agreed that it might as well open up a space to explore new aspects of diaspora as agent for global cooperation. Since each participant focusses on specific case, this was considered useful for setting up a framework for global cooperation and the role of diaspora. It was also noted that the further investigation into the concept of cooperation might include unexplored aspects and should not necessarily be limited to the positive quality of cooperation. Other recommendations include further research on potential global institution/governance for diaspora; changes within diaspora across generations and genders (and the implication for global cooperation); as well as contribution to country of origin and residence.

Report written by Gisela Wohlfahrt