Report of the Crossroads Asia Conference

Mobilizing Religion: Networks and Mobility

18-19 July 2013, Bonn

Institute of Oriental and Asian Studies

List of Rapporteurs

Anna Grieser   (Crossroads Asia, LMU Munich)
Jana Juessen   (Crossroads Asia, ZEF University Bonn)
Katja Mielke   (Crossroads Asia, ZEF University Bonn)
Nelli Nokkala   (Crossroads Asia, ZEF University Bonn)
Christoph Wenzel   (Crossroads Asia, HU Berlin)

Conference Report

Jana Juessen   (Crossroads Asia, ZEF University Bonn)

Contact Details of Organizer

Prof. Dr. Stephan Conermann
Institute of Oriental and Asian Studies
University of Bonn
Regina-Pacis-Weg 7
53113 Bonn
Tel. +49(0)228 73 7462
stephan.conermann@uni-bonn.de

Elena Smolarz
Institute of Oriental and Asian Studies
c/o Annemarie Schimmel Kolleg
Heussallee 18-24
53113 Bonn
Tel. +49(0)228 73 62963
esmolarz@uni-bonn.de

Contact Details of the Scientific Coordination of Crossroads Asia

Dr. Anna-Katharina Hornidge
Center for Development Research (ZEF)
University of Bonn
Walter-Flex-Straße 3
53113 Bonn
Tel. +49 (0)228 73 1718
hornidge@uni-bonn.de

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Introduction and Proceedings

The conference 'Mobilizing Religion: Networks and Mobility' by the BMBF competence network Crossroads Asia convened from July 18-19, 2013 in Bonn. This conference was the third of six international conferences by Crossroads Asia after a kick-off conference in April 2011 and "Figurations of Mobility" in 2012. Lead organizer of the conference was the Institute of Oriental and Asian Studies at the University of Bonn. During the conference, 29 presenters and chairpersons from Denmark, Germany, Italy, Sweden, USA, Kyrgyzstan and Egypt presented and debated their research topics with about 100 participants. With the aim to rethink religion as identity marker for social orders and power relations, spatial and social mobility formed the thematic core of the conference.

Crossroads Asia's research focuses on the geographical area stretching from Eastern Iran to Western China and from the Aral Sea to the Arabian Sea and starting point of research is the movement of people as well as the flows of ideas and resources within and beyond. Crossroads Asia aims to examine specific causal and functional connections that are localized in Crossroads Asia, but can stretch beyond the bounds of the region sketched out above or be confined to smaller areas within this region. The research focus lies in the importance of mobility issues, which are related to conflict, migration, and development.

While the first international conference provided a forum to discuss theoretical advantages and shortcomings of figurational sociology, and to elaborate key concepts linked to various forms of mobility, "Mobilizing Religion: Networks and Mobility" was designed as a platform to discuss empirical findings from diverse regions, ranging from Central to South and East Asia and to the MENA region, as well as from diverse disciplinary backgrounds. The interdisciplinary and international environment of the conference particularly enabled lively discussions endorsed by empirical case studies from across the world.

After a welcoming address by **Stephan Conermann (click here to watch it on ZEF's YouTube channel)**, the conference panels forming seven thematic blocs – Networked and Globalized Religious Traditions, Religious Aspects in Migration Networks, Tablighi Jama'at as Translocal Islamic Network, Religious Legitimation for Migration, Religious and Secular Aspects in Political Processes, Religion and Social Institutions, and Religion and Identity – convened. One highlight of the conference was the Keynote Lecture by Volkhard Krech "Globalizing Religion: Preliminary Consideration on Historical and Contemporary Developments" (**click here to watch it on ZEF's YouTube channel**).

Panel 1: Networked and Globalized Religious Traditions

Chair: Anna-Katharina Hornidge (Bonn)

Presenters

- o **Tulasi Srinivas** (Boston / Bochum)
  Mobilities and Moorings: Ritual, Neo-liberalism and the Subjunctive in Urban Temple Publics of Bangalore City.
- o **Jakob Roesel** (Rostock)
  The Tamil Diaspora: A Network for Cultural Cohesion, Economic Solidarity and Political Assertion.

The presentations in the first panel – Networked and Globalized Religious Traditions – discussed how religion is on the one hand subject to developments in the context of "modernity" against the background of a globalization discourse (Srinivas) and can on the other hand be instrumentalized to infiltrate communities for financial reasons, thereby influencing certain notions of globalization (Roesel).

 Tulasi Srinivas in her presentation on contemporary urban Hindu ritual in Bangalore City emphasized the recent "mobility turn" that has been suggested by several scientists (Hannam, Shelley and Urry 2006), which centers on the effects of globalization and increasing mobility for the movement of people, capital, culture, ideas, goods and communication. Main thesis of the presentation was the failure of social scientists to point out the paradox of embedded spatiality and networked connectivity as exemplified by the description of a traditional ritual procession in Bangalore City colliding with a traffic jam and an energy cut. Srinivas suggests that shifting articulations of technologies and currencies of thought in rituals point to the frayed nature of traditions-modernity debates.

Jakob Roesels talk on the Tamil diaspora as cultural, economic and political network began with a historic recount of the expansion of a Tamil diaspora during the 19th century to Malaya as well as East and South Africa. It was pointed out that the cast system, which is present in Sri Lanka, served to facilitate travelling and thereby very distinct kinds of migration and mobility. The Tamil diaspora defines itself locally as diaspora, historically through a "lost homeland narrative", and internationally as globally networked Tamil diaspora. Beginning with the onset of ethnic civil war in Sri Lanka between the Sinhalese government and the Tamil Tigers, this historic network served the latter to infiltrate diaspora communities in order to finance Tamil operations and globalize economic activities.

In the ensuing plenary debate, it was discussed, which advantages the theoretical approach "micro-politics of change" (of the participant and of ritual itself) has, as employed by Srinivas, to frame the ritual procession situation. Furthermore it was questioned how the (imagined) reach interlinks between past, present and future, when the stereotypical western notion of time as an arrow does not apply and time can rather be regarded granular or discontinuous in nature. When debating the talk on the Tamil diaspora, the concepts of political unity vs. social or cultural unity were opposed and the Tamil case was compared with the situation of the Palestinian diaspora asking, whether the Tamil diaspora was more easily unified, because of the inherent cast system.

Click here to watch Panel 1: Networked and Globalized Religious Traditions **on ZEF's YouTube channel.**

Panel 2: Religious Aspects in Migration Networks

Chair: Martin Sökefeld (München)

Presenters

- o **Claudia Derichs** (Marburg)
  Communally Legitimated Institutions and Unwritten Laws – Observations in Malaysia and Pakistan
- o **Andreas Benz** (Berlin)
  The Karachi-Factor – How Ismaili Migrants from the Karakorum Region Found their Way to Pakistan's Biggest City
- o **Olivia Kilias** (Berlin)
  Doing Religion in a Malaysian Apartment Block – Religion and Ethnicity in the Context of Educational Migration from the Middle East to Malaysia

The presentations of the speakers in panel two – Religious Aspects in Migration Networks – illustrated how religion and related moralities (values/norms) can not only have an enabling effect (Benz) on migration and mobility, but also heavily constrain it (Derichs) or show fuzzy impacts in interrelation with different faith and ethnic groups of various national communities, in this case from the Islamic World (Kilias).

Claudia Derichs in her talk on communally legitimated institutions and unwritten laws emphasized that gender relations and roles are always constructed and reproduced by informal processes. While this would result in gender privileges on the one hand, the case studies demonstrated that religiously based law is also being used to enforce gender norms, which are not in accordance with the comparatively more liberal civil laws anymore. For example, in Malaysia, Fatwas – as such informal rulings on religious basis – become law once they are gazetted, thus overriding statutory law in areas, which have previously exclusively been covered and regulated by formal civil law. A similar pattern was pointed out by Derichs with the recent example of "The Kohistan Five" in Pakistan – a case where five females were

killed after a video of a wedding party was aired showing the girls and two boys together in one room singing and clapping. Here tribal law reportedly demanded the killing of the girls, though there was no 'crime' or offense against Islamic or penal law involved. Nevertheless, the government could not even enforce statutory law ex-post. Concluding, Derichs urged the participants of the conference to investigate the informal side of politics, legal authority and de-

facto legal practices and its repercussions on mobility and mobilization processes.

Andreas Benz' presentation, titled "The Karachi-Factor: How Ismaili Migrants from the Karakorum Region Found their Way to Pakistan's Biggest City", drew out the Ismaili factor, actually – as religious determinant of migration paths and social upward mobility through initially unskilled labor migration and, later on, increasing migration for education purposes thereby resulting in social upward mobility of the Maulai Ismailis of Gojal in Gilgit Baltistan. The reason Karachi gained such a high attractiveness for them lay in the fact that their

joining the *Nizari Ismailiya* community of the Aga Khan brought them into close contact with the established Khoja Ismaili community in the southern port city. The latter formed an influential and economically highly successful social group consisting of traders, industrialists and entrepreneurs; and intra-faith-community solidarity implicated that they readily provided the Maulai Ismailis opportunities (jobs, protection, facilitation), capacities (integration in mainstream Islam, community centers), and education (scholarships, Urdu language confidence). As a result of this religious-network-based mobilization, Gojal features extraordinarily high education levels and literacy rates in Pakistan today.

Also focusing on educational migration, Olivia Kilias noted in her talk "Doing Religion in a Malaysian Apartment Block: Religion and Ethnicity in the Context of Educational Migration from the Middle East to Malaysia" that ethnic identities and career motives seem to override religious motivations to study at Malaysian universities because Malaysia stylizes itself as both, the "shining face of Islam" (with a tendency to Islamize knowledge) and de facto Islamic boom country where international careers can be started in more promising ways than in Yemen, Iraq, Iran, or Indonesia – the countries, most students originate from. The educational paths of young Muslims to Malaysia point at center-periphery relations in the Muslim world, manifesting also in a kind of politicization of religion when one's own religious identity determines how and where one can or cannot travel. Observing people of different educational and Islamic faith backgrounds meeting in an apartment block, Kilias' ethnographic study reminded the audience of two factors which often tend to be overlooked: One, that "people don't flow", that is that migration always involves a longer process including periods of immobility. Two, her research highlighted the intersection of spatial and social mobility detecting that educational migration, as a rule, increases the status of migrants back home.

Panel 3: Tablighi Jama'at as a Translocal Islamic Network

Chair: Shahnaz Nadjmabadi (Tübingen)

Presenters

- o **Mukaram Toktogulova** (Bishkek / Berlin)
  Tablighi Movement in the Context of Re-Islamization in Kyrgyzstan: Local Practices and Contested Discourses. (**Click here to watch an interview with Ms. Toktogulova.**)
- o **Aksana Ismailbekova** (Berlin)
  Transnational Religious Networks in Central Asia: Structure, Travel, and Culture of Kyrgyz Tablighi Jama'at.
- o **Thomas K. Gugler** (Münster)
  Sharing Faith: Mobile Religion and Modern Pilgrims.

The third panel – Tablighi Jama'at as a Translocal Islamic Network – approached the issue of missionary trips as an Islamic ritual from three different perspectives: While Toktogulova focused on the question, how Tablighi Jama'at translates into local practices in Kyrgyzstan, Ismailbekova focused on the influence of the Kyrgyz Tablighi Jama'at on the trans-nationalization of Islam in Central Asia. Gugler's presentation on the other hand took a

macro perspective and analyzed the general aims and structure of international missionary trips such as Tablighi Jama'at and its Barelwi counterpart Dawat-e Islam.

Mukaram Toktogulova's presentation on the "Tablighi Movement in the Context of Re-Izlamization in Kyrgyzstan: Local Practices and Contested Discourses" focused on the

localization of Tablighi practices in Kyrgyzstan with special emphasis on the role of Tablighi women in preaching Islam. After the collapse of the Soviet Union reIslamization of the society in Kyrgyzstan was started with the revival of pre-Soviet Islamic practices that were prohibited during soviet times. On the other hand emerging transnational Islamic movements were introduced to local Muslims, which they had not experienced before. Tablighi Jama'at rapidly became popular among ordinary Muslims through which local Muslims have been involved in local and transnational Tablighi movements. Tablighi women in Kyrgyzstan play a key role in raising "yiman" (faith) not only among their own gender and in family circles but also by influencing the decision of male relatives to go on missionary trips.

Aksana Ismailbekova's talk, titled "Transnational Religious Networks in Central Asia: Structure, Travel, and Culture of Kyrgyz Tablighi Jama'at" explored the transnational character of religious networks in Central Asia or the connection of religious pluralism and religious debate. In scientific narratives it is commonly postulated, that external religious flows enter Central Asia while aspects such as transnational elements of the Kyrgyz Tablighi Jama'at, are often neglected. Several case studies were presented that depict Kyrgyz Tablighi travellers not as passive recipients of outside influences, but as actively engaged in cross-border exchange of religious ideas and networking processes. One case study told the story of the priest of a mosque who came back from Tablighi Jama'at and had adopted two boys from Russia, who had lost their parents. Moreover, women have since the beginning of the 1990ies started travelling more and are also engaged in exchange with the transnational Tablighi Jama'at e.g. by selling religious items to travellers from abroad.

In Gugler's presentation "Sharing Faith: Mobile Religion and Modern Pilgrims" the attraction of modern pilgrimage was presented as being linked to the connotation of converting its subject into an actively engaged global citizen. Since the ritual resembles patterns of transcultural lifestyles, it is perceived as a modern and cosmopolitan way to experience Islamic piety. Every missionary trip consists of a pre-field, in-the-field, and post-field phase. The three main participants of a missionary journey are the "senders", the "goer-guests," and the "host receivers". The senders include the sending entity and the sending supporters, who contribute financially, logistically, emotionally, and/or in prayer. The goer-guests include followers and leaders. The host receivers consist of field facilitators and the intended receivers.

The following plenary discussion centered on questions of unity and tension. It was debated, whether one Tablighi Jama'at philosophy exists, since in Iran for example it is a subversive movement. Another aspect that was debated was the role of Tabighli Jama'at during times of tension, e.g. after the Osh conflict in Kyrgyzstan, where the movement's contribution to peace building failed, as well as its role as potential creator of tensions. It became apparent, that tensions can arise in the "pre-field" phase over the question, who is chosen to go on pilgrimage as well as in the "post-field" phase, when pilgrims are asked to report in writing to their mission leaders, how many people and whom they have encountered on their mission.

Panel 4: Religious Legitimation for Migration

Chair: Elena Smolarz (Bonn)

Presenters

- o **Anna Grieser / Martin Sökefeld** (München)
  Intersections of Sectarian Dynamics and Spatial Mobility in Gilgit Baltistan.
- o **Simone Christ** (Bonn)
  "We All have to Sacrifice" – Legitimacy and the Notion of Sacrifice in Philippine Migration.
- o **Florian Kohnle** (Eichstätt-Ingolstadt)
  Religious Aspects in the Context of Autochthonous Christians' Diaspora Networks in the Middle East.

The presenters of panel four – Religious Legitimation for Migration – discussed the relationship of religion and migration as a literal connection between religious affiliation and physical movement in Gilgit Baltistan (Grieser / Sökefeld), as a means of sacrifice in the Phillipines (Christ), and religious aspects of diaspora networks along autochthonous Christians' Diasporas in the Middle East (Kohnle).

Grieser's and Sökefeld's presentation "Intersections of Sectarian Dynamics and Spatial Mobility in Gilgit Baltistan" understands the connection between religion and movement not on a metaphorical level, as in religious movements for instance, but as a literal connection of religious affiliation and (physical) movement. Since the early 1980s, religious affiliation has become the socially most significant dimension of identity in Gilgit Baltistan and has polarized the three major Muslim communities in the area: Shias, Sunnis and Ismailis. One major result of the sectarian conflict is that in many cases space and places have become religiously marked. Society in Gilgit Baltistan is characterized by high degrees of spatial mobility as people move between different parts of the town, between Gilgit and the surrounding areas or between Gilgit Baltistan and Pakistan. The sectarianization of space and place has then significant consequences for people's movements, shaping their considerations and strategies of where (and how) to move, and where not and resulting in clusters of Sunni or Shia villages as "No-Go-Areas" for people with different religious beliefs.

In her talk ""We All have to Sacrifice" – Legitimacy and the Notion of Sacrifice in Philippine Migration" Christ points out that the Philippines are considered a prototype of a labor-exporting country and for the feminization of labor. More than ten percent of the population live and work abroad, and between 3000 and 4000 people leave the country every day to find work. These developments lead to transnational family life since a large number of (female) migrants are married and have children. In the Philippines, migration is considered to be legitimate if it is for the sake of the family, resulting in sacrifices of the absentee parent but also of the family members left in the Philippines. The notion of sacrifice is rooted in the Philippine Catholic context, but the concept also entails indigenous elements such as *kapwa*,

the perception to relate the self to other people. The assumption of sacrifice is gendered since mostly women are expected to suffer for their families. Exchange is another aspect of sacrifice in the Philippines: parents expect their children to reward their sufferings abroad with high performance.

Kohnle's presentation on "Religious Aspects in the Context of Autochthonous Christians' Diaspora Networks in the Middle East" connected the declining number of autochthonous Christians in the Middle East to economic and social marginalization, and demographic developments in combination with migration flows and discussed the current situation of autochthonous Christians along the case study of Lebanon. The country sustains the largest Christian share of population of the Middle East and acts as (temporary) harbor for a high number of refugees. International migration flows are often connected to the existence of international migration systems. In this context, many experts point out diaspora networks as central systems for the realization of migration flows. In marked contrast to these statements, there are discourses, which emphasize the individual aspects of migration flows. When it comes to the causes for the migration flows of autochthonous Christians in the Middle East, these narratives have caused a huge debate. Many Iraqi Christians in Lebanon proclaim the Christian character of Lebanon as the crucial factor to migrate into the country. Within the sciences, discourses proclaiming economic factors as the trigger for migration flows are predominant. In this context, religious factors are considered less important. Against this backdrop, questions concerning the reasons for the high migration rates among autochthonous Christians arise.

In the following debate, it was discussed why the presentation by Grieser and Sökefeld focused on place, how the changing nature of spatial dimension of networks can be considered, and which role the concept of scale plays in this context. Questions that arose in context of the presentation by Christ questioned whether the notion of sacrifice was unique to the Philippines, postulating that similarities could be found in the way migration is perceived and legitimized in Poland. Comments on the presentation by Kohnle concerned the essentialization of religion inherent in his research concept and the neglect of ongoing wars in the region as part of the explanans of the situation of Christian diaspora communities in Lebanon.

Panel 5: Religious and Secular Aspects in Political Processes

Chair: Conrad Schetter (Bonn)

Presenters

- o **Ruth Bartholomä** (Gießen): The Role of Islam in the Education System of the Volga Tatars.
- o **Nadine Sika** (Cairo) / **Kressen Thyen** (Tübingen): Religion, Politics and Contentious Practices in Egypt.
- o **Marie-Christine Heinze** (Bonn): Spatial Manifestations of Yemens Current Sunni-Shi'i Conflict and its Religious Dimensions.

Panel five - Religious and Secular Aspects in Political Processes – illustrated how the relationship of religion and secularity can have adverse effects on educational developments in specific historic settings (Bartholomä), and that the negotiation over a religious or secular state design in the aftermath of the Arab Spring is very dynamic and takes place on several spatial dimensions (Sika / Thyen and Heinze).

In the presentation on „The role of Islam in the Education System of the Volga Tatars" Ruth Bartholomä regards Islam as crucial for the self-identification of the Volga Tatars during the 20th and 21th centuries, and analyzes Islam as an important factor influencing different parts of the education system before 1917: This becomes apparent through the existence of "Muslim schools", stylistic elements and explicit formulations in schoolbooks for non-religious subjects such as geography and mathematics. While in Soviet times, this influence was heavily reduced, Bartholomä speaks of an "Islamic revival" among the Volga Tatars beginning in the early 1990s. The consciousness of many Tatars as part of the Muslim world was demonstrated by the functioning of numerous *medreses* as well as by the founding of an Islamic University in 1998 and of *Tatar-Turkish gymnasia*. In a 2008 debate about the schools, on which the presentation focused, it became apparent that they were considered by official authorities as a refuge for Islamic thought: One of the formal reasons for denying the Turkish teachers a prolongation of their visas was that one found books by the Turkish theologian Said Nursi in those schools. Although representatives and pupils of the schools declare that there is no kind of missionary activity, they rarely deny that Islam is an important factor for the self-image of many of them.

The presentation by Sika and Thyen, titled „Religion, Politics and Contentious Practices in Egypt" focused on the question whether the contemporary Egyptian state is venturing on a road to Islamization or whether the political and social dynamics in Egypt are highly contentious and mark a trend towards separating religion from politics. Egypt witnessed its first free presidential elections in March 2012, which brought Mohamed Morsi, an Islamist, to power as the president. Only few months after Morsi's inauguration secular youth movements – who played an important role in the ousting of former president Mubarak and therefore were central in bringing Morsi to power – have called for the "end of the

Brotherhood regime" and are mobilizing against an Islamization of the Egyptian state. Data was retrieved through two surveys conducted among Egyptian youth between 2012 and 2013, as well as in-depth interviews with politically engaged youth conducted in early 2013. Results demonstrate that the majority of young people mobilizing for regime change wish for a secular Egypt. Moreover, while religion plays an important role in the lives of Egyptian youth, there are little differences between the main demands of Muslims and Christians. The presentation concluded that religion plays a subordinate role in protests compared to demands for social equity, freedom, and dignity.

In her talk on "Spatial Manifestations of Yemen's Current Sunni-Shi'I Conflict and its Religious Dimensions" Marie-Christine Heinze points out that the current Sunni-Shi'i conflict in Yemen has taken place on differing and specific symbolic spatial dimensions in the capital Sana'a compared with the more violent territorial dimensions encountered in the governorates north of the capital. Transnational dimensions of the Sunni-Shi'i such as Iran's and Saudi Arabia's competition over regional influence that seems to divide the Arab world mainly influence the Northern governorates and are often carried out violently. Main conflict parties are *Houthi* rebels, a *Zaydi* movement from the North, and the *Hizb al-Islah*, which is a heterogeneous party in which Muslim Brothers and Salafis

join forces with businessmen and tribal leaders. In Sana'a on the other hand symbolic means are more present and find their expression in a competition over the number of tents occupied on Change Square as well as in slogans covering the walls of the city.

In the following, the significant differences between Tatar, Russian, and Euro Islam as well as the instrumentalization of religion by the Tatar government to spread fear among Muslims of traditional orientation were discussed. The study by Sika and Thyen received several comments on the employed concepts and survey and it was recommended to differentiate: What is "youth"? What does "being religious" mean? The presentation by Heinze evoked a discussion on what was specifically "Yemeni" about the Arab Spring and the strong linkages with the movement in Egypt. After that a more general discussion about the mobilization of religion to sharpen unrelated or construed religious (Shia-Sunni opposition) conflicts as well as the narrative of the "long arm of Iran" evolved.

Panel 6: Religion and Social Institutions

Chair: Judith Schlehe (Freiburg)

Presenters

- o **Ines Stolpe** (Bonn)
  Transcending Religion: Intersections between Spatial, Social and Mental Mobility in Contemporary Mongolia.
- o **Shahnaz Nadjmabadi** (Tübingen)
  The Islamic Institution of "xeyrāt": Mobilizing Capital – Initializing Investment.
- o **Andreas Mandler** (Bonn / Florence)
  Mobilizing Religion to Access Arable Land in Tadjikistan.

The presentations of panel six – Religion and Social Institutions – illustrated how the interplay of the two can be used as a strategic culture of ruling (Stolpe), how religious norms are continuously transformed into practical institutions, resulting in a dynamic ethos of public generosity (Nadjmabadi), and how people may recur on the mobilization of religious norms to access resources in times of unclear or fluctuating alternative (national or local) institutions (Mandler).

At the beginning of her presentation „Transcending Religion: Intersections between Spatial, Social and Mental Mobility in Contemporary Mongolia" Ines Stolpe stated that Mongolia is usually represented as a post-socialist model democracy. Due to the country's abundance of natural resources, its economy features one of the highest growth rates in the world. Contemporary Mongolian society is characterized by two processes, which can be broadly understood in terms of "nationalization" and "regionalization" and studied through a new social phenomenon identified in the civil society: so-called *Nutag*-councils. The Councils emerged in the 1990s as self-governing bodies of people who had migrated and their activities involve economic, cultural, religious and social issues. Through the enactment of their territorial identification, they form an essential connection between rural and urban Mongolia, thereby transcending political, ethnic and religious differences. These networks reveal what Mongolians consider to be relevant for social action, as well as for the formation of identities in a global context. *Nutag* councils, not religion, serve as a constitutive vehicle of self-expression, while Religion (Buddhism) is incorporated in the "Mongol national identity" as in early Mongolian state theory of the "two principles" (*khoyor yos*), which envisioned cooperation between the secular and the sacral spheres as a strategic culture of ruling.

In her talk, titled "The Islamic Institution of "xeyrāt": Mobilizing Capital – Initializing Investment" Shahnaz Nadjmabadi presented field data collected during different field visits in the Iranian eastern province of Xorāssān and also in southern Iran, along the Persian Gulf, to show how the charity system of "xeyrāt" is used to mobilize capital and enhance investments in all kinds of endowments of public nature. The focus, however, was particularly on the modalities of transforming religious ideals in practical institutions or how the idea of charity and solidarity is put into practice. Nadjmabadi illustrated, that religious norms are constitutive for social constructs and orientations in the context of the Iranian charity and welfare system. *Buniyads* are private organizations without state control, converting religious resources into economic capital. A recent development trend are the newly appearing organizations, *nikukari*, which are less for the devotees but rather a form of social participation, a "fashion" and a means of building networks. The ethos of public generosity is thus not static, but instead a product of social relationships with historic and religious rules and also a means of protecting the stability of the Islamic state of Iran, by supporting Islamic ideology. (**Click here to watch an interview with Dr. Nadjmabadi.**)

Andreas Mandler's presentation „Mobilizing Religion to Access Arable Land in Tadjikistan" took as entry point the fact that conflicts regarding the access to land are commonplace within local communities in Tadjikistan despite land reform legislation and policies following the Soviet regime. Rural households request access to natural resources from different institutions at various societal levels. Among others, these may be the *Hukumat* and *Jamoat* (district government/sub-district administration) on the state level, or, on local level various village boards and the collective farm enterprise (*Dehkon* farm). Mandler stated, that it is unknown why sometimes national laws are put forward and at other times local institutions are considered more relevant. Apparently, the status of present day institutions is fluctuating and the significance of institutions changes. At the same time, findings from field research in 2011 and 2012 in the Tajik Zarafshan Valley indicate that religion is mobilized to enable or safeguard access to natural resources. For example decisions on the access to natural resources are justified as being "according to Islam". It appears that within the village assemblies, neighborhood boards or encounters with state institutions the individual reputation as a "good Muslim" is relevant.

In the following debate, it was discussed, whether different forms of belonging (religious and party politics) are a potential conflict line within *nutag* councils, which concept of „development" underlies the welfare system of Iran as well as how the temporal element can be instrumentalized to re-think space in the context of land conflicts in Tadjikistan.

Panel 7: Religion and Identity

Chair: Ildikó Bellér-Hann (Copenhagen)

Presenters

- o **Heinz-Werner Wessler** (Uppsala / Bonn)
  "De-Brahmanizing History": On Reconstructions of Dalit Religiosity and Identity Politics in India.
- o **Lutz Rzehak** (Berlin)
  The Language of the Taliban
- o **Jeanine Dagyeli** (Berlin)
  Crossing Borders and Boundaries: Social and Labour Mobility in Central Asia Craftsmanship
- o **Florence Galmiche** (Bochum)
  Finding the Buddhists and Mobilizing them… Networks and Religious Competition in South Korea

In his presentation""De-Brahmanizing History": On Reconstructions of Dalit Religiosity and Identity Politics in India", Heinz-Werner Wessler relates the creation of identity politics to efforts to regain agency beyond the all-inclusive pretensions of modern Hinduism. Dalits (formerly known as "untouchables") and Adivasis (tribal population) form about one fourth of the Indian population and the majority of the endogamous groups belonging to these population clusters are still socially, ritually and economically marginalized. Particularly the Dalits, however, have been systematically campaigning against different forms of discrimination. Efforts to regain a self-defined space of religiosity are again related to a larger project on Dalit identity politics in competition with the Brahmanic domination in the interpretation of Hindu/Indian identity. The Dalits distinguish consciously from Hindu India. A symbolic act was Ambedkar's (a Dait and Indias first Law-Minister) conversion to Buddhism. By this he gained a Messias like position for many Dalits. This shows the complexity of religion and religiosity. Wessler notes, that the growth of the Bahujan Samaj Party and its matron in Uttar Pradesh, Mayawati, has demonstrated the conflicting cultural, political and social dimensions of these rivaling patterns of the interpretations of history. Even though Mayawati is no longer in power, the mobilization of Dalits persists, complementing the ongoing mobilization of Hindu nationalism.

In "The Language of the Taliban" Lutz Rzehak presented on linguistically induced concepts of the Taliban who call themselves "Mujahedin of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA)". Rzehak notes, that of all social variables that are involved in a conflict, language is, probably, the most diffuse and the most difficult to define. His studies focus on the complicated ways in which linguistic practice is caught up in the forms of power and inequality which are pervasive features of social conflict and show that the main ideological concepts that affect the linguistic behavior of the Taliban are Islamism, patriotism and resistance. Main dissemination channel to distribute news, ideas, programs and official documents is the

internet. The IEA's website – currently to be found under shahamat.info – concentrates on domestic news, mainly on foreign attacts and own actions. The language is characterized by many religious formula. This is to a certain degree typical in Afghanistan. But the IEA-website is overloaded and uses additional terms, and many decorations (*epitheta ornantia*). Its ideology is Islamism, nevertheless, it does not feature theological discussions. Islam is reduced to the question, how to govern a country. The following debate on the first two presentations in panel 7 centered mainly around the question, why the IEA-website is less elaborate in Dari then in Pashto, and Rzehak hinted, that the use of different languages seems to be unintended, and that there are many authors who are only seldom marked. It was also discussed, whether the term De-Brahmanization is realistic or rather contested, e.g. by the more pluralistic discourse of Dalits.

Jeanine Dagyeli, in her presentation "Crossing Borders and Boundaries. Social and Labor Mobility in Central Asian Craftsmanship" examined inter-personal, partly long-distance professional relations among Central Asian craftsmen and their options for social advancement through the lens of the Central Asian crafts' *risāla*. Generally, the *risāla* was meant as a practical guide for craftsmen for questions of work-related proper conduct. Looking at *risāla* through a very specific lense, it enabled mobility, even if there would have been mobility without it, and it can be understood as a means to facilitate mobility. According to Dagyeli, they mirrored disputes about religiously legitimate gain and transmitted basic Islamic concepts as well as central Sufic concerns – especially concerns eminent among the Naqshbandiyya order which was very influential in Central Asia. This knowledge was verbalized in milieu-specific language and images, and transformed into ritual practice ultimately embedded in the craftsmen's habitus. The *risāla* – whether taken as scripture, as talisman or as embodied practice – served as a means to create bonds between craftsmen. Thus, shared identity and belonging could transgress great distances and mutual exchange of labor while specific techniques were supported. Furthermore, the possession and performance of a *risāla* greatly enhanced a craftsman's status within and beyond the crafts'milieu and they still figure as a marker of extraordinarily good craftsmanship and outstanding religious conduct.

In "Finding the Buddhists and Mobilizing Them. Networks and Competition in South Korea" Florence Galmiche illustrates how the competition with Protestant churches changed the way people attending Buddhist temples label themselves since the 1990s. Galmiche addresses the ambivalent relationship of Buddhism with the successful model of the Protestant "megachurches" as well as the contemporary ambition of Buddhists actors and institutions to redefine and affirm their place in South Korean society through new forms of mobilization. While an active identification as "Buddhist" and the notion of religious membership was not as relevant to describe religious participation formerly, Buddhist institutions have recently set the consolidation of their social base of support as a priority. Buddhist leaders are now aiming at strengthening their religious denomination by developing a conscious, collective affiliation among believers, e.g. offering special services following the demands of the believers to "transform normal people to real Buddhists". This development is formalized by issuing membership cards to reinforce the place in society and to create a unified religious group of Buddhists. This concern is shared by lay practitioners, who are also actively taking part in this new affirmation of a Buddhist identity and in the constitution of religious networks vying with Protestant ones.

The ensuing discussion on the second two presentations of panel seven focused on the questions how people enter a certain craft, e.g. by birthright, and which degree of formality Central Asian craftsmen live. Concerning the Buddhist religion in South Korea the debate centered on links and spill-overs from the Japanese model.

Conclusion

The main objective of the international conference "Mobilizing Religion: Networks and Mobility" was to provide a platform for the discussion of empirical findings on Crossroads Asia's core concepts "conflict", "migration", and "development" and on cross-cutting issues such as "mobility and mobilization", as well as on spatial dimensions like "networks", "translocality" and "borders and boundaries". Aiming to bring empirical research of network members and external researchers together in an interdisciplinary and open minded manner and to advance understanding and scope of Crossroads Asia's area studies concept, the core concepts were not chosen as structuring elements.

Content-wise, the main objective of the conference was to look into mobilizing factors of religious belief systems within interactions and processes along the existing working groups "Conflict", "Migration" and "Development" and beyond, in matters of spatial and social mobility, organization and function of networks as well as of identity building and transformation.

Religion's mobilizing function manifests itself on different levels of processes of spatial and social mobility. Religious faiths create relations: religious dogmas can account for group identity and orientations on the ideal level. They define structures as well as functions of religious groups or networks and standardize behavior patterns of individuals on the social level. These networks promote an individual member's social and spatial mobility through offering an established/firm infrastructure in an alien region as well as through advantage social uplift within one`s own and the new society. Furthermore, spatial and social mobility of a network-member is connected with the acquisition of knowledge and behavioral patterns, which may result in transformation of individual as well as collective identity. Thus, political, social, cultural, and religious processes are mutually dependent and form dense interrelations or figurations of interaction, which should be researched in their entireness and complexity. Therefore the upcoming Crossroads Asia Conference "Transregional Crossroads of Social Interaction: The Shifting Meaning of Regional Belonging in South and Central Asia" will be dedicated to this issue on 21. March 2014.
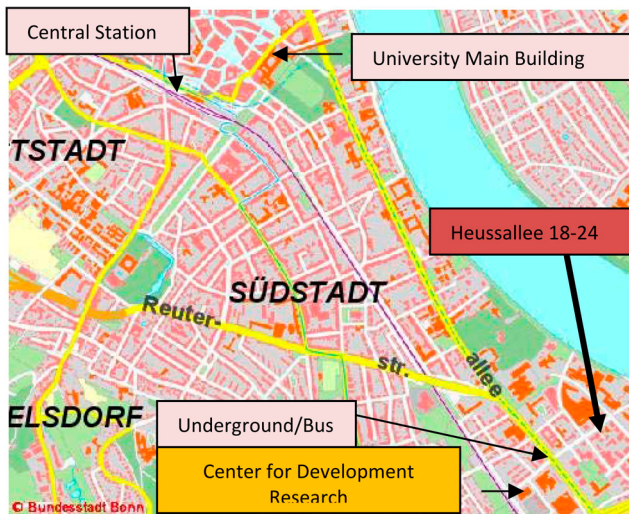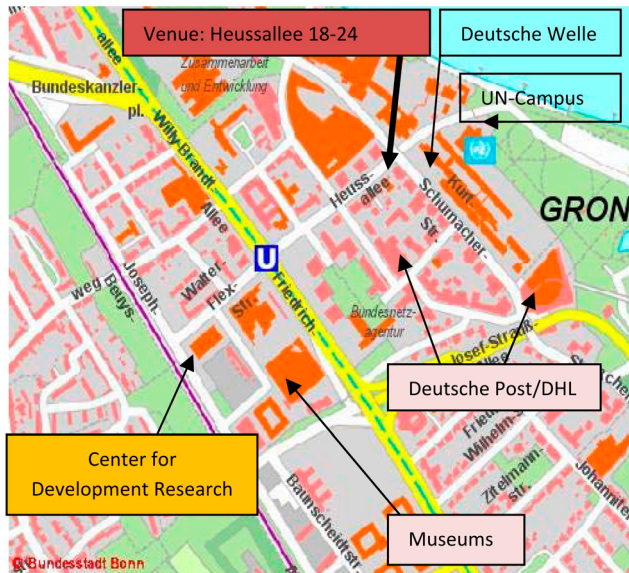
Venue: Heussallee 18-24, 53113 Bonn

How to get there:

From Central Station:

Underground to: "Heussallee-Museumsmeile"
- U 16/63 (Direction: Bad Godesberg)
- U 66/68 (Direction: Bad Honnef - Ramersdorf)

Exit in the direction of UN-Campus and Deutsche Welle

or

Bus to: "Heussallee" or "Deutsche Welle"
- 610/611 (Direction: Heiderhof)

Contact for Conference Organization:

Institute of Oriental and Asian Studies
Center for Development Research
University of Bonn
Elena Smolarz
Office at: Heussallee 18-24
53113 Bonn
Tel: 0228/7362963
Mobile: 0163/7352510
esmolarz@uni-bonn.de

Contact for Registration:

Fabian Falter
s5fafalt@uni-bonn.de

For general Information on Crossroads Asia:

www.crossroads-asia.de

CROSSROADS ASIA
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International Conference

"Mobilizing Religion: Networks and Mobility"

Bonn, 18-19 July 2013
University of Bonn
Heussallee 18-24

Map labels (top map):
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Thursday, 18 July
(Venue: Conference Room Heussallee)

09:00-09:45	Arrival and Registration

09:45-10:00 **Welcome Note**
(Stephan Conermann, Bonn,
Institute of Oriental and Asian Studies)

10:00-11:00 **Panel 1**

Networked and Globalized Religious Traditions
(Chair: Anna-Katharina Hornidge, Bonn)

- **Tulasi Srinivas (Boston / Bochum)**
Mobilities and Moorings: Ritual, Neo-liberalism and the
Subjunctive in Urban Temple Publics of Bangalore City.

- **Jakob Rösel (Rostock)**
The Tamil Diaspora: A Network for Cultural Cohesion,
Economic Solidarity and Political Assertion**.**

11:00-11:30 **Coffee break**

11:30-13:00 **Panel 2**

Religious Aspects in Migration-Networks
(Chair: Martin Sökefeld, München)

- **Claudia Derichs (Marburg)**
Communally Legitimated Institutions and Unwritten Laws
– Observations in Malaysia and Pakistan.

- **Andreas Benz (Berlin)**
The Karachi-Factor: How Ismaili Migrants from the Karakorum
Region Found their Way to Pakistan's Biggest City.

- **Olivia Killias (Berlin)**
Doing Religion in a Malaysian Apartment Block – Religion and
Ethnicity in the Context of Educational Migration from the
Middle East to Malaysia.

13:00-14:00 **Lunch**

14:00-15:30 **Panel 3**

Tablighi Jama'at as a Translocal Islamic Network
(Chair: Shahnaz Nadjmabadi, Tübingen)

- **Mukaram Toktogulova (Bishkek / Berlin)**
Tablighi Movement in the Context of Re-Islamization in
Kyrgyzstan: Local Practices and Contested Discourses.

- **Aksana Ismailbekova (Halle / Berlin)**
Transnational Religious Networks in Central Asia: Structure,
Travel, and Culture of Kyrgyz Tablighi Jama'at.

- **Thomas Gugler (Münster)**
Sharing Faith: Mobile Religion and Modern Pilgrims.

15:30-16:00 **Coffee break**

16:00-17:30 **Panel 4**

Religious Legitimation for Migration
(Chair: Elena Smolarz, Bonn)

- **Anna Grieser / Martin Sökefeld (München)**
Intersections of Sectarian Dynamics and Spatial Mobility
in Gilgit-Baltistan.

- **Simone Christ (Bonn)**
"We All have to Sacrifice" – Legitimacy and the Notion
of Sacrifice in Philippine Migration.

- **Florian Kohnle (Eichstätt-Ingolstadt)**
Religious Aspects in the Context of Autochthonous Christians'
Diaspora Networks in the Middle East.

Friday, 19 July
(Venue: Conference Room Heussallee)

09:30-11:00 **Panel 5**

Religious and Secular Aspects in Political Processes
(Chair: Conrad Schetter, Bonn)

- **Ruth Bartholomä (Gießen)**
The Role of Islam in the Education System of the Volga Tatars.

- **Nadine Sika / Kressen Thyen (Tübingen)**
Religion, Politics and Contentious Practices in Egypt.

- **Marie-Christine Heinze (Bonn)**
Spatial Manifestations of Yemen's Current "Sunni-Shi'i
Conflict" and its Religious Dimensions.

11:00-11:30 **Coffee break**

11:30-13:00 **Panel 6**

Religion and Social Institutions
(Chair: Judith Schlehe, Freiburg)

- **Ines Stolpe (Bonn)**
Transcending Religion: Intersections between Spatial,
Social and Mental Mobility in Contemporary Mongolia.

- **Shahnaz Nadjmabadi (Tübingen)**
The Islamic Institution of "xeyrāt": Mobilizing Capital –
Initiating Investment.

- **Andreas Mandler (Bonn / Florence)**
Mobilizing Religion to Access Arable Land in Tajikistan.

12:30-14:00 **Lunch**

14:00-16:00 **Panel 7**

Religion and Identity
(Chair: Ildikó Bellér-Hann, Copenhagen)

- **Heinz-Werner Wessler (Uppsala / Bonn)**
"De-Brahmanizing History": On Reconstructions of
Dalit Religiosity and Identity Politics in India.

- **Lutz Rzehak (Berlin)**
The Language of the Taliban.

- **Jeanine Dagyeli (Berlin)**
Crossing Borders and Boundaries: Social and Labour Mobility
in Central Asian Craftsmanship.

- **Florence Galmiche (Bochum)**
Finding the Buddhists and Mobilizing them… Networks
and Religious Competition in South Korea.

16:00-16:30 **Coffee break**

16:30-18:00 **Socializing**

18:30 **Keynote Lecture**
(Chair: Stephan Conermann)

- **Volkhard Krech (Bochum)**
Globalizing Religion: Preliminary Considerations on Historical
and Contemporary Developments.

CROSSROADS ASIA CONFERENCE
"Moblizing Religion: Networks and Mobility"
Bonn, 18th and 19th July

List of Participants

No.	Name	First Name	Institution	Email
1	Ahmed	Randa	United Nations University - Institute for Environment and Human Security	ahmed@vie.unu.edu
2	Alff	Henryk	Freie Universität zu Berlin, Zentrum für Entwicklungsländerforschung/Center for Development Studies (ZELF)	h.alff@fu-berlin.de
3	Ananthavina-Yagan	Thamil Venthan	University of Maastricht	t.ananthavinayagan@ student.maastrichtuniversity.nl
4	Antweiler	Christoph	University of Bonn, Institute of Orient and Asian Studies	antweile@gmx.de
5	Arahman	Nor Azura	University of Bonn, Institute of Orient and Asian Studies	
6	Avramovska	Maja	Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband (DVV)	avramovska@dvv-international.de
7	Bach	Yvonne	University of Mainz - Institute of Education	bachyv@uni-mainz.de
8	Bartholomä	Ruth	University of Gießen, Department of Turkic Studies	Ruth.Bartholomae@turkologie.uni-giessen.de
9	Bellér-Hann	Ildikó	University of Copenhagen, Departement of Cross-Cultural and Regional Studies	ildiko@hum.ku.dk
10	Benz	Andreas	Freie Universität Berlin, Institute of Geographical Sciences, Centre for Development Studies	a.benz@fu-berlin.de
11	Bromand	Wagma	University of Bonn - Center for Development Research (ZEF)	wbromand@uni-bonn.de
12	Butt	Khalid Manzoor	University of Bonn - Center for Development Research (ZEF) / University of Lahore	khalidmanzoor63@hotmail.com

No.	Name	First Name	Institution	Email
13	Cermeño	Helena	University of Bonn - Center for Development Research (ZEF)	helena.cermeno@gmail.com
14	Christ	Simone	University of Bonn, Institute of Orient and Asian Studies / Bonn International Graduate School of Oriental and Asian Studies (BIGS OAS)	simone.christ@uni-bonn.de
15	Conermann	Stephan	University of Bonn - Institute of Oriental and Asian Studies (IOA)	stephan.conermann@uni-bonn.de
16	Dagyeli	Jeanine	Berlin Graduate School Muslim Cultures and Societies	jeanine.dagyeli@zirs.uni-halle.de
17	Debiel	Tobias	University of Duisburg-Essen, Institute for Politic Sciences	tobias.debiel@inef.uni-due.de
18	Deugor	Patrycja	Lund University	
19	Derichs	Claudia	University of Marburg, Comparative Politics and International Development Studies	derichs@staff.uni-marburg.de
20	Döscher	Anja	University of Bonn - Institute of Oriental and Asian Studies (IOA)	s5andoes@uni-bonn.de
21	Durdu	Ayfer	Humboldt Universität zu Berlin - Central Asian Seminar	ayfer.durdu@hu-berlin.de
22	Dusend	Sarah	University of Bonn - Institute of Oriental and Asian Studies (IOA) / Bonner Asienzentrum (BAZ)	sdusend@uni-bonn.de
23	Ehlert	Judith	University of Bonn - Center for Development Research (ZEF)	judith.ehlert@uni-bonn.de
24	Falter	Fabian	University of Bonn - Center for Development Research (ZEF)	s5fafalt@uni-bonn.de
25	Fleschenberg dos Ramos Pinéu	Andrea	National Insittute of Pakistan Studies - Quaid-i-Azam University Islamabad	andrea.fleschenberg@gmail.com
26	Galmiche	Florence	University of Bochum, Center for Religious Studies (CERES)	flogalmi@gmail.com
27	Geserick	Rolf	PT-DLR: Project Managing Agency - German Aerospace Center Bonn	
28	Gill	Nadeem	Deutsche Welle	nadeem.gill@dw.de
29	Grieser	Anna	University of Munich, Institute of Ethnology	anna.grieser@yahoo.de

No.	Name	First Name	Institution	Email
30	Gugler	Thomas K.	University of Muenster, Centre for Islamic Theology	thomas.gugler@uni-muenster.de
31	Guio	Thaira	University of Bonn	
32	Gul	Imtiaz	Center for Research and Security Studies, Islamabad	imtiaz@crss.pk
33	Hassan	Ammar	University of Bonn - Agricultural Sciences and Resource Management in the Tropics and Subtropics (ARTS)	ammarcheema786@gmail.com
34	Heiler	Rosthan	SOLWOP	
35	Heine	Sebastian	University of Bonn	sheine1@gmx.de
36	Heinze	Marie-Christine	University of Bonn, Institute of Orient and Asian Studies	heinze@uni-bonn.de
37	Herbers	Hiltrud	University of Cologne, Geographie	hherbers@uni-koeln.de
38	Hill	Joe	University of Bonn - Center for Development Research (ZEF)	jhill@uni-bonn.de
39	Hojiev	Khushbakht	University of Bonn - Center for Development Research (ZEF)	khojiev@uni-bonn.de
40	Hornidge	Anna-Katharina	University of Bonn - Center for Development Research (ZEF)	hornidge@uni-bonn.de
41	Isaak	Kerstin	University of Bonn, Institute of Orient and Asian Studies	kisaak@uni-bonn.de
42	Ismailbekova	Aksana	Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin	aksana_ismailbekova@yahoo.co.uk
43	Jüssen	Jana	(ZEF)	jjuessen@uni-bonn.de
44	Khalid	Manzur	(ZEF)	khalidmanzur63@hotmail.com
45	Khalifa	Ahmed	Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC)	khalifa@bicc.de
46	Khan	Shadi	Deutsche Welle	shadi.khan@dw.de
47	Khorsandi	Zohreh	University of Bonn - Bonn International Graduate School of Oriental and Asian Studies (BIGS OAS)	zkhorsandi@uni-bonn.de
48	Killias	Olivia	Humboldt Universität Berlin, Institute of Asian and African Studies	olivia.killias@staff.hu-berlin.de
49	Koenig	Claudia	Südasienbüro e.V.	cem.koenig@netcologne.de
50	Kohnle	Florian	University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt, Department of Cultural Geographie	Florian.Kohnle@ku.de

No.	Name	First Name	Institution	Email
51	Krech	Volkhard	University of Bochum, Center for Religious Studies (CERES)	volkhard.krech@rub.de
52	Kreuzer	Dorothée	University of Bonn - Student	s5dokreu@uni-bonn.de
53	Kruckow	Caroline	FriEnt-BMZ (Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development) / Brot für die Welt	caroline.kruckow@bmz.bund.de
54	Kuhl	Rainer	EB-Verlag, Berlin	
55	Malik	Jamal	University of Erfurt	
56	Mandler	Andreas	University of Bonn, Center for Development Research	amandler@uni-bonn.de
58	Mielke	Katja	University of Bonn - Center for Development Research	kmielke@uni-bonn.de
59	Nadjmabadi	Shahnaz	University of Tübingen, Department of Ethnology	shahnaz.nadjmabadi@aoi.uni-tuebingen.de
60	Nokkala	Nelli	University of Bonn - Center for Development Research	nelli.nokkala@uni-bonn.de
61	Orthmann	Eva	University of Bonn - Institute of Oriental and Asian Studies (IOA)	eva.orthmann@uni-bonn.de
62	Ouedraogo	Marie	United Nations University - Institute for Environment and Human Security	ouedraogo@vie.unu.de
63	Punitharajah	Pahintha	University of Cologne, Geographie	pahinda.punitharajah@gmail.com
64	Punitharajah	Mahilatha	FH Mönchengladbach	mahilanjali@yahoo.de
65	Reetz	Dietrich	Zentrum Moderner Orinet, Berlin	dreetz@rz.hu-berlin.de
66	Reifenrath	Gabriele	University of Bonn - Institute of Oriental and Asian Studies (IOA) / Bonner Asienzentrum (BAZ)	ioa@uni-bonn.de
67	Retat-Amin	Maike	University of Bonn - Center for Development Research	mretat@uni-bonn.de
68	Reynolds	Catherine	University of Bonn - Center for Development Research	reynolds.catherine@gmail.com
69	Rösel	Jakob	University of Rostock, Institute of Politics and Administrative Sciences, Chair of International Politics and Development Cooperation	jakob.roesel@uni-rostock.de

No.	Name	First Name	Institution	Email
70	Rössing	Ute	Schmitz Stiftungen Düsseldorf	ute.roessing@gmx.de
71	Rzehak	Lutz	Humboldt Universität Berlin, Department of Central Asian Studies	lutz.rzehak@gmx.de
72	Saber	Nasim	Deutsche Welle / Afghanistan Information Center	nasimsaber@gmx.de
73	Sabra	Martina	Freelance Journalist / Consultant	martina.sabra@t-online.de
74	Sahrai	Fereschta	University of Education Freiburg	fereschta.sahrai@ph-freiburg.de
75	Scheliga	Felicia	Südasienbüro e.V.	felicia.scheliga@web.de
76	Scherrer	Beate	JIGSAW Entwicklungspolitisches Servicebüro	b.scherrer@jigsaw-service.de
77	Schetter	Conrad	Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC)	schetter@bicc.de
78	Schlehe	Judith	University of Freiburg, Institute for Ethnology	judith.schlehe@ethno.uni-freiburg.de
79	Schulz	Martha	University of Bonn - Bonn International Graduate School of Oriental and Asian Studies (BIGS OAS)	martha.schulz@uni-bonn.de
80	Shtaltovna	Anastasiya	University of Bonn - Center for Development Research	
81	Sika	Nadine	American University in Cairo	nadinesika@aucegypt.edu
82	Siriwardane- de Zoysa	Rapti	University of Bonn - Center for Development Research	rapti.siriwardane@wolfson.oxon.org
83	Smolarz	Elena	University of Bonn - Center for Development Research	esmolarz@uni-bonn.de
84	Sökefeld	Martin	University of Munich, Institute of Ethnology	Martin.Soekefeld@ethnologie.lmu.de
85	Somalingam	Thusinta	University of Mainz - Institute of Education	thusinta@uni-mainz.de
86	Spenlen	Jeanette	Otto Benecke Stiftung	jeanette.spenlen@obs-ev.de
87	Srinivas	Tulasi	Emerson College and University of Bochum, Center for Religious Studies (CERES)	Tulasi_Srinivas@emerson.edu
88	Stolpe	Ines	University of Bonn, Institute of Orient and Asian Studies	istolpe@uni-bonn.de
89	Stroetges	Fabian	Durham University - MA-Student School of Government and International Affairs	j.stroetges@durham.ac.uk
90	Thyen	Kressen	University of Tuebingen, Institute of Political Sciences	kressen.thyen@uni-tuebingen.de

No.	Name	First Name	Institution	Email
91	Toktogulova	Mukaram	American University of Central Asia, Anthropology Department, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan	mucaramt@yahoo.com
92	Vollmer	Ruth	Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC)	Vollmer@bicc.de
93	Wan Teng	Lai	University of Bonn, Institute of Orient and Asian Studies	laiwanteng@gmail.com
94	Wardak	Yahya	Afghanistan Information Centre / Ministry of Higher Education Afghanistan	yahya_wardak@hotmail.com
95	Weerawardhana	Chaminda	United Nations University - Institute for Environment and Human Security	weerawardhana@vie.unu.edu
96	Wenzel	Christoph	Humboldt Universität zu Berlin - Central Asian Seminar	Christoph.Wenzel@hu-berlin.de
97	Wessler	Heinz Werner	University of Bonn, Institute of Orient and Asian Studies; Universitet Uppsala, Department of Linguistics and Philology	hwessler@uni-bonn.de
98	Wilde	Andreas	University of Bamberg - Institut für Orientalistik	andreas.wilde@uni-bamberg.de
99	Wilker	Karin		
100	Wolf	Juliane	(IOA)	lia_wolf@web.de
101	Youkhana	Eva	University of Bonn - Latin America Center	eva.youkhana@uni-bonn.de

Information on the competence network Crossroads Asia

The competence network Crossroads Asia derives its name from the geographical area extending from eastern Iran to western China and from the Aral Sea to Northern India. The scholars collaborating in the competence network pursue a novel, 'post-area studies' approach, making thematic figurations and mobility the overarching perspectives of their research in Crossroads Asia. The concept of figuration implies that changes, minor or major, within one element of a constellation always affect the constellation as a whole; the network will test the value of this concept for understanding the complex structures framed by the cultural, political and socio-economic contexts in Crossroads Asia. Mobility is the other key concept for studying Crossroads Asia, which has always been a space of entangled interaction and communication, with human beings, ideas and commodities on the move across and beyond cultural, social and political borders. Figurations and mobility thus form the analytical frame of all three main thematic foci of our research: conflict, migration, and development.

- Five sub-projects in the working group **"Conflict"** will focus upon specific localized conflict-figurations and their relation to structural changes, from the interplay of global politics, the erosion of statehood, and globalization effects from above and below, to local struggles for autonomy, urban-rural dynamics and phenomena of diaspora. To gain a deeper understanding of the rationales and dynamics of conflict in Crossroads Asia, the sub-projects aim to analyze the logics of the genesis and transformation of conflictual figurations, and to investigate autochthonous conceptions of, and modes of dealing with conflicts. Particular attention will be given to the interdependence of conflict(s) and mobility.

- Six sub-projects in the working group **"Migration"** aim to map out trans-local figurations (networks and flows) within Crossroads Asia as well as figurations extending into both neighboring and distant areas (Arabian Peninsula, Russia, Europe, Australia, America). The main research question addresses how basic organizational and functional networks are structured, and how these structures affect what is on the move (people, commodities, ideas etc.). Conceptualizing empirical methods for mapping mobility and complex connectivities in trans-local spaces is a genuine desideratum. The aim of the working group is to refine the method of qualitative network analysis, which includes flows as well as their structures of operation, and to map mobility and explain mobility patterns.

- In the **"Development"**-working group four sub-projects are focusing on the effects of spatial movements (flows) and interwoven networks at the micro level with regard to processes of long-term social change, and with a special focus on locally perceived livelihood opportunities and their potential for implementation. The four sub-projects focus on two fundamental aspects: first, on structural changes in processes of transformation of patterns of allocation and distribution of resources, which are contested both at the household level and between individual and government agents; secondly, on forms of social mobility, which may create new opportunities, but may also cause the persistence of social inequality.

The competence network aims to mediate between the academic study of Crossroads Asia and efforts to meet the high demand for information on this area in politics and the public. Findings of the project will feed back into academic teaching, research outside the limits of the competence network, and public relations efforts. Further information on Crossroads Asia is available at www.crossroads-asia.de.