Report of the Crossroads Asia Conference

Figurations of Mobility

November 22-24, 2012

Central Asian Seminar

Institute of Asian and African Studies

Humboldt Universität Berlin

List of Rapporteurs

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Figurations of Mobility

November 22-24, 2012

Berlin

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Introduction & Proceedings

November 22-24, 2012 the BMBF-funded competence network Crossroads Asia convened an international conference on 'Figurations of Mobility' in Berlin. This conference was the second major international event by Crossroads Asia after a kick-off conference in April 2011 and as such part of altogether four international conferences. Lead organizer of the conference was the Central Asian Seminar at the Institute of Asian and African Studies, Humboldt Universität Berlin. During the three-day conference, 29 presenters and chairpersons from Denmark, Germany, India, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Swiss, and the USA presented and debated their research topics with 65 participants. With the aim to rethink area studies through the lens of Norbert Elias' figurational sociology, spatial and social mobility formed the thematic core of the conference.

As starting point of research, Crossroads Asia takes the geographical area stretching from Eastern Iran to Western China and from the Aral Sea to the Arabian Sea and investigates 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 – figurations – that are localised 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.

Thus, the conference provided a forum to discuss theoretical advantages and shortcomings of figurational sociology and to elaborate key concepts such as networks and translocality linked to various forms of mobility. In doing so, the conference brought together scientists from the regions of particular interest to the competence network, ranging from Central to South and East Asia, from America and Europe, as well as from diverse disciplinary backgrounds. The interdisciplinary and international environment of the conference particularly enabled lively discussions, which were further nurtured by a mix of theoretical panels endorsed by empirical case studies from across the world.

After a welcoming address by **Peter A. Frensch**, Vice President for Research of Humboldt Universität Berlin, the conference panels forming four thematic blocs – theoretical & conceptual analysis, migration and state, historical dimension and cultural aspects – convened. One highlight of the conference formed the kick-off panel on the analysis of the figurations concept within the context of area studies, with panelists from area, and post-area studies competence networks and centres with different geographical scopes. Panels framing migration and mobility included case studies on dynamics of global Chinese migration, Russia's migration policy towards Kyrgyzstan, the developmental effects of Mongolian Home Land Councils as well as migration flows between Bangladesh and India, Kazakhstan and Germany and translocal livelihoods across borderlands. The panel on the historical dimension of social figurations focused on slave trade and piracy in the 19th century and crossborder mobility during the Russian and Ottoman Empires. Panels on culture included discussions on the impact of migration on Iranian artistic trends and kinship concepts in mobility approaches.

Panel "Figurational Analysis and Area Studies: Theoretical Dimensions"

- Chair: **Conrad Schetter (Crossroads Asia, Bonn)**
- **Sergio Costa (Berlin)**
  Figuration, Regime, Entanglement: Researching Interdependent Inequalities in Latin America
- **Vincent Houben (Berlin)**
  Liquid Space, Southeast Asia and Beyond
- **Beatrice von Hirschhausen (Berlin)**
  The Figuration Concept Applied to the Analysis of Different Modernization Strategies in Rural Rumania. Observations from the Field
- **Alexander Wolters (Bishkek/Berlin)**
  Figurations, Systems, and World Society. Explaining Social Change with Elias and Luhmann
- **Tareak A. Rather (Srinagar)**
  Dynamics of Migration in Central Asia: Locating the Role of Social Capital
- **Khashayar Beigi (Berkeley)**
  Deterritorialisation as a Figure of Cultural Encounter in Central Asia
- **Alessandro Monsutti (Geneva)**
  Figuration and Beyond: How to Reconcile Fine-grained Ethnography with Global Anthropology – The Case of Afghanistan

The first part of the panel combined speakers of various thematic and area studies backgrounds other than Central and South Asia who had previously made attempts to use Norbert Elias' concept of figurations in their own research. Three panelists, **Sergio Costa** from the competence network desiguALdades.net (FU Berlin), **Vincent Houben** representing DORISEA (Humboldt Universität Berlin), and **Beatrice von Hirschhausen** (Phantomgrenzen in OME, Centre Marc Bloch Berlin), presented their experience in using the concept for guidance in empirical inquiry and in making sense of their empirical data with the help of approaches from figurational sociology. The fourth panelist, **Alexander Wolters** (Bishkek/Berlin), sought to argue for a combination of figurational sociology with elements of Luhmann's system theory from a non-empirical perspective. The session was chaired by **Conrad Schetter** (Crossroads Asia, Bonn).

Costa emphasized how the concept of regime fits better with the empirical reality of entangled inequalities which the researchers identified, including historical, supra-state, sub-national, socio-economic, political and legal dimensions. The attempt to apply the figurations concept on social inequalities proved to be a challenge with little heuristic value; instead the concept of 'regime' was favored over 'figuration'. The main problem with 'figuration' was that a meaningful unit of analysis could not be established (as distinct unit with spatial and political dimensions that Elias' concept seems to suggest), given the newly defined features of social inequalities. **Houben**, author of the book "*Figurations of Modernity – Global and Local Representations in Comparative Perspective*", argued that space has become relativist after the spatial turn in the social sciences and area studies. Area studies, in consequence, become increasingly crucial for assessing the manifold new formats of space, for example

'liquid space'. Speaking for his own 'area', **Houben** pointed out that space in Southeast Asia has a distinct liquid quality. This could be derived from studying emic concepts of flows and movements. Further, with regard to Southeast Asian Studies, he demonstrated by citing several authors that a fundamental reverse in perspective has taken place. Societies and history have come to be explored from the margins and interstices of conventional spatial entities. Subsequently, the relevance of area studies today could be grasped in attending to spatial-temporal specificities and translating these into small-range and grounded theories, besides generating insights of own value. **Von Hirschhausen** provided glances into her own attempts to use 'figurations' for understanding different modernisation strategies in rural Romania. Being just at the beginning of her analysis she implied that the role and substance of the material environment might form a further hunch how the figuration concept could be enhanced. **Wolters** suggested similarity between Luhmann's and Elias' theoretical considerations given Elias' assumptions about figurations of figurations (or better: the fact that individuals are always part of multiple figurations), i.e. the increasing complexity actors find themselves in, once power imbalances increase the spatial and social distance between individuals. While figurational sociology thus contains integrative tendencies, systems theory could be configured as complementing it, due to its idea of the existence of strictly bounded sub-systems which are highly exclusionary of each other.

The discussion after the first four presentations was devoted, first, to the question if and how change could be better explained with the seemingly static concept of 'regime' as replacement for 'figuration'. The logic of the latter would command to follow the actors and analyse agency, the structures of action, in order to trace change; whereas regimes are usually non-human and without agency. Secondly, the relevance of concrete places was disputed given the argument of increasingly relativist spatial units such as liquid space. Thirdly, it was suggested that researchers of the Crossroads Asia network could benefit from Elias' figurational sociology approach if it is understood as encouragement to focus on the direction of action, the nature of interaction, as well as its density and speed. The distinction and exclusiveness of these dimensions will have to be followed up and discussed further among the network members.

The second part of the theoretical panel consisted of three contributions reflecting on how figurational research can be combined with issues of territoriality, space, mobility, and migration with reference to Central Asia and Afghanistan, the geographical region the research in the Crossroads Asia network takes as point of departure. **Tareak A. Rather** from the University of Kashmir in Srinagar discussed the role of social capital in post-Soviet migrations in and from Central Asia pointing out the need to employ mobile methods in the study of contemporary migrant flows. **Khashayar Beigi** from Berkeley reported impressions from his recent anthropological fieldwork in Tajikistan when weaving death, imagined mobility, actually occurring immobility, and Islam into one story of deterritorialisation. The presentation called for a reconnection with and acknowledgement of the intellectual dimension of Islam with personal subjectivities via a focus on daily life-practices. As last speaker in the panel, **Alessandro Monsutti**, Research Director of the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva, took up the diverse threads and offered a personal reflection on the linkage between figurational approaches and area studies. He pointed out that the analytical focus on process dimensions, temporary configurations, and junctures is likely to be more fruitful than looking at bounded entities (e.g. groups). The unit of analysis for figurational research can't be

short of the whole world because it consists of a network of networks; however, feasibility criteria and meaningful research should remain any researcher's priority. With regard to area studies, **Monsutti** positioned himself as its defender – based on the ethical argument that area specialists usually develop a long-term commitment to places they work on and to the local population. Thus, if researchers manage to avoid essentialising culture and acknowledge the intersubjectivity of their work – in other words, they affect the people studied through interaction and vice versa – area studies constitute a non-positivist scientific approach to knowledge generation.

In the final discussion several commentators challenged **Beigi**'s notion of deterritorialisation arguing for

example that a reculturalisation can be observed, given the localisation of global practices against existing cultural paradigms, or rather a reterritorialisation through the recreation of the former Soviet Union in the shape of popular Islamic culture. One commentator questioned whether territory should necessarily be seen as a claim or whether the conference participants are not too much concerned with the relatedness or un-relatedness of their research with spatial notions.

Summarizing, in the presentations and subsequent discussion the following critical remarks regarding Elias' concept of figurations were voiced: First, the interdependencies conceptualised as figurations are situated in a container, e.g. a card game in a room or a football game on a sports ground, thus Elias seems to need a space where the figuration is located ('figurations take place'). Likewise, all examples Elias gives involve temporary interdependencies of individuals. Lastly, figurations are hard to trace empirically, as experience of the social inequality researchers in Latin America and the case study from Romania exemplify.

It was commonly suggested that an enhancement of the figurations concept with elements of other theoretical approaches (e.g. Bourdieu's fields and capitals, Luhmann's system theory) can be fruitful and is indeed essential in order to capture the complexity and interwovenness of social realities and all aspects of life, including the mobility dimension.

Panel "Framing Migration: State and Non-State I"

- Chair: **Anna-Katharina Hornidge (Crossroads Asia, Bonn)**
- **Ximena Alba (Berlin)**
  Changes in the Dynamics of Chinese Migrations around the World: Economic Transnational Enclaves, Community Resources, and Social Insertion
- **Cholpon Kemelova (Bishkek)**
  The End of Fast-Track. Explaining Changes in Russia's Migration Policy toward Kyrgyzstan

Panel "Framing Migration: State and Non-State II"

- Chair: **Detlef Müller-Mahn (Bayreuth)**
- **Ines Stolpe (Berlin)**
  Lifelines after Migration. Mongolian Homeland Councils as Agencies of Development
- **Eva Gerharz / Katrin Renscher (Bochum)**
  Translocal Figurations of Belonging. Migration in the Borderlands of Bangladesh and North-East India

The panels "Framing Migration: State and Non-State I & II" focused on diverse empirical examples in which the presenters analysed social and spatial mobility of actors and related these issues to the framework of the state. All four presentations raised questions concerning the interaction of state and non-state actors in processes of mobility and identity making; three used Elias' figurational approach as a conceptual tool.

The first session was chaired by **Anna-Katharina Hornidge** (Scientific Coordinator of Crossroads Asia, in chairing the session replacing Ambassador Heinrich Kreft). As first speaker, **Ximena Alba,** PhD candidate from Mexico City and currently short-term fellow at FU Berlin, presented two case studies of female Chinese migrants in Mexico. Starting from these she concluded that gender roles of the home country as well as the diaspora network frame migratory patterns and provide 'legitimacy' to varying forms of migration. In the course of time individuals can nonetheless subject these patterns to change. While Alba´s attention lay on the individual migrants as actors, the second presentation given by **Cholpon Kemelova**, Academy of Management in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, focused on the state. **Kemelova** scrutinised the impact of changes in migration policies of the Russian Federation for labor migration from Kyrgyzstan.

After the presentations **Detlef Müller-Mahn** drew attention to evident asymmetries in social research regarding success and failure of migrants' everyday life strategies. The following discussion was opened by a remark of **Martin Sökefeld**, pointing out a possibility of distinguishing the concepts of 'figuration' and 'regime': while figurations would revolve around networks of actors, these again are embedded in state-made regimes. **Müller-Mahn** took up the question of the importance of networks, which provide roles and

patterns of behaviour. **Alba** pointed out the importance of networks for the individuals as an asset which becomes even clearer when network support is absent. At the same time networks can restrain individuals' through traditional rules and strict patterns.

Kashayar Beigi and **Ingeborg Baldauf** portended the relevance of remittances for development and their role for state interests and policies. **Tareak A. Rather** referred to issues of demographic changes and (un-) employment, which have to be addressed by nation states, emphasizing the aspect of migration in these. In this context **Cholpon Kemelova** referred to state attempts to teach citizens 'how to spend money rationally', which again has to be seen within a context of the state trying to educate/normalise its citizens.

Further comments pointed out the distinguishableness of formal and informal economy and the question whether networks of migrants are or can be integrated by the state. **Gudrun Lachenmann** highlighted the specificity of translocality in which networks of migrants and their social bonds, strategies, and behaviour change in adaptation to the new locality and further questioned the usefulness of Elias' figurational sociology in assessing these by instead pointing to Giddens' 'duality of structure' approach as potentially nurturing.

The second panel was chaired by **Detlef Müller-Mahn**. **Ines Stolpe**, lecturer at the Central Asian Seminar of Humboldt Universität Berlin, discussed the role of so called *nutag* or homeland councils in Mongolia. These social institutions, based on common spatial rather than ethnic or social affiliation, evolved after socialism throughout the country (and abroad), and acquired agency in development processes vis-à-vis state authorities. **Eva Gerharz** and **Katrin Renscher**, Ruhr-Universität Bochum stressed the multidimensional impact of what they call translocal figurations of belonging in the two cases of the 'tribal art scene' in Meghalaya, Northeast India, and identity-making among communities in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh. After the presentations, the interaction of state and non-state actors in social figurations was debated in considerable depth. In particular, positioning 'the state' as external to figurational processes was expounded.

The discussion then focused on questions of local processes of history making and mega-narratives. The role of the state and whether the state provides a background for actors and analysts or whether it has to be seen as an actor itself was discussed in depth. **Stolpe** mentioned 'institutional voids', gaps in state performances that can be taken as an entry point of analysis in order to comprehend the dynamics between state, individual actors, and other institutions.

Panel "Framing Migration: State and Non-State III"

- Chair: **Anna-Katharina Hornidge (Crossroads Asia, Bonn)**
- **Rita Sanders (Zürich)**
  Social Figurations Evolving in People's Movements between Kazakhstan and Germany
- **(cancelled) Saniya Edelbay (Almaty)**
  Migrations in Kazakhstan: Oralmans
- **Manja Stephan / Philipp Schroeder (Berlin / Halle)**
  Across Borders: Researching Translocal Livelihoods in-between Central Asia, Russia, China and the Middle East

In her presentation, **Rita Sanders** from the University of Zürich investigated the relationship between social figurations and feelings of belonging. Migrants from Kazakhstan, having moved to Germany, form a transnational social field, which shapes their feelings of home and belonging, their future plans, and how they evaluate the past. **Sanders** underlined the significance of the processual character of belonging and explored individual variation and agency. The examples of individual case studies show how people creatively respond to their changing environment and how they use and transform the social figurations in which they are embedded.

Manja Stephan, Humboldt Universität Berlin and **Philipp Schroeder**, Max Planck Institute, Halle discussed in their presentation various methodological, theoretical, and conceptual aspects on how to investigate life contexts that are marked by the crossing of national, mental, and cultural boundaries. Their ethnographic data touch on the work and livelihood realities of ethnic Kyrgyz in-between their home country, Russia, and China as well as on Islamic education networks spanning from Tajikistan to Moscow and Egypt. In this way their contribution complements Elias' notion of figurational sociology with approaches of translocality as well as capital and (social) exchange theory.

During the discussion and in addition to the models illustrated in the presentations ('movement and ties' and 'building a new home in the old', for ethnical Germans, emigrated to Germany and for those who stayed in Kyrgyzstan) **Sanders** was requested to reconsider the model of the 'returning migrant'. Usually they return with a higher economic, social, and cultural capital (an established network in Germany, higher qualifications, language skills, etc.). Thanks to their economic resources and their enhanced social authority they are able to achieve a favourable position as an expert for reentering existing networks. Although the German state accomplished convenient conditions for the admission of migrants (of German origin) – for example uncomplicated acceptance of German citizenship and a policy of providing opportunities for migrants – a lot of them do not feel socially integrated due to missing acceptance and recognition by the public. For **Sanders** therein lies a reason for the failure of integration processes and the desire to return. The relevance of the category 'home' as a social and cultural figuration leads to a better comprehension of translocal, social, and mental spaces among migrants as well as of the category of 'embeddedness' in social life.

Stephan and **Schröder**, during the discussion, were asked to demonstrate how to display interdependencies in figurations and how to analyse trans-border processes and change over a longer period of time on the basis of their case studies. They focused on the transformation of power balances between involved actors in different social spaces, on the development of new strategies and individual identities as well as on the transformation of social practice and phenomena's symbolic meanings throughout history. The amendment of Bourdieu's concept of 'forms of capital' and 'fields' to the figuration concept provides the opportunity for a better analysis of the network's quality by focusing on the exchange of different kinds of capital. Families, according to the presenters, constitute a suitable research subject because they already exist on several relational levels and as part of the 'family-figuration', which visualises inner figurative interdependencies. Connections with other figurations and the embeddedness in different social spaces clarify translocal mobility.

Panel "Historical Dimensions"

- Chair: **Ildikó Bellér-Hann (Copenhagen)**
- **Andreas Wilde (Crossroads Asia, Bamberg)**
  Maritime Figurations of Piracy and Slave Trade in the 19th Century Indian Ocean World
- **James Meyer (Montana)**
  The Border: Russian and Ottoman Approaches to Cross-Border Mobility in the Late 19th and Early 20th Centuries

Andreas Wilde, University of Bamberg, showed in his presentation how to apply the concepts of figurations and translocality in historical analysis. With the examples of 'maritime figurations', slave raiders, and traders in the Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf, **Wilde** outlined the flows of slaves, which connected various sites, places, and people on different shores of the Indian Ocean over vast distances.

James Meyer, University of Montana, examined in his presentation Russian and Ottoman policies towards crossborder mobility. While Tsarist officials indeed expelled Muslims from some areas of the Russian Empire during times of war, in most cases Tsarist officials sought to prevent Muslim emigration from Russia to the Ottoman Empire. Meanwhile, both Tsarist and Ottoman officials made decisions regarding which populations they wanted to attract and which they desired to expel. Over time, officials in both empires sought to gain control over both the transfer of populations into and out of territories.

Subsequently, **Wilde** exemplified the construction of figurations and the definition of their boundaries, resulting from the historical sources assessed. For example the slave traders' figurations result from their networks' sphere of action. **Wilde** noted that the concept of figurations can be applied to the analysis of historical processes in different ways. The concept gives a broad foundation for the examination of sources in regard to a certain research question, providing new perspectives to examine the mobility of humans and goods and serving as a model of explanation for interdependencies in migration networks, for structural change as well as for historical development.

Meyer answered to questions on the definition of borders in context with trans-border mobility (geographical borders, which are marked by political influence), on the conception of spaces (different political spaces in a religious space) and on the motivation for migration (no religious persecution, but absent acceptance as equal citizens and a perspective for material improvement). According to **Meyer** the phenomenon of state-controlled and politically regulated migration (for example through financial appeals) resulted, in the case of the Russian Empire, from the imperial conception of the state as centralistic structure. Furthermore, he saw impacts in the contemporary ethno-geographic situation of Turkey resulting from Muslim' migration from the Russian Empire to the Ottoman Empire.

Panel "Culture I"

- Chair: **Judith Schlehe (Freiburg)**
- **Ying Du (Berlin)**
  Narrating the Displacement: Trauma Drama or Rebirth Epic?
- **(cancelled) Amin Moghadam (Paris)**
  Iranian New Migratory and Transnational Trends in Dubai. The Case of Iranian Artistic Practices

Panel "Culture II"
"Kinship Concepts in Mobility Approaches"

- Chair: **Lutz Rzehak (Crossroads Asia, Berlin)**
- **Aksana Ismailbekova, Nathan Light, Rune Stenberg, Ayfer Durdu, Tommaso Trevisani**
  (Crossroads Asia Berlin and Guests)

The panel chaired by **Judith Schlehe** focused on cultural dimensions of figurational research. **Ying Du**'s presentation analysed the situation of authors, who are or were writing on displacement in China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macao caused by war or globalisation. In the following discussion questions of language usage and literary forms were discussed. As minority-languages belong to one language family in greater China, respective authors write in one literature-language while literary forms, in which the authors express their feelings about displacement (e.g. poems), remain to be under researched.

The following discussion encouraged **Du** to connect her research with ongoing discussions on socio-cultural boundary-making, here especially with regard to currently discussed forms of Chinese cultural imperialism in Southeast Asia and their contributions to the redefining of social and cultural space in the in the region. The redefining of socio-cultural space also finds expression in the shaping of physical space throughout Southeast Asia, up-taking or explicitly turning against Chinese symbolism and architectural features.

The next session, chaired by **Lutz Rzehak**, Humboldt Universität Berlin, was organised in a penal discussion format, including brief presentations by **Aksana Ismailbekova**, Zentrum Moderner Orient Berlin, **Nathan Light**, Max-Planck Institute Halle, **Rune Stenberg**, Freie University Berlin, **Ayfer Durdu**, Humboldt Universität Berlin and **Tommaso Trevisani**, Max-Planck Institute Halle, on kinship, marriage, and mobility. First, **Rune Stenberg** gave a short insight into kinship marriage processes in Western China, with an emphasis on the actual procedure of marrying. **Aksana Ismailbekova** discussed "Marriage Strategies after the Osh-Conflict" and how marriage was cognitively employed as a survival strategy by affected families. **Nathan Light** followed with the presentation "A De-civilizing Process? Towards a Figurational Analysis of Kyrgyz Marriage by Capture" which focused on procedure and reasons of bride kid napping, while **Ayfer Durdu** focused on "The Quiet Mobility of Women in Northern Afghanistan" and expected effects and strategies of kinship marriage. **Tommaso Trevisani** assessed Uzbek weddings in relation to social mobility and efforts by the Uzbek

government to limit spending on weddings. **Rune Stenberg**, who had opened the panel, also closed it with a short summary of "Local Conceptualisation of Marriage and Kinship" in Central Asia.

All presenters referred to the concept of Elias' figurations or to Elias' concept of the civilizing-process.

Point of discussion in the following was, whether and to what extent the state has influence on common figurations of kinship and marriage when affected by dramatic incidents, e.g. the Osh conflict. Most contributors shared the impression that – although it tried to do so via restrictions and rewards/incentive schemes – the state had merely little or no influence on these changes. In the Osh conflict for example, the state tried without success to reward interethnic marriages. Here all presenters were asked to include the political in their analyses, which had so far remained rather apolitical given such a highly political topic as marriage.

Another question was whether love or even romantic love could be found in these static kinship-marriages. **Durdu** answered that love can be found in any or most cases, starting with parental love. Furthermore the connected question on the unintended consequences of figurations affected by conflicts was raised. Due to the Osh conflict, families often try to marry their children very quickly without giving them the possibility to get to know each other before marriage, leading to a fairly high percentage of separations. In Kashgar, marriages are arranged to bring families closer together, which may result in rising tensions due to the originally aimed at closeness.

Conclusion & Way Forward

The main objective of this international Crossroads Asia conference was to provide a space for researchers from area studies and systematic disciplines to interact on the theoretical framework of the networks post-area studies approach. Thus, members of other area studies competence networks and centres were consciously invited to join especially the first panel of the conference as speakers and share their views on the figurational approach taken to assess relations and processes of spatial and social mobility. A crucial result of the theoretical panel was, that a refinement of the figurations concept with other theoretical approaches can help to grasp the complexity of social realities, including mobility as a spatial dimension.

On the level of empirical exchange, the conference furthermore offered a fruitful ground for discussion based on findings from the regions studied by the Crossroads Asia network, as well as other parts of the world. Here, Crossroads' main themes 'migration', 'development' and 'conflict' formed the structuring elements along which studies on 'mobility' and 'mobilisation', 'networks' and 'figurations', as well as 'borders' and 'boundaries' were discussed. As such, Crossroads' thematic and conceptual focus was stretched by additionally adopting the lens of multiple spatial dimensions, i.e. networks, distance (a dimension implicitly discussed as part of 'mobility'), places, and territories (implicitly discussed as part of the 'borders' and 'boundaries' discussions, etc.). With the aim to scrutinize traditional areas as externally constructed containers and instead to focus on the emic definitions of area, Crossroads Asia therewith moves a crucial step further in its research objective and project mandate to bring its empirical research activities in an interdisciplinary manner together and to discuss their empirical and conceptual contributions to Crossroads thematic and conceptual core and beyond. The here documented international conference on 'Figurations of Mobility' consequently did not only provide the much needed space and inspiration for the empirically-based research by network partners as well as colleagues from other area studies networks and centres to interact, but furthermore allowed for a conscious reflection on the conceptual framing of the empirics. With this, crucial steps towards an interdisciplinary synthesizing of the empirical research and towards a further development of the conceptual framework were taken.

ANNEX I: Conference Programme

FIGURATIONS OF MOBILITY
Conference programme
Berlin, November 22-24, 2012

THURSDAY, 22 NOVEMBER

Venue : Humboldt Universitaet, Campus Nord, Haus 18 (Leonor Michaelis Haus), Lecture Hall 2

13:00   **Registration**

14:00   **Welcome** (Peter A. Frensch, HU Vice President for Research)

14:15-16:00   **Figurational Analysis and Area Studies: Theoretical Dimensions**
(Chair: Conrad Schetter, Crossroads Asia, Bonn)

         Sergio Costa (Berlin)
Figuration, Regime, Entanglement: Researching Interdependent Inequalities in Latin America

         Vincent Houben (Berlin)
Liquid Space, Southeast Asia and Beyond

         Beatrice von Hirschhausen (Berlin)
The Figuration Concept Applied to the Analysis of Different Modernization Strategies in Rural Rumania. Observations From the Field

         Alexander Wolters (Bishkek/Berlin)
Figurations, Systems and World Society. Explaining Social Change with Elias and Luhmann

16:00-16:30   **Coffee Break**

16:30-18:00   **Tareak A. Rather** (Srinagar)
Dynamics of Migration in Central Asia: Locating the Role of Social Capital

Khashayar Beigi (Berkeley)
Deterritorialization as a Figure of Cultural Encounter in Central Asia

Alessandro Monsutti (Geneva)
Figuration and Beyond: How to Reconcile Fine-grained Ethnography with Global Anthropology (The Case of Afghanistan)

18:15   **Reception**

FRIDAY, 23 NOVEMBER

Venue: Humboldt Universitaet, Campus Nord, Haus 18 (Leonor Michaelis Haus), Lecture Hall 2

10:00-11:00   **Framing Migration : State and Non-State 1**
(Chair: Anna-Katharina Hornidge, Crossroads Asia, Bonn)

Ximena Alba (Berlin)
Changes in the dynamics of Chinese Migrations Around the World: Economical Transnational Enclaves, Community Resources and Social Insertion

Cholpon Kemelova (Bishkek)
The End of Fast-Track. Explaining changes in Russia's Migration Policy toward Kyrgyzstan

11:00-11:30   **Coffee Break**

11:30-12:30   **Framing Migration: State and Non-State 2**
(Chair: Detlef Müller-Mahn, Bayreuth)

Ines Stolpe (Berlin)
Lifelines After Migration. Mongolian Homeland Councils as Agiencies of Development

Eva Gerharz / Katrin Renscher (Bochum)
Translocal Figurations of Belonging. Migration in the Borderlands of Bangladesh and North-East India

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

14:00-15:30   **Framing Migration: State and Non-State 3**
(Chair: Anna-Katharina Hornidge, Crossroads Asia, Bonn)

Rita Sanders (Zurich)
Social Figurations Evolving in People's Movements between Kazakhstan and Germany

Saniya Edelbay (Almaty)
Migrations in Kazakhstan: Oralmans

Manja Stephan / Philipp Schroeder (Berlin / Halle)

Across Borders: Researching Translocal Livelihoods in-between Central Asia, Russia, China and the Middle East

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

16:00-17:00 **Historical Dimensions**
(Chair: Ildikó Bellér-Hann, Copenhagen)

Andreas Wilde (Crossroads Asia, Bamberg)
Maritime Figurations of Piracy and Slave Trade in the 19th Century Indian Ocean World

James Meyer (Montana)
The Border: Russian and Ottoman Approaches to Cross-Border Mobility in the Late 19th and Early 20th Centuries

18:00 **Dinner** *(Venue to be announced)*

SATURDAY, 24 NOVEMBER

(Venue to be announced)

10:00-11:00 **Culture 1**
(Chair: Judith Schlehe, Freiburg)

Ying Du (Berlin)
Narrating the Displacement: Trauma Drama or Rebirth Epic?

(cancelled) **Amin Moghadam** (Paris)
Iranian New Migratory and Transnational Trends in Dubai. The Case of Iranian Artistic Practices

11:00-11:30 **Coffee Break**

11:30-13:00 **Culture 2**
(Chair: Lutz Rzehak, Crossroads Asia, Berlin)

"Kinship Concepts in Mobility Approaches"
Aksana Ismailbekova, Nathan Light, Rune Stenberg, Ayfer Durdu, Tommaso Trevisani (Crossroads Asia Berlin and Guests)

ANNEX II: 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 specificlocalisedconflict-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 understands itself as a mediator 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 .

Competence Network Crossroads Asia: Conflict – Migration – Development

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