

CROSSROADS ASIA

Conflict – Migration – Development

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Crossroads Asia

The scholars collaborating in the competence network *Crossroads Asia* pursue a novel, “post-area studies” approach, making thematic figurations the basis of their scholarly research. The geographical area of study of the competence network extends from eastern Iran to western China and from the Aral Sea to northern India. We refer to this area of study as *Crossroads Asia*.



Map 1: *Crossroads Asia*

We do not want to construe yet another region at the interface of conventional South Asian, Central Asian and Iranian Studies. Instead, we set out from concrete thematic *figurations* (i.e., causal and functional constellations) basically located in *Crossroads Asia* but with possible geographical extensions far beyond the area thus delineated, or in other concrete cases, covering only a much more narrow geographical zone within the area. Space, according to our “post-area” perspective, is determined through the perceptions, actions and imaginations of the agents in thematically defined contexts (Lefèbvre 1991).

We take *mobility* as an overarching research perspective for the competence network since *Crossroads Asia* 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. *Mobility* is at the bottom of all three main focal aspects of our research: conflict, migration, and development. The figurational concept implies that changes, minor or major, within one element of a constellation would always affect the constellation as a whole. When – building on the *Crossroads* metaphor – the lights change, the dynamics of mobility (and consequently, migration as well as conflicts and development) are prone to change as well, be it to the effect of acceleration ("green light"), stagnation ("amber"), or deadlock and blockage ("red").

The scholars involved in the competence network are set to produce individual as well as collaborative studies which will not only significantly deepen our thematical knowledge of figurational phenomena relevant to the area, but also test the validity of the *Crossroads Studies* approach. If the approach stood the test, a model for future “post-regional studies” competence networks would have emerged and the group effort to not only enhance empirical knowledge, but also make an impact on theory development, would have been successful.

Along with scholarly publications, the competence network will set up informational platforms and media to meet the high demand for para-academic information for the public about matters of conflict, migration and development in the region. Findings of the group project will feed back into academic teaching, research outside the limits of the competence network, and public relations efforts so as to ensure sustainability beyond the first funding phase of four years.

Working Groups and individual research objectives

Conflict, Migration and Development form the thematical core of various strands of scholarship, such as multi- and interdisciplinary peace and conflict studies, migration and social networks studies and development studies. In theory making, the schools that have emerged in these fields predominantly draw on macro studies in conventionally established "areas", including empirical evidence from OECD countries on the one hand and developing countries on the other. By providing a series of micro studies from *Crossroads Asia* assembled around these thematical foci, we attempt to broaden the empirical basis, and support the conceptual and theoretical endeavors undertaken in the above named scholarly fields. Our competence network will be organized in three thematic working groups, in each of which scholars from the humanities cooperate with social scientists.

Working group 1: Conflict

Members of the working group *Conflict* will scrutinize mostly figurations that bear conflict due to structural changes deep enough to make the "lights turn". The interplay of global politics, the erosion of statehood, and globalization effects from above and below, with local struggle for autonomy, urban-rural dynamics, diasporic phenomena

and many others are virtually or actually explosive. Gaining a deeper understanding of the rationales and dynamics of conflict in *Crossroads Asia*, scrutinizing the logics of genesis and transformation of conflictual figurations, and investigating autochthonous conceptions of, and modes of dealing with, conflict are the main objectives pursued by this working group. Particular attention will be given to the interdependence of conflict(s) and mobility.

In project K1 “Baluchistan’s global and national networks and local conflict configurations in Gwadar and Chabaha“ Just Boedeker examines conflictual figurations at a local level in Pakistani and Iranian Baluchistan against the background of the end of the cold war. Recent global economic developments in a hitherto peripheral region (the construction of ports and pipelines) have generated conflict between state, local population and regional and global players (India, China, the USA). – ‘Glocal’ reconfigurations, which encourage not only local autonomist movements, but also cross-border political networks, are investigated in project K2 “Processes of change in disputed border regions: Sovereignty, nationality and feelings of belonging in Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan“(by Antía Mato Bouzas), located in the northern border region between Pakistan and India.

Anna Grieser's research in dam projects in Pakistan-administered Azad Kashmir (K3 „Water and political control“) aims at understanding dynamics in political networks and debates around contested water resources. – Located in the transitional zone from social to political conflict, project K4 examines „Mobilization processes and the escalation of violence in urban areas“. Katja Mielke will do case studies in the effects of perception of poverty/deprivation by inhabitants of three metropolitan cities in the *Crossroads Asia* region. – The crucial role of verbalization, communication and discourse in the context of conflict regulation mechanisms is addressed by Lutz Rzehak in project K5 „Language and conflict“. The verbal coding of things conflictual, from avoidance and prevention to escalation and resolution, will be examined against various socio-cultural contexts in *Crossroads Asia*.

Working Group 2: Migration

Researchers cooperating in this working group aim to map out trans-local figurations (networks and flows) within *Crossroads Asia* and figurations extending from there into neighboring as well as distant areas (Arabic Gulf, Russia; Europe, Australia, America). How are basic organizational and functional networks structured? How do these structures affect what is on the move (people, commodities, ideas etc.), and vice versa? Conceptualizing empirical methods for mapping mobility and complex connectivities (Tomlinson 1999) in trans-local spaces is a genuine desideratum. The aim of the working group is to refine the method of qualitative network analysis (Hollstein & Straus 2006), which includes flows as well as their structures of operation, and to map mobility and explain mobility patterns.

Project M1 "Spaces of refuge" (N.N.) scrutinizes the relation of conflict and migration. How do refugees and other migrants cope with dislocation, how do they construe spaces of memory, how do they elaborate good and bad places in discourses

and narratives? Spatial imaginations question political orders and borders and thus bear a high potential for conflict. – In project M2 "The hidden female face of mobility", Ayfer Dudu, setting out from the widely accepted principle of virilocality, investigates family networks that rely on, and in turn encourage, the mobility of women.

Looking into the educational sector, Andreas Benz in project M3 "Paths to knowledge: structures, flows and processes in networks of educational migration in *Crossroads Asia*" examines institutions of secular and religious learning as targets of migration and triggers of mobility. At the centre of the research are processes and social practices of (re)production and modification of plurilocal integration of peripheral high mountain regions of North India and Northern Pakistan with knowledge centres within *Crossroads Asia* and outside. While project M3 focuses on secular networks and flows of people, knowledge and resources, the importance and impact of translocal religious networks form the subject of project M4 "In and out of South Asia: Regional transnational communitarisation of religious actors of Islam" (Dietrich Reetz; Aksana Ismailbekova). In comparative analyses of institutions and actors, this project investigates Muslim networks from South Asia (including Deobandis, Tablighis, Jama'at-i Islami) in post-Soviet Central Asia, Afghanistan and West China. In correspondence with M4, project M5 is dedicated to "Re-islamisation between the dictate of the state and global Muslim networks" (Petra Tiller): Two in-depth case studies will analyze the impact of Islamist networks on pre-existing Islamic institutions and worldviews in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

Finally, project M6 "Mobility in the history of *Crossroads Asia*: Slave trade in the 18th and 19th centuries" (Andreas Wilde) explores the importance of personal networks for economic and social action based on the forced physical mobility of slaves. Before the emergence of nation states, social space structured by tribal, clientelist and, increasingly, imperial power strategies sets the stage for this very special phenomenon in mobility.

Working group 3: Development

The researchers of the working group "Development" will pursue the question of the effects of spatial movements (flows) and contexts of interlinkage in networks in *Crossroads Asia* on the micro level with regard to long-term social change, with a special focus on locally perceived livelihood options and their potential for implementation. The working group focuses on two fundamental aspects: Structural changes (traffic lights turning green) in a process of transformation of patterns of allocation and distribution of resources, which are contested both on the household level and between individual and government agents, and secondly, forms of social mobility, which may increase options, but may also cause the persistence of social inequality.

Two work packages concentrate on the local impacts of the reoriented trade relations and flows of goods as consequences of post-Soviet border opening. Work package E1 "Development potentials and risks of transformed exchange processes in the border area of Kazakhstan-Kyrgyzstan-Xinjiang" (Matthias Schmidt) examines the effects of

the appearance of new actors and linkages in the border area between Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Xinjiang. This will focus on the renegotiation of land use rights, trade activities and thus for the livelihood strategies of dependent households. Work package E2 "Resource development, migration and development dynamics along the North South corridor in the border area Iran Afghanistan Pakistan" (Shahnaz R. Nadjmabadi) examines the effects of infrastructure development on the Iran-Afghan Pakistani border by looking at the exchange of energy resources and trade goods between South Asia, the Persian Gulf and the Central Asian countries. The emergence of this corridor represents a recent 'traffic light'-position in *Crossroads Asia*. In relation to emerging connections (including Iranian and Afghan joint ventures) this work package focuses on the role of development brokers with migration experience in the border region of eastern Iran, West Afghanistan and in the port city of Chabahar.

Project E3 "Water, inequality and social mobilization in *Crossroads Asia*" (Peter P. Mollinga; Joseph Hill). examines how different national control systems for the management of water resources translate into differences in local social (in)equalities, in sectoral and regional conflicts at the meso level, as well as in related social mobilization processes and mechanisms.

E4 "Dictionary of social concepts", carried out by Lutz Rzehak, aims to contribute to cultural and historical research by means of analysing regional social knowledge through key concepts in endogenous languages. Thus the dialectics of similarity and variation can not only be documented through the keywords conflict, migration and development, but also through the underlying social categories such as rule, statehood, development, society, law, honour etc. The project therefore lies at the central intersection of the three working groups.