

PREFACE

Dear readers,

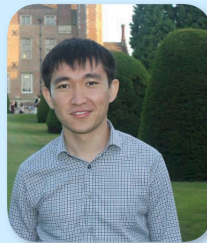
we are very pleased you share our interest in knowledge transfer between Central Asian studies and actors in society and politics. As you know, a group of young Central Asian scholars from all over Europe recently met for a two-day workshop to discuss and work on this topic together. (February 8-9, 2018: [ZMO](#) & [IAAW](#), Humboldt University)

We are preparing a more detailed report on the outcome of the workshop and will inform you as soon as it is published. Meanwhile we would like you to get to know the participants and the whole spectrum of our academic work. Please, do not hesitate to contact any of us directly or at centralasianstudies@web.de if you have any questions, suggestions or ideas you want to share!

Best regards,
Florian Coppenrath, Lena Heller, Kyara Klausmann, and Elizaveta Kucherova

PARTICIPANTS

My PhD thesis is generally on images and perceptions of the European Union in two countries of Central Asia – Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. At the Workshop I presented on sources of the EU's images. The paper revealed that different factors at international, domestic, and individual levels shape different aspects of the EU's complex images. As the focus of the workshop was a transfer of knowledge, the discussion developed around the issues of to whom and how this kind of knowledge could potentially be transferred to. It was generally argued that not only identifying target audiences and communication channels are important for transfer, but also the language that the academia normally uses should also be adapted to larger audiences to increase their receptiveness.



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Workshop participants at the Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient Berlin, February 2018



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In my research I concentrate on the socio-cultural dimension of urbanization processes in Mongolia with a special interest in Ulaanbaatar. In my PhD research I deal with place names of socialist Ulaanbaatar. Since the recent workshop I see knowledge transfer processes as a double-edged blade: Even though agents and actors outside of academia are very encouraging of young scholars adopting a more proactive approach, they tend to see them as tools without an agenda of their own. There might be insufficient capacity for young academics to 'prove their worth' by means of genuine initiative or in-depth insight. Oftentimes cooperation might center around validating a predetermined outcome instead of remaining open to "re-search" of other possible solutions. To be successful, knowledge transfer requires flexibility on both sides.

Dealing with *perestroika* in Central Asia, I collect and analyze stories of the so called 'Russian speakers' who left Tajikistan before the civil war. My analysis focuses on the traumatic experiences caused by the rapid changes in their lives. Taking this feeling seriously is crucial for understanding the countries we still call "post-Soviet" as well as the European new right and EU-sceptics. I believe in knowledge transfer, due to the social responsibility all humanities carry. Having said that, I also expect the decision makers to follow their social responsibility to secure the existence of independent academia. When it comes to knowledge transfer, there are hundreds of challenges and thousands of opinions. However, during our workshop we found some solutions and the willingness to search for them.



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I conducted my research on the environmental expertise and activism in Temirtau (Kazakhstan).

Environmentalists are perceived as experts by lay residents and could link citizens and authorities by bringing a 'voice from below', but fail to do so, because state authorities confer the role of experts and the privileges of

decision making to state agencies. This discrepancy, as well as a lack of lay participation in decision-making processes, make the gap between lay and expert knowledge wider and political mistrust among citizens deeper. After our workshop, I believe that journalists and social web networks should engage more in knowledge transfer. There are ways to approach governmental agencies inside and outside the country to enhance the credibility of lay expertise and its inclusion into decision-making processes.

Developments at my university have shown that the right to exist of some disciplines is constantly questioned. Decision-makers might not know the "inside" of academia and that is why communication at the interface between academia and actors in society and politics is so important. Notwithstanding the huge challenges of knowledge transfer, we should rather discuss them and improve the possibilities than stay in our own circles. I hope that our workshop and the resulting dialogue is a good starting point for further developments. Besides that, getting an insight in the research projects of the workshop participants and learning from their experiences was helpful for me, as I am only at the beginning of **my research on the work of German political foundations in Mongolia.**



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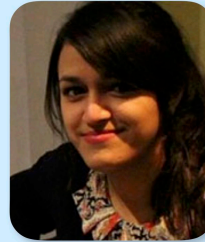
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My research focuses on the organizations representing Uighurs and Tibetans in Europe

and speaking more broadly I am very interested in interest representation of diverse societal groups at the European Parliament. My Central Asia focus comes with my job at a Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation financed project, where I watch closely what Belt and Road Initiative means for Europe, Central Asia and the world. For me the major take away from the workshop is that there is still a huge mutual mistrust and lack of communication between politics academia. The old-fashioned image of theory vs. praxis handicaps the knowledge transfer and needs to be overcome from both sides. This workshop was definitely a first step into the right direction.

My research examines narrative and identity among the Hazara community in England.

I am studying two Hazara narratives: one of a 'history of oppression' relating to the Hazara community's historic persecution in Afghanistan, and the other of 'overcoming', relating to the achievements of the Hazara community in education, women's rights and politics. 'Knowledge transfer' is a new buzzword making rounds in academia, but it is long overdue. What stayed with me the most after the workshop, is the need for researchers to be proactive in engaging with those outside of academia, as we sometimes get lost in our own work and do not realise that those who work in other disciplines do not always have our work or input at hand.



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My research examines the influence of the Turkmen informants of Alexander Samoylovich (1880-1938) on the development of national identity.

As a representative of the Higher School of Economics, I would like to thank all the participants and organizers for an interesting possibility to discuss the development of Central Asia. This entire workshop was an interesting event which peculiarity was maximum transparency. To be honest, this event represents an interesting starting point for the development of networking processes and the growth of the community of young researchers. I want to underline that the main aim of this event was a representation of the world outlook by the population of the region. The study of the needs of the regional communities is crucial within the frameworks of the knowledge transfer and the comprehension of the processes within Central Asia outside of the region.

My research takes a close look at the work of state sponsored dance ensembles in post-Soviet Tajikistan and its relation to national and regional identity.

This helps to understand Central Asia not as a monolithic, mainly Russian-influenced block, but as individual states, each of which follows their own national agenda. In this sense, political tensions and developments can be linked to national culture, historical developments since the Soviet era, and emotions related to national identity. A cultural approach can lead to a better understanding of the Tajik society and the function of those gender roles. This understanding is the basis for successful day-to-day politics, development cooperation, and intercultural exchange and communication aiming for long-term solutions.



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My research deals with negotiations regarding private housing constructions between the state and citizens in Soviet Samarkand in the

1950s and 1960s. It is important to define actors in and the purpose of knowledge transfer for every single case. We should resist the temptation of viewing the knowledge produced in humanities in solely exploitative logic of 'usefulness', because the responsibility towards the society and public also includes a critical analysis of the surrounding context.

During the workshop I could observe disputes concerning the assumed antagonism between 'policy' and 'academia' - a clear sign that next to practical issues of knowledge transfer we need to discuss its ethical limits.



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My research focuses on studying local and domestic interdependencies of space and security in rural and urban parts of Mongolia through an anthropological lens.

Moreover, I'm interested in socio-cultural aspects and customs of milk fermentation and dairying in Mongolian herder house-holds. Both topics are often embedded in bigger discourses of political decision-making sometimes even reaching beyond the borders of the Mongolian nation-state when e.g. international investors plan to purchase land. In such cases, anthropological research is able to transfer local perceptions and an in-depth



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understanding of land disputes into the spheres of policy-making. The workshop provided us with an exchange of valuable experiences and gave new insights about the challenges researchers face when channeling their empirical knowledge into political and economic spheres.

My research is addressing the formation of young women's sexual subjectivities that evolve in the process of personal navigations trying to reconcile tensions between personal (intimate) desires and societal norms of what is il/legitimate.

I believe that this research will be of interest to women's rights and feminist movements and will further help to facilitate discussions on female sexualities in Tajikistan in more critical ways. The workshop provided me with new insights on how knowledge transfer can be realised. We did not only discuss the topic of knowledge transfer among ourselves, but also with people involved in policy development. The possibility of such discussion enabled both scholars and practitioners to hold a critical evaluation on potentials of collaboration.



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In my research, I look at ideas of progress of students at Kabul University between 1964 and 1992.

Due to the highly ideologized conflict, the local and international historiography on related topics is strongly biased. In my project, I listen to all sides involved, which is of high value to understand the role of ideas in the conflict in Afghanistan. While the workshop confirmed that on both sides - academia and politics - there is an interest in cooperation, I am reluctant to condense my research to a short and generalized policy brief, as its value lies in reflecting the complexity of the topic. However, an increase in direct conversations between scholars and policy makers could be fruitful - as it was during the workshop.



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Bahodine Majrouh (b. 1928 - d. 1988) was an Afghan intellectual whose biography offers a case in point of knowledge transfer from academia to society and politics. He was a professor of Western philosophy at Kabul University who, during the Soviet occupation, founded a news agency in Peshawar, Pakistan and interacted with journalists, diplomats and politicians internationally. **My research bears on Majrouh's far-reaching intellectual contribution in the context of the Cold War, which in no way limits the relevance of my work to the University.**

In the hope of valorising academic knowledge production re-lated to Central Asia and promoting further knowledge transfer, my colleague and I at SOAS proposed a follow-up to this workshop, focusing on NGOs and other CSOs as outlets for professional researchers.



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I first heard about knowledge transfer while working on Wikistan, an upcoming knowledge hub on Central Eurasia for researchers and stakeholders. I dug further and am currently co-designing projects of cooperation between re-searchers, journalists and NGOs. In parallel, I drafted a **PhD-proposal on "Hip Hop in Kyrgyzstan's cities" - a topic with no obvious political or economic outreach.** The contributions to the work-shop made me aware of the diversity of knowledge transfers, more particularly depending on the target group (and even within one organisation, as the session with Mr. Krahl showed). Nonetheless, I also came to the conclusion that concerns about the operationalization of knowledge should come at a later point, as to not influence the outcome too much.