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## INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC SCIENCES AND THE HUMANITIES (SSH) FOR THE UNION OF THE MEDITERRANEAN

*NEW / HYBRID DIASPORAS WITHIN GLOBALIZATION  
INTER-/TRANSIDENTITY — INTER-/TRANSNATION  
(state 18.03.2012)*

### Provisional Proposal

The project has undertaken an initiative of intercultural and trans-cultural dialogue. This dialogue is based on several models of coexistence that have been developed over the past two decades in cultural studies, specifically related to **postcolonial theories** and approaches and stemming from research on ‘**hybridity**’, ‘**diversity**’ and from other relevant topics in the humanities and social sciences. This project aims to make a substantial contribution to the **development of concepts and ideas for the coexistence** of cultures in conflict, as well as to prepare a platform for a future, **even political, dialogue** between them.

The present research proposal acknowledges the existence of pressing issues of migration that are common to Europe, Israel, the Maghreb and Turkey, and which bear comparison with the case of the Americas — the United States and Latin America — a region that has undergone mass migrations and has witnessed the **configuration of new forms of diasporas**.

The project will assume a cultural studies approach while taking into account **historical, sociological, political, philosophical and epistemological** perspectives that are relevant to the debate on issues of **migration, nation, culture or identity**, i.e., the development of concepts of diversity and **integration at the European Union**. A **diachronic viewpoint** that includes early historical periods will be of relevance in order to gain some insight and experience for the present.

As noted, the ‘**trans-cultural**’ approach embodied in cultural studies and the social sciences plays a central role in this project. This standpoint is meant to improve substantially the **interrelation between the disciplines** and acting partners in order to **increase the visibility and internationalization of the Social Sciences and Humanities**, as well as stressing the **central role of these disciplines for the structuring and management of social processes**.

## Description of the project

Cultural transformations in the present era of globalization constitute a central issue as well as a goal for the **European Union**. These changes take place on many different levels and are manifested in vastly different ways, in particular those having to do with the frontierless phenomenon of mass migration. It is therefore in Europe's interest to analyze its integration policies and the consequences of such global phenomena, for example, sensitizing and developing strategies and tools for today's doctoral students who may be the decision-makers of tomorrow. Such global phenomena can be identified in the deep processes of '**transformation**', '**translation**', '**order**' and '**disorder**', resulting from a diversity attained through the dichotomies of coercion/de facto, desired/unwanted, conscious/ unconscious, and accepted/rejected, which fit into the complex processes of communication and conflict, which in turn generate '**resonances**' and a wide variety of '**differences**'.

## Objectives of the project

The primary goal of this project is the promotion of a political and cultural dialogue between Israeli and Arab/Palestinian/Turkish scholars in the field of the humanities and social sciences. Moreover, this dialogue must contribute to an interdisciplinary theoretical and methodological debate on an international level, while allowing the integration of the discussed concepts into university education, adult education, and political counselling. The project thus takes a productive and practical approach, in other words, the theories and methods are not limited by their origin to certain disciplines or areas, but are also applied according to the experiences of other fields. This is what gives this project its innovative nature.

The project's objective is to at least generate a discussion, to think in a paradigmatic way about cultures in conflict as well as about the methods and approaches that go beyond personal and discipline-bound thought processes, though without neglecting the specific knowledge related to those disciplines. It is a matter of creating a bridge between cultures and disciplines aimed at a peace-oriented European policy, in other words, in order to promote transversal concepts and approaches.

In light of this background, the project aims to provide a platform for any voice that is open to dialogue and thus not only contributing to raising awareness about current debates on burning cultural spheres of Arab (Moroccan), Turkish and Jewish cultures, about education and scientific policies of interchange between East and West, in Israel, Turkey, Morocco and Palestine, but also about the present debate within the European Union on concepts such as '**nation**', '**identity**', and '**belonging**'. We would like to reevaluate the notions of cultural identity/tradition and diversity, so as to overcome nationalistic concepts that perpetuate ethnic stereotypes and inhibit integration. Therefore, the project attributes principal importance to the systematic description of the differences and diversity of cultures, but also the similarities between the Arab, Turkish, Jewish and European cultures interacting in the European space. The dynamics of those regions will be compared with the Hispanic-U.S./American Diasporas.<sup>1</sup>

Culture, literature, art, and media are the ideal objects for such analyses because they are embodiments, representations and performances in which these kinds of current phenomena can be comprehended, analyzed, represented and made visible. Culture always serves as a **warning device**, describing pressing issues in less conventional ways, independent of any constraints, and bringing them into the light of public discourse.

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1 The "Hispanic-Diaspora" is going to act as a model for the project due to the fact that it presents a dynamics of coexistence of Anglo Americans and Latin Americans that does not represent a structural conflict, even if the relation between these ethnic groups is not entirely free of racist conflicts.

It is these objects of analysis that demonstrate, in spite of growing nationalism and fundamentalism of all kinds, to what point global migration movements and the ever-growing interdependencies created by the production and distribution of merchandise, cultural property, knowledge, and technology, today determine world current events and thereby in fact modify the world. In recent decades, particularly since the turn of the millennium, this situation has posed a challenge for the social sciences, in particular for the various area studies, to analyze and describe in a systematic way the structure, nature, and consequences of these processes as well as the cultural encounters they engender. At the same time, various theories, methods, and approaches, as well as numerous studies and alternative guidelines for the assessment and analysis of this type of phenomena have been developed, ranging from **transnational and trans-cultural models** to homogenizing and nationalist approaches.

Diversity strategies take on different forms, representations, and other discursive staging, each with its particular characteristics, effects and sociopolitical, historical and cultural resonances, conceived of and developed for the coexistence of social groups within multicultural societies: for example Tel Aviv, Casablanca or different European cities (large cities such as London, Paris, Madrid, Barcelona, Berlin, Amsterdam; medium-sized cities such as Frankfurt am Main, Cologne, Munich; and smaller cities like Freiburg, Basel, Görlitz and Zgorzelec on the Polish side of the border); the United States with its 3000 kilometres-long border with Mexico and the large migrations from all the continents; Latin America, with the phenomenon of internal migrations; and the Maghreb and Israel with their specific migratory policies and situation (e.g. Israel being a country that welcomes immigrants from all over the so-called Jewish Diaspora who, once in Israel, come to form new—often language- and culture-based—diasporas within Israel).

On the other hand, these strategies of diversity are confronted to models of normative and mono-causal explanations in the domain of concepts of ‘nation’, ‘identity’, ‘culture’, and ‘ethnicity/belonging’. This kind of anachronistic reaction, striving for excessive standardization, raises questions such as whether or not and to what extent it is still possible to speak, think, and write about the traditional categories of ‘nation’, ‘identity’, and ‘culture’ in light of the fact that the waves of migration and ethnic diversity are increasing. What is the meaning, origin and result of the individual’s belonging to a state or nation? How is identity constructed today? How do hospitality and the right of belonging take shape (Levinas, Derrida)? How and in what is diversity anchored? These questions and others can be extended to political, sexual, social and religious practices and issues that are realized beyond the traditional models. Another highly sensitive issue that remains to be analyzed in the framework of our project is as follows: does thinking about diversity contribute to co-existence or does it in fact exacerbate existing conflicts? Can ‘tension-enriched resonances’—known in cultural theory by the term ‘negotiation’ and which would require regulating, flexible, and normalizing mechanisms of control that have yet to be applied—emerge?

Diversity, understood and analyzed in this way, is no longer a category devoid of problems and systematically winning approval as was hitherto the case in cultural studies, anthropology, and postcolonial studies. Rather, it is an open, **nomadic, process** always in need of regulation, that, when given to excessive standardization, can lead to mythical representations and mono-causal concepts of ‘identity’ and ‘nation’ that are often diametrically opposed to a liberal and multicultural policy, as it can be observed in the Netherlands, Scandinavia, Western Europe and the Americas.

Samuel Huntington describes in a paradigmatic way in *Clash of Civilizations* (1998) and *Who Are We?* (2004), a very problematic and conservative attitude provoking more misunderstanding and annoyance than it does offer solutions. Many events in Holland and Germany seem to support such radical positions in regard to the formation of parallel societies. However, both public policy and cultural theory have entered a new phase of debate, facilitated by the paradigm shift in the domestic and foreign policy of the United States introduced

by Obama and bringing up to date the hegemonic and neocolonialist strategy of Kissinger which was in force up until the George W. Bush government: ‘recognition’ instead of ‘confrontation’; ‘negotiations’ instead of ‘sanctions’, all of them are the new paradigms which, in turn, quite obviously contain other risks.

In addition, our project will research problems resulting from the contrast between a practice of diversity, lived and experienced, and on the other hand, more rigorous concepts of national identity, as is the case in Israel and Morocco. How does one behave in a multicultural society in light of such a rigorous nationalism? How does nationalism can be legitimated given a reality of diversity?

Diversity, in this context, contains at least two inseparable components, depending on location, education and experience: it can have a satisfying or conflictive character; it can convey a sense of belonging and security or cause anxiety, especially in cases where certain elements of a particular culture are irreducible. Between these two irreconcilable poles is a range of intermediate possibilities that take shape consequent to political, social, religious and cultural constellations and are divided in the sense of ‘resonance’.

One must be aware of the fact that mass migrations overwhelm geopolitical boundaries. The border separating the U.S from Mexico is the most controlled and monitored border in the world from a technical and military point of view, but it is also where the most abuses and deaths take place, this despite the fact that the two states are living in peace without any territorial or political conflict. And despite such supervision and retreat to the south, it was impossible to prevent the United States from become a bilingual country with about 50 million Spanish speakers. Likewise, the waves of migration from former colonies, protectorates or territories of the former colonial powers such as Spain, Portugal, the United Kingdom, and France are another example of the displacement of cultural coordinates: Latin Americans, Indians, Africans and North Africans have vastly altered the ethnic and cultural texture of these countries, such as in the cities of Madrid, Lisbon, London and Paris.

Nonetheless, it is not only the concepts of ‘identity’, ‘nation’, and ‘national culture’ that are undergoing a substantial change, but in other areas of the social sciences, as well, we witness profound changes on the backdrop of diversity and nomadism, as for example terms like ‘ethnicity’, ‘text’, ‘fiction’, ‘history’, ‘religion’, ‘reality’, ‘subject’, or ‘art’ are all in constant motion. These concepts and the cultural theories associated with them since the 1980s are constantly being challenged, adjusted, and redefined, and are now on the interfaces and passages between cultures, disciplines and scientific thought, reaching the limit of their interpretability.

Simultaneously, digitalization and virtualization have made the world so densely packed that its growth seems permanently on the brink of implosion. For this reason we must redefine what we mean when we use terms like ‘nation’, ‘national identity’, ‘national culture’, ‘border’, ‘religion’, ‘exile’ or ‘nomadism’, if these concepts still have any meaning. These concepts stretch from the most fundamentalist to the most cosmopolitan ideas and the project will address these issues.

Like most phenomena in every period, globalization has both positive and negative aspects. Some of these aspects are the growing permeability of cultural, religious, political, and geographical boundaries, which has, on the other hand, also strengthened nationalisms and essentialisms to the extent of racism.

This complexity of coexisting, intersecting, and mutually interfering worlds can be subsumed under the category of ‘diversity.’ This category not only occupies an essential place in a wide variety of fields of knowledge and disciplines, as well as in the realm of real life and daily experience, but it has also become a true *conditio* of our time: life as knowledge is marked by continual processes of translation and transformation, by resonance and difference, especially in areas where the irreducible realms or facets of identity or of culture are at play.

Responses from Europe to resonances, to difference, or, more precisely, to ‘différance’ are very different from the demands of reality. On the one hand, we develop strategies that lead to a real chance of allowing coexistence and of making diversity a pluralistic norm, but on the other hand we build walls in the form of different kinds of responses, of surveillance and of defence, we reinforce the power of the police, which are rather desperate and failing attempts to put a stop to the migrations.

### **New concepts of diaspora in the actual research: Performative and nomadic diasporas**

During the 90s and into the beginning of the millennium, the social, political, and cultural sciences have shown that societies tend increasingly to organize themselves along the lines of large ethnic groups or communities. Particularly in megacities such as London, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Paris, or Berlin, we can think of Chinese, Indian, Hispanic, or North-African communities. Those groups have built genuine diasporas in which their members have two or more identities, two or more cultural references, and two or more loyalties. There are scholars that disapprove the term ‘diaspora’ as a fashion. Notwithstanding this critique, particularly against Hull’s usage of the term ‘diaspora’, in the 1990s several scholars began to speak about ‘African diasporas’, and Robin Cohen (1997:67), for example, considers that colonial expansion from the 16th century onwards created various ‘global diasporas’. These and numerous other classifications have led to a very heterogeneous status of the term ‘diaspora’, with regard as well to its semantic and pragmatic ‘extension’ and ‘intention’. In spite of this plural scepticism, the application of the ‘diaspora’ label to all kind of minorities has enjoyed a boom (Edwards 2001; Gilroy 1993).

The consequence is that the utilisation of the term ‘diaspora’, particularly following Hall’s conception, requires some explanation, as this term has been greatly determined by Jewish history. Traditionally, ‘diaspora’ is related to exile, enslavement, subjugation, captivity. ‘Diaspora’ also connotes the ‘dispersion’ of a group forced to leave its land, deportation from one place to another place, where the group builds a close ethnic community marked by codified rituals and habitudes in order to preserve the ethnic memory, identity, and coherence of the group. Its members consider the place of arrival as temporary and they hope to come back to their original place. The historical diaspora in the Jewish context is very clearly delineated: the Jewish communities in the diaspora used not to enter into a negotiation of their culture and to building a “third space”. This was a way to prevent hybridisation processes.

The broadening of the semantic field of the term ‘diaspora’ began in the 1980s, coming to mean the dispersion of different communities but not only in the sense of ethnic communities (vid. *Le Petit Robert* de 1994; cf. Gafaïti 2005). Particularly among scholars in the US, and following Safran (1991), Tölölyan (1991; 1996), Chow (1993), Gilroy (1993), Warren (1993), Hall (1994; 1996), Lipsitz (1994), Mishra (1996), Clifford (1997), R. Cohen (1997), Ph. Cohen (1998), Anthias (1998), Dirlik (2004), Chivallon (2002) we learned that different ethnic groups are not determined by history, by the debate over colonialism, decolonization, or post-colonialism, but by local conditions and local reality. The main preoccupation of these communities is their survival. We perceive them in ‘extraterrestrial’ or ‘alien’ situations; they live in anonymity and in illegality, they work illicitly, they are merely tolerated and often persecuted by the police or by paramilitary groups. This groups live in a ‘situation zero’ (cf. de Toro 2003), in discursive situations not of post-colonialism, but of ‘post-coloniality’ and hybridity. The large waves of migration are caused by poverty, hunger, wars, or genocides. Nowadays, migrants arrive in country X with the conviction not to return to their original home and to establish themselves definitively in the destination country. Even if they long for and dream of return to their original country, this builds what is effectively a ‘myth of return’, since the migrants remain in the host country. These groups build specific communities but

with different interests, and after a while they come to belong to two or more cultural references and obtain ambivalent and oscillating identities. The organisation of these groups is comparable to that of the cultures of the Indian Ocean in the Middle Ages, notwithstanding the vast differences in religious and ritual practices that no longer exist nowadays (cf. Goitein 1973; 1999; Vergès 2003:241–257). But like them, contemporary diasporas define themselves in the new country on the basis of language, dress, culinary, and cultural practices. These kinds of community are in constant growth, such as the Hispanic community in the USA, the Maghreb community in France, the Turkish community in Germany, or the Indians and Pakistani in the UK. I would like to define this kind of diaspora as a form of economic, political, and social organisation where the State is no longer the first and most important point of reference, but the diasporic group or community.

Although this type of diasporic organisation is not currently the dominant form of social and political life, it is relevant, as mentioned above, in megacities such as New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, London, Paris, or Marseille, in big cities such as Berlin and Munich or in Amsterdam, sometimes to the point that they provoke radical, violent, hegemonic, and xenophobic reactions such as that in France, or in Holland, but also in the USA.

This kind of new diaspora is not related to so-called ‘multiculturalism’, but rather to ‘cosmopolitanism’, a global concept that conceives of culture and organizes life in a different way, with nomadic and rhizomatic references. For this reason we can understand this new concept of ‘diaspora’—in the framework of the epistemology of hybridity—as *differance* and multiplicity, as the *potentiality of difference by a reciprocal recognition*. In this way we change the connotation of ‘diaspora’ as dispersion, or, in other words, we complement this meaning with one of dissemination and rhizome as a *plurality of experiences, cultural codes, identities that cannot be reduced to one cultural model* (Chivallon 2002 expresses this in the same way). Today, the term ‘diaspora’ also represents a process of ‘translation’, of de-territorialization and re-territorialization, movement, and negotiation.

The term ‘diaspora’, within the epistemology of hybridity, is equivalent to Gilroy (1993), who posits a form of historical construction wherein the traces of history and memory, norms, utopias, and projections are registered. The term ‘diasporization’ mean for us a ‘staging’, a ‘performance’, or a ‘symbolic representation’ of diasporical situations, creating an alternative concept to those of one ‘nation’ or one ‘identity’ based on the binomial ‘blood/soil’, category that is stressed in political discourse, but in reality makes less and less sense.

The ‘diaspora’ or ‘diasporization’ can be considered a network of different cultures and identities in which the individual defines himself through a common experience of other individuals within his community. Our ‘diaspora-concept’ has in a large measure a metaphorical signification, as in Hull (1994:401ff.), but this is not the case of ‘diasporization’, which is ‘performed’, ‘staged’, and built on a ‘zero-situation’.

Facing the complexity of the term ‘diaspora’, it is necessary not to forget the historical tradition and the evolution of the term in order to avoid oversimplification. As consequence, it seems more apt to think ‘diasporas’ as a dynamic, open, nomadic, performative process and to talk about ‘diasporas’ in the sense of ‘diasporical situations’ or ‘diasporization’. In this context, ‘diaspora’ represents the opposite of essentialism; it shares common aspects with ‘transnationalism’ or ‘cosmopolitanism’, as far as these concepts always connote an oscillation between at least two or more cultural modes, concepts of nation, identity, and life-practices.

A series of central questions results from these reflections, which are dealt with in the subjects of the project.

## Premises

A favourable environment for the development of comparative and transversal cultural research was established in Leipzig during the last two decades based on the experiences and

achievements obtained by the University of Leipzig. These achievements have great relevance for exploring local and global phenomena beyond the traditional 'area studies.' Such an approach allows the development of a description of various spatial constellations, with their specificities and their differences and to put them in relation with one another in order to access different alternatives in the framework of resonance, difference and consensus.

As for the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the project inscribes itself within the research tradition of this University, lead by Institutes such as the Truman Institute for Peace, the Institute of Advanced Studies. All these units have a wide research experience on the outcome of successful projects that focus on migration, cultural studies-oriented and transnational topics, having a prestigious faculty in philology, cultural studies, history, demography, etc., also with a focus on the Middle East.

The responsible for the project points out, in terms of the project's orientation, a series of anchor points, such as the research academy, graduate schools, 'zones of ruptures in globalization', 'cultural exchange', 'transnationalization and regionalization', 'German as a foreign language / transcultural German studies', 'Religious non-conformism and cultural dynamics', as well as the yet to be created field of research, 'Contested Order', and other active and internationally recognized research centers at the University of Leipzig, such as the 'Iberoamerican Research Center', the 'Centre de Recherches Francophones', and the 'Centre d'études québécoises' of the Faculty of Philology and the S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace und the Institute of Western Cultures of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. In recent years, several scientists, institutes, research groups, structured training courses for doctoral students, and other centers have developed visible profiles in the international arena, through international conferences, research projects and publications series, thus making an essential contribution to the development of scientific theory and to the international standing of the University of Leipzig. The interdisciplinary and transcultural approach reflected in this project is characteristic of the close collaborations that can be fostered between the humanities and cultural studies.

## **Partners**

The project will be conducted by two universities: the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the University of Leipzig in cooperation with colleagues from other German, European (Barcelona, Paris 3, Ecole normale supérieure, REC/O: Maison des Sciences de l'Homme), Turkish (Sabanci University) as associated Partners (the Moulay Ismaïl University in Meknès, Université Sidi Mohamed ben Abdellah in Fès, Université Ibn Tofaïl de Kénitra, Université chouaïb doukkali. El Jadida), with the Top Research Area "Contersted Order" and the Center for Are Studies, the S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace und the Institute of Western Cultures of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

The project will be directed by Prof. Dr. Ruth Fine, Chair of the Department of Romance & Latin American Studies of the Faculty of Humanities of the Hebrew University; Prof. Dr. Alfonso de Toro, Director of the Institute of Romance Languages and Literatures of the Ibero-American and Francophone Research Center of the Philology Faculty of the University of Leipzig.

Experts from the fields of both Jewish studies and Arab (Palestinian/Turkish) studies, as well as leading Jewish and Arab figures will be invited to the two countries by the partner universities. The partnership with the Moroccan colleagues is essential, due to the fact that Morocco is a country in which Jewish as well as Arab institutions coexist in a relatively stress-free way and they are ready to engage in this dialogue, which is not at all to be taken for granted.

Our project will give special consideration to the ‘Hispanic Diaspora’, in the United States as an interesting case study, since the ethnic conflicts between Anglo-Americans and Latinos as a structural conflict, do not have the same proportions (even if relations are not free from political tensions and racism) as does the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians.

### Structure, approach, schedule

The project will be implemented over five years. There will be a preparatory phase which began with the “Leipziger-Workshop” from the 6<sup>th</sup> till the 11th of December 2011 and continued with a second “Jerusalem-Workshop” from the 23<sup>th</sup> till the 27<sup>th</sup> of June 2012.

The first workshop has the function to gain a critical mass of scientists and academic figures that can be integrated to the long-term project, the second workshop has aimed to develop a detailed plan for the project. The project itself should preferably begin in fall 2012. The beginning of the project will depend of the next announcement of the promotion programme of the German Aero space Center (DLR)

Responsible for the Concept:

© Prof. Dr. Alfonso de Toro, IAFSL/FFSL/  
Prof. Dr. Ruth Fine, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

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