

Islam as a Web? Analyzing Networks in Muslim Societies

Workshop held at Berlin Graduate School Muslim Cultures and Societies, Altensteinstraße 48

Date:

Wednesday, 30 January 2013, 10am–5pm

Preparatory Meeting:

Tuesday, 18 December 2012, 4pm – 5pm

Organiser:

Jörg Matthias Determann

Participants:

doctoral students of the BGS MCS, doctoral students and fellows of associated institutions, and any other interested researchers

Format:

Ten-minute presentations about scholarly texts followed by discussions

Readings:

Please choose at least three readings from the following list. The list comprises textbook chapters on social networks (1–5) and studies on networks in Muslim societies (6–10):

1. Alain Degenne and Michel Forsé, *Introducing Social Networks* (London: Sage Publications, 1999): Chapter 1, 'Social Relationships and Networks'.
2. Alain Degenne and Michel Forsé, *Introducing Social Networks* (London: Sage Publications, 1999): Chapter 2, 'Personal Networks and Local Circles'.
3. Charles Kadushin, *Understanding Social Networks : Theories, Concepts, and Findings* (Oxford University Press, 2011): 'Introduction'.
4. Charles Kadushin, *Understanding Social Networks : Theories, Concepts, and Findings* (Oxford University Press, 2011): Chapter 10, 'Networks as Social Capital'.
5. Charles Kadushin, *Understanding Social Networks : Theories, Concepts, and Findings* (Oxford University Press, 2011): Chapter 11, 'Ethical Dilemmas of Social Network Research'.
6. Roman Loimeier and Stefan Reichmuth. 'Zur Dynamik religiös-politischer Netzwerke in muslimischen Gesellschaften', *Die Welt des Islams* 36, n. 2 (1996): 145–185.
7. Janine Clark, 'Social Movement Theory and Patron-Clientelism: Islamic Social Institutions and the Middle Class in Egypt, Jordan, and Yemen', *Comparative Political Studies* 37, no. 8 (2004): 941–968.
8. Stefano Allievi, 'Islam in the Public Space: Social Networks, Media and Neo-communities', in *Muslim Networks and Transnational Communities in and Across Europe*, edited by Stefano Allievi and Jorgen S. Nielsen, 1–27 (Leiden: Brill 2003).

9. Sebouh Aslanian, 'Social Capital, and the Role of Networks in Julfan Trade: Informal and Semi-formal Institutions at Work', *Journal of Global History* 1, no. 3 (2006): 383–402.
10. Krause, Werner. 'Imaginierte und reale Netzwerke in Südostasien', in *Die islamische Welt als Netzwerk: Möglichkeiten und Grenzen des Netzwerkansatzes im islamischen Kontext*, edited by Roman Loimeier, 289–310 (Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2000).

Requirements:

Please attend our preparatory meeting in December. During this meeting you will choose one text from the reading list to present during the workshop in January. In addition to reading this text, please read at least two other texts from the reading list and participate in our discussion during the workshop. Ideally, you should read at least one textbook chapter on social networks (readings 1–5) and at least one study of Muslim social networks (readings 6–10).

Credit Points:

1 CP

Application:

The deadline for application is 11 December 2012 (via e-mail to matthias.determann@fu-berlin.de).

Contact:

For any queries or questions, please contact:
matthias.determann@fu-berlin.de or md@bgsmcs.fu-berlin.de

Draft Programme:

You will give a ten-minute presentation about one of the texts. Each presentation is followed by a brief discussion of the text.

10am–12:30pm: Social network theories

Textbook chapters on social networks (1–5).

12.30pm–1.30pm: Lunch break

1.30pm–5pm: Networks in Muslim societies

Studies on networks in Muslim societies (6–10).

Workshop Outline:

Sociologists have long studied the ties that connect people to one another. However, with the spread of computer networks and the internet, the concept of 'network' rose to further prominence. The Arab Spring is sometimes seen as being caused by young people's social networking. Some writers have even described the entire history of the world as the expansion and tightening of a 'human web'. Is the term 'network' thus merely fashionable, overused and overrated? Or does the analysis of social networks offer valuable new understandings of human societies? Is the concept of networks, indeed, useful not only for sociologists but also for historians, political scientists, scholars of religion and area specialists? This workshop tries to answer these questions. In the morning session, we will discuss chapters from two of the latest textbooks on social networks. This will provide us with an understanding of the main theories and approaches in network analysis. In the afternoon session, we will focus on a number of texts that apply network analysis to Muslim societies. We will ask what approaches these texts used and what their strengths and weaknesses are. By the end of the workshop, we might not agree about whether Islam or indeed all human societies are best conceived of as webs. However, we will have gained a solid understanding of contemporary network theories. Perhaps most importantly, we will have also learnt which particular theories might be useful for our personal research into Muslim cultures and societies.