11th Käte Hamburger Lecture

Identity and Political Mobilization of Diasporas:
A Gendered Perspective

With Prof. Nadje Al-Ali
Professor of Gender Studies, SOAS University of London

21st April 2015, 19:00-20:40
at Jüdische Gemeinde Duisburg, Springwall 16, 47051 Duisburg

At a time of a heightened sense of crisis with respect to potential terror threats, economic austerity, controversial immigration policies, and debates about freedom of speech, academics have a particular responsibility to inject nuance into media and policy discourses. This need for nuance and complexity is particularly acute in relation to current debates about Muslim diasporas in Europe who are often represented in simplistic and stereotypical manner as a homogeneous group of people with the same beliefs, motivations, political aspirations and values. Yet diasporas of all ethnic and religious backgrounds consist of multiple waves and layers, ranging from refugees, asylum seekers and other forced migrants to those seeking labour, education and family unification. Different trajectories of displacement and migration clearly shape identities and political orientations, as do the specific social, economic and political circumstances and conditions in countries of settlement.

Anti-Muslim racism and Islamophobia have increasingly characterized media discussions, policy debates and public opinion in the context of Europe’s concern with ‘the other within’. But is the designation of “Muslim” actually meaningful in a context when diasporas are clearly rooted in very different national, ethnic and political struggles, and where communities and individuals identify themselves with a broad spectrum of secular and religious positions? And, equally pertinent, isn’t it about time to rethink what European and its national identities actually mean and signify? A discussion about diasporic identities in Europe needs to go in tandem with an interrogation of “Europeanness” and European nation states’ identities.

Moving away from older paradigms about integration and acculturation, more recent scholarship recognises the significance of transnational networks, activities and social fields in shaping diasporic identities, belonging and political mobilizations. In policy circles, the question of diasporas as potential “peace makers” or “peace wreckers” has gained particular momentum, given the wide range of conflicts, wars, and forms of violence as well as attempts at conflict resolution and peace processes. How do we account for different forms of mobilizations between and within different diasporic
communities? What is the role of gender and other intersecting hierarchies of unequal power relations, such as class, ethnicity and generation, for example, in enabling, shaping and restricting political mobilizations of diasporas? And what does violence, war and peace mean for women and men within specific diasporas?

In the eleventh Käte Hamburger Lecture on 21st April 2015, Nadje Al-Ali, Professor of Gender Studies at SOAS, University of London, will address the importance of a gendered lens when analysing the identity formations and political mobilizations of Muslim diasporas in Europe and beyond.

Programme

19:00–19:15  Welcoming and Introductory Remarks:
              Mayor of Duisburg Sören Link
              Prof. Tobias Debiel, Director of Käte Hamburger Kolleg / Centre for Global Cooperation Research

19:15–20:10  11th Käte Hamburger Lecture
              “Identity and Political Mobilization of Diasporas: A Gendered Perspective”
              Prof. Nadje Al-Ali, Professor of Gender Studies, SOAS University of London

Discussants:  Dr. Jochen Hippler, University of Duisburg-Essen
              Dr. Ariane Sadjed, University of Vienna

Moderator:    Prof. David Carment, Käte Hamburger Kolleg / Centre for Global Cooperation Research; and Carleton University Canada

20:10–20:40  Discussion with the Audience

20:40        End of the Lecture and Get-Together

The Lecture will be conducted in English.