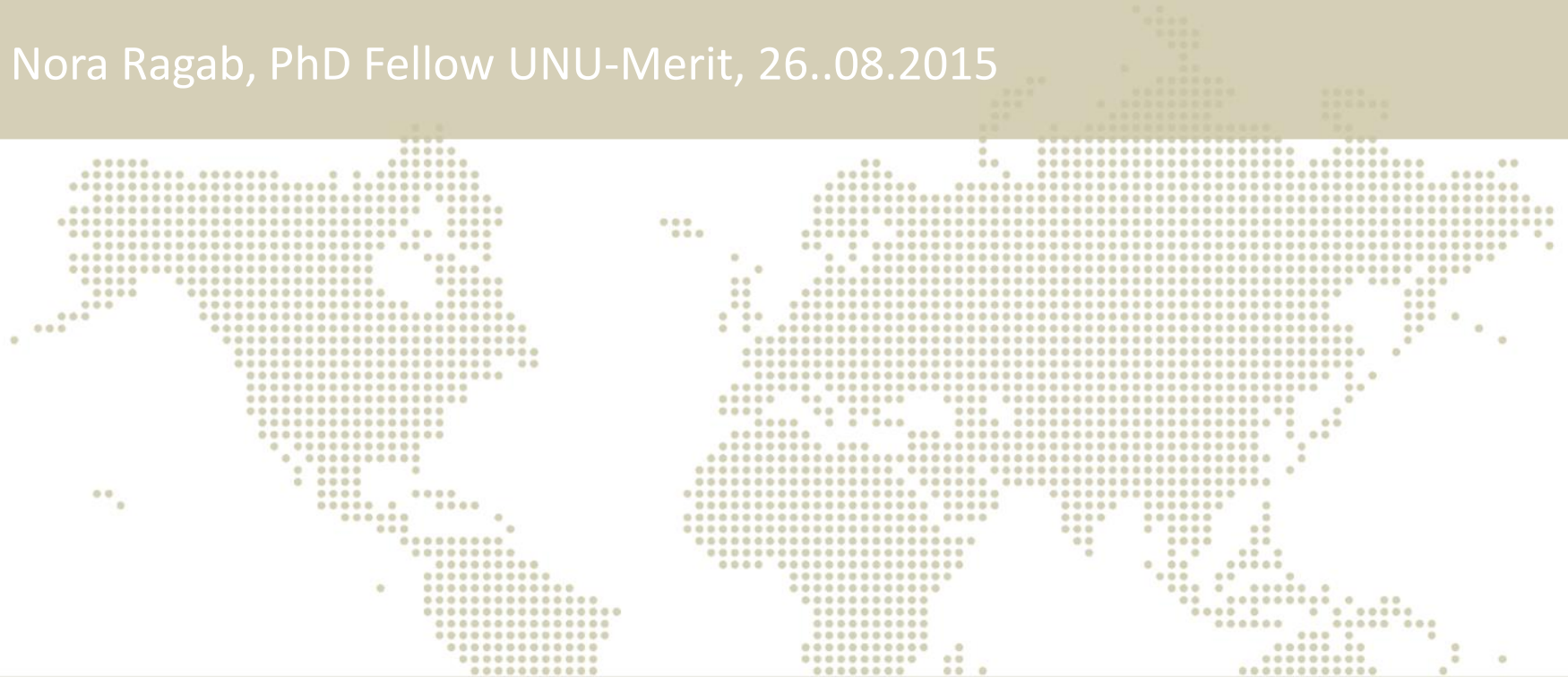


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Diaspora Engagement in the MENA Region

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Outline

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- The concept of diasporas
- The MENA Region
- Syrian and Tunisian diaspora groups in Germany
 - Background to the studies
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 - Comparing the two cases
- Conclusion

Introduction

The “Arab Spring” from Tunis to Damascus

- Not only influenced societies in the countries but also those living abroad

Diasporas significant players in the international political arena

- Diasporas as agents of change or long distance nationalists?

The concept of diasporas

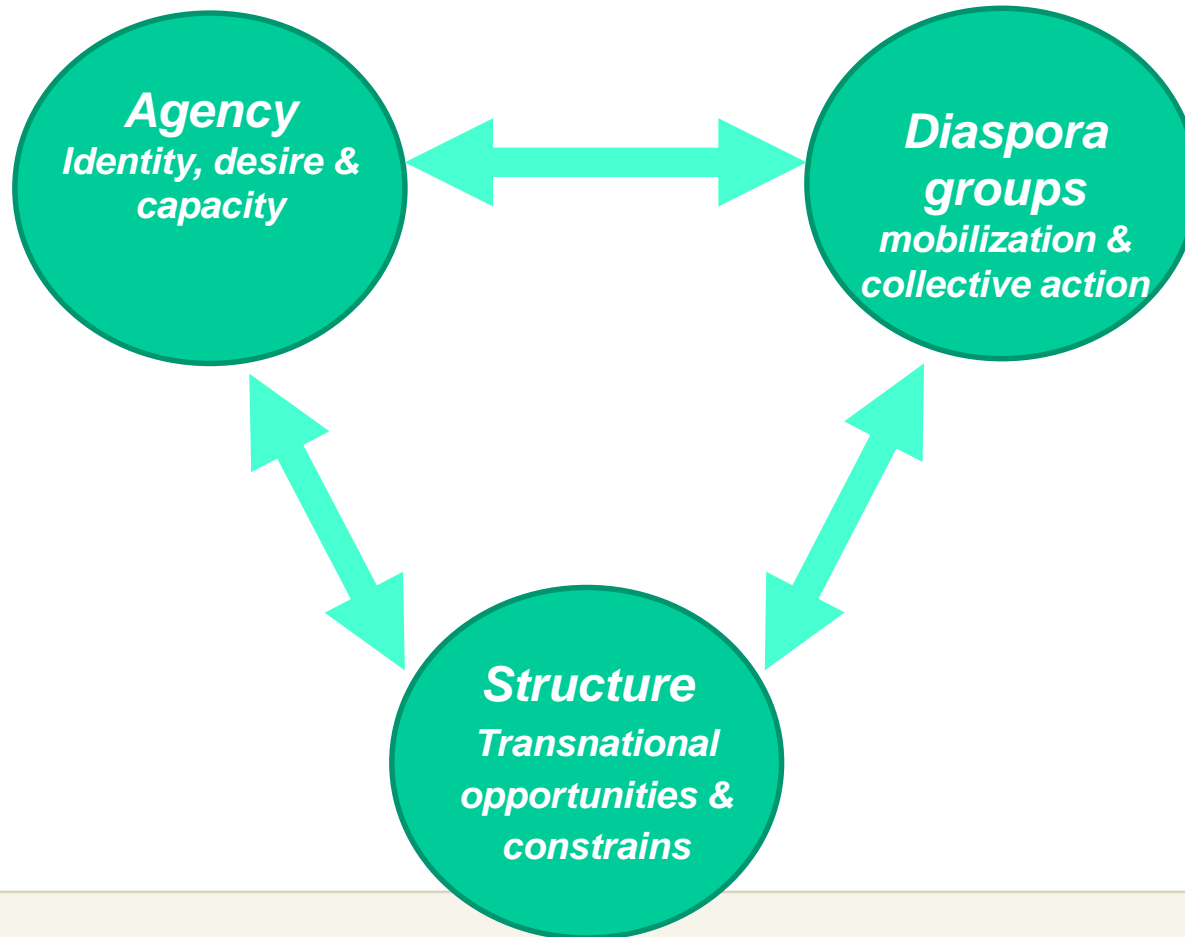
Three main features of diasporas

- Dispersion
- Relationship to actual or imagined homeland
- Shared group identity, group consciousness

Constructionist approach:

- Diasporas as multilayered social formations
- Focus on the process of transnational mobilisation
- Emphasis on the broader transnational context

Analytical Framework



The Mena region



Great diversity in terms of economic, political and social development:

- Violent conflicts in Syria, Iraq, Libya and Yemen
- Spillovers to neighboring countries Jordan and Lebanon
- Challenging political transitions in Tunisia and Egypt
- Growth and macroeconomic stability in Oil-rich countries



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Mena Migration patterns

Characteristics

- 19 million migrants originating from MENA in 2013 (UN Population Division)
- Region include migrant sending, receiving and transit countries
- Patterns differ greatly across countries, times and destinations
 - Destination strongly varies with origin
 - Skill composition varies between receiving countries

Trends

- Growing Migration within the region
- Overall level of education of the migrants increased

Background of the studies

Tunisia

- Commissioned by GIZ (German Development Cooperation) in 2013
- Analysis of Tunisian diaspora groups in Germany
- Identification of potentials for constructive cooperation with GIZ

Syria

- PhD project
- Focus on collective action and transnational engagement of Syrian diaspora groups

Qualitative approach

- Participant observation
- In-depth Interviews
- Stakeholder interviews

Tunisia



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Background

Country context

- Jasmine Revolution in 2010/2012
- Challenging political transition

Tunisian emigration to Germany

- Germany as important destination country due to signing of labour recruitment agreement with Tunisia in 1965
- Number of Tunisians in Germany was estimated between 28 291 (2014, German Federal Statistical Office) and 86 601 (2012, OTE)
- Increasing trend towards migration for reasons of education

Tunisian diaspora groups I

The Revolution has changed the landscape of Tunisian diaspora organizations

Cultural Associations

- established by the “guest worker” generation between the 1960s and 1990s
- support and strengthen the relationships between the Tunisians living in Germany, promote their integration and strengthen their ties to the country of origin

Academic and Student Associations

- Established mainly in the late 1990s by the highly skilled Tunisians
- Support Tunisian students in Germany, enable technology transfer to Tunisia and to support a long-term cooperation

Source: Field data 2013

Tunisian diaspora groups II

Business and Professional Organisations

- Mainly developed during the revolution
- Promote economic development of Tunisia by pooling the expertise of the Tunisians abroad and by promoting investment in Tunisia.

Social and Political Organisations

- Developed during the revolution
- Heterogeneous and focus on different areas of involvement.
- Support the main objectives of the revolution,
- Humanitarian organisations, advocacy organisation, public policy network, development organisation



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Areas of involvement

Promoting integration

- Consulting and training opportunities for Tunisians in Germany

Bridge builder

- Enabling mutual understanding and intercultural exchange
- raising awareness of the current situation in Tunisia

Promoting economic and knowledge transfer

- Promote networking between Tunisian professionals, students and academics
- Organization of trade fairs, information sessions and conferences

Projects in Tunisia

- Community programs to improve the quality of life
- Microfinance programs to promote entrepreneurship
- Humanitarian aid

Potential for cooperation

- Involvement of diaspora groups in consultancy work
- Involvement of Tunisian diaspora groups in the political process
- Promoting temporarily return
- Promoting entrepreneurship
- Promoting the development activities of migrant organizations

Factors influencing engagement

Low capacity of the organizations

- Lack of time, manpower and financial resources
- Lack of information on opportunities for cooperation
- Lack of trust among the organisations

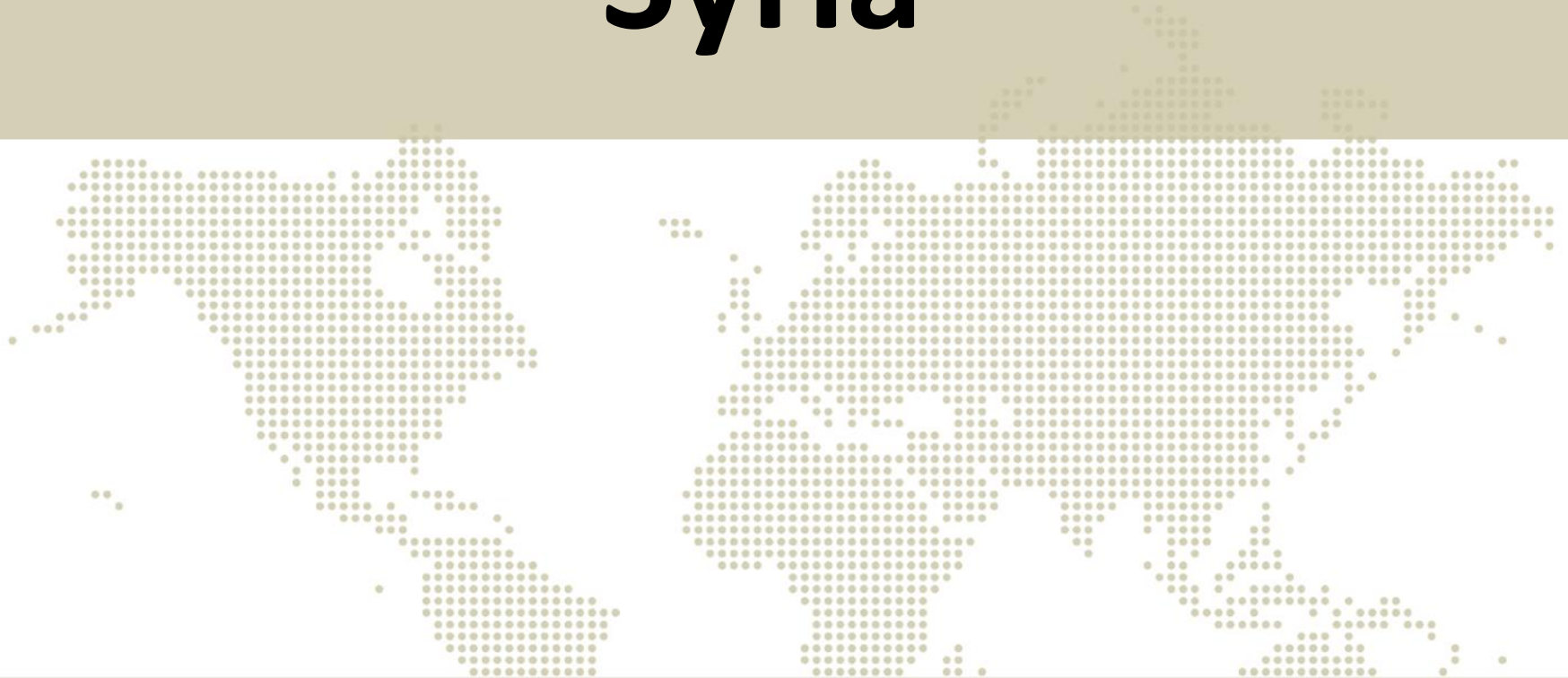
Political opportunity structures in Tunisia

- Provides opportunities and challenges

Political opportunity structures in Germany

- Increased interest since the political change

Syria



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Background

Country context

- One of the worst humanitarian crises of the 21st century
- 11.5 million people displaced
- 12.2 million people in need of humanitarian assistance
- Spread of sectarian violence across the region

Syrian emigration to Germany

- Germany is Europe's largest receiving country of Syrian migrants, hosting in total 118,196 individuals with Syrian citizenship in 2014
- Syrian immigrants in OECD countries have an intermediate skill level and half of the population is employed in highly skilled jobs

Syrian diaspora groups

- Syrian Diaspora is characterized by heterogeneity in terms of religion, ethnicity and political aspirations

“It was the Uprising which united the people”

- Several initiatives were formed to support the Syrian revolution in Germany
- Members of organizations belong to various ethnicities and religions and represent a variety of political views
- Organizations realize activities in the fields of humanitarian aid, awareness raising, and human rights

Areas of involvement

Economic sphere

- (Collective) remittances to support those in need in Syria, in the refugee camps, and peaceful protests

Political sphere

- Raise awareness among the German society
- Lobbying in order to influence decision making on the Syrian case
- Little direct political involvement (e.g. SNC)

Social sphere

- Provide humanitarian assistance
- Civil society projects (e.g. Workshops)



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Factors influencing engagement

- Low capacity of the organizations: lack of time, manpower and financial resources
- Traumatization and other psychological consequences of the conflict
- Lack of support from German government and the international community
- Conflict stage influence the areas of engagement and forms of cooperation

Comparing the two cases

Similarities

- Uprising and political change not only influenced societies in the country of origin but also the members of the diasporas
- Similar opportunities and constrains in the country of destination
 - Lack of resources and new opportunities

Differences

- Developments in the country of origin
- Composition of immigrant population
- Forms of engagement

Conclusion

- Diaspora engagement as diverse, multi-layered, multidimensional and shaped by different contextual factors
- Strategies of diaspora groups should not be perceived as dynamic in space and time
- Analysis of diaspora groups and their sources of network identity not just along ethnic and religious lines, but also based on gender, professional networks and political affiliation

Thank You!



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