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October 10, 2010

'TRANS-LOCAL' DIASPORA AND DEVELOPMENT: A CONCEPT AND RESEARCH NOTE

ABSTRACT
This note clarifies how the concept of diaspora is employed in this project and suggests four areas of concentration in our approach to understanding their 'trans-local' development activities. First is the nature of diaspora as communities; second is their trans-locality built of horizontal, vertical and lateral links; third is their constant networking and embeddedness; and fourth is the 'looping effect' of their activities in the country of origin back to Canada, and vice versa. All of this makes our subject a perfect illustration of fluid dynamics. As time passes, Canada is the country of origin for new 'diasporic' generations and the looping effect is found moving back to another faraway place; consequently at least two countries are being developed by these activities.

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I.   **Preliminary Observations on the Diaspora Concept**

Concepts are tools for organizing information about phenomena to be investigated, understood and explained. Concepts are abstractions that structure perceptions of the world and allow judgements to be made about the relevance and significance of information (Dingwerth & Pattberg 2006). Concepts work by grouping phenomena with similar properties together (and keeping others apart) even though the similarities might not readily be apparent. For example, although "we might separately learn about tables, chairs, sofas … the process of learning will be facilitated if we arrive at the concept of furniture." (Bélanger 2000:1)

The definition of a specific concept does not need to be fixed or achieve universal agreement in order for meaningful research and communication to take place. Concepts in the social sciences and humanities are almost always subject to different interpretations and to contestation (Wahlbeck 2002). The diaspora concept, which is used in several different academic disciplines, is plagued by ambiguity, and some approaches to the study of diaspora in the literature are very problematic for our project.

For example, at one extreme we have very narrow and rigid definitions that commonly cite three notions as central to the definition of diaspora (e.g., Safran 1991). First is the notion of a 'shared identity' or 'consciousness' which, combined with a sense of deterritorialised 'belonging', enables common economic, socio-cultural, political and other endeavours. Second is the notion of 'exile' (usually involuntary or coerced) with implications of 'return' to an original 'homeland'. Third is the idea of a stable perhaps timeless quality with respect to cultural relations of diasporic communities in their host society, as if they did not learn much from each other.

Because these notions are problematic a more flexible conception of diaspora is needed. Although some sense of identity is essential, some groups that may be considered diasporic may lack such commonality, or may experience divided identities. Many diasporic communities seek to balance the need to adapt to the host society with maintaining particular(istic) identities. Indeed a diasporic community could be so highly assimilated into a country of settlement that it retains only vestiges of identity or 'difference', which may be instrumentally mobilized in support of the country of origin or some other collective cause (Werbner 2004, Tseng 2002).

Thus, rather than being fixed and coherent, diasporic identities are "socially and historically constituted, reconstituted, and reproduced" (Patterson & Kelly 2000:19). Gilroy (1993) and Hall (1990) use the metaphor of **hybridity** to capture the multiple, provisional, contingent and dynamic amalgams of diasporic identity. Furthermore, rather than viewing diaspora as comprising only two sites ('home' and 'exile'), it is more

useful to think of diaspora occupying multiple sites/localities and to examine the connections between them (MacGaffey and Bazenguissa- Ganga, 2000). These **trans-local** connections – i.e., built around multiple localities connected by ever-changing **networked** relationships – should be the focus of research. Philosopher Ian Hacking talks about *'looping effects'*. These are not just simple feedback effects, but are flows of information and influence that modify both the subject and object of the network or relationship. So that the 'community' which acts for development outside Canada (in its 'place of origin'), is altered in Canada by both the experience and consequences of the action -- whether or not that distant activity is considered by them to be a success and failure.

At the other extreme, the notion of a diaspora has been broadened to describe any expatriate minority community that has a history of migration (Wahlbeck 2002; Cohen 1997; Marienstras 1989; Vertovec and Cohen 1999). This broadened definition is also problematic. Although diaspora are formed through historical and contemporary migratory processes separating an 'original' and 'current' home, diaspora should be distinguished from other patterns of migration across time and space (Bilge & Denis, 2010). This is because migration (be it through voluntary immigration and resettlement, temporary migration, or involuntary displacement and asylum) is potentially an **individual** action. Diaspora, however, implies the existence of some kind of meaningful **community** based on a *continuing* (albeit fluid and dynamic not fixed and static) shared identity.

II.   Operational Definition of Diaspora: A Minimal Approach

Gerring and Barressi (2003) offer a way to overcome these problems through what they term the 'minimal' approach to concept formation. A minimal definition offers a small set of attributes (to which others may be added at a later date). It has the advantage of combining a low number of attributes with the ability to encompass a wide(er) range of phenomena.[2]

Thus, rather than attempting to identify all the attributes of diaspora and develop a comprehensive typology, we offer a minimal definition embodying key attributes that we consider *necessary* for the existence of a diaspora. For the purposes of this project, a diaspora includes ***members of a community dispersed to many diverse localities across and within state borders around the world, who retain more-or-less distinctive identities (fluid and contingent) vis-à-vis a host society, have an interest in a 'home ', and are linked via networks of social organization*** (adapted from Kearney 1995:559; Brubaker 2005:5-6).

Hence the three minimal attributes of diaspora include:

   a) ***Community:*** variations in shared identity and hybridity, boundary maintenance,

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[2] When the attributes of a concept are expanded its empirical scope or range of phenomena it can encompass is narrowed.

and nature and degree of orientation to a 'home' (real or imagined) as a source of value, identity and loyalty;

b) **_Trans-locality:_** patterns of dispersion and social relations across and within state borders;

c) **_Networks:_** diaspora are also social organizations with networks of action, interaction and communication that vary by type, and degree of institutionalization and embeddedness.

Mapping variations in these attributes, diasporic groups could be placed along a continuum with 'emergent' or 'nascent' diaspora at the minimum end and 'established' diaspora at the maximum (and various combinations in-between).

II.   Research Concentrations

These preliminary observations and operational definition suggest four areas of concentration in the initial environment scan of diaspora and development in Metro Vancouver.

1. Community: _Shared Identity, Hybridity & Boundary Maintenance_

Produce a 'map' of diasporic communities in GVA identifying the bases of their commonality (ethno-national, cultural, racial, religious, linguistic, gender, class/status/occupation, etc).   Note the following:

a. _History & Social Structure:_ There is an important temporal component in the formation of diasporic identity – i.e., although fluid, contingent and contextual, collective identities are forged over time, in particular historical contexts. It is useful to research these contexts (political, economic, etc). The popularity of the diaspora concept in public policy and academia is regarded as a positive move towards emphasizing _agency_ and studying people in their own right. It is also seen as a way to move beyond the essentializing (and pejorative) discourses associated with 'ethnicity', 'tribe' and so on. However, in using the diaspora concept, it is also important to remember the _social structural_ context – the unequal power relations, and structures of inequality, exclusion, and discrimination (based on race, gender, class, etc) in the societies of settlement. It is not only the structure of the society of settlement one needs to take into account, but also that of the diaspora communities that might themselves foster inequality and oppression.

b. _Boundary Maintenance & Scale:_ – i.e., this addresses the 'boundary' of the 'imagined community' (Anderson 1991) delimiting the collective identity of a diasporic group and differentiating that group from others (i.e., 'us'/'them'). While some diasporic identities might have a wider (e.g., global/regional) scale, others (sometimes among members of the same group) may be narrower

depending on the context/issue. It is useful to be sensitive to scale when producing the map of diasporic identities.

c. _Historic interactivity_: The diasporic group in Canada does not act in isolation, but in a climate where others are doing this (or have already done this). The newcomers see how other established 'groups' have been acting trans-locally (e.g., new Russians in Canada interested in Russia see that Ukrainians interested in the Ukraine, Jews interested in Israel or Scots interested in Scotland have for years successfully acted 'at a distance' and maintained their balance and position here – one might argue 'improved' their position here). This would work for large and older communities in BC like Punjabis or Cantonese, noticing what others have been doing, being used as models by others.

2. **Trans-locality**

Diasporic trans-locality and associated social networks are strongly influenced by contemporary **globalization** processes. Although diasporic groups have existed for centuries, contemporary globalization by facilitating communication, migration and mobility, economic and other forms of social interaction and relations, has spurred the growth of transnational communities not bound by the geographical borders of either the countries of origin or the countries of settlement. However, as many observers note, contemporary transnational networks influenced by globalization are not really deterritorialised; they are always connected to and rooted in specific localities (Faist 2000; Labelle and Midy 1999; Smith and Guarnizo 1998). Furthermore, globalization has not led to a situation in which localities have disappeared but rather to a 'glocalized' (Robertson 1995) social reality where both the local and the global exist side by side and in relation to each other. We employ the term **_'trans-locality'_** -- i.e., existing and operating via social networks in multiple localities within and across national boundaries -- to capture this important dimension of diasporic social organization.

Trans-locality, therefore, encompasses both _spatial_ (geographic) and _social_ (the networks) elements. In practice the two are intertwined but for analytical purposes it is useful to separate them.

With respect to the spatial elements, a number of scholars have proposed a three-fold classification of the linkages between diaspora and development (Mohan, 2002; Mohan and Zack-Williams, 2002). We modify these to encompass three spatial vectors of trans-locality: _horizontal_, _lateral_ and _vertical_ linkages (or some combination of them, because these categories and the relationships among them are fluid and blurred).

a. **_Horizontal_** (i.e., within the host locality). Here, we have development _of_ or _in_ the diaspora where people within diasporic communities use their localized diasporic connections and networks within the 'host' (Global North) country ostensibly to secure economic and social well being and contribute to development of (or in) their specific locality.

b. *Lateral* (i.e., connecting different localities within one host country and/or across national boundaries to other host localities in the Global North). Here, development occurs *through* the diaspora whereby diasporic communities utilize their diffuse global connections and networks beyond the locality ostensibly to facilitate economic and social well being in the home and/or host country.

c. *Vertical*. Here, we have development *by* the diaspora in which diasporic flows and connections (both lateral and horizontal) ostensibly facilitate development back 'home' in the Global South.

3. Networks

While trans-locality refers to the spatial vectors within and through which diasporic development activities occur, the *networks* are the specific *social* vehicles or platforms (e.g., associations, NGOs, sports clubs, unions, churches, mosques, etc) through which these activities are carried out. Here, we are interested in the following:

a) ***Degree of Institutionalization & Embeddedness***: Diasporic networks vary in the degree of institutionalization (i.e, range from formal to informal associations) and they also vary by their degree of 'embeddedness' – i.e., the extent to which they reflect the community/identity characteristics identified in #1 (Portes and Sensenbrenner, 1993). Research should classify the major networks in each of the three trans-local vectors (# 2a, b, &c).

b) ***Type of network***: These can be economic, business/entrepreneurial, political, religious, aid/relief, kinship, and spatial etc. These networks are particularly sensitive to the looping effect, thus creating a lateral 'in Canada' effect of this 'action at a distance' in the global South. Looping means that actors are in continuous negotiation with others about the meaning and significance of these distant development activities. This may be a source (or one source) of the deepening interest of second or third generation individuals from diasporic communities in the human rights of people in their 'place of origin'.

4. Activities

These include the variety of development activities carried out by diasporic networks. The research should focus on activities that fall within the scope of the proposed public dialogues based on the UN Millennium Development Goals:

• Dialogue 1: Poverty Reduction and Economic Growth

• Dialogue 2: Improving Health

• Dialogue 3: Strategies for Education

• Dialogue 4: Human Security and Peacebuilding

• Dialogue 5: Diasporic Contributions to Development

5. **Researchable questions**

A **researchable question** *concerns a possible dissatisfaction in second or third generation actors with the other more classic development efforts initiated by their parents or aunts and uncles. Do they see those efforts as exhausted, and do they see no avenue for further action in that place (too dangerous, too confusing)? Do these new actors perhaps see a global and supportive environment for human rights pressure, originating on the outside? If this is occurring, is it because the action 'inside' in the place of origin proves very hard to sustain? Is this because the actors 'over there' are now embedded here in Canada in new ways? Cross-generational symbolic and monetary support is not uncommon, but joint action and definition of objectives turns out to be difficult.*

A note on 'Development'

This project does not privilege one definition of/approach to 'development'. We acknowledge there are many definitions/approaches and strong disagreements among analysts and practitioners. The dialogues and workshops should accommodate diverse views, including those who are uncomfortable with the term 'development'. The notion of 'development' employed in this project simply describes **social processes of change**, some of it intended, some of it not. For this project the outcomes of development may be positive or negative, or positive to some and negative to others. That is precisely why *dialogue* is a better to approach to understanding these issues among these very different communities.

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Focus Group Questions

1.Personal Experience - What is your personal story:

- As diaspora (connection to community)
- In terms of development (individual and collective/network)

2. Activities in Development (What? How? And Where?)

- Describe your project (Where is it? Who is involved?)
- How do you come to define this as development?
- How would you describe the core development goal of your project? i.e., health, economic development, human security and peace building, education or other?
- What do the community participants say about your project?
- What barriers or challenges have you experienced?

3. Trans-locality

- To what extent has your knowledge of the local/regional conditions informed your project design and implementation?
- To what extent does your diaspora community/network here in Metro Vancouver and or Canada has influenced your project work and or approach?

4. Networks

- To what extent do you work with networks or associations here in Canada?
- What benefits have these networks offered your initiative?

5. Learning

- What have you learned about as a result of your project and how has this learning impact what you plan to do in the future?
- In your view what are the best (most effective, important) ways to tap the potential of the diapsora in development
- What personal learning would most benefit your initiative?

6. Follow Up

- Are you interested in participating in the public dialogue and who else should we involve in the public dialogues?

Focus Group #1.
September 27, 2010
CUSO-VSO Office, 1460 Howe Street
5-7 p.m.

In Attendance

(1) EDD Team
[JA] Joanna Ashworth
[SN] Shaheen Nanji
[US] Umeeda Switlo, CUSO-VSO
Franciska Hidayat
Linda Elmose

(2) Participants
[MI] Dr. Mohammed Iqbal, Emeritus Professor at UBC, co-founder of the Maria-Helena Foundation
[AK] Mr. Ashfaque (Ash) Khan, involved in development projects in Pakistan and Afghanistan
[RA] Rosamelia Anrade, works in a UBC CIDA-funded project in Ecuador involving health sciences education
[NM] Nasra Mire, organizes an arts-based youth training program in Uganda
[JT] Jean de Dieu Tuyisenge, involved in development projects in Rwanda
[M] Mohammed Rudini, Indonesian Student Society member, SFU
[MS] Mola Shahsavar, intern, CUSO-VSO

Agenda
1. Welcome, Introduction & Project Information
2. Questions
3. Next Steps

1.   Welcome, Introduction & Project Information
   -   "We're studying diaspora and identity issues, from here [Global North] and there [Global South]. Our project involves two co-directors, academic leads in development studies (Political Science and Communications), and our partners, CUSO-VSO and BCCIE
       We are planning public engagement dialogues and workshops as high-level learning exchanges with experts, practitioners in development. These are to be "learning workshops".
   -   Mention of the project origins [J. Ashworth and S. Nanji], and the initial CIDA proposal on community engagement and finding out the views of diaspora on the world, or on the concept of "diaspora".
   -   "Diaspora" is a concept not a well-known term to many. In the project we view it in the sense of identity or attachment to a region of origin. We use the term "trans-local" as it refers to crossing the boundaries between the local here in Canada and the local in other countries or regions. There is a knowledge and familiarity of what goes on locally, here or there. We seek to look at the relationship between Metro Vancouver and development. People are doing interesting work, so we can gain from their knowledge, and we want to increase the public's knowledge about their work."

2.   Questions

Question 1: *Who are you (or, what is your identity) and what is your relationship to the diaspora? How do you think of the work? How do you feel connected with the work, or connected to your country of origin or region?*

AK: - Has done development work in Pakistan for 8 years, and now also working in Afghanistan; works in building and funding schools, in the capacity of as an engineer.
- "I consider myself more of a world citizen than kindred to any one region or group. I feel that as a world citizen I have a duty to help others. This is not duty based on an affiliation with any group or region."

MI: - "I have no contact with Pakistani or Muslim communities. I identify myself with poor people. I started the Maria-Helena Foundation with my wife 15 years ago, and it is not – in spite of its name – Christian."
- "Diaspora members' first duty is to assist those in the Global South."

MR: - I don't really understand the concept of diaspora very well. But, I joined the Indonesian student club, in part, out of a belief that we need to support our home country.

RA: -Does development work in Ecuador and Venezuela for CIDA. Started as a communications advisor for CIDA for a development project in Chile.
- "Early on, I did not know what diaspora meant. I had heard of a Middle Eastern diaspora, but I didn't think about it in a personal way. Later, I learned that I was part of the Latin American diaspora. I mostly associate my mixed heritage in terms of cultural practices, and food, for instance."
- When asked about Spanish colonizers of Latin America: "No, I feel no close connection to Spain or the Spanish."

NM: - "Usually I thought or heard of diaspora as referring to African-Canadian diaspora. I follow the religious, cultural practices at home, but I'd never been to Somalia. I would hear family stories at home. Somalia is not a country [making the discerning of diaspora connections rather complex]. My life and that of my friends are complex, so it is difficult to figure out where we fit in Canada or in East Africa. My sister and I went to Uganda [to do our development work]. What I am changes, and depends on where I am. When in East Africa, I can feel like I belong, but I don't follow their standards or mentalities. I try to find a balance between my Canadian and African identities. When I'm working over there, I miss home.

Question 2: *What projects are you passionate about? How do you define or conceptualize "development"? What are the specifics of your development work and where does this occur? What is the core of what you are doing? How do you do development?*

US: - CUSO-VSO has a rich involvement in development, and conducts work in seven focus areas, for instance in HIV/AIDS, education, health, governance. That's the organization's goal to enhance skills sets in communities in the Global South. One focus is to not make their society like ours. Personally, I think the concept of "underdevelopment" – political, financial, etcetera-- is a mistake. Each culture needs a greater sense of pride in its own culture.

JA: - "The question is, Development for what? What is the ideology? What are the values? What we'd like to understand by hearing what stories you have and what is the implied understanding of development, and then how you see your work in terms of the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). We are structuring the dialogues around the MDGs, asking: What is health?, What is peace and security? What is the impact or the contribution of the diaspora [to this development]? So, let's start with the development projects, then learn how you view development.

AK: - "The point regarding 'development'" is an important one. It addresses the point of how the MDGs should be considered in the West. For example, what if we in the West want basic education as a development goal. Do we assist them [in the Global South], or wait until they themselves determine that this is their development goal? For instance, they might decide to do away with school fees."
        - "Development means that we do not replicate our Western approach, or understanding of development in other places. For example take the US. If their habits and lifestyles are transferred to the Indians, or viewed by them as 'development', then this can change the food consumption habits like eating more carbs and meat. But, because they see development in a Western way, it leads to obesity and health problems. We need to do away with Western development notions."

RA: - Works in a health-related project in Ecuador, funded by CIDA entitled "Sustainably Managing Environmental Health Risk in Ecuador." Project created and implemented a two-year MA program for health education, focusing on the ecosystem approach. 29 students of the first cohort have now graduated. The next step is a PhD program to train the 29 students. UBC was involved at first, for instance, by creating the modules, but one university of three was strong enough to run the project.
        - We still support them, providing scholarships, but they run the program on their own, and they development their own curriculum."
        - "If we send the students to UBC, they might not return. Why would they return when they can make more money and live more comfortably here? Also, they don't' all know English very well. Diaspora members are involved in the project."
        - "Development is not just about doctors, and nurses, health systems, although this is one part of it, and all these things are important. But we also need to consider the environmental health, social determinants of health, and access to health. What is important in our project is taking a holistic view, or an ecosystems approach."
        - "I think it's naïve to think that we go to do development in other places, or that we fully understand others and their standard of health and education, without biases. We do have a foundation [of biases, assumptions, preconceived views], based on our previous experiences and understandings. There are lots of challenges to development because of these foundational understandings."
        - "There is not a lot of infrastructure [in Ecuador, developing countries] and low capacity."

MI: - "There are two aspects of development. I say two things about development. First, development is where no violence against women exists – that is my definition of a developed society. Second, a developed society is where there is no indoctrination."
        - "We do bricks and mortar projects, building a permanent primary school. We supply them money to build schools that are co-educational and all the teachers are women. 15 schools built so far, and one more being built in Pakistan. Parents pay the fees, to pay the salaries. Each school has 300 students. In Pakistan, five years of primary school counts as

the basic education. It costs between US$60, 0000 - 80,000 per school. This is cheap compared to costs here."
- "We have built 15 one-room schools in rented or donated spaces, each with 30 students. This costs C$ per school per year, and 300 dollars for 5 years of education per student. People donate a property to social cause, for instance giving a house given to charity. We have given 200 scholarships of $2 to pay for school fees. We are starting a new school for girls at the mid- to high-school levels. Higher education for women leads to development gains by reducing population, maternal and child mortality, and decreases violence against women. Education women command respect and are empowered."
- "We also have one outpatient hospital."

MR: - " The Indonesian Student Association works with other students in the University of Indonesia. We have volunteers to build a school, to provide poor students with basic knowledge. We try to provide microscopes or science equipment. Our focus is on fundraising. We are looking at an informal school idea."

NM: - Established a non-profit related to photography and media.
- "We aim to provide youth skills in film, photography, editing etc. We partnered with a youth centre in Uganda. Our first step was to do the research to understand the environment there. We provide youth with media skills. We gave 20 days of training 20 Ugandan youth, providing workshops for skill building and then organized a display of their works with a gallery. There are two cycles a year."
- "The youth really want to learn. Students want more and more skills. The issue or problems [in understanding 'development'] is that it is not about us, and not about whether the organization was started by who. Without people there [in the Global South] the programs can't be sustainable. We created a program to have youth train the next group of youth. So we provide leadership training as well as photography and film skills. 8 students traveled to Tanzania for more skills development. Now we've developed a Skype [Internet telephone] relationship with the centre, and they develop their own workshops, asking us for assistance at times. This is an interesting change. I'm learning a lot."
- "We have expectations about how something will be when we go into a community. For instance, as a black women, they assume that I don't know what I'm doing, as much as a white women. But then they do realize that I'm able because I understand their culture, ways, and ways of thinking.

JA: - You describe the layers of complexity.

AK: - I have done development work the last 15-20 years in Pakistan and India, and the past 8 years in Afghanistan and return every two years.
- Influenced by the book "Three Cups of Tea, (by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin) about Mortenson's work building schools in remote villages in Pakistan, and who promotes peace through education in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Also influenced by the Calgary association, Women for the Women of Afghanistan, two individuals from Chiliwack who deliver international aid. Wants to build a school in Jalalabad, where he found 1000 kids sitting under a tent. Plan is to raise $100,000 to build a 12-room school.
- He is going to assist flood victims in Pakistan, as an engineer, to see what infrastructure needs there are or disaster relief.
- "If you want to do it, you can find a way."

- "I agree with Iqbal's philosophy, that civil society and women's rights always emanates from education. We want to build a one-room schools in Afghanistan, or an informal school. where we provide one meal and two hours of education."
- "If you do little things at a time, we can make change."

JT:
- SFU student from Rwanda
- "Rwanda is in the process of rebuilding itself. Orphans are victims of the HIV/AIDs and the genocide. Many don't go to school and there is also the disabled who cannot pay the school fees. Primary school is free, but there are fees to pay for high school. And, it's hard to get the fees. The disabled give up on life, and feel that there is no future. They give up."
- "I was lucky to get schooling in South Africa. I felt the need to do something. "I've been in the same situation as they were in, and yet lucky to have education. What could I do?"
- "Western NGOs send help and aid, but I found the middle class in a worse situation than before. Where's the money going to help the orphans and the disabled?"
- "People think that I have money and can help them because I'm an outsider. I told them to make association of small farms and to get some government help. At as an individual I can't do anything. So I helped them with their strategy. I bought them a cow. When I visited the association in 2008 five families were sending their children to private school."
- "My new idea is to send 20-year-olds to vocational schools, business school, or to learn construction or technical skills. I asked the school for a discount, and sent two kids to school with my money."
- "I have many privileges, so I always look for ways to help people. Why am I better off than they are? Why is it me here at SFU? I can't do it myself. So I made an NGO—EduAfrica-- to outreach and to help more youth go to school. Our NGO is now open to public and our current aim is 20 kids in January. We incorporated with SFU for cooperation. We wait to see the outcome."
- "As Africans you can do things. It's better to reach leaders in Africa, and to support and encourage them in what they are doing. Collaboration with vocational schools, or women's' associations, for instance. Canadians go to Rwanda as well; it's not only one way. Canadians and Rwandans each gain."

Poster: "Development"
- Development values - not to replicate Western approaches to consumerism
- UN development goals
- Enhance skill sets
- Work within the cultural context
- Sustainable development and ecosystems approaches
- Ecuador: health and social determinants of health
- Rwanda: help set up an association for economic development

Question 3: *What is your understanding of the concept of "tranlocality"? How does local knowledge and understanding of the local situation have an impact on what you do? Are there any comments on translocal understandings of here and there?*

JA: - Here in Canada/Vancouver we have local connections. For instance Jean connects with students here and taps into local knowledge here, as well as local knowledge and familiarity with the region he works in.

MS   - We should know the norms and culture of that society. For instance, Nasra knows the culture and practices, so she can help and guide them better than someone foreign with that culture.

NM: - "Yes, but we partnered with a local youth centre that was already established. Building a new organization is not always needed. I don't understand all the cultural dynamics because I didn't group up there. People seem to want to start new organizations."
        - "We are having funding issues now. Small organizations are not getting recognized. Small associations don't not get attention and if they don't get attention they die. But it these smaller organizations that assist majority of people in poverty."

US: - Being in Vancouver, we can draw from a group of friends, we meet more often and create community. So, we can be more effective. CUSO just started exploring the diaspora, but we've been doing it for 15 years. For instance, an Ethiopian goes back. It's easier to do fundraising here in Vancouver because we have connections here."

NM: - We do work with local refugees/African youth. I work with organizations here in Vancouver. My work in Vancouver prepared me for work in Uganda. With friends, family, or the grassroots level, you can go there, and see it [the place, the people and their needs.] If I grew up in East Africa I wouldn't do this, but I left. I did not need to come back, but I did. Why? You have all you need here.

SN: - We can use Canadian knowledge to deal with issues, increase our knowledge and use this in developing country. You learn a lot of because we worked with community here."

Other Ideas
        - "Language barriers are avoided."
        - "Here in Canada, people do not know what the people need over there. We need to ask them. We must build on their foundation, their knowledge."

MI: - "Most of the participants here are group-based or community based. My situation is different since I consider how to go about helping others as an individual. We use our foundation, but I don't have a community."

JA: - "So, there is a relationship between knowledge here in Canada, and diaspora groups and what people want. What does development mean? Development is perhaps best defined locally and in a dialogue to explore want local people want, but also get what we in the West can see as development according to broad principles. And, we use skill sets learned here over there."

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Poster: "Trans-locality"
-    Canadian (local) associations
-   What can I do as an individual? Through association?
-    Small community connection, grassroots
-    Unless you have a connection you probably won't work in that area.
-    CUSO: "sending" diaspora members, but informally
-    Language barriers
-    Allows for fundraising
-    Experience in Canada; development experience here, and then
     transfer to others
-    Local knowledge networks: How is this connected?
-    How much support?
-    Use trans-local knowledge of the Canadian context, e.g. media
     power.
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Question 4. *Do you have any last words? What have you learned from your experiences or from what you heard today?*

- "I've learned from hearing what people are doing. It is inspiring."
- "To do something good is limitless– no matter age, or resources."
- "I have learned to access corporate funds, and that business wants to be involved in assisting the developing world."
- "I wish I knew earlier what I know now. For instance, the opportunities in the world. You can have access to experience and opportunities."
- "You need patience in doing development work."
- "Having conversations, hearing what people are doing, and having an open space is inspiring."
- "Regarding diaspora in development, much is volunteer work, so it is inexpensive." We should leverage the ideas and volunteerism."
- " I learned to forgive and forget, and that good people exist."
"You can start small, and think big. Just jump into projects you believe in. Networking, providence, many good people will help."
- "No-one could make a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could do only a little" (Edmund Burke (1729 – 1797), Irish philosopher

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Poster: Project Identification
-    Organizational structure: a spectrum from organized as NGO with charitable
     status, to partnership or club, family, to individuals.
-    Fundraising issues
-    Training
-    Ongoing support is a challenge
-    Sustainability: how to keep a project funded, accountable
-    Infrastructure
-    Feasibility of the project
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3.   Next Steps

<u>Suggested References</u>
-          Donna Kennedy Grant, from Calgary working on Yemini diaspora; a lawyer who assists
           200 engineering studies to get education, does human rights work; is now interested in
           the Indo-Pakistani community; ACGC (Council on Global Cooperation); "Canadian
           Bridges"

-          Calgary: Canadian Women for women of Afghanistan

Engaging Diasporas for Development Tapping the Trans Local Potential for Change

GRADUATE STUDENT ROUNDTABLE AKA: FOCUS GROUP 2
October 6, 2010
SFU Burnaby, Halpern Centre
4:30-6:30 p.m.

Discussion Transcript*
(* Thematically, not chronologically organized.)

Attendance
* **Note:** Some names missing, so need to add names from email list that was passed around at the meeting.

Daniel Ahadi, PhD Student, School of Communication
Nadia Cheney, SFU Undergrad Student
Alejandro Hernandez, MA Student, Dept. of Sociology
Ritendra Tamang, PhD, Sociology
Jean de Dieu Tuyisenge, SFU Undergrad Student, Health Sciences
Karen Sydjesus, MA Student, Faculty of Education
Nasra Mire, SFU Undergrad Student
Milan Singh, PhD Student, School of Communication
Suzie XXX, SFU Undergrad Student
Derek Blair, SFU Undergrad Student
Manuel, MA Student, Sociology

PMT:
Bob; James; Joanna; Shaheen; Mig; Linda; Franciska

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1.   **Introduction of the Project**
- Slides shown
e.g Environmental Scan: Who are the diaspora? What are they doing?
- Joanna: The Trans-local Concept Note (TNC) provides the platform for the project. The TNC amplifies our concerns in the project. We're interested in how your research on diaspora dovetails with ours.
- James: What struck me in doing the research is how elusive the concept of diaspora is. In the TCN we try to operationalize diaspora as a general concept. We came up with a way to do this by suggesting that diaspora encompasses communities of individuals in a general way, and then we can build on this. The TNC also shows areas of research to be pursued. For instance, conflict in countries of origin. The paper talks about transnationalism and our reflections on trans-locality, which is a type of transnationalism particular to the modern-day diaspora.

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- Joanna: We are looking at change processes, and creating change. What is the possible potential of the diaspora. "Potential" is a key word. How is the diaspora unleashed or limited because of the trans-local relationships between here and there? How is it impeded or facilitated?

- [slide] "Diaspora" is defined as: A dispersion of peoples from their original homelands, who are "socially and historically constituted, reconstituted, and reproduced" (Patterson and Kelly, year).

- Joanna: We want the centerpiece of the project to be stories and to use these to engage the public about what is happening and to understand the complexity of work grounded in and wrapped around theory. How can we share knowledge of individuals and groups?
[Regarding the purpose of this roundtable], we want to reach out to the public about what people do in higher education. What is the impact and not just the economic impact and how to change our current practice in development? We want to create learning communities around groups. Often there is no opportunity to bridge the divides between people. We look at our own understanding of development and how development practice relates to changed relationships to individuals' diasporas here in metro Vancouver. So, we are creating learning communities around these questions in the project. We need to find a way to connect with networks, to find out what they are doing and how to link them.

2.   Student Introductions and Research Interests

Ritendra: He is part of the Nepali diaspora. He studies immigration policy and the emerging Bhutanese diaspora in Canada and Europe, looking into network development and the impact of diaspora on development.

- My understanding of diaspora relates to shared experiences…I'm a part of, and a student of, the Nepali diaspora. Secondly, I've been studying the emerging Bhutanese diaspora in Canada and Europe. These two parts of the research are connected to each other. Diaspora refers to the shared language and culture of Nepali and Bhutanese people. What inspired me was the Bhutanese are refugees in Nepal, and [yet they have garnered a considerable influence in Canada and Europe.] About 100,000 Bhutanese have live in the eastern part of Nepal over the past 20 years. International interventions have been attempted, but more work is needed.

- Canadian immigration policy has changed within the last 7 years. One change is the priority placed on recognizing refugees in dire situations. This allowed the Bhutanese to come here and to [give account to their situation in Nepal or their homeland]. Five thousand refugees were accepted as political immigrants and the process was started. They moved to Vancouver and PEI, with about 800 remaining here and with 200 in Vancouver alone. Problems arise in the immigration/refugee process, which was very difficult. Issues related to housing and welfare [among others]. But the Bhutanese are proud to be here in Canada, they are relaxed and greatly enjoy their freedom and the benefits they gain here. These rights are empowering. The Bhutanese [here] are also linked to European diaspora. In the US, 60,000 were brought from Nepal. The link I

try to make is between Europe (esp. Germany, Norway, Switzerland) where only a few of the tens of thousands of Bhutanese refugees ended up. But their empowerment is nevertheless rather strong, in spite of their small numbers. Their empowerment (e.g. to raise awareness of their problems at home on the part of the host government) became apparent soon after their arrival in their new "host" country. What empowers them in their host nation? They have already started to lobby against the human rights violations back home [in Bhutan/Nepal] and they are active and powerful. For instance, they made the Bhutanese government respond to an international human rights report for the first time. They managed to do this in a short time [in their newly adopted western country]. In 2009, they started a new network already, created their own website; and created a Bhutanese association of Canadians, and called for the government to make changes [to the treatment of the Bhutanese people]. Power and energy of the newly emerging diaspora is provided by the host country. They lack such power in the refugee camps back "home".

- The connection of the Nepali community and the Bhutanese [is that the power of the former has assisted the latter.] The experience in Nepal has been a strength for the Bhutanese, who share language and cultural ties and who live in Nepal. The Nepali diaspora alone has power and access and are free in the host country. All community members are not united, but for bigger issues like human rights and security [this unity can be achieved]. There is no Canadian embassy in Nepal, which causes a problem. The community needs to lobby [here in Canada]. The Nepali diaspora has a Library Foundation, which generated $100,000 to start with, and demonstrating how a rural diaspora came together owing to power of the host country. Currently, there is lobbying for a Canadian embassy in Nepal. These diaspora members go out across Canada. The Nepali diaspora has an estimated 23 million dollars in remittances.

- Joanna: Cohesion and cooperation made it possible for the Bhutanese to make these gains. What are the conditions?

- Alejandro: I study the migration of Latin American youth to Vancouver, asking why they want to migrate for reasons beyond economic ones [Specifically] I study Mexican rural communities and the migration of rural youth to America over the past 7 or 8 years. Mexican migration is 200 years old. Currently, as of the 1980s, with Mexico's economic problems there is little keeping youth in their communities. Among these youth there are two main groups: those who migrate to improve the life of their families. They mostly take the form of illegal migration to the US. They work in the US and send money home to buy houses or land. A second group is not migrating to the US and not sending money home, but spending any earnings on themselves. [This latter group signals] a rupture in the history of communities. By the mid-90s new ideas emerged to immigration that was not linked directly to helping the community or family back home. This means that youth developed their own new identity not associated with developing or helping their family, but [rather associated with a] commitment to a new way of life [focused on their own material gains]. These rural communities are remote and far from civilization. Even though they live far from any town or urban centres, these 16 or 17 year-olds were well aware of global brands like Nike… Generally, I have found that the younger generations from Mexico who pay "coyotes" to come to America to find jobs are less likely to remit money home as their parents wish. Instead, these youth are spending their money on

material things, like clothes and cars, leaving their parents debts to get them to America unpaid.

- I studied one specific case in which [a Mexican mother paid the coyotes to get two of her sons to America so that they could remit money home to pay for their transportation debts and to pay for housing, school fees.] In the end, the mother went to the US, and first had to pay off three debts to the coyotes for sending she and her two sons to the US. She then started to send remittances to pay for the schooling of her younger children, for land, and to improve the living of her family in Mexico. This case exemplifies what happens to youth who are looking for new ways or reasons to migrate. The new generation gets away from the community but they want new, brand-name clothes, shoes and a new American way of living. They are interested in consumerism, [or what is a kind of] cultural remittance by sending home shirts, jeans or music. Mexican youth are attracted to US capitalism. So this case entails interesting issues of culture and identity. There are strong networks of immigration in Mexico, parallel or mirror communities in the US. They find the same traditions, clothes, or celebrations. Younger generations do not follow the traditional way. People form into associations when they migrate to US communities, [and when they] send money home for school fees and other things. Young people don't form these groups, but instead they make individual purchases. They appear to be less associative actors.

- Daniel: He is conducting his dissertation on "The Communication Infrastructure of Iranian Communities in the West: Accommodation, Identity Formation, and Multicultural Adaptation of a Community in Diaspora." He addresses the creative workforce in Canada. He is also the principle investigator for a project on cross-cultural counseling and support services for the immigrant population in Vancouver, and researcher for a project on "Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Media in B.C.". Generally, he look at questions of belonging and media practices.

- Milan: She explores the connection of diaspora and the negotiation of (Canadian) citizenship at specific times of crisis.

- My research project largely examines our understanding of Canadian citizenship in relation to diaspora groups and cultural identities, security, and terrorism. Using the "1985 Air India Bombing" case study, I use discursive and textual methods to explore how citizenship is constituted for 'marginal identities' by focusing on legal policies and public responses to national tragedies. These have resulted in the exclusion of certain populations from the state and continue to contribute to a dichotomized sense of belonging within diaspora communities even after the 1985 Air India tragedy, a key case in Canada over the past 25 years.

- This terrorist incident created logistical problems for the Canadian government and the RCMP to track down and deal with terrorists. As we have moved forward, with the official inquiry, trials and memorials, we ended up with [a new language and new ways of understanding Canadian identity.] This case is an example of a key moment in creating citizenship and diaspora. Multiple groups – family members, community members – plead for the government to give them recognition. So this tragedy is a moment of identity, in which officials, immigrants, refugees [are influenced by] the

recent Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act, which changes our position and our understanding on immigration... and diaspora and how they connect to religion. There are questions of how we shift the centre of identity, which affects the rights given to individuals/groups [and affects issues related to] border crossing. Moments of conflict and crisis enable the main changes of security and the new multicultural policy. They tell [how] Canadians feel about the negotiation of identity. Trans-locality addresses imaginary communities.] Some groups can use the media to their advantage to connect issues like the Air India incident to issues of attachment and identity. For instance, the Air India tragedy was associated with the recent South Asian Vaisake [sp?] parade in Surrey. Terrorism creates a negative image of the diaspora that is associated with crisis and conflict.

- Manuel [?]: He is starting ethnographic research on how religious spirituality is expressed in the Jewish diaspora, looking at why secular Jews become involved in religious institutions in different adopted countries. He is involved in building dialogue between Jews and Palestinians.

- My work shows me that immigrants can pull and push what goes on inside a country from the outside even better than those on the inside.

- Nadia: She works on a project for training teachers called "Partnership for Youth and Power" in Bangalore.

- We do online training. I was chosen to participate because I'm Indian. I think about the critical questions to reflect on regarding my work, and the topic of diaspora. I want to reflect on the work I'm doing.

- Jean: I'm president of EduAfrica, a non-profit organization I organized with my friends. Our aim is to focus on helping the whole world, but for now our focus is on Rwanda. If we succeed in Rwanda we will expand to other countries. I realized that in wanting to help others that I could not do it alone, so I joined other SFU students who were willing to make change. We help people with associations in Rwanda, through such things as farming subsidies. These people do not have anything to bring to market. It is hard to help individuals – so many are in need— but partnerships in associations brings people together so that they then can help each other. This helps them to get out of poverty, and to be able to pay the fees to send their children to school. We help these people to help themselves, rather than relying on the aid of outsiders. So far we have helped two older students [in their 20s] go to school by paying their tuition. We plan to send perhaps 20 students to technical or trade school this January to learn vocational skills. This will help them to get a job.

- The problem in general is that people, and especially young people, give up hope. So, nothing happens. Africans have a habit to wait for people to come to help them. We help people to help themselves, or try to have Africans, like myself, to assist our own. I'm privileged, being here at SFU studying. When you come out from poverty with skills and knowledge and the ability to make change, you should do it. It's not good if we do nothing to make a change.

3.   General Discussion: The Concept of Diaspora

-    Jean: The diaspora in Rwanda is divided and the history is complicated. There are similarities and differences between Rwandan Hutu and Tutsi tribes. We can look and see the differences. After the genocide we've been completely divided. So it's hard to connect; people are cautious. In Vancouver it's very hard to see them [Rwandans] working together. They base their feelings for each other on history. I've tried to make a difference by myself [in dealing with people from different tribes], but few people are willing to compromise to work with those [different] others. It's a big job to put all Rwandans together. So it's individuals who make change. Others might come after, but it is hard to get them to come together because of the lack of trust between people after the genocide.

-    Manuel [student from Israel]: I like the idea of diaspora; it sounds homogenous, but when you break it down within each diaspora or immigrant community there are so many subgroups. Unless you're part of it [you might not notice all these differences.] We tend to hear from the dominant or privileged group(s) in the diaspora, with their voices assumed to represent all the rest of the diaspora. So many voices remain mute. The interesting thing is there are so many voices, stories and perspectives that so few of us know about. It seems like the concept "diaspora" does not capture [the meaning that it is meant] to contain.

-    Bob: Diaspora are shape-shifters that can be used in many ways. But being in the diaspora is all about variety, and variety is good.

-    Nadia: I feel like we just started this important conversation and that there is so much more to discuss. I take away or sense that this meeting is powerful and that to have this conversation about diaspora is enlightening.

-    Shaheen: One of the key elements of a definition of diaspora is the desire to return home. I wonder if this is nostalgia… Diaspora as a concept is an empowering term. I can still choose to belong to one group or another-- Indian, Ismaili, or Canadian— by my own definition. [This makes it] legitimized. There is the potential to be empowering but it can be restrictive as well if immigrants are considered as "the other".

     Zhizhang [?]: I'm interested in the topic of identity because I'm not fully Korean or Canadian. Diaspora is a new word. I'd like to learn more about it because people like me question these points about identity to the group.

-    Nasra: It's great to hear these stories about diaspora and identity since I have some of the same questions regarding identity. I feel connected in the sense that I have similar questions about the concept of diaspora and it's meaning.

-    Ritendra: [These issues] complicate our definition of diaspora. The concept can be *racializing* too. So this further complicates our understandings and practices. I am also intrigued by the question of what it means to be Canadian. I myself struggle with this issue.

- Manuel [?]: I look at the role of expatriate communities outside of their host countries. They are drawn magnetically through the keyhole into this other world. I try to put my hand on the issue of diaspora, but once you're in the room the topic becomes much more complex.

- Derek: I find the definition of diaspora is expanded and enriched [by these points made in this discussion].

- Alejandro: I think about these new issues we are discussing regarding diaspora in my research, and issues related to the negotiation of identity within the diaspora or the nation. These issues are linked to questions of power. My work looks at the younger generations in the diaspora, and attempts to answer some interesting questions [regarding the younger generations from Mexico who go to America to find jobs but who are less likely to remit money home as were their parents.]

- Daniel: The diaspora concept as we talk about it suggests that we do not live in a post-racial world since the concept still refers to immigrants. We do not talk about the "British diaspora", for instance. Diaspora studies [are coterminous with] immigrant studies where the discussion of diaspora inevitably leads to the discussion of immigrants and different races and ethnicities. The terms used by the Canadian government, like "visible minorities" and non-visible minorities [for Whites] are problematic categories. They inevitably lead us to discuss race, ethnicity, and religion when we talk about diaspora or immigrants. These categories should be part of the dialogue [rather than being assumed or essentialized.]

- Joanna: Daniel, you seem to be saying that diaspora is a polite form or way to talk about immigrants. Is that your interpretation?

- Bob: The Scottish diaspora has been talked about for hundreds of years as a self-conscious group with descriptions made by Scots to distinguish them from English. This is an old discourse, in fact.

- Milan: I found in my comprehensive examination on diaspora and identity that the term "diaspora" can be used in an empowering way if we add different kinds of groups, such as queers. [When we think about the concept] we should be interpretive in our way of thinking about identity. But, typically, we end up referring only to immigrant groups. To what extent do we use the term diaspora or to what extent is the [common meaning associated with] the term imposed? [Members of the diaspora] need to negotiate their relationships at certain moments. A diaspora has so many groups so if the term is collapsed it loses its richer meaning. The term is often collapsed in the literature. How can we have a dialogue that brings the concept back to represent agency and people?

4. General Discussion: Final Comments

- Joanna: We can meet again and discuss trans-locality. We are asking the question: What is local knowledge? Is it here or there? Trans-locality allows us to consider ways of knowing. Another part of the equation is development. I hope that we can continue to get together with you students to follow up on your research, to see how it

dovetails with ours. To wrap this up, let's go around and you all can ask a question you have or that you'd like answered, or you can mention anything you'd like to learn about our project. [Feel free to] raise any new idea or question or request you might have.

- Jean: I have learned that the power of change is based on the power of numbers. I cannot make change alone, but with my friends and others we can make change. It helps to find out something together and to share our ideas. I don't know the number of Bhutanese or Nepalis here in Vancouver, [but they appear to have a strong ability to make changes.] It is hard to attain development if there are major divisions and a lack of trust amongst the groups in society. Who feels excluded? Development is happening but many do not feel included. Development [as a concept] is so big it's hard to describe. When it feels like you're not alone [in a poor country/place] you can gain hope.

- Bob: It's good to think about communities and experiences and the time spent in living in Metro Vancouver. I'm not sure how many diaspora there are in Vancouver but certainly prior to 1994 their number was small. The same point can be made for the Philippines or the Iranians before 1979-80.But though these emigrants were not numerous, there were continuous and they have flourished. For instance, in 1974 the Ismailis left Uganda. In these cases a trigger initiated and carried the movement outside the country of origin. This event also provided a sense of self-awareness and mobilized the group to be cooperative in an unfriendly environment. For some reason, in the Iranian case they did not go back. People would go back to Uganda, although not for awhile. It is important to look at the diaspora or community in terms of the originating space and [efforts made to block it out]. For Burma, the emigrants might not go back. Their ability to think of place rationally is blocked, rather than imagined. After a time, they might go back, say, to look for family property, or to do investment. But their views of the homeland have been seized up during a certain time period. At these times, they think of human rights or other issues. Is this an attractive way to use Amnesty International, or the Government of Canada to bring to light human rights issues?

- Joanna: [This speaks to the importance of] the story of origin of the diaspora, how it is formed, and how it plays a role in determining how coherent the community is. [Questions surround the] background and time it takes to develop a coherent diaspora, and time by which a new generation returns to build the connections with the adoptive country. Differences exist and a critical incident plays a role. India, Israel, Bhutan, Nepal , Rwanda. – I love to sit here and learn about these experiences and to consider my own experience as part of the diaspora. How this affects citizenship, or connection to your region. For instance, Nasra's experiences in working in Somalia. How does your diaspora, or network or connections affect you?

- Nasra: My parents were born in Somalia. Because they emigrated after 1982 during the civil war they did not go back to Somalia, and I have not been able to go there either. People do not understand why the war started. There was, is, too much violence, and anger. My sister and I went back to Uganda, but our parents could not understand why we wanted to go. Bob's point about the blockage people face makes sense. My mother did not want to let us go back. This journey was a shock to her.

Because she sees us as Canadians, she does not understand why we wanted to go back. East Africa – Tanzania, Uganda— is home to many Somali immigrants. So it was cool to go back and connect with the next generation.

- Shaheen: George noted the similar kind of attachment. Some people need to return to Uganda or India, or any country of origin and if they organize around religion this is not clear where they should return to.

Joanna: Who grapples with identity and diaspora and how does this inform what you do?

Manuel ? [student from Israel] : Diaspora identity is not bound to a geographic place. It matters, for instance, if you are an immigrant or a refugee. Ismailis did not care to go back to Uganda because they did not see themselves at home there. Canadian society sees you [as part of the diaspora]…. You see from Israel or Iran, but many do not see themselves as part of the group. Some might not go back because there were persecuted back home and wait for the political change in order to go back. I study the Jewish diaspora, in which the immigrants mostly do not feel [beholden] to an established community. But the Bhutanese just came so they are quite new, but with their Nepal situation they became a community with a common experience. So sometimes the language and culture bind a diaspora, as is the case of the Bhutanese and Nepalese. Jews and Arabs do not get along in Israel, but here in Canada they do. This is where the commonalities such as language, culture come into effect. So, in Canada there is a space for new communities in an intersection of culture and language and not just in terms of geographic space.

- [xxx]: People might emerge from complex and conflicted regions, but they want to engage in places where their parents are from. Something draws them and lifts them in that direction. They don't have any guidance; they just do it. They take real and imaginative risks. Their family tells them to take caution and not to go back. A cautionary mood exists if there was a frantic exodus. So one of the themes of the project could be to ask what happens when people take these risks in returning "home".

- Joanna: Or, why they begin to engage in their diaspora.

- Daniel: I'm interested in the topic of diaspora communication. This is the frustration of diaspora, [or at least that of the] Iranian diaspora. The categorization of this diaspora created spaces of marginalization. In studying diaspora it is important to consider who are the community leaders. When I study diaspora, I first find out who the leaders are. They are the ones with influence in the community. Keep in mind that there are different voices in a diaspora, and that many of these are not heard. There is a dominant voice that is supposed to represent the diaspora, but I don't belong to it. I'm not a community leader. Many people feel that they don't belong to the diaspora.

- [xxx] There is a disconnect between the different groups and their power, and this can be seen even in Vancouver diaspora communities in Vancouver. [This occurs even with diaspora] without the experience of violence and conflict.

- Nadia: I'm trying to piece together what is being said here. In terms of my own experience, my own parents had to leave India because one parent is Muslim and the other is Catholic, so they could not stay there and be together. So this was not a critical incident that forced them to leave. Later in the 1980s things changed so that they could go back. Their story of leaving is one of love. With my work in Bangalore, they chose me [because of my roots in India] even though I did not have the language skills. But they chose me. Personally, I'm excited, but who was the community leader? In going to represent my organization I must try to impart my Canadian values, but they chose me because I'm Indian. As a kid I was confused by this notion: I'm Indian in Canada and Canadian in India. In Canada there is no problem [of identity or identification], but within my organization [my roots] are implicitly important. This has increased my understanding and awareness of my Indianness.

- Manuel ?: Many people feel that they are not a part of the diaspora. So the questions are: Who or what is an Indian? Who is a representative of a diaspora?

- Bob: They [diaspora members] would be reminded of the [originating] story because of their awareness of it. They fight to hold it at a distance, [but it is] available to be communicated to them. It depends on how dependent on the community these diaspora members are. They might need it.

- Joanna: Leadership and informal or formal associations are an interesting set of themes here. For instance, the Bhutanese have a formalized association.

- Karen: I'm both Chinese and Filipino. I'm not sure if I represent either Chinese or Filipinos. When I'm in China, I'm not Chinese and when I'm in the Philippines I'm Chinese. In Canada I'm recognized as Chinese and Filipino, so it's more fluid here. So, my family came here. In the Philippines, the Chinese are scapegoats for all problems, like a poor economy. They are blamed for any political instability, but the Chinese are also at risk of kidnapping. You can never go anywhere alone and must be careful about the risk of kidnapping. Now that we're here in Canada, I'll never go back to China. My father built a small school in China, but he won't go back. Being Chinese is nostalgic for my parents. Home is in the Philippines. But for us kids, Canada is our home. But living here we're never considered fully Canadian.

- This raises the issue of multiculturalism in Canada, and the question of citizenship or the sense of belonging and identity [amongst people from the various races and ethnicities]. I work with each group, Chinese and Filipino. We're Canadian and have lived an extended life here, but we're not considered Canadian. Many live in enclaves [of a certain ethnicity or nationality.] How do we share citizenship? We need to shift the concept of citizenship because of the changes to [the Canadian population]. I do not relate to hockey, or igloos. How can I become Canadian? For instance we love human rights, justice and freedom, and the peace of mind that comes with not being afraid of being kidnapped. I am happy to walk the streets safely, which I can't do in the Philippines. How do we enjoy [these freedoms] together? How can the freedom be used?

- Joanna: refers to an SFU Dialogue on "Being Canadian."

- Milan: This [issue of immigrants searching for their Canadian identity] reminds me of the point that people need to negotiate their identity at certain moments. To what extent is the character of the diaspora imposed on certain people by its leaders? This is an issue of negotiation. We are Canadians, but we're placed in certain groups based on our nationality or ethnicity, language. To what extent is the diaspora forced on us? Members have multiple backgrounds, created by different movements or experiences. We try to place ourselves in identifiable identities. How can we break down and challenge the places, or identities placed on us by the diaspora, or challenge the Canadian label on us as "immigrants". In my studies I ask, how can we ensure that there is agency in our considerations of the diaspora, or in the formation of identities that might be changing. The questions to table is how do we define ourselves and how are we being defined?

- Nadia: How is being an immigrant or from an immigrant family being connected to land, community, and natural history. [More thought needs to go into] the negotiated space in which we walk around.

Engaging Diaspora in Development: Tapping Our Trans-Local Potential for Change

Focus Group Session # 3 – Notes
Date: Wednesday, October 27, 2010
Location: SFU Harbour Centre

Attendees:
Project Management Team: Joanna Ashworth
                                                 Shaheen Nanji
                                                 Mignon Alphonso
                                                 Franciska Hidayat
Focus Group Participants: Evans Ngago
                                                 Jon Tinker
                                                 Antonio Arreaga-Valdes
                                                 Juliana Hejia

Personal introduction and the work that you're involved
[Juliana]:
Have been actively involved with Colombian community in Vancouver through the Colombian-Canadian Community of BC. One of the initiatives is creating a bilingual magazine that highlights issues addressing poverty, education and tourism in Canada so the Colombian community can learn while understanding the Canadian environment. The magazine is used to raise awareness and funds for the settling newcomers from Colombia as well as contributing to Colombian Foundations. Challenge: Tapping into volunteers.

[Evans]:
Visited a rural school in Kenya last year and it hit him to see three kids were sharing a textbook.
"If people read in different speeds, how can you share a textbook with two other people?"
"How can a school be a school without a library?" (What are the chances for success?)
His initiatives include trying to buy books locally, build a local library that can be used for the whole community.
   - Feels that diaspora can make an impact by influencing the government.
   - Identified the community where he grew up as a platform of his development work in Kenya.

[Antonio]:
Actively involved in Ethno-Business Council – a Latin American business association that supports minorities that just come to Canada in their business. He believes Ethno-Business Council represents Latin America, SE Asia, and other parts of the

globe (business is the common denominator). The Ethno-Business Council of BC's initiatives:
  - to serve communities from a business point of view
  - to get together, to learn about each other and Canada and to identify common issues
  - Founded the "New Canadian Entrepreneur Award"
Challenge: Working with different people from different country.

[Jon Tinker]: PANOS
Did a lot of work (for 3-4 years) "looking at what development is"
The basic (traditional) concept involves the idea of a division between North and South where the north represents rich, industrialized, and civilized countries while the latter represents poor and uneducated countries.

- In CIDA's view, we need to help the south through training. However, in alternative view, we should actually see it through their "COMMONALITIES" (what we have in common, what we share, and what common problems we have). For instance, in terms of health, there are many ways that the Canadian and Kenyan health systems share issues and problems in common.

- The Commonalities lens in practice.
E.g. Bringing 12 NGO experts from Haiti to Canada to share the same knowledge of HIV/AIDS.

-Nurses-training project for HIV (BC Centre for Disease Control)
The traditional medical model: good medical care is only available in a hospital setting. However, the problem with HIV is that prevention happens outside of the hospital. And HIV is hitting hardest to the marginalized (the poor, immigrant, sex-workers, etc.)
  - Develop training program and allow nurses to take healthcare services outside the hospital into communities.
  - BC nurses working on Hastings
  - Haiti nurse met with the BC Centre of Disease Control to share the model used in Haiti that is very progressive, more so than the BC nurses' outreach program at the time. This approach can be considered as a way in which knowledge/expertise moves in the opposite direction of North-South model.

-He sees diaspora provides a link (or a bridge) to the commonalities lens.

This project should get rid of the old way of looking at development in the traditional North-South model ('us' helping 'them') and to think about development from the alternative view of commonalities lens.

[Evans]:
-Development need to be cost-effective/beneficial to the country doing development. E.g. CIDA.

-Diaspora method of development. For example, his library project was based on permanent structure and sustainable solutions. "If it works, it should be able to be copied by others."

-Also agrees that diaspora can link with local people to make the development project sustainable and prominent.

[Juliana]:
The Colombian community that she actively engages with focuses on Colombian people living in Canada particularly the immigrant. They convene many kinds of events, education workshops and provide such as mentoring new immigrants to get a job so the Colombians that come to Canada won't feel being marginalized. However, the resources are limited because this foundation is a pure volunteer work.

[Antonio]:
The community in here needs a room to grow such as by importing expertise through mutual exchange. In other sense, the idea of receiving help here and linking back.

<u>Learning from Experiences and wanting to explore more of</u>

[Antonio]:
-Not only from the success stories but also learning from the mistakes.
-Work with co-operatives (have no guarantee but you will be in better shape).

[Evans]:
- Limitation - cost of volunteering (to find the people who have the time to volunteer).
- Conflicts in groups (how to manage conflicts especially in large group).
- Helping people not to be marginalized here within their own community.
- How to help people in Canada (e.g. the Kenyan people) first in order to make changes back in Kenya?
- How to engage others in your initiatives?
- How to support members of diaspora communities ?
- How do you tap into the financial resources in Canada?
- Teaching people on the idea of volunteering, the idea of giving a little bit.

[Jon]:
- Fundraising → money earned by diaspora and send back to relatives.
- Diasporas in business/trade do this well, why can't we tap into this elsewhere?
- It's not easy through NGOs as cultural differences may also lead to ineffective communication. That's why diaspora may play an important role as a bridge.

[Antonio]:
- Many examples in Canada can be used. E.g. Scotiabank's initiative.

Engaging Diaspora in Development: Tapping Our Trans-Local Potential for Change

Focus Group Session #4 Report
Date: November 10, 2010
Location: Umoja Society office, Surrey

Attendees:
Project Management Team:

Joanna Ashworth
Shaheen Nanji

Focus Group Participants:

Amos Kambere
Shahin Mitha
Silus
Edith Kambere
Bonfils Mada
Mambo Masinda
David
Shannon Tito
James Kamau
Mwami Kambale
Chantale Kasongo
Jean-Bruno Nkondi

Project Co-Directors Joanna Ashworth and Shaheen Nanji led the meeting hosted on the premises of the Umoja Society offices in Surrey. We began with introductions.

-> Amos Kambere: Co-executive Director of Umoja, working in Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda
-> Shahin Mitha: Volunteer work with women in Pakistan, Kenya, Uganda & Zanzibar
-> Silus: working with people here & Africa & Asia
-> Edith Kambere: Works with Amos
-> Bonfils: Pres of Burundian Community of BC. Church grp. Connects newcomers & home.
-> Mambo – Co-exec director of Umoja; runs Fondation Lazare, Congo building an orphanage school.
→ David – Arrived from Uganda 2 wks ago, worked with UN peacekeeping in Congo.
-> Shannon Tito – teacher in Surrey. Doing a PhD on peacebuilding thru education. Works on peacebuilding through Charles Owor Foundation, North Uganda. School & Orphanage, "Sparrows Nest" for previously abducted girls. Work here with Ugandan

community
-> James Kamau – Youth Int'l Canada, connecting Canada & Kenya. Works with Kenyan Ministry of Youth – sports arts & social entrepreneurship
-> Ma(?) – Congo. Exec Dir of Afr. Assn of Francophone. Funded by Cdn Heritage. Wants an African Cultural Centre.
→ Chantale works with widows and orphans in the Congo
-> Jean Bruno Nkondi

We presented an overview of the Engaging Diaspora in Development Project and there were a number of questions and concerns to be addressed before we invite the participants to consider the focus group questions.

->Mambo – Wonders if there will there be a toolkit coming out of the project and what are the other outcomes? He is concerned that the university will make this an academic project.
->Shaheen – the project is run by a University and there is an academic/research component. However, the main goal is public engagement – we hope to build a network of diaspora so that they can learn from one another and pool resources.
-> Mambo - Fondation Lazare – collects funds from community to buy medicine & computers for Congo. In Kinshasa, the number of homeless orphans is rising, so they built orphanage -- raised funds in Abbotsford (60k) for 75 children. Currently building a school In Ngoma and Butembe. He observed that Canadians have compassion fatigue. Need 56k for 15 classes for primary (classes in the morning) & secondary (classes in the afternoon) – 1000 students have 5k so far.
-> Amos – by the time you get the 56k you'll need more because of time and inflation. Wonder how to get CIDA to engage? He noted that they do not seem interested in small scale projects.
-> James – On the MDGs – youth are doing a lot but they are not on record or profiled. There is no mechanism to report a grassroots efforts or to evaluate & support these groups. Wants to showcase work at youth in Kenya. Did school tour on HIV through music, etc.
-> Silas – What are we going to get? Where are we going to go from here?
-> MA? – This diaspora conversation isn't new, but it's also about meeting G8 or whatever requirements. Africans need to create a committee to compute data and coordinate engagement with CIDA & SFU, etc. There are more than 60,000 Africans doing this work.
-> Shannon – Africans need to have direct connection to the public and speak for themselves.
-> James – how can we get consensus & speak with one voice?
-> Shannon – community organizations can do so much with so little. Involves passion & self-sacrifice.
-> Amos – they need find funds to get projects to the next level. How do we let people know how well we do what we do? Amos does microcredit, $1,000 has grown to empower women 30 women
-> Shahin – need to tell the story of how we came to do so much with so little. She sells scarves for $25 – educates 25 kids for a month.

-> Miriam – shared the story about when her mother passed away and she went home to the funeral. She noted that there were mostly women over the age of 45. Young men were alcoholics and unemployed, children being raised by women 45+. Aunt was caring for extended family kids – 2 kids being supported by World Vision, younger kids were in gov't school and 1 girl was kept at home to help around the house. Asked how can she help. Her aunt said they need $50, so she gave her $100. With that, she opened a small store, began sewing. Miriam went back after a year and found that her aunt now sells clothes, and kids have uniforms to go to school. The girl that was kept at home is now in school and has hope in her eyes. Since then, she has given the same to 2 other women. Daughter raises $50 for uniforms. Her vision is that they should be able to give kids uniform every year.
-> James – personalizing stories is powerful. Lots of people have the heart & $ need to hear the story. Doing a project on Lake Victoria. There were too many weeds in the lake. They take the weed & turn it into a source of fuel. Kids have been trained & they are raising funds for equipment.
-> MA? – Suggests that the community should produce newsletter and tell the stories of successful development projects.

Learning from the stories of experience
-> Chantale – Orphanage in Congo – Mbabashi. She is a widow. Went to bury her husband and was mistreated by husband's family. Wants to care for widows and orphans. Widows take care of orphans. She funds them to each care for 6 children. Uses her own funds. But the need is so strong to help she is in debt.
-> Shahin – joined a team of women who have 20 years of experience. Individuals have tremendous potential. Have to learn to trust the community that you are building. Keep the compassion. She says education is key.
-> MA? – Congo is the sit of massive rape. He runs a foundation - One for All -- to help women who have been raped. Building centre to help. Literacy – 70% of women are illiterate. Need education. The Centre will also offer literacy and nutrition. Education is key.
-> Banfils – learning is imperative of collective having leadership and common goal. Need to learn from each other.
-> James – importance of funding. Need to know how to get funds for w/shops. Also need to learn how to sue social media.
-> Shannon – it doesn't take much money to make a difference
- Bonfils – need to go to MLA & MP. We elect them & they should represent us.
-> James – There is also value in connecting with university students
-> Jean – raises fund for village in Brazzaville to rebuild school. Stories are all working together. How do we prioritize & connect with another? Education is a priority. You can build a school but what about curriculum? Some parts of Africa are more developed than others. Some Francophone countries are in worse shape than Anglophone. Hearing other peoples' stories inspires him to do more and do it better.

The group left the meeting feeling supported and inspired by each others' work and the stories they shared. All the attendees of the focus group are invited to attend the series of five public dialogues that are to begin in January 2011.