global petro-industry, emerging as the forerunner of the welfare state model that other "petro-states" would followed. This forerunner position was also manifested on the level of urbanization. In the 1980s, in the aftermath of the 1973 and 1979 "oil shock", scholars assessed the rapid urbanizations and change of demographics in the Gulf that came with the rising oil revenues as "petro-urbanism". However, the case of Kuwait demonstrates that such petro-urbanism was already happening in the 1950s as Kuwait experienced its "oil boom." Kuwait's "urban transformation" is here understood as a process of change that entails a certain continuity as well. This perspective is an invitation to view the shift from the pre-oil to the oil period not just as a radical break, but to look instead for spatial, visual and socio-political traces of continuity.

Iridescent Kuwait develops a transdisciplinary and multi-perspective approach as it analyzes and discloses the tactics typical of petro-modernity that manifested in Kuwait by working with and through an unusually broad range of visual material from architectural drawings to national emblems. Acknowledging petroleum's ability to have a powerful aesthetic and visual resonance in visual culture and the built environment, the study explores three interlinking spheres (urban planning, corporate and governmental) that set the scene for Kuwait's expanding image world during the period between the first oil shipment (1946) and Kuwait's independence from Britain (1961). Moreover, the work engages contemporary artworks by artists and collectives based in the Gulf to discuss the ways in which the 20th-century image world of petro-modernity is negotiated today and the often nostalgic sentiment that its still seductive, iridescent aesthetic triggers.

Overall, the findings suggest that, as early as the 1950s, modernity worked effectively as a system of visual regimes, whereby the visual success of meaning-making was somewhat independent of the performative functionality (of architecture and urban space) that modernity is usually associated with. Petro-modernity triggered not only a material and energetic exuberance but also a visual excess. *Iridescent Kuwait*'s contribution is to think through visual artefacts to analyze, and disclose the tactics typical of petro-modernity as they manifested in Kuwait. In addition, contemporary artistic practices provide a form of visual response to the historical urban visual culture that emerged in Kuwait, and potentially also other petro-states, as well as possible bottom-up counter-narratives to inherent official political and corporate narratives. Today, Kuwait has lost its forerunner position to the UAE and Qatar due to the Iraqi invasion in 1990/91 amongst other reasons. Therefore, the examination of Kuwait's image world is an exploration of the mid-twentieth century urban and visual history of the Gulf States' "forerunner" Kuwait.

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Marie Karner: Neo-Diasporic Communities. Blouzaniyye in Sydney, Australia. – Abgeschlossene

Dissertation am Geographischen Institut, Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz. Hauptbetreuer Prof. Dr. Anton Escher.

The dissertation examines neo-diasporic communities at the beginning of the 21st century in order to better understand their practices and dynamics in empirical and theoretical terms. The changing framework conditions require new perspectives on a theoretical level with respect to previous approaches to conceptualizing the diaspora phenomenon. As part of a circular research design, ethnological, sociological and economic concepts and models have proven to be useful for gaining extensive insight into identity constructions, processes of community building and the social networking among members of neo-diasporic communities.

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Maronite communities, whose members identify with villages in the Wadi Qadisha (Lebanon), were selected as case studies due to their similar character and shared identity elements. Simultaneously, they show a high degree of fragmentation and internal differentiation which is useful for isolating relevant theoretical elements.

The multi-local empirical research was conducted in nine Lebanese villages as well as in the cities of Sydney (Australia), Halifax (Canada), Easton (PA, USA), Providence (RI, USA) and Dubai (UAE). Local com-

munities with different levels of activities and a variety of community-based institutions were studied at these locations. The multi-method, empirical study consisted of ero-epic conversations, problem-focused qualitative interviews with 185 individuals, participant observations at more than 100 gatherings, communication on online platforms as well as additional research of secondary sources. The collected data were interpreted using a qualitative complex analysis. The category system was generated inductively based on the empirical material, while constitutive theoretical analytical dimensions were taken into account as deductive elements.The empirical examination focuses on the case study of the Blouzaniyye, i.e. persons who identify with the village of Blouza in Lebanon. The intentions shared by Blouzaniyye living in Sydney and their initiated events are particularly innovative and specific which is why the location is the focal point of the analysis. Further aspects, which are more pronounced in the other neo-diasporic communities studied and thus easier to identify, were integrated in the footnotes as elements relevant to the theory.

A "theory of neo-diasporic communities at the beginning of the 21st century" was derived from the broad empirical database. The prefix "neo" indicates a new understanding of diaspora with the following interrelated theoretical dimensions crucial for the dynamics, existence and continuity of a neo-diaspora:

(1) Committed individuals take on specific functions based on their individual competencies, interests and networks. They contribute to the preservation of the community and determine its prioritization.

(2) The sense of belonging is reproduced through fundamental, standard and special components of an ever-evolving imagined ethnic identity. These components are used by alternating members to varying degrees as individual identity resources.

(3) Members establish institutions in accordance with the societal principles of organization in the countries of residence and modify them with regard to current trends and styles. Real and virtual places of communication are created to preserve shared emotional experiences. They are continuously adapted to the needs of members and serve several purposes.

4) The implicit rules and social obligations are internalized through collective narratives and emotional practices in the context of socialization and interaction. Normative imperatives ensure a solidary interaction in addition to the synergetic and external interaction important for stabilizing the community.

(5) Members organize community-building, public and professional events in order to pursue common objectives and to expand their internal and external networks.

The presented theory claims spatio-temporal validity under the circumstances of today's nationalist world order. However, the specific characteristics of each neo-diaspora are influenced by surrounding political, social and economic contexts. As long as members can realize a viable income or rely on social security, a neo-diaspora can evolve under different governmental and economic systems.

The network of neo-diasporic communities does not have to be permanently deterritorial, but can potentially and even exclusively extend into different specialized fields of interaction. Even if neo-diasporas transform into interest groups, members continue to preserve the perceived notion of a common "origin" in suitable settings. However, the actual "origin" of a person is not of crucial importance for inclusion in the community. The diffuse and permeable boundaries are defined by the understanding of knowledge orders, the adoption of emotional practices and the individual commitment to the community.

Neo-diasporic communities reveal a high degree of flexibility, situativity, connectivity and processuality which allows them to adapt to changing conditions and contexts in a very dynamic way. In the face of the ongoing digital globalization, increasingly complex geopolitics and more restrictive border regimes, some neo-diasporic communities will be subject to permanent transformation.

Neo-diasporas provide their members with identity elements, social stability and recognition. At the same time, they have positive effects on society as a whole due to the range of different cultural and educational events initiated by members, shared specific knowledge and their charitable, voluntary and civic involvement. For this reason, it is important to recognize and include neo-diasporic communities in politics, media and science. In contrast, it is not expedient to strive for "assimilation" of immigrants and to reject any form of community building based on the fear of "ethnic isolation", a notion that is indisputably inconsistent with the results of this study.

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David Kreuer: Notions of Drought. Nomadic Economy and Tribal Community in Eastern Morocco. – Abgeschlossene Dissertation an der Fakultät für Geschichte, Kunst- und Orientwissenschaften, Universität Leipzig. Hauptbetreuer Prof. Dr. Jörg Gertel.