

Locating Diaspora in Kurdish Studies: Migration, Identity, and the Politics of Knowledge

International Workshop
24/09/2025

Organised by Dr. Hacı Cevik

BIM

Berliner Institut für empirische
Integrations- und Migrationsforschung

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Locating Diaspora in Kurdish Studies: Migration, Identity, and the Politics of Knowledge International Workshop

Migration, forced displacement, and life in exile are not merely recent phenomena in Kurdish history. They are constitutive of the Kurdish experience itself. Across the four parts of Kurdistan, generations of Kurds have faced exile, resettlement, and statelessness. Today, millions of Kurds live outside the homeland, forming one of the largest stateless diasporic communities in the world. This one-day intensive workshop explores the role of diaspora in the making of Kurdish identity, memory, and political imagination. It takes stock of existing research and opens space for new discussions on diasporic life across different political and geographical contexts.

As Kurdish Studies continues to grow as a field, migration and diaspora research has emerged as a key sub-area. The lived experiences of Kurds in exile – across time, space, and generations – offer critical insights into questions of belonging, identity, resistance, and transnational political engagement. Empirical and theoretical works addressing the diasporic condition of Kurds across diverse geopolitical contexts are especially welcomed, particularly those examining how diasporic life challenges or reaffirms political, cultural, and emotional attachments to the homeland. This one-day intensive workshop bring together scholars working at the intersections of identity, mobility, and statelessness, with the aim of positioning Kurdish diaspora studies as a dynamic and essential part of Kurdish Studies.

The workshop is organized by Dr. Haci Cevik in collaboration with the Berlin Institute for Empirical Integration and Migration Research (BIM) at Humboldt University. The workshop is funded by the Einstein Foundation.

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Venue: Berlin Institute for Empirical Integration and Migration Research (BIM), Humboldt University of Berlin, 4th Floor, room 408. .

09:00 – 09:20 – Welcome Remarks

Prof. Aileen Edele (Director of BIM, Humboldt University of Berlin)

Dr. Haci Cevik (Workshop Organizer, BIM, Humboldt University of Berlin)

09:20 – 10:20 – Keynote Lecture

Prof. Bahar Baser (Durham University, UK), **Kurdish Diasporas in Transnational Perspective: Between Homeland Politics and New Forms of Belonging**

10:20 – 10:40 – Coffee Break

10:40 – 12:30 – Panel I – Displacement and Belonging: Rethinking Kurdish Diasporic Subjectivities

Chair: Alice von Bieberstein

Francesco Ventura- **Blurring Ethnic Boundaries: Exploring the Political Agency of Diasporas in Transnational Activism – The Case of the Kurdish Freedom Movement**

Inci Öykü Yener-Roderburg- **Nonvoter remote partisanship among conflict-generated diasporas: Response of nonvoter Kurds to Turkish elections in Germany**

İrfan Aktan- **Kurdish Diaspora in Japan: Racist Attacks and the Struggle for Belonging and Identity**

Hasret Çetinkaya- **Namûs and the Racialised State: On Colonial Governance and Diasporic Subjectivity**

Haci Cevik- **Carrying Silence, Returning with Voice: Kurdishness Between Konya and the Diaspora**

12:30 – 13:30 – Lunch Break

13:30 – 15:30 – Panel II – Transnational Networks, Activism, and Memory in the Kurdish Diaspora

Chair: Nader Talebi

Miki Nose- **From Sympathy to Hostility: Tracing Media Discourses, Immigration Policy, and Hate Speech Targeting the Kurdish Community in Japan**

Jiyar Aghapouri- **Intersectional Dynamics of Gender and Ethnicity in Transnational Activism: Kurdish and Iranian Diasporas during the Woman-Life Freedom Movement**

Damla Bayraktar Aksel- **Diaspora Engagement and Identity Politics: Parliamentary Framings of the Kurdish Diaspora in Turkey**

Rosa Burç and Zeynep Yanaşmayan- **Navigating simultaneous racisms in postmigrant Germany: The politics of in/visibility in the lives of Kurds**

Kate Ferguson- **‘It was just, like, normal home life’: Experiences of language brokering in Kurdish families**

15:30 – 15:45 – Coffee Break

15:45 – 17:00 – Closing Keynote & Roundtable Discussion

Prof. Mehmet Gurses (Director of Kurdish Political Studies Program, University of Central Florida, US)- **Re-Centering Kurdish Studies: Diaspora, Statelessness, and the Politics of Knowledge**

Moderator: Dr. Haci Cevik

Open discussion with all participants

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Keynote Lecture- Kurdish Diasporas in Transnational Perspective: Between Homeland Politics and New Forms of Belonging

Prof. Bahar Baser

Bahar Baser joined Durham University's School of Government and International Affairs in 2021. Previously, she was Associate Professor at the Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations, Coventry University where she led the "Peacebuilding and Conflict Transformation Research Group". Prior to that, she was a postdoctoral research fellow at the University of Warwick at the Department of Politics and International Studies between 2012 and 2014. Dr. Baser completed a PhD in Social and Political Sciences at the European University Institute in Florence, Italy. During her PhD, she had the opportunity to work as a Visiting Research Fellow at Humboldt University (Berlin Graduate School of Social Sciences) in Germany, REMESO (Institute for Research on Migration, Ethnicity and Society) in Norrköping, Sweden and the Instituto de Ciencias Sociais (ICS) in Lisbon, Portugal.

She is an expert in the area of diaspora studies, peacebuilding and conflict transformation, with a regional focus on the Middle East. She has conducted extensive research on diaspora engagement in peace processes, post-conflict reconstruction and state-building in the Global South. She has published extensively on stateless diaspora activism and mobilisation in Europe with a specific focus on host states' counterterrorism policies, radicalization of diaspora members and transnationalization of homeland conflicts.

She is the editor of Kurdish Studies Series published by Lexington Books and the co-editor of Diasporas and Transnationalism Series published by Edinburgh University Press. She is also a senior associate research fellow at the Security Institute for Governance and Leadership in Africa (SIGLA), Stellenbosch University, South Africa and visiting professor at Tampere Peace Research Institute, Tampere University, Finland.

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Panel I – Displacement and Belonging: Rethinking Kurdish Diasporic Subjectivities

Chair: Alice von Bieberstein: She is a Professor at the Institute of European Ethnology at Humboldt University of Berlin. Her work focuses on political violence, state formation, and political economy, with a particular emphasis on the afterlives of the Armenian Genocide through questions of land and property in Turkish Kurdistan. She is co-editor of the book *Reverberations: Violence across Time and Space* (2021), and her articles have appeared in various academic journals. Her book *Temptations in Ruin: Sovereign Accumulation and the Making of Post-Genocide Turkey* is forthcoming with University of Pennsylvania Press. Von Bieberstein lives and works in Berlin.

Francesco Ventura

Francesco Ventura is an Assistant Professor at the SAGAS Department of the University of Florence, Italy. He received his PhD in Geography from University College Dublin. His research interests include political geography, diaspora studies, critical geopolitics, transnationalism, post-statist geographies, the Kurdish Freedom Movement, Turkish foreign policy, internationalism, territory, social ecology, and assemblage thinking.



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Dr. İnci Öykü Yener-Roderburg

Dr İnci Öykü Yener-Roderburg is a postdoctoral researcher at Lund University (LU) in the ERC (European Research Council)-funded project FABRIC (Faith-Based Refugee Relief in Europe: Connecting the Empirical & the Ethical). The project develops a new ethics of migration by examining and utilising the moral insights and practices of faith-based refugee relief organisations, contributing to cross-disciplinary debates on the ethics of forced migration in Europe. Before starting at LU, she was a lecturer at the Cologne Center for Comparative Politics, University of Cologne, offering graduate courses on citizenship, migration, and multiculturalism. And she was awarded a fellowship at the Academy of International Affairs NRW, where she conducted research on the role of faith-based diaspora organisations in elections in both origin and resident countries. Previously, she was a postdoc/research associate at the Institute for Turkish Studies, University of Duisburg-Essen, acted as an external collaborator for the ERC-funded project “Migration, transnationalism and social protection in (post-) crisis Europe”, CEDEM, University of Liège, Belgium, and contributed as a country expert for Germany in the NSW Government funded project “Building Democratic Resilience”, the Centre for Deliberative Democracy and Global Governance (CDDGG), University of Canberra, Australia. Her research interests include external voting, transnational political engagement of migrants, citizenship, refugee relief, migration ethics, faith-based diaspora organisations, and qualitative research methods.

İrfan Aktan

He was born in 1981 in Hakkari-Yüksekova. In 2000, while studying at Ankara University's Faculty of Communication, Department of Journalism, he began working as a journalist at Bianet and Express magazine. He pursued a master's degree at Ankara University's Department of Women's Studies. His books *Nazê: A Story of “Migration”* (İletişim Publications) in 2005 and *Poison and Antidote: The Kurdish Question* (Dipnot Publications) in 2006 were published. He worked at BirGün newspaper, Nokta, Yeni Aktüel, and Newsweek-Turkey magazines, and wrote articles for Birikim journal, Radikalnewspaper, and zete.com. In 2010, he was sentenced to prison due to a quotation in an article published in Express and was awarded the Press Freedom Award of the Turkish Journalists Association in the same year. He served for a period as the Ankara Bureau Chief of İMC TV. He wrote the script for the documentary *Bûka Baranê*, which focuses on the persecution of Kurds in the 1990s. Between 2016 and 2021, he worked at Gazete Duvar. The European Press Prize committee selected his 2022 report titled *Kazığı Oynatmak*—about Syrian refugees and published in Express—as one of the five finalists for the year. In 2022, he was a visiting researcher at Kyoto University, and in 2024, at Waseda University in Japan, where he conducted research on the country's migration policy, anti-immigrant hate speech, and the lives of Kurds living in Japan.



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Dr. Hasret Çetinkaya

Hasret Cetinkaya is a Senior Lecturer in Human Rights and Gender at Manchester Law School, Manchester Metropolitan University. Her interdisciplinary research explores the 'social life' of rights and ethical living, as well as the related problems of agency, subjectivity and power. Hasret's current book project titled "Honour' and Human Rights: Namûs, Ethical Life and Legal Subjectivity', addresses the epistemological, and thus political, framings that have trapped our perception of 'honour' and its subsumed local practices, like namûs.

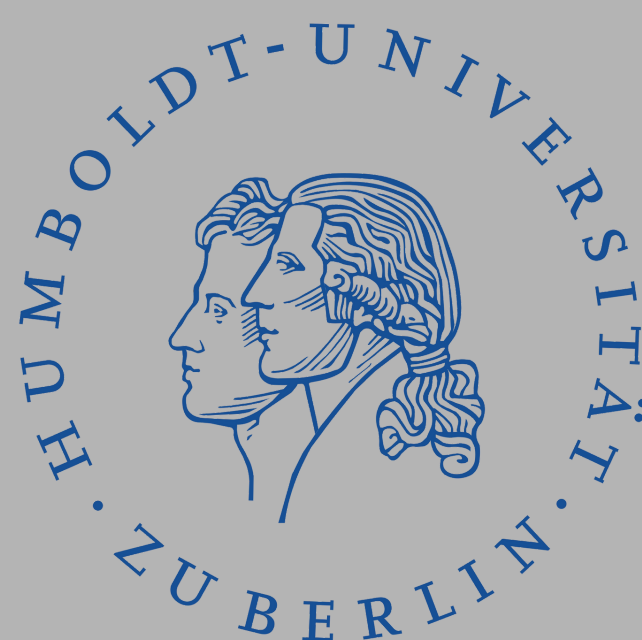
Dr. Haci Cevik

Haci Cevik is currently a post-doctoral researcher at the Berlin Institute for Empirical Integration and Migration Research (BIM) at Humboldt University in Germany, funded by the Einstein Foundation. He completed his Bachelor in Political Science and Public Administration at Kocaeli University, followed by a Master in Political Sciences at Ankara University. He earned his PhD from Hacettepe University in the Department of Social Work, specializing in Migration Studies. He worked as a research assistant at Hacettepe University from 2019 to 2022. His research focuses on ethnic politics, Kurdish studies, collective identity, diaspora, and migration.



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Panel II – Transnational Networks, Activism, and Memory in the Kurdish Diaspora

Chair: Nader Talebi: Dr. Nader Talebi is a Research Associate and Guest Lecturer in the Department of Integration Research and Social Policy at the Berlin Institute for Empirical Integration and Migration Research (BIM), Humboldt University of Berlin. He holds a PhD in Sociology from Lancaster University, where he examined state power and revolution through a strategic-relational analysis of the 1979 Iranian Revolution. His research interests include state theory, social space, migration, nationalism, historical and political sociology, and the modern history of the Middle East. He has held postdoctoral positions in the projects TRANSMIT (Transnational Perspectives on Migration and Integration) and ExiTT (Exit - Transit - Transformation) and coordinated initiatives supporting migrant and refugee inclusion, such as RefugeesHub in Berlin.

Miki Nose

Miki Nose is a librarian at the Institute of Developing Economies, Japan. She is the Subject Librarian for the MENA region and Central Asia and is in charge of the Preservation and Conservation Department in the library. She is particularly interested in the collection and preservation and conservation status of Kurdish materials for which there is no national library.

Dr. Jiyar Aghapouri

Dr. Jiyar Aghapouri is Associate Professor of International Studies and Director of the Center for Peace and Human Security (CPHS) at the American University of Kurdistan. He is also a Visiting Fellow at the University of Oxford's Global Security Programme and previously served as a Visiting Fellow at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) from 2021 to 2022 where he also completed a postdoctoral fellowship on Migration and Displacement at LSE's Gender, Justice, and Security Hub.. He has worked as a consultant for UNICEF and other NGOs in the Middle East. His teaching and research focuses are on diaspora, migration and displacement, ethnicity, gender politics and society of the Middle East with a particular emphasis on Kurdistan and its overlapping countries.

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Dr. Damla Bayraktar Aksel

Damla Bayraktar Aksel is an Associate Professor at Bahçeşehir University, specializing in international migration, migration governance, and diaspora engagement. His research examines how state and non-state actors shape migration policies, with a particular focus on emigrant and diaspora policies, global mobility regimes, and the ethics of migration governance. He is the author of *Home States and Homeland Politics* (Routledge, 2019), which explores Turkey's evolving diaspora policies and their implications in France and the U.S. As Principal Investigator of the Emigrant Policy Regimes (EMIGPOL) project, he leads research on policy frameworks and bilateral agreements related to emigration across different political contexts. Beyond academia, he engages in policy-focused research and consultancy with national and international institutions working on international migration, contributing to discussions on global migration governance, diaspora policies, and transnational mobility in collaboration with international organizations, policymakers, and civil society actors.

Dr. Rosa Burç

Rosa Burç is a political sociologist working on how narratives of violence and repertoires of resistance travel across time and space, especially in the context of Kurdistan and among stateless and marginalized communities. She received her PhD from the Center on Social Movement Studies at Scuola Normale Superiore in Florence. Her dissertation was awarded the 2025 Honorable Mention by the American Political Science Association MENA Politics Section. Since 2023 she is the principal investigator in a research project on intermigrant racisms and solidarity at the DeZIM-Institute in Berlin.



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Dr. Zeynep Yanaşmayan

Zeynep Yanaşmayan is the head of Migration Department at the German Centre for Integration and Migration Research (DeZIM). She holds a PhD in Social Sciences from KU Leuven, Belgium. She is an interdisciplinary scholar working at the intersection of political science, sociology, and socio-legal studies with research interests on citizenship, migration and mobility studies, transnationalism and diaspora politics. She is the author of *The Migration of Highly Educated Turkish Citizens to Europe: From Guestworker to Global Talent* (Routledge) and co-editor of *The Failure of Popular Constitution-Making in Turkey: Regressing to Autocracy* (CUP). She publishes widely on issues of migration and asylum in both academic and non-academic outlets.

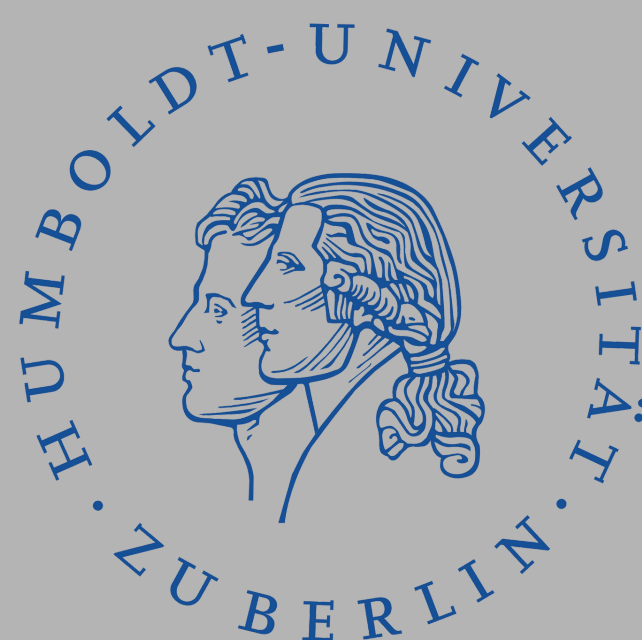
Kate Ferguson

Kate Ferguson is a PhD student in the Centre for Translation and Interpreting Studies in Scotland (CTISS) at Heriot-Watt University. An off-campus student based in Istanbul, Kate is also a freelance translator working mainly in the field of minority and human rights. Her research interests centre around linguistic rights, language access and linguistic identity.



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Closing Keynote- Re-Centering Kurdish Studies: Diaspora, Statelessness, and the Politics of Knowledge

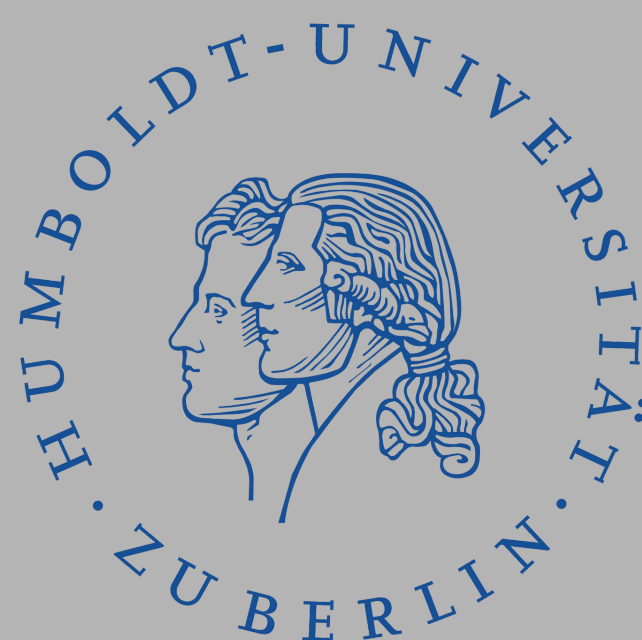
Prof. Mehmet Gurses

Mehmet Gurses (Ph.D. in Political Science, University of North Texas, 2007) is the Jalal Talabani endowed professor and director of Kurdish Studies at the University of Central Florida. His research interests include Kurdish politics, religion and politics, ethnic and religious conflict, post-civil war peacebuilding, and post-war democratization. He is the author of Anatomy of a Civil War: Sociopolitical Impacts of the Kurdish Conflict in Turkey (University of Michigan Press, 2018) and co-editor, with David Romano and Michael Gunter, of Kurds in the Middle East: Enduring Problems and New Dynamics (Lexington Books, 2020). He has published extensively in journals including International Interactions, Defense and Peace Economics, International Studies Perspectives, Party Politics, Conflict Management and Peace Science, and Political Research Quarterly.

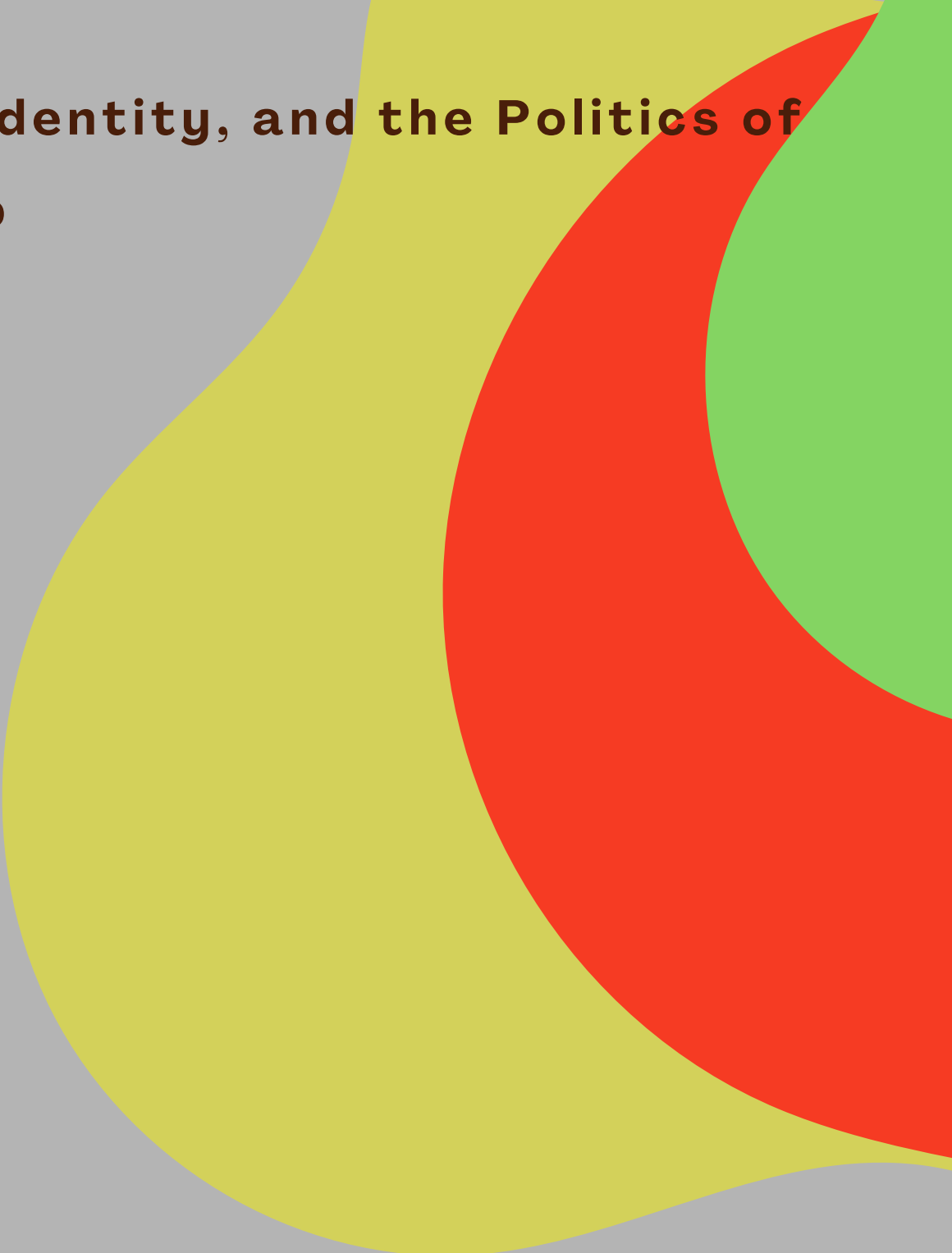
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