GLAC Community Report |2018|

– Executive Summary –

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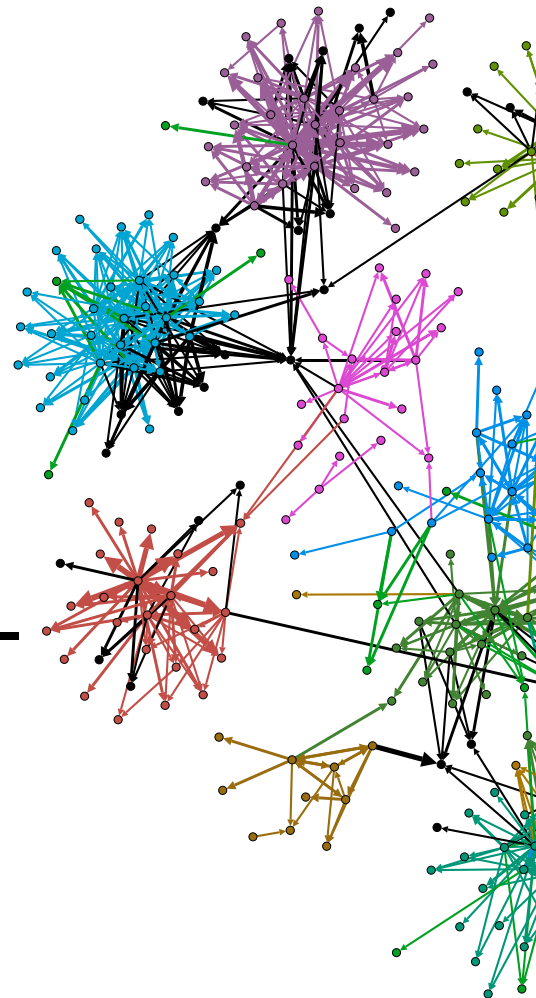
As part of the various activities carried out by the Global Leadership Academy (GLAC) since 2012, a diverse pool of actors from international development, business, academia, public administration and civil society has formed. In order to promote a true community amongst these actors and to unfold the hidden potential this kind of network has to offer, the presented study researches the status quo of the already existing links between the members as well as the factors that would encourage the development of a community and the active engagement of the actors. Moreover, the study identifies what needs-based offers and communication formats the community members demand and would consume.

Respondents' characteristics

The participants of the GLAC Labs, the Global Diplomacy Labs and members of the Transformation Thinkers Network compose the participants of this study. In total, with 183 out of 592 possible respondents participating in the survey, a response rate of 31% was achieved. Equal shares of women and men that participated in the presented survey reflect the overall gender balance within the potential GLAC Community. A similar percentage of respondents work in either NGOs or civil society, the public sector, business, at universities or think tanks. Those who indicate "other" overwhelmingly work at international organizations. The regional distribution revealed that the greatest group of survey participants is from Europe (28%), followed by a quarter of the respondents being from North- and South-America. About a fifth each comes from Asia (20%) and Sub-Saharan Africa (19%). Less than a tenth of survey participants lives in the MENA region and a single respondent comes from Oceania.

Apart from their professional affiliation, the participants were also asked about their skills and areas of expertise. The answers to this question are as diverse as their cultural backgrounds, revealing that the potential GLAC Community consists of truly interdisciplinary experts. Most of the respondents consider themselves experts in areas such as (good) governance, policy analysis, international relations, social development and SDGs or they state possessing organizational and management skills on an expert level.

The GLAC Community Network

In an effort to assess the networks and interactions already existing among current or former participants of the GLAC Labs, Global Diplomacy Labs and the Transformation Thinkers Network, as well as the hosting team and the GLAC core team, a social network analysis to X-ray those links was employed. The main findings show that the network is clearly structured along the Labs and that only very few respondents have contacts outside of their respective program. Other characteristics of the networking status quo reveal the following: The network has a rather low density (measuring the existing against all possible connections) and the longer real meetings date back, the less intense are the ties between the participants. Moreover, in order to evaluate the quality of the existing connections, it is not only necessary to look at the numbers but crucial to also consider the frequency of the connections that in this case indicate existing potential for improvement to further connect this loose community. The analysis furthermore offers an insight into the nature of the persons already actively connecting who would have a positive influence on the cohesion of the GLAC Community. Influencers are the actors especially frequently contacted by others, whereas networkers are contacting other community members particularly often and therefore maintain many relationships to other actors. In terms of establishing a vivid community among the members, both influencers and networkers are of undeniable value for encouraging active participation. Other than the connections between the GLAC Community itself, the participants also indicate relationships with the hosting team and the GLAC core team. It becomes clear that some influential hosts play a leading role in connecting participants from different Labs with each other as they have manifold connections themselves. Similarly, participants often mention members of the GLAC core team as one of their connections. These observations make both the hosting team and the GLAC core team members subject of further considerations as to what role they will or should play in the future GLAC Community.

Relevance of the GLAC Community
Despite the fact that the community is not yet established, more than 75% of the respondents already state that the GLAC Community is of (great) importance to them. Another indicator to assess the relevance of the community is the perceived attachment to it. The conducted data shows that the majority of the surveyed participants feel some or even a strong connection to the GLAC Community. On the downside, approximately 33% of the respondents either feel little or even not at all connected to the community – an issue that needs to be addressed in order to form an active and inclusive community. One way of doing so would be by attaching a strong value to the "glue" of the community. Referring to the elements that the members of the community share and view as important, the unique characteristics of the potential GLAC Community according to its future members could be summarized by the following three aspects: 1) An ideational community ("think development differently"), 2) A forum for new ideas and common projects ("do development differently") and 3) An interdisciplinary and diverse network ("be part of a diverse and global group of experts that share a passion for social and political change"). Closely related to the question of attachment to the community is the contrary question of the respondents' counterarguments against a stronger engagement in the community. The predominant majority of participants indicate that they simply did not know about the other members or opportunities to get in touch with them. Many respondents state the lack of personal encounters that would have then led to lasting connections. Nonetheless, these answers demonstrate that insufficient interest in being part of the community is not a significant reason that kept participants from connecting.

Activating the Community: Service offers, topics and communication
Asked for their wishes concerning topics and service offers a future GLAC Community could provide, the vast majority of participants would appreciate networking and exchange opportunities, regional/local meetings as well as online platforms/resources and educational offers such as coaching, mentoring or training. The most demanded topic areas concerning prospective thematic focusses are social inclusion, welfare, poverty reduction, environment, climate change, sustainability, development and the SDGs.
In terms of preferred communication channels, emails rank as a clear favorite ahead of social media like LinkedIn, Facebook or Twitter. Three quarters of the respondents favor receiving information about the GLAC Community via email.

The study concludes with recommendations to establish the GLAC Community that include, among others, an online database that would facilitate getting in touch by providing contact details among the community members, the organization of (regular) regional or local meetings for networking purposes and offering various means of project support ranging from expert consultancy to project funding.