There is a very powerful force behind an innovative mindset towards traditional diplomacy.

The GDL is a community of professionals who are, step by step, changing the world.

The GDL is called GDL because of each and every one of its members.

The idea behind this entire GDL concept is that the problems are common. We share this world. There are not only problems, crises, conflicts. There are also solutions.

Innovative mindset towards traditional diplomacy.
Welcome to the Augmented Reality
There is so much more to see here!

To immerse yourself in Augmented Reality, open your internet browser and go to global-diplomacy-lab.org/publication. Your camera will be activated automatically. Hold it over the AR marker and you’re ready to go!

co-creation noun: a way of working together where people from different backgrounds are invited to jointly produce a product or service that will benefit all of them.

Global challenges need global answers for local implementation. Whether pandemics, climate change, poverty or cross-border conflicts: to tackle the complex issues confronting humanity in the 21st century and to achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), we need new forms of collaboration. Traditional diplomacy must open up to new voices, perspectives and expertise—from civil society and business, from culture and academia, from North, South, East and West. It is time for what we call diplomacy 4.0: inclusive, agile, innovative. Shaping a vision of this new diplomacy is the mission of the Global Diplomacy Lab (GDL).

To achieve this, the GDL gathers professionals from various fields and all corners of the earth to develop and test new tools of communication and collaboration, to lend its diverse expertise to external actors, and to formulate concrete propositions for change on the ground—from tackling urban violence in Chicago to envisioning new ways to harness Africa’s youth demographic dividend.

The GDL is supported in this mission by the Federal Foreign Office under the patronage of the Federal Foreign Minister as well as the BMW Foundation Herbert Quandt, the Robert Bosch Stiftung, and the German-American Fulbright Commission. Network partners include the Stiftung Mercator, the Rotterdam School of Management and the Global Leadership Academy of the GIZ, to name just a few. Outstanding representatives of the leading partners’ networks have the opportunity to apply for becoming GDL members. In addition, the GDL has cooperated in its various projects with individuals and organisations from a whole range of spheres across the globe and is open to new collaborations and partnerships.
The Global Diplomacy Lab explores ideas and conducts experiments, overcomes established boundaries and generates something new. The work of a Lab – anywhere in the world, from Germany to Canada to Ghana – is based on cooperation: between members, but also between members and the challenge holder. Out of these unusual collaborations, new solutions for a set challenge emerge.

The Lab at Work: Local Engagement from a Global Perspective
As in a real-life scientific laboratory, the GDL could not be what it is without the research conducted by its members. But while academic conferences centre on delivering already completed papers, the Global Diplomacy Lab conducts its research on site. Under this concept, the GDL incorporates site visits into the Labs. During the 2018 Lab in Chicago, the GDL worked with more than 30 different community partners – providing an opportunity to get to know many different approaches to countering youth violence, but also for the local organisations to meet and establish cooperations with one another: a new local ecosystem of activists was born thanks to the engagement of the GDL and was maintained even after the end of the Lab.

The GDL is uniquely suited for this type of community mobilisation and engagement. This is in part due to its member-driven structure: members put forward ideas for topics and formats, and they are encouraged to involve organisations or individuals from their own network.

Diplomacy in Practice
Each Lab represents a form of diplomatic practice for the participants, whether or not they are diplomats in their professional lives. The Lab is a space for tackling social innovation, for individual and collective growth, and for building a more inclusive and increasingly global diplomatic future. It is these collaborations on the ground that imbue the name “Global Diplomacy Lab” with meaning.

The concentration of knowledge and experience leads to an explosive added value, which each member brings back into their very own community and environment.

The Dean of the GDL Ruprecht Polenz (left) with members and Stefan Biedermann (FFO, right) at the 9th Lab in Chicago, 2018.
The GDL is known for its member-driven organisational spirit and its courage to implement New Work methods. With its curiosity and the ambition to shift traditional diplomacy on to more inclusive territory, different formats and methods are being tested and implemented in GDL’s work. Some formats are unusual for traditional diplomacy, but incredibly important because they allow for dialogue among equals.

**GDL’s Gallery Walk**
Members visit galleries close to lab locations and introduce themselves by means of gallery exhibits. Members are invited to pick an art object and explain how it relates to their personal, professional background and/or the conference topic. The method makes it possible to introduce oneself and one’s work and at the same time try to interpret art objects as well as explain why the object was chosen.

**DiploHack**
DiploHack combines the specific know-how and skill sets of diplomats, social entrepreneurs, tech developers and designers with those of journalists, academics, NGOs and businesses to ‘hack’ traditional diplomatic problems in start-up style groups. This method is designed similar to a hackathon. Participants work as solution-oriented as possible, so that the result can be applied. DiploHack was founded by Jon Pelling (Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and Weijer Losecaat Vermeer (Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

**Peer-to-peer Open Space “Networked Diplomacy”**
Format “Each one teach one”: Teaching a Diplomatic Skill
Members can sign up to teach a specific skill which can be applied in different working fields. The idea of this method is to use and pass on helpful skills from peer to peer. Furthermore, the members can exchange ideas about different ways of working and methods which can be applied to one’s own work or volunteering. A guiding question of the format is: What can traditional diplomats and other international actors learn from each other? How can they cooperate towards mutually desirable outcomes?
Lab Soundbites

1st Lab, Founding Meeting
Trust in Global Affairs: Just a Dream?
32 alumni of the Federal Foreign Office, the BMW Foundation Herbert Quandt, the Robert Bosch Stiftung and the Stiftung Mercator were invited to participate in the founding of the Global Diplomacy Lab together with Ruprecht Polenz, who became its Dean.

To open up creative pathways for more inclusive diplomacy, GDL seeks to identify experimental approaches focusing on cross-sectoral knowledge exchange and conducting equal dialogue.

2nd Lab
Fragmentation vs. Integration: Towards a More Inclusive Global Order
The unique and unconventional format of the GDL Labs draws media attention in the host cities while bringing together representatives of a variety of sectors and creative individuals to discuss meta-topics related to international politics.

3rd Lab
Status: unresolved! – Designing Migration Policies for the Future
New Ideas for Tackling the Refugee Question
“The groups came up with a host of new ideas, from migration apps (the MigrApp) to help refugees share information along migration routes, and a scheme called ‘Policy makers Without Borders,’ in which government officials volunteer to spend two to four weeks offering their services in a refugee camp, on their own time. Instead of having reporters and TV cameras hovering behind them waiting to pick up soundbites, the policy makers would also document their experiences themselves. This last idea came from a group that included Imran Simmins, a talkative diplomat from the South African embassy in Berlin who thinks MPs and civil servants need to know what it is like to be a refugee.”
Extract from Deutsche Welle article about the third Lab

4th Lab
Do the Ends Justify the Means? The Significance of International Law and Moral Standards in Diplomacy
Visits to relevant organisations are the best way to put the Labs’ topics into a meaningful context, experience the issues first-hand and fulfill the GDL’s commitment to see the bigger picture and include unheard voices. The fourth Lab focussed on the responsibility to protect and included visits to the following organisations:
- Alexianer St. Hedwig Psychiatric Hospital
- Center for Political Beauty
- German Historical Museum
- Pirate Party Germany
- Violence Prevention Network

5th Lab
Decoding Global Diplomacy: Balancing Power through Information Technology

Follow-up from Global Affairs Canada
“Since the Lab, we have continued to advance and refine our work on developing and executing campaigns. The Open Situation Room working groups teased out interesting concepts and proposals that continue to percolate within our team and are being considered as we continue to work on supporting internationally oriented advocacy campaigns. In particular, work on identifying and engaging influencers has improved immensely and the idea of “validation” continues to be an interesting one. The acquisition and use of more powerful tools has proven beneficial.

Storytelling has also advanced considerably, through improved guidance and training for staff abroad as well as a renewed focus on the story journey and how digital assets and partners can play a vital role. There were many fascinating ideas provided during the Open Situation Room. As our work evolves, our team will keep them in mind and look at how they can help support the efforts of the offices abroad.”
6th and 7th Lab

Buenos Aires, Argentina
18 to 21 June 2017

Berlin, Germany
19 to 22 November 2017

Cutting-Edge Networks: Interweaving Regional Capacities for Mass Atrocity Prevention

Challenge: Does realpolitik prevail in the end? What about the responsibility to protect? What role do interests, morals and international law play in such issues?

The Lab was co-hosted by the Auschwitz Institute for the Prevention of Genocide and Mass Atrocities.

Local partners
• ESMA Museum and Site of Memory
• House for the Right to Identity (Casa por la Identidad)
• Journalist Cooperative Lavaca
• Metropolitan Foundation (Fundación Metropolitana)
• Regional Coordinator of Economic and Social Research (CRIES)
• Remembrance and Human Rights Center Ex-ESMA
• Remembrance Park (Parque de la Memoria)
• Community Project Thirty and Everyone (Treinta y Todos) at Villa 31

“Before coming to the Lab, I really had quite limited expectations about how useful this very specific topic within the Latin American context would be for totally different geographical areas. But after coming here, I see how things are similar, how the problems are almost identical, how the approaches that can be used to solve all these problems or to find solutions are almost identical.”
— Dilshad Muhammad, GDL member and researcher from Syria

Creating the Incubator and Impact Labs

The Incubator Lab gives participants the opportunity to improve their personal and professional skills and develop their ideas further by engaging with the Labs’ topics. At the Impact Lab, members draw on their enriching experiences from the Incubator Lab as well as on their professional backgrounds, aiming to go a step further and develop versatile solutions using unconventional methods.

Creating the position of Methodological Lead

Established after the 5th Lab and held by Elizabeth Maloba during the 6th and 7th Lab, the Methodological Lead position made it possible to streamline the Lab’s methodology, ensure consistency between the Incubator Lab and the Impact Lab, and facilitate the experiments with new formats.
8th and 9th Lab
Strategies for Overcoming Urban Violence: Exploring Global Perspectives & Engaging for Local Prevention

Challenge holders: City of Chicago, Obama Foundation

During the eighth and ninth Lab, a toolkit to help better address urban youth violence – known as SERVUP – was co-created by GDL members, Chicagoans and global experts. If you want to learn more about the toolkit, you can read the report at https://global-diplomacy-lab.org/labs/9th-lab/

10th and 11th Lab
Global Power Shifts: Political and Economic Inclusion for the Next Generation. Collaborating to Realise the Potential of the Demographic Dividend

Challenge holder: German Federal Foreign Office
Challenge: Address the issue of international collaboration to realise the potential of Africa’s demographic dividend

GDL Recommendations to the German Federal Foreign Office
- A Nano Diplomacy Concept: Building Inclusive and Equitable Cities Addressing Demographic Issues
- Five Elements to Foster Mutual Trust and Commitment in Transnational and International Collaboration between Germany and African States
- Data, Trust and the Demographic Dividend: Enhancing Data Reliability and Trust-Building Measures
- Making Diversity Work: Recommendations for Strategic Diversity Management

The Forum Theatre technique was used during the Lab. Find out more about it on pages 12–13!
From Spectator to Spect-Actor: Giving Agency to Those Who Have Lost it

During the 2018 Labs on Youth Violence in Chicago, GDL members were introduced to the practice of Forum Theatre, a specific strategy of the Theatre of the Oppressed, by Angelo Miramonti, Professor of Community Theatre at the Instituto Departamental de Bellas Artes in Cali, Colombia. It proved very productive in the context of the Lab, which worked on solutions to prevent and overcome the destructive force of youth violence in the city of Chicago, but also aimed to compile a toolkit that could be used elsewhere.

Forum Theatre, a method introduced to GDL members during the 2018 Labs, encourages people to speak up against oppression—on stage and in real life.

Gang Membership—The Only Way?
Given situation: School in Chicago.

Actor I: Teacher.
Actor II: Jay, a student who is failing due to problems at home.
Actor III: Don, a gang member who is only sporadically in school.

Don [to Jay]: So what did I miss?
Jay [to Don]: Not much. This exam. My father is still ill, and my mom still has no money. I have a job at the grocery store—I can start my apprenticeship there if I graduate this year. Then I can support my family better.

Don [to Jay]: I know a much less complicated way to make good cash, man!

Teacher [comes in, begins to distribute exams]: Good morning. Jay [throws paper on Jay’s desk]; this is another disappointment.
Jay: What? What in the world is wrong with it? This is only because you don’t like me.
Teacher: I’m surprised you are so surprised, Jay. You were not even here much in the past month.
Jay: It’s because of my father, he is still ill and—
Teacher: Do you want to graduate or not?
Jay: If I graduate, I will get an apprenticeship at the grocery store where I work.
Teacher: You won’t graduate. You will fail if you go on like that.
Jay: What? What am I going to do? What if I lose it all?
Teacher: That is your own business. I do not know what you are going to do.
Jay: This system is not fair to me! You are not fair to me.
Teacher: Jay, shut up!

Gang Membership—There is another Way ...

Don [to Jay]: So what did I miss?
Jay [to Don]: Not much. This exam. My father is still ill, and my mom still has no money. I have a job at the grocery store—I can start my apprenticeship there if I graduate this year. Then I can support my family better.

Don [to Jay]: I know a much less complicated way to make good cash, man!

Spectactor I: STOP!

Spectactor I [gets up, goes on stage and takes Jay’s place]: I am telling you very clearly now that I am not interested.

Teacher [comes in, begins to distribute exams]: Good morning. Jay [throws paper on Jay’s desk]; this is another disappointment.
Jay: What? What in the world is wrong with it? This is only because you don’t like me.
Teacher: I’m surprised you are so surprised, Jay. You were not even here much in the past month.

Spectactor II: STOP! [gets up, goes on stage and takes Spectactor I’s place]: I would like to speak to you privately about this after class.

Teacher [improvised]: What do you mean: Do you want to graduate or not?

Spectactor III: STOP! [gets up, goes on stage and takes Spectactor II’s place]: I would like to speak to you after class about how I cannot start an apprenticeship if I do not graduate, and I need money to support my family.

Typically, Forum Theatre starts by presenting an unresolved conflict that escalates over the course of the scene or the play. The audience is confronted with the original, scripted situation once. As the scene is replayed, audience members are asked to rise from the position of the spectator to the spect-actor who can intervene by shouting “Stop!” The spect-actor then assumes the role of the oppressed character and continues with their own made-up script.
Lab Mumbai, India
“The GDL Lab ‘Impact of Urban Design on Inclusive Cities: Intersections and Crossroads’ is an opportunity for the GDL members to help develop a reporting framework for the SDGs at the city level, in line with the New Urban Agenda, and to create a strategy for implementation.”
Elsa Marie D’Silva

Lab Mexico City, Mexico
“We have the opportunity to work with UNDP Mexico as the challenge holder. They were looking for a creative collaboration to approach systemic change. In this sense, we started working in social innovation to address the migration and development nexus in Mexico.”
Edna Martinez

Lab Făgăraș, Romania
“The Lab focuses on the relevance of local communities for diplomacy and the SDGs. While the majority of the world population lives in medium-sized and small cities and rural areas, these people have almost no role to play in international affairs.”
Ștefan Cibian

2020/2021 Labs
GDL grows with every member and every partnership and always remains open to new ideas. To a greater extent than previous Labs, the 2020/21 Labs were initiated and hosted by members and co-created with numerous local partners. Each of these Labs had an online and an in-person phase. Due to the pandemic, the incubator phases were entirely online and significantly longer than previous Labs.

The Role of Local Communities in the Context of Global Affairs
Hosted by Stefan Cibian and the Făgăraș Research Institute and supported by many local partner organisations, ranging from the municipal authorities to civil society organisations and the local church, this Lab encouraged participants to ask critical questions about the role of local communities – such as the community of Făgăraș, Romania – in the context of global affairs.

The Impact of Urban Design on Inclusive Cities
Hosted by the Red Dot Foundation and co-organised by GDL members Elsa Marie D’Silva, Eirliani Abdul Rahman and Rudrani Dasgupta, the Lab in India invited participants to think about the impact of urban design on inclusive cities and to contribute to building a more inclusive and safer city for all inhabitants. This Lab will be an excellent opportunity to develop and try out a model for an inclusive city that could also be applied elsewhere.

Public Diplomacy to address the Human Mobility and Development Nexus in Central America and Mexico
Organised by GDL member Edna Martinez and co-hosted by UNDP Mexico, this Lab aimed to co-design a proof of concept for the collective implementation of the Comprehensive Development Plan in order to examine the phenomenon of ongoing migration at the border between El Salvador, Guatemala and Mexico from the perspectives of sustainability, social justice and economic growth.
GDL Goes Countryside with Ştefan Cibian

Ştefan Cibian: We propose that the GDL community looks at the relevance of small towns and rural areas in global diplomacy, in building global partnerships for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and in addressing emerging security challenges. At the moment, we are identifying challenge holders that would enable GDL members to both engage with the local realities in Transylvania and to support motivated local challenge holders’ efforts to explore such links between local actors and global affairs.

After five years of the GDL, what is your vision for it for the next five years?

The GDL has a unique and special approach to driving global change. For me, the GDL is a community of professionals who are, step by step, changing the world for the better. The more we exercise our ability to address challenges, the better prepared we are to face the significant transformations brought about by technology, climate change and other global challenges in the decades to come. The GDL enables us to do exactly that – to contribute meaningfully to addressing global challenges in various parts of the world, by coming together in a unique cross-sector community of motivated leaders.

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“Instead of traditional diplomacy between governments, the GDL wants to develop an inclusive diplomacy 4.0 that conceptually and actively involves non-state actors with their cross-border opportunities and interests. As in a laboratory, suitable methods are developed experimentally for this.”
— Ruprecht Polenz, Dean

“Mr Polenz has been involved in foreign policy for many years. That’s why he teaches us that there are always three sides of everything: one that you see, one that I see and one that none of us can see.”