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Refugees and migrants between everyday conflict and peace processes

CONFERENCE DOCUMENTATION

Simone Christ, Esther Meininghaus, Katja Mielke, Tim Röing (Eds.) **\ BICC**

SUMMARY

How do refugees and migrants in Germany deal with conflicts in their daily lives? And how do they do so in their country of origin by engaging in peace processes?

This *Knowledge Note* provides key insights into our BICC conference on "Refugees and migrants between everyday conflict and peace processes", held on 5 December 2019 in Bonn, Germany. During this conference, about 50 policymakers, academics, NGO specialists and engaged individuals sought answers to these questions throughout six breakout groups during the conference day. In sum, we drew the conclusions that:

\ Seemingly clear 'categories' such as "refugees", "migrants", or "diaspora" disguise the complex realities of everyday lives of persons who have moved to Germany from abroad.

\ Conflicts that occur between and within diaspora groups in the countries of residence are not merely a reproduction of conflicts that prevail in the country of origin.

\ Persons with a refugee or migrant background are often forced into a transnational life with little opportunity to engage in politics in their country of origin or residence.

\ There is no standardised approach of how to include exiles in Track 1 peace negotiations.

\ Countries of residence need to create opportunities for political participation and civic education created by migrants and refugees themselves.

By summarising each breakout group and plenary discussions of our conference day, this *Knowledge Note* explains the reasons as to why these findings emerged as crucial. In addition, you find recommendations for German and international policy as well as further research in the section 'Major findings'.

Hope for peace. Graffitti, Bashiqa, Iraq

CONTENTS

**Before the opening of the conference ** State Secretary Klaus Kaiser of the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, with Esther Meininghaus and Michael Dedek, BICC (f. l. t. r.)

Refugees and migrants in Germany—Between everyday conflict and peace processes

How do refugees and migrants in Germany navigate conflicts in their daily lives and in their country of origin? On 5 December 2019, BICC invited international specialists from academia, the public sector and non-governmental organisations to Bonn to explore these questions in a conference titled "Refugees and migrants between everyday conflict and peace processes".

The conference was based on findings and follow-up questions which emerged out of the four-year research project at BICC "Between civil war and integration—Refugees and the challenges and opportunities of societal change in North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW)". This project, which was funded by the Ministry for Culture and Research of the state of NRW from 2016 to 2020, researched how refugees and migrants in Germany encounter situations of conflict in two spheres: In their everyday lives where they have settled, and via transnational networks that connect them with their country of origin. It is largely unknown how refugees and migrants proactively live through everyday conflict and navigate peace-making processes. In addressing this issue, the project focused on challenges these individuals face, but also their agency.

Michael Dedek, Director of Administration at BICC, along with State Secretary Klaus Kaiser of the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, opened the conference and warmly welcomed all participants. State Secretary Kaiser emphasised the role of BICC for generating expertise and knowledge related to fragile settings and peace negotiations and how this is relevant for knowledge transfer.

1 \ Do you think that refugees and migrants in Germany are included in (everyday) conflict resolution processes in Germany?

2 \ Do you think they are included in (everyday) conflict resolution/peace processes in their country of origin?

**Michael Dedek ** Director of Administration at BICC, gave a warm welcome to the participants

Guiding questions of the conference

The conference was held under Chatham House rules and was a closed event for invited guests only, without the presence of the media.* Conference participants included, among others, researchers, individuals with refugee or migrant backgrounds, current and former diplomatic staff and specialists from the non-governmental sector.

The conference was guided by the following questions: How do refugees and migrants in Germany deal with conflicts in their daily lives? And how do they do so in their country of origin by engaging in peace processes? To get the discussion going, conference participants were asked to share their perceptions by voting on the the following two questions:

_____

*   For this reason, photographs show BICC staff only.

More than 70 per cent answered "No" to each question. In the ensuing discussion, some participants explained their votes and underlined that it is important to define who is meant by the term refugee and/or migrant and which conflict context they originate from.

Since 2016, the BICC project explored conflicts surrounding the settlement of large numbers of refugees in Germany. The project sought to address the lack of empirical knowledge on the experiences of conflict, conflict resolution and everyday life in Germany among both refugees and migrants. In the course of the project, BICC researchers focused on different dimensions of conflicts, including 1) conflicts and conflict prevention in refugee shelters, 2) conflict transportation between context of origin and Germany, 3) conflicts and challenges during integration processes and 4) peace processes

and the involvement of refugees in Germany, as well as "peace processes from below" that at times take place independently from official talks (e.g. in Syria and Afghanistan). The project findings were presented during the breakout groups throughout the conference.

During the conference, participants were invited to discuss its guiding questions on three different levels: 1) macro and meta level, 2) meso level, and 3) micro level. At each level, two different strands were addressed, one strand dealing with everyday conflicts and conflict resolution and a second strand dealing with peace processes and conflict resolution. Six breakout groups then explored the agency of refugees and migrants in navigating conflict in their everyday life and by participating in peace processes. The following diagram shows the different levels, strands and questions that inspired each breakout group.

	Everyday conflicts and conflict resolution	Peace processes and conflict resolution
"Diasporas" and peace (Macro and meta level)	*How do legal and scholarly categories distinguish e.g. between "diasporas", "refugees" and "migrants"* **Breakout group 1**	*How do legal categories regulate individuals' access to rights and public recognition in UN-led peace processes?* **Breakout group 2**
Group conflict (Meso level)	*How do everyday conflicts among refugee and migrant communities develop in Germany?* **Breakout group 3**	*To what extent can NGOs take conflict dynamics into account when trying to integrate refugees/migrants into peace processes?* **Breakout group 4**
Individual experiences (Micro level)	*How do refugees and migrants straddle the worlds between integrating into German society and maintaining links with their country of origin?* **Breakout group 5**	*How do refugees and migrants handle integrating into German society while also participating in peace processes to end conflict in their country of origin?* **Breakout group 6**

The following sections present key findings of each breakout group as well as highlights of the concluding session and offer four broad takeaways from the conference.

**Simone Christ and Benjamin Etzold ** in Breakout Group 1

How do legal and scholarly categories distinguish "refugees", "migrants" and others?

Breakout group 1 discussed different uses of the terms 'refugees', 'migrants' and 'diaspora' in academia and policy circles, and the problematic nature of using these terms synonymously in policymaking. Participants underlined an urgent need for scholars to make the nuances behind these terms clear to policymakers so that, at minimum, future decisions do not further exacerbate tensions or conflict in countries of origin.

Perceptions of refugees and migrants have changed over time. While refugees were perceived positively after World War II and at the beginning of the Cold War, migration today is often sensationalised in the media. Migrant communities are increasingly likely to be represented as a threat to social cohesion by right-wing media and politicians, and parts of the public consider migrants' ties across different countries as suspicious. Also, the term 'diaspora' is utilised far too broadly by the media and in policy circles, to a point where it becomes synonomous with 'refugees' and 'migrants'.

In academic debates, 'diaspora' relates to a process of mobilisation rather than to a fixed group of people with a perceived common identity. By sharing experiences from field research on diasporas from Burundi, Somalia, Kosovo and Iraq, the panellists demonstrated that diaspora construction is a very complex process, often influenced by interest groups and triggered by an event with mobilising potential such as violent conflict in a country of origin. Diasporas do not naturally emerge as a result of migration.

Many diaspora groups possess transnational linkages to their countries of origin, and some use these links to actively influence conflicts or peace processes. However, diasporas are, contrary to public perception, very diverse in their political views, organisational forms and engagement. Some of their members might support conflicting parties in their countries of origin, while others might not want to be involved in conflicts at all and instead focus on building a life where they have settled. Political actors of some countries of origin might also purposefully try to create diaspora groups for political gains. Policymakers and the public tend to unjustly generalise these diaspora-promoting activities, often portraying diasporas simply as either peacemakers or peace wreckers. This might result in a discourse that links diaspora politics to contentious behaviour and to accusations of them fueling conflicts both in their countries of origin and in places of settlement. As a result, diaspora groups experience tension between their transnational positionality and their autonomy. The question of whether full autonomy for diaspora groups is actually possible remains doubtful. Social media further influences these complex relations between diasporas and their contexts of origin, but also between different diaspora groups, by facilitating information-sharing and the maintenance of transnational linkages.

Categorisations can have a significant impact on the diaspora members' rights

As demonstrated by these inputs, assumptions held by policymakers or the public about diasporas do not correspond to individuals' transnational experiences. They also do not take the feeling of belonging to home countries and places of settlement into account. Post-colonial dimensions and the legacies of past conflicts also play a significant role in transnational relations. Yet, policymakers and the public tend to categorise 'diasporas' according to their motives for migrating, such as "refugees" or "economic migrants". These categorisations can have a significant impact on the diaspora members' rights, access to resources and the possibility to participate in peace processes, but also in policy formation in the country of settlement.

Participants concluded that there is a lack of expertise among policymakers when it comes to transnational communities. Translocality could be a useful analytical concept to promote amongst these actors, as it allows for an understanding of the multifaceted links between diasporas and their places of origin. Policymakers also like to have identifiable partners for policymaking, which results in the privileged position of certain actors that claim to represent diaspora groups or minorities over others, leading to—or exacerbating—conflicts within diaspora groups. To avoid such generalisations, researchers should debunk the use of the term diaspora in policy circles and promote more nuanced and informed policies for these actors to adopt.

**All breakout groups ** asked the particpants to actively share their ideas

UN peace processes:
No standardised approaches

The participants joined breakout group 2 to gain a common understanding of how
the United Nations designs and engages in peace processes that they mediate, for
example in the case of Afghanistan (between 1981 and 2001) and in the
Geneva process for Syria (2012-ongoing).

During this session, it became evident that the United Nations do not apply a standardised approach to setting up peace processes. They have certain mechanisms at their disposal, such as the UN (good offices) missions, Security Council Resolutions and General Assembly sessions. However, the design of conflict-specific processes strongly depends on the experience and preferences of the Special Envoy in charge and on the conduciveness of the international context. In the cases of Afghanistan and Syria, the UN peace processes in both countries differed from each other and also changed over time for several reasons. The Syrian peace process was backed up by a UN mediation mission only; the government was never ousted and has held its seat in the UN General Assembly. Since the permanent members of the Security Council side with the conflict parties, they have produced extreme divisions in the Security Council, manifest in several vetoes. Overall, this impeded progress in conflict resolution as well as humanitarian access.

In contrast, the Security Council members did not scrutinise UN-activities in Afghanistan against the backdrop of the Cold War and anti-Taliban sentiments among the international community. The first UN mission in Afghanistan to engage in peacemaking was established upon request to the UN General Assembly and General Secretary in 1981. In the course of the violent conflict in Afghanistan, several UN missions were deployed, for example, to mediate the negotiations over the Soviet withdrawal (Geneva Accords 1988) or to bring the main conflict parties Northern Alliance and Taliban to the negotiation table in the second half of the 1990s. Unlike in the 1980s, when mediation efforts between two parties to the conflict excluded many resistance groups, the UN mission of the late 1990s (UNSMA) tried to involve all relevant groups, including the Taliban. In 2001, the actual UN peace talks on Afghanistan at the Petersberg near Bonn (Germany) excluded the Taliban and other groups from the conference—a procedure that many criticised.

**Team members ** of the research project at BICC "Between civil war and integration—Refugees and the challenges and opportunities of societal change in North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW)": Simone Christ, Tim Röing, Lena Schellhammer, Katja Mielke, Esther Meininghaus (f. l. t. r.)

Several parallel processes by non-UN actors in current peacemaking efforts in Afghanistan

Current peacemaking efforts in Afghanistan are characterised by the existence of several parallel processes by non-UN actors. Whereas the United Nations is not involved at all, leaders of different countries, as well as international actors, had tried to start their own processes in the past. The United States and Russia opened rivalling tracks for Afghan peace talks with the Taliban. A parallel development can be observed in the Syrian case, with Russia negotiating in Astana and Sochi, Turkey in Ankara and the United Nations in Geneva. Refugees and other Syrians and Afghans in exile who would have been prepared to participate in UN-organised talks were never invited. In the 1980s, exiles did not play a role in the official Track 1 negotiations on Afghanistan; in the late 1990s and in the 2001 conference, exiles around the former King Zaher Shah did participate in conferences, formed delegations and eventually had access to the UN talks on Afghanistan near Bonn. However, it is important to scrutinise which parts of the population they were actually representing in order to understand which, if any, groups were excluded. Since 2002, former Afghan exiles have played a prominent role in Afghan politics.

**Clara Schmitz-Pranghe ** researcher at BICC who works in the project "Trajectories of reintegration: The impacts of forced displacement, migration and return on social change"

UNDPA sought to include Syrian NGOs into the Geneva peace process

In the case of the Geneva process for Syria, UNDPA, through its office in Turkey, sought to include Syrian NGOs based there into the peace process through civil society engagement and background talks. However, specific issues of particular interest to refugees (safe return with security guarantees, property rights) have not been recognised as a separate issue in Track 1 talks that bring together representatives of civil and armed groups at the highest diplomatic level. This is despite the fact that 50 per cent of the Syrian population have been forcibly displaced either inside Syria or outside the country. Syrians who live in camps, in particular, are often not politically organised. Participants identified a tension that can emerge between IDPs who consider the involvement of exiles in the peace process as illegitimate given that these might live in comparatively greater comfort—although this is not always factually the case. Indeed, breakout group participants voiced the need for refugees to be organised and represented in peace processes politically, but they also recognised the challenges of doing so (e.g. prioritising everyday survival, lack of political rights as refugees, costs of travel documents required to attend peace talks, etc.).

**Tim Röing (middle) ** was the moderator of Breakout Group 3

How do everyday conflicts among refugee and migrant communities develop in Germany? The case of the Turkish diaspora

Breakout Group 3 illustrated the theoretical discussions on diaspora with a case study. The panellists presented their field research on Turkish diaspora governance and sought to illustrate how everyday conflicts within refugee and migrant communities develop.

Diaspora policies of the Turkish state have changed over the last two decades as a result of its gradual transition towards authoritarianism. They range from no policies at all to an active mobilisation of the diaspora to support the regime. The state and its branches try to exert control over transnational and diasporic spaces, while the Turkish government has changed the definition of the term "diaspora" to include non-Turkish groups.

Immigrants from Turkey arrived in Germany from the 1960s on, either as political refugees (e.g. Kurds, Alevis, oppositional groups) or as working migrants. When the AKP (Justice and Development Party) entered government in the early 2000s, the Turkish government began to target this diaspora via its transnational state apparatuses due to what the government perceived as their considerable political potential. However, after the 2016 coup and subsequent purging of the state branches, many people fled Turkey to the anticipated security of Europe, creating what one panellist called "the new diaspora". Turkey's handling of this new diaspora could be characterised as extraterritorial repression carried out by transnational state apparatuses such as Diyanet or the National Intelligence Organization (MIT). These have targeted "traitors" with negative propaganda, passport cancellations and even kidnapping. Based on semi-structured interviews in Europe and Turkey, the research presented in this Breakout Group indicates that diaspora governance enables the state to exert both an ideological and a repressive influence over the Turkish diaspora.

Fragmentation of the diaspora communities originating from Turkey

Respondents in the panellists' research highlighted the fragmentation of the diaspora communities originating from Turkey. This is due to the predominance of deep and entrenched conflicts, sometimes with several overlapping lines of fragmentation. These include, but are not limited to, political, sectarian and ethnic conflicts. Interviewees experienced violent encounters in everyday social spheres such as

mosques or schools. Many respondents were branded "traitors" or "terrorists" by members of the Turkish community loyal to the Turkish government. Asylum seekers who arrived from Turkey after the coup in 2016 felt particularly vulnerable due to traumatic experiences of loss and hiding in Turkey and their unstable situation in Germany, where they were often forced to live in shelters. Several respondents lied about their reasons for being in Germany when confronted by other members of the Turkish community or stopped speaking Turkish in public spaces. Another important aspect seemed to be the issue of "class" and the social barrier between the new diaspora (mostly highly skilled, upper-middle-class individuals) and those of "guest worker"-origin. The presence of these issues (political persecution, class conflict, etc.) in Germany indicates a transnationalisation of conflicts.

This session concluded with a discussion on the larger question of how to handle authoritarianism in diasporas. Participants noted the importance of trust among diaspora in the government of their country of settlement—for example, a high level of mistrust against Germany might fuel the rise of authoritarianism in the Turkish diaspora. This led to the conclusion that the movement of conflict through migration remains highly sensitive, as the responsibility for conflicts is often either ascribed to the communities themselves or to the failure of official institutions to resolve them. Participants thus stressed the importance of knowing the local context: A lack of context about the countries of origin, as well as the structures of diaspora communities by the country of settlement could be exploited for authoritarian goals.

**Esther Meininghaus ** gave an input in Breakout Group 4
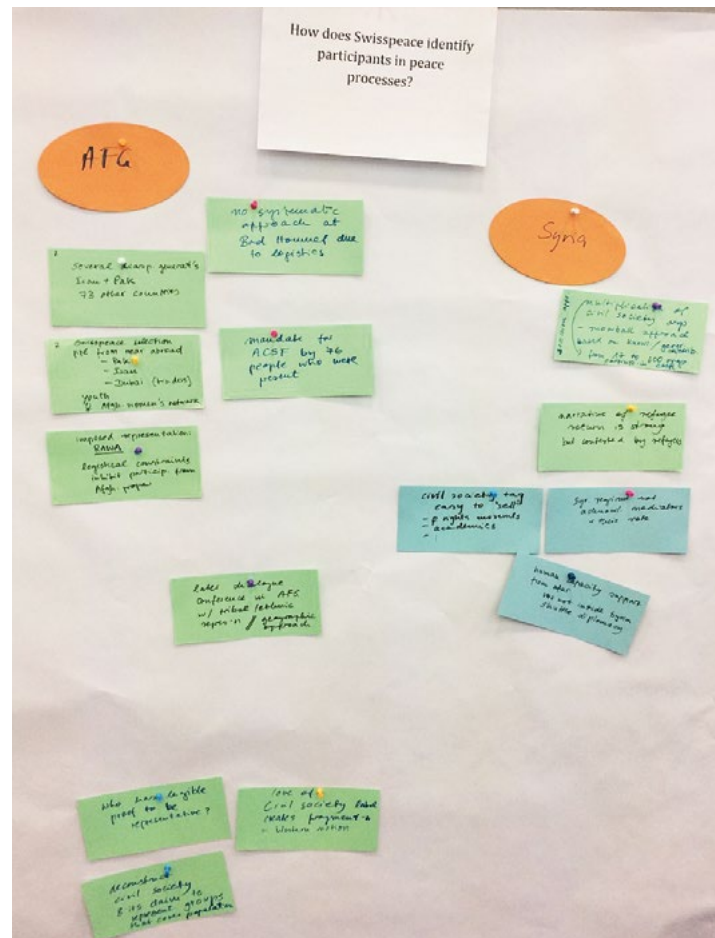
To what extent can NGOs take dynamics of exiles' intra-group conflict into account when trying to integrate refugees or migrants into peace processes?

Breakout group 4 focused on the question of how exiles are engaged in civil society talks by reflecting on the role of swisspeace in the Afghan and Syrian peace processes. While the processes differed, swisspeace faced similar challenges to identifying, selecting and including members of civil society.

In the Afghan process after 9/11, the high-level dip-lomatic meetings (UN peace talks on Afghanistan) were planned separate from a civil society gathering, however, both were organised parallel at the end of November 2001. Swisspeace organised the civil society meeting within ten days and was confronted with significant logistical challenges, e.g. travel organisation. One objective of the meeting was to facilitate civil society interaction with the UN talks on Afghanistan; however, only one delegation consisting of five people was allowed to observe the UN talks. In the Syrian peace process, swisspeace was also responsible for logistical support, travel, communication and translation. Additionally, swisspeace was responsible for identifying important civil society interlocutors in the Syrian peace process and advising the United Nations on their inclusion. swisspeace's engagement, which started in January 2016, can be traced back to the then-United Nations Special Envoy for Syria's initiative to consult widely with Syrian civil society under the broad mandate of UN Security Council Resolution 2254.

**Breakout Group 4 ** participants' thoughts on how swisspeace identifies participants in peace processes

How to identify participants for civil society negotiations in peace processes in Afghanistan and Syria?

The second question participants discussed was how swisspeace identified participants for civil society negotiations in both peace processes. Due to logistical issues, swisspeace could not follow a systematic approach in selecting participants for the UN talks for Afghanistan. 'Random' selection, which was based on personal networks, was complicated by the logistics of bringing representatives to Germany at short notice. Swisspeace focussed their invitation on active Afghans in the diaspora, e.g. Afghans who lived in Pakistan, a small delegation from Iran and Dubai (the latter mostly from the private sector). Active diaspora members were also invited from select European countries and the United States. Afghans from within Afghanistan could not be reached in time to arrange for German visas. In later civil society conferences and consultations held inside Afghanistan, swisspeace followed a geographic approach to balance tribal and ethnic representation, while still engaging international diaspora members. However, due to the fragmentation of Afghan society, it was difficult to decide who could be considered 'representative'. In contrast, the United Nations is responsible for the selection of civil society support room (CSSR) participants in the Syrian peace process. Pre-2011, few civil society networks were visible inside Syria, but the number of participating organisations have since increased from 17 organisations in 2016 to over 600 organisations in 2019. Over half are based outside of Syria. In terms of selection, 220 civil society actors were nominated to participate in nine civil society meetings on the basis of personal networks, snowball approaches and geographical distributions.

**Elke Grawert ** senior researcher at BICC, works in the collaborative research project "Forced Migration and Refugee Studies: Networking and Knowledge Transfer"

arguing that those who lived in Pakistan became Pakistani, those in Iran Irani, while some European and North American diaspora members insisted that they remained the "most Afghan". In Syria, too, it has been difficult to decide who should be included in the talks. Similar to the Afghan case, the question remains as to how to achieve geographic representation, for example by not only focusing on Damascus, but also including participants from Aleppo, Homs or Damascus.

In sum, the situation of civil society actors within Afghanistan and Syria, and that among exiles, is extremely difficult to grasp, fraught with logistical challenges and influenced by the interests of external parties. Taken together, these obstacles render civil society engagement in peace processes a continuous challenge.

Intentional inclusion or exclusion of certain groups for the sake of effectiveness?

The last question focussed on the intentional inclusion or exclusion of certain groups for the sake of effectiveness. Despite the parallel Civil Society Conference organised by swisspeace, the Afghan civil society had no formal role at the UN peace talks on Afghanistan. While swisspeace continued to work on the inclusion of civil society in the official process, the question as to "who is civil society in Afghanistan" and who can represent it arose multiple times in the ensuing post-conflict reconstruction process. Questions also arose on how much displacement had changed Afghan population groups, with some
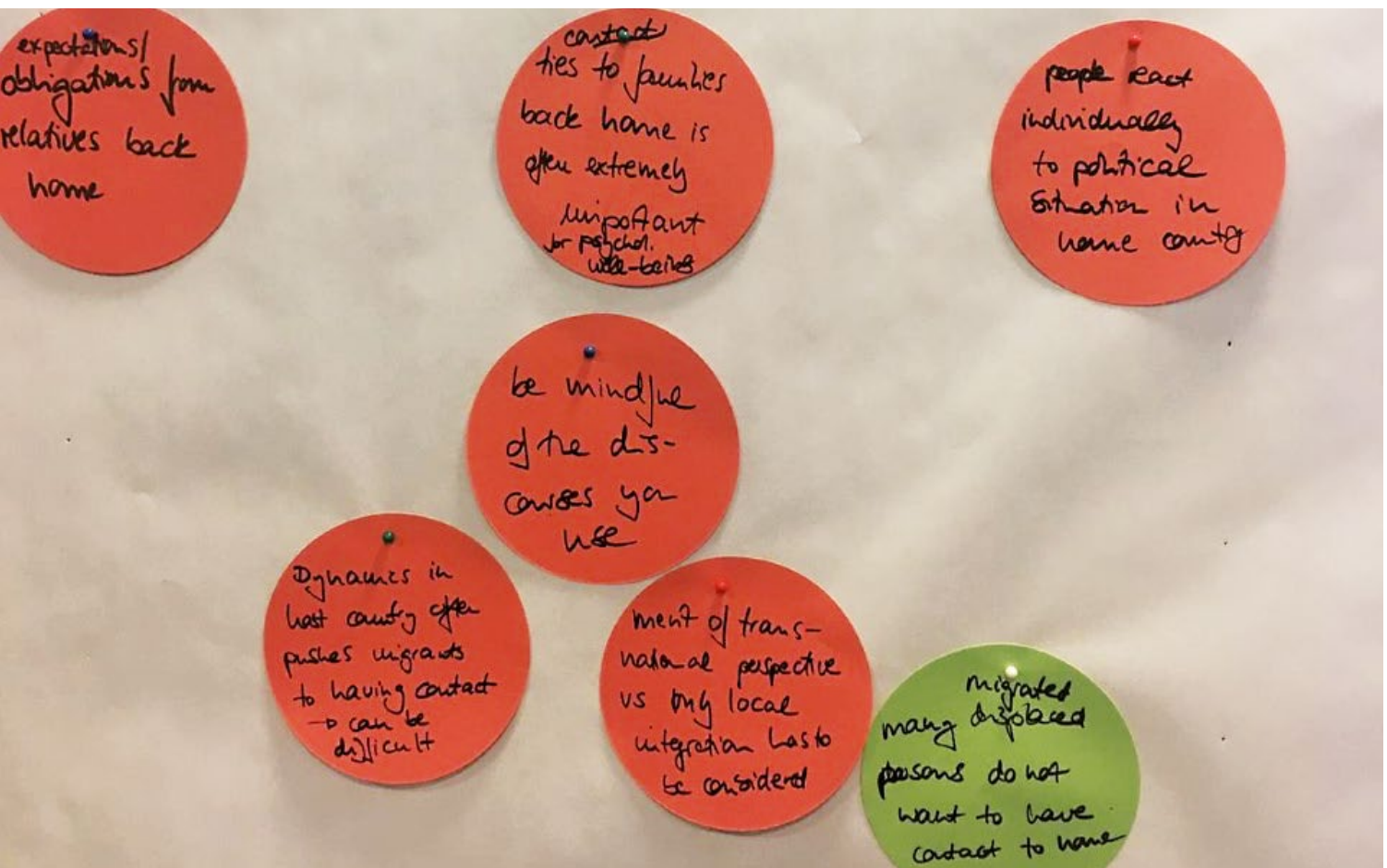
**Breakout Group 5 ** discussed which difficuties refugees and migrants encounter when they try to settle in Germany

How do refugees and migrants straddle the worlds between integrating into German society and maintaining links with their country of origin in their everyday lives?

Breakout Group 5 showed that transnational ties are not only a feature of diaspora groups but are also deeply ingrained in refugees' and migrants' everyday lives. While they are facing the challenge to integrate and settle down in Germany, refugees and migrants also maintain links with family members in different places. Often, families are forced to organise their lives transnationally, as parts of the family are still in the conflict region or live in refugee camps.

The conclusions drawn in this breakout group are based on long-term observation of integration processes of migrants and refugees. Legal status and language skills are among the challenges that refugees encounter during the integration process and that determine in- or exclusion from society. Also, getting recognition for their education and professional achievements has proven to be extremely important. Support by friends, families and volunteers has been crucial to overcoming these structural barriers, as official support is mostly insufficient or lacking completely. The example of a refugee from Afghanistan—a medical doctor who was not allowed to work for several years—showed that if a daily routine is missing and refugees are not allowed to work, this can result in a personal psychological crisis. Women from Iran were also highly skilled, but due to their insecure legal status and following legal framework, they worked far below their qualification and only on short working contracts.

Many refugees have to deal with their traumatic experiences

Even years after having initially been displaced, many refugees have to deal with their traumatic experiences, in particular, if they have not received any psychological or medical support. Even though they have managed to live in stable conditions and the initial displacement situation happened a long time ago, the traumatic experience prevails and can haunt them.

Sometimes, families are forced to live transnational family lives across different places and countries due to restrictions on family reunification. This situation is a huge emotional challenge for the people affected. In some cases, refugees choose unskilled jobs over qualifications, because they have to earn money to support their relatives abroad. It is essential to keep in mind that transnationalism is not always a benefit and not always something refugees engage in voluntarily. Many would rather focus on building up their lives in Germany instead of having to live a transnational family life.

Most who become active in exile had already been politically organised in their countries of origin

When most are struggling to cope with their everyday lives, how can refugees and migrants get involved politically? We should be careful not to assume that those who get involved politically represent the interests of a collective where most just want to get by. Rather, the reasons for political actions are almost always to be found in a person's life story, as most who become active in exile had already been politically organised in their countries of origin. Also, wars and conflicts in homelands prove to be extremely challenging for refugees, as family matters are important to them and family members of politically active refugees may be exposed to numerous risks. Some refugees did not show any ethnic affiliations when they came to Germany, but as the war in the homeland intensified, they became highly ethnicised. Moreover, polarisations in-between different refugee groups from the same country of origin arose. Processes of re-ethnicisation could be exploited by political actors, where some countries of origin are pushing for further influence through diaspora mobilisation. However, each case has to be looked at individually to avoid generalisations. Individuals might react very differently to the same political stimuli, according to their experiences and their life histories.
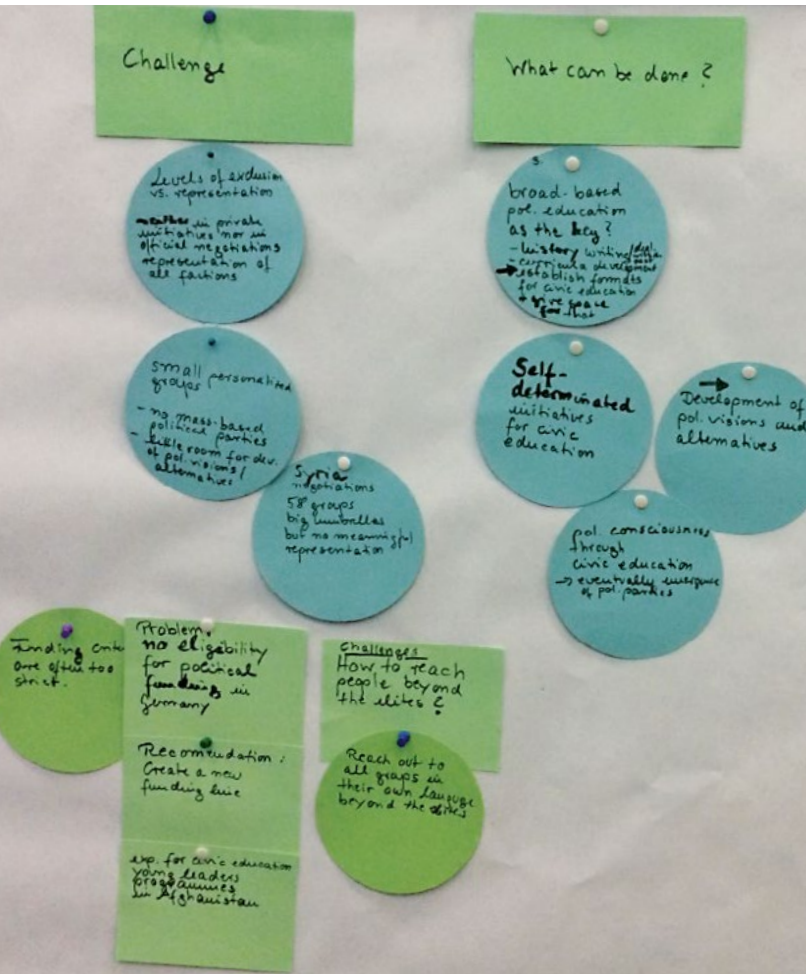
Thus, the panel showed how migrants and refugees face the challenge to straddle the worlds between integrating into German society—dealing with issues such as legal status, language or traumatic experiences—and maintaining transnational ties with family or as policital actors. The experiences vary between the indviduals, and it is not always the choice of refguees and migrants to live in transnational spaces.

**Katja Mielke ** shared her research results on how peace processes were influenced by Afghan migrant communities

To what extent can refugees and migrants also engage in peace processes on their country of origin?

Complementing the previous two sessions on UN peace processes (Track 1) and civil society inclusion, Breakout Group 6 discussed peace processes and political engagement for peace initiated by, for example, Afghans and Syrians themselves.

**Breakout Group 6 ** "How can representativeness in peace processes be strenghtened?"

flict parties to a conference in Munich in August 2001 out of the subjectively perceived urgent need to bring the different fighting factions to one table. Foreigners were purposefully excluded from this meeting, which concluded with an eleven point resolution for a follow-up conference. Both examples demonstrate varying extents of individuals' agency and the significance of strong personal networks for mobilisation in peacemaking efforts.

Syrian-led political initiatives for peace

In comparison, many Syrian-led political initiatives emerged after decades of repression only with the beginning of anti-regime protests in 2011, and many leading intellectuals and human rights activists had spent long years in prison. This meant that, to formulate political demands, new opposition bodies needed to be created, often from scratch. One of the few Syrian-led peace conferences to this end was the Antalya conference held between 31 May and 3 June 2012. This conference was financed by a Syrian family and hosted 350 Syrians from different (political) backgrounds, such as members of the Damascus Declaration, an alliance for change founded in 2005, and Leftists. Although they elected a council and decided on a list of resolutions, Syrian-led initiatives such as these were soon after superseded by the UN-mediated Geneva processes and, later, the competing Astana format, which were characterised by a strong interference of foreign actors.

In their format, the UN-led Syria and Afghanistan processes are characterised by a high variety of different actors and groups, and also by a different level of representation and exclusion. All factions were neither represented in self-initiated peace processes nor in UN-led talks.

Peace processes beyond international summits are usually concealed in official history-writing. Participants, however, discussed two examples of bottom-up peace processes for Afghanistan and one example for Syria to illustrate their importance. For Afghanistan, the initiatives of Dr Yusuf in the 1980s and early 1990s and the peace conference organised by a private person in Munich in 2001 served as examples. Dr Yusuf, Afghan Prime Minister in the 1960s, led a group of politically active Afghans in Germany who favoured consultations with as many different conflict parties as possible to form a technocratic government. They initiated talks and participated in events advocating their proposal, also involving the Afghan government and international actors, including the United Nations. In contrast, a private person achieved to invite representatives of all con-

How representativeness in peace processes can be strengthened

Consequently, Breakout Group 6 participants discussed how representativeness in peace processes can be strengthened. The panellists argued that both Afghan and Syrian peace processes lack broad-based political parties or interest groups with representative constituencies. Additionally, citizens of neither country have access to critical history writing of their country, since it has not entered education curricula (Afghanistan) or it is subject to state propaganda (Syria). Likewise, civic education has not been taught systematically in either Afghan or Syrian schools, which renders the challenge of developing feasible and concrete visions of alternative political systems and policy programmes very difficult—let alone of feeding these into peace processes. If long-term visions for peace are expected to emerge, the panellists hence argued that as a first step, Afghan and Syrian initiatives in Germany should receive support so that they can create their own civic education programmes, including critical history writing and support in the development of formats for dealing with the past. Panellists recommended that these initiatives be supported and that Afghans and Syrians working in such initiatives be able to discuss ideas and decide on contents autonomously. This recommendation is not without challenge. For example, the question was raised as to how to reach people beyond the elites, as well as the question of how legal frameworks need to be changed for obtaining funding for such initiatives in Germany. So far, funding is either made available for humanitarian aid or development activities, but not for civic education initiatives led by non-German citizens. To prevent a further depoliticisation of Syrians and Afghans in Germany and to prevent funding from external states for targeted politicisation, as it can be seen in AKP-funding for certain Turkish initiatives in Germany, breakout group participants argued that a new German funding line is needed.

Participants \ animatedly continuing the discussion in a coffee break

1. Are refugees and migrants in Germany included in (everyday) conflict resolution processes in Germany?

Rather yes	5,6 %
Rather no	77,8 %
Do not know	16,7 %

n=36 (single response)

2. Are refugees and migrants in Germany included in conflict resolution / peace processes in their country of origin?

Rather yes	14,3 %
Rather no	74,3 %
Do not know	11,4 %

n=35 (single response)

**Conference poll ** The participants were asked about the role of migrants and refugees in Germany in conflict resolution as well as in peace processes in their countries of origin

The role of exile groups and activists in peace processes: How to overcome feelings of hopelessness?

The conference concluded with a round table discussion, which brought together representatives of academia and civil society. They discussed challenges facing diaspora groups and refugees who desire taking part in peace negotiations.

Proceeding from the question of how exile groups and activists could be supported in their activities, participants highlighted the lack of programmes that enhance meetings and information exchange between Track 1, 2 and grassroots-level peace negotiations. This gap contributes to a deep feeling of disappointment in Syrian and Afghan exile groups, for example, over social and political developments in their countries of origin. At the same time, these groups do not believe that their active participation in peace processes is desired.

There are multiple causes which impede a more direct participation of exile groups. First of all, the opportunity for an exchange between exile groups and facilitators at negotiations, in particular with Western organisations, is missing. Second, exile groups face a lot of (political) headwinds in host countries. Top-down approaches mainly pursued by Western organisations often ignore the importance of understanding the conditions under which exile groups live in their country of exile. Third, the lack of knowledge and experience, especially among Syrian exile groups, concerning functional processes of political systems and political party life is an obstacle. As most citizens of Afghanistan and Syria only have limited access to political participation and even smaller chances of obtaining a position in any future government, they lose interest in studying disciplines related to politics.

International policy should prioritise the creation of dialogue platforms for refugees and migrants

To overcome these feelings of hopelessness, more approaches to supporting individuals are needed as well as the establishment of informal safe spaces where exile group members can voice their opinions freely. For this purpose, international policy should prioritise the creation of dialogue platforms which allow individual refugees and migrants to talk about their own narratives of displacement. Furthermore, participants stressed the need to involve social workers or psychologists because they provide indis-

pensable assistance in dealing with trauma. To successfully implement integration and peace processes, all actors need to listen to each other as a first step. Countries that host large exile groups should also facilitate their participation in formats that enhance civic education about political processes. Rather than treating exiles merely as immigrants, civic literacy is a precondition for political awareness.

An ongoing exchange of experiences and knowledge between actors involved in different tracks of peace negotiations could be a good starting point for the involvement of exile groups. This could then also be used to facilitate return programmes and reconstruction processes. The return topic is a sensitive one because refugees and migrants are facing serious challenges in their countries of origin, such as the risk of being killed, imprisonment, assumptions about their (lack of) political loyalties, or reproaches for (alleged) privileges of having lived abroad. Moreover, conditions of return are set by external actors and not by themselves.

Some participants emphasised that many Syrian and Afghan exiles possess skills and financial resources to promote reconstruction processes in their countries of origin. In their view, researchers often tend to overlook that many exile groups are already engaged in reconstruction efforts in their home countries. Without the positive impact of remittances, for instance, some national economies would break down.

The round table participants concluded that top-down-approaches to peacebuilding are shortsighted and misleading. Successful implementation of peace processes and reconstruction requires the active involvement of exile groups' perspectives, skills and ideas. For this purpose, conditions that encourage individual members of exile groups to take part in these processes should be strengthened by (inter-) national policy.

**The annual academic conference was a joint effort of many ** Marie Wurscher and Susanne Zacharias (r.), BICC team members

How to cope with conflicts?
Lessons from refugees' and migrants' everyday lives and engagement in peace processes

Based on the synthesised insights of the conference day,
the organisers identify five major findings.

1 \\ Seemingly clear 'categories' such as "refugees", "migrants", or "diaspora" disguise the complex realities of everyday lives of persons who have moved to Germany from abroad.

Diaspora populations—for example the Turkish community in Germany—are not homogeneous but include people who have migrated for very different reasons. These include persons who could be considered working migrants and those who claim asylum. Moreover, they comprise different generations as well as different social classes, religious or ethnic groups and have possibly changing political affiliations. These are not necessarily well connected and may even have conflictive attitudes toward one another. Afghans or Syrians living in Germany do not even designate themselves as diaspora.

2 \\ There is no standardised approach of how to include exiles in Track 1 peace negotiations.

Individuals are at times actively involved in resolving conflict in their countries of origin, which also includes formal peace processes. However, as revealed in the conference, participation in Track 1 peace negotiations is not systematic. Sometimes exiles are given a considerable share of seats, as was the case in the UN peace talks on Afghanistan in 2001, but this is not the rule. There is equally no standardised approach of how to map, choose and include exile groups.

3 \\ Conflicts between and within diaspora groups in the countries of residence are not merely a reproduction of conflicts that prevail in the country of origin.

At the meso-level, the example of Turkey and the Turkish community in Germany shows that conflicts change as a consequence of conditions in the country of settlement. How and why these conflicts shift remains scarcely researched and understood. It has, therefore, not been possible yet to take such dynamics into account when setting up peace processes, although this should urgently change. This topic warrants greater attention in future research.

4 \\ People with a refugee or migrant background are often forced into a transnational life with little opportunity to engage in politics in their country of origin or residence.

Individuals with a refugee or migrant background often struggle to integrate into the country of residence due to legal restrictions (e.g. access to job markets). This often leads to forced transnationalism: Because family members are trapped in countries of origin or transit, family lives are reconfigured in virtual spaces. While not every person who leads such a transnational life wishes to engage in politics in their country of origin or residence, some are willing and able to initiate and participate in peace processes comparable to Track 1 and involving the major armed factions but have little access or opportunity to do so.

5 \\ Countries of residence need to create opportunities for political participation and civic education created by migrants and refugees themselves.

Currently, Germany does not provide opportunities for civic literacy enhancement that is organised and conceptualised by the exiles themselves, although civic education programmes may have a positive impact on exiles' relations with their country of origin. Overall, whether from a refugee or migrant background, individuals often encounter high expectations (e.g. integration into the labour market, learning the local language), but have few political rights and are largely not perceived as political subjects. Those who wish to engage for peace are given little support. Conference participants concluded that migrants and refugees should clearly not feel obliged to engage in politics in their country of origin or residence, but that they should ideally have the opportunity to do so if they so choose.