AiS NETWORK MEETING & RETREAT

8.-10.06.2022

Wannseeforum

Berlin

REPORT

Program

Wednesday 08.06.22

13:00	Arrival & Reception
14:30	AiS Welcome Plenum
16:00	Localizing Academics in Exile: A First State of the Art
	Aslı Vatansever, Betül Yarar, Çağla Diner, Aslı Telli Aydemir
18:00	Dinner
19:30	AiS Strategy Session
21:00	Evening Drinks

Thursday 09.06.22

08:00	Breakfast
09:30	Whatever Happened to Solidarity Bernd Kasparek, Christina Rogers, Veronika Zablotzky
11:00	Working Group-Time
13:00	Lunch
14:30	Academic Freedom Today Olga Hünler, Ertuğ Tombus, Florian Kohstall
16:00	Cake & Canoe at the Lake
18:30	Out of House Dinner

Friday 10.06.22

08:00	Breakfast
09:30	Working Group Prep-Time
10:30	AiS Strategy Talk
12:30	Lunch
14:00	AiS Network Meeting Plenum
15:00	Departure

Locating Academics in Exile: A First State of the Art

The first session highlights different ongoing and accomplished research projects on "academics in exile". While for a long time the public debate on scholars has been dominated by a romantic picture of émigré life as the peak of intellectual and artistic activity, recent research highlights the hardship of normal everyday life of scholars in a competitive academic environment. Through the reflection of experienced conditions displaced scholars have turned to "situated knowledge", becoming the subject and object of their research. This constitutes an important contribution to the research on the German and European higher education system as it holds a mirror to a system that has difficulties not only to critically reflect and assess itself, but also to move and adapt to the challenges of what has been coined 'forced internationalization'.

By assessing a first state of the art, we try to open the debate on: how does engaged and situated research offer specific insights to this field of study and what does it do to the individuals involved? What instruments are used to make voices heard and how do exiled researchers situate themselves in the wider debate on reforming higher education in Germany and elsewhere?
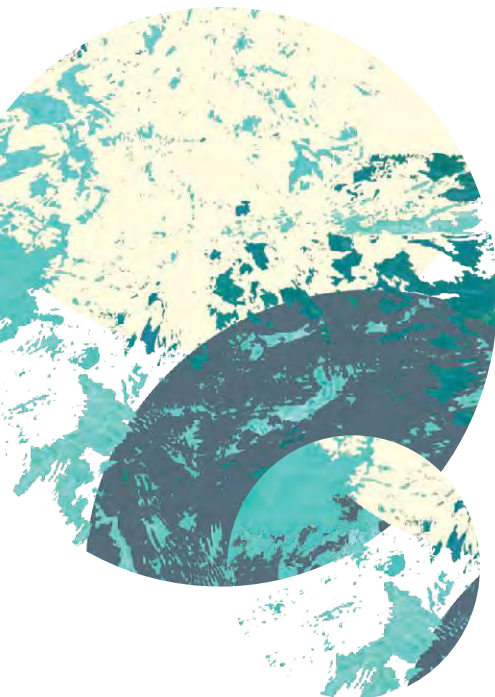
Whatever Happened to Solidarity?

This panel aims at re-thinking the discursive practices of solidarity today. May it be in the context of the summer of migration, the global pandemic, social movements tackling issues of labour inequality, climate change and racist discrimination or in the context of crisis and war in Afghanistan Syria, Ukraine, Yemen or other places, the call for solidarity is invoked in many instances. At the same time, there is a need to investigate how solidarity is reinvented in practice and which power dynamics play into how it is lived today.

The panel brings together members of the transdisciplinary consortium "Transforming Solidarities: Praktiken und Infrastrukturen in der Migrationsgesellschaft" and "Academics in Solidarity" to discuss how the notion has been negotiated in recent research, under which conditions solidarity emerges and is put into practice, and pinpoint what is yet needed in this regard. The panel is an invitation to think about forms of cooperation and mutual responsibility that are not based on charity or necessarily shared interests, identity, community and belonging.

Academic Freedom Today

The goal of this panel is to negotiate how we can grasp key issues of academic freedom today that will help to pinpoint strategies to support and facilitate research without restrictions to specific knowledge and people in the sciences and humanities. There has been a lively debate on academic freedom in recent years in which the latter has been set as 'core value' of academic institutions and as prerequisite for research in many science communities. Different factors have led to a heightened attention for the topic, but empirical and theoretical studies on the contexts and definitions of academic freedom have only recently gained momentum as a topic of inquiry in itself calling for more in-depth transdisciplinary and transnational collaboration on this matter. This panel wishes to highlight the different perspectives towards academic freedom in order to grasp what we mean and need to investigate when dealing with the topic. This includes perspectives from people affected by restrictions to academic freedom and a sensibility for the global networks of scholars at risk that not only hold a rich knowledge on how academic freedom is challenged, but have also set up considerable political and social initiatives to intervene or react to restrictions to knowledge production and the people involved in it.

AiS Network Meeting & Retreat Report
08.-10. June 2022, Wannseeforum Berlin

Academics in Solidarity invited its members for a Network Meeting & Retreat between 08.-10. June 2022 at Wannseeforum Berlin. 35 participants followed the invitation. The event was conceived in order to exchange and network in a semi-closed environment, to create stringer bonds through joint experiences such as working groups, canoeing, forest walks, camp fire and to elaborate strategies to better support scholars in exile in the future, in and outside academia. The thematic concept gave participants the chance to investigate three key issues: First, the situation of migrant scholars working and living in the German research environment. The focus lay here on what one can learn from previous experiences of and research from and on "academics in exile". Second, the attendees discussed the changing concepts and practices of solidarity performed and called for in reference to flight and migration or authoritarian shifts. The main emphasis was put on present-day notions and practices of solidarity in light of existing political struggles. Third, members negotiated matters of academic freedom by discussing the current state of research in home and residency countries and by outlining initiatives dedicated to changing conditions of academic freedom. These topics were not only discussed in respective panels with invited members and guests, but participants also negotiated pressing issues and strategies within working-group sessions during the three-day event and presented the outcomes of these groups on the final day of the retreat.

This report gives a brief overview of the discussion points during the AiS Network Meeting & Retreat and assembles key findings of the working-groups.

Panel #1: Localizing Academics in Exile: A First State of the Art

In the first panel discussion, AiS scholars discussed the situation of exiled researchers in Germany. Aslı Vatansever, Betül Yarar, Çağla Diner and Aslı Telli Aydemir contributed with insights from their research or interventions and discussed with further authors on this topic, such as the chair Florian Kohstall. The introduction to the panel presented a plethora of research in the field with the aim of gaining more insight into research lives of migrant scholars, i.e. Aslı Vatansever's book *At the Margina of Academica. Exile, Precariousness, and Subjectivity* (2020); Betül Yarar's research projects „In-formal Opportunities and Restrictions of German Universities Reflected in Experiences of Exiled Scholars" in Bremen and „The Inclusion of Refugee-Exile Scientists into Academic Labor Markets" in Hamburg; Çağla Diner and Aslı Telli Aydemir's AiS Policy Brief *Supporting Scholars in Exile: Towards Long-Term Career Path Solutions;* and the AiS book *Academics in Exile: Networks, Knowledge Exchange and new Forms of Internationalization* (2022) featuring articles by AiS members, of which Florian Kohstall, Ergün Özgür and Olga Hünler were present at the meeting. Ergün Özgür added to the discussion by highlighting her publication within the edited volume on critical scholars from Turkey and her investigations on their opportunities in Germany. The presenters stressed the general precarity within the German academic system. Exiled researchers face the reality of a highly competitive academic environment with very limited chances of a permanent position. The German academic system offers tenured tracks for a very small percentage of people, almost all job positions are fix-term positions of up to one to three years. There is a lack of long-term funding opportunities and a general dependence on third-party funding that is creating a highly mobile and precarious group of scholars that make up about 90% of the academic labor market. This means that all scholars working in academia are precarious per se with exiled scholars being an even more disadvantaged group within this already highly precarious environment as exiled researchers face additional restrictions due to their status, language skills, interruptions in their research life, access to pensions and health care and have to become accustomed to new networks and societies.

Presenters added that there is still a need for an adequate support for exiled scholars and the inclusion of refugee-exile scientists into the academic labor markets. It was, among other, highlighted that many programs catered to scholars at risk at first glance seem like 'humanitarian' actions to support scholars, but are rather driven by notions of excellency catering their support only to a few highly skilled international researchers. Presenters and the audience pitched in on this insight, thereby also jointly problematizing the term 'scholar at risk'. The term may imply staging oneself as passive victimized subject, although many scholars meanwhile have been living abroad for a while and are not considered 'at risk' anymore in the strictest sense, but rather searching for long-term employment opportunities where they are forced into this category of 'risk' to receive funding. Many of these scholars face difficulties in the German university and administration system due to a lack of tenured tracks, short-term scholarships and a non-recognition of previous scholarly work keeping them at the periphery of academia. The chair pointed out that research on scholars in exile has gained momentum as the presentations and the AiS book show, but that further examinations are needed, not only to inform the broader public, but also to make these issues more visible for university leadership as part of a broader insight into the marketization of university systems in Germany. Finally, coping options focusing on research lives were negotiated either highlighting individual solutions that try to play the system and/or force people to leave academia and look for jobs in other sectors or fighting the system collectively by organizing in networks for public outreach and creating jobs.

Panel #2: Whatever Happened to Solidarity?

The second panel set out to investigate how solidarity has been reinvented in practice in recent years and which power dynamics play into how it is lived today. The session chaired by Christina Rogers kicked off with a presentation by political theorist Veronika Zablotzky, who presented the work of the interdisciplinary consortium "Transfoming Solidarities: Praktiken und Infrastrukturen in der Migrationsgesellschaft". She explicated the setup, core themes, research interests and approaches of the consortium, thereby highlighting her specific engagement as political theorist in sharpening the concept of solidarity and its investigation considering contemporary challenges. She highlighted that their concept of solidarity is rooted in working together across differences rather than finding alliances across sameness, may it be identity, nationality or other form of normative claim. Thus, solidarity stresses ethics and solidarity grounded in a political stance rather than in morals, thereby not being necessarily linked to compassion, empathy or pity. This understanding avoids pressuring people into support on the grounds of a bad consciousness or demands by society, but rather points towards a more positive political attitude towards creating commons in solidarity practices.

Zablotzky's presentation was echoed in a lively debate among the participants with regard to the practices of solidarity in general but also more in particular with regard to exiled academics. The discussion with the audience lead to the suggestion of aligning different understandings, i.e. empathy with political actions to cover the broad field of possibilities for solidarity. Participants debated if empathy may be necessary to be able to put oneself in the other person's shoes in order to understand their needs or if solidarity is rather acting against certain injustices, regardless of personal understandings in this matter. Finally, there were clarion calls from the audience to consider very practical examples of solidarity as the most important perspective, asking to approach the notion of solidarity from the perspective of concrete practices to support colleagues in their struggles.

Panel #3: Academic Freedom Today

The third panel was dedicated to grasp key issues of academic freedom today in order to pinpoint strategies to support and facilitate research without restrictions to specific knowledge and people. Florian Kohstall as chair of the panel highlighted how the push for internationalization by university administrations, ongoing migrant movements and a rise in populist and authoritarian shifts have given the topic a heightened attention in the public and university debates. One example under discussion was the academic freedom index, which shall offer university administrations guidance on the level or academic freedom in different countries worldwide. As this mapping project can only deliver a certain picture with its own limits, the panelists Olga Hünler and Ertuğ Tombuş shared with the audience how they have approached issues of academic freedom in their research and practice. Olga Hünler who has investigated historical shifts in academic freedom in Turkey shared how important it is to create an awareness of academic freedom and how she and others have engaged in doing so with the MOOC „Dangerous Questions: Why Academic Freedom Matters". It was stressed how investigations of the meaning and impact of academic freedom remains a difficult endeavor and also how networks like Off University have tried to practically intervene by giving expelled scholars the chance to disseminate their knowledge via self-organized lectures. In the meantime, different initiatives of this kind have emerged and it is worth to join forces in order to highlight their contribution, not only to provide a safe space for academics in exile, but also as an alternative hub of knowledge production. Ertuğ Tombuş pointed out how building the Center for Comparative Research on Democracy of which the Academic Freedom Network is a part, was a way of strengthening research on the topic and also building additional transnational networks dedicated to this issue. Within the discussion it was also highlighted how exiled scholars are increasingly considered as a homogenous group by organizations dealing with scholars at risk, thereby disregarding the political background of each individual and bringing scholars into risky situations in other countries by inviting them to joint panels or events together. It was pointed out that while academic freedom is difficult to define, one component can be creating a high level of uncertainty within a regime: One political technoloy is creating tensions where nobody knows what is considered as safe position or knowledge anymore that one could express freely without being in danger of repression. Political stances could be tolerated on one day and considered problematic on another, creating a situation where nobody knows where a 'red line' is actually crossed. One specific political power is thus one of heightened uncertainty; uncertainty over what is considered as 'critical' at all.

Working Group Presentations

In alternation with the input sessions, participants discussed in four working groups specific issues during the three-day event with the aim of producing a short presentation in the end. The groups were asked to choose the following topics or create themes of their own:
- Sustainable strategies for supporting scholars at risk & research in exile.
- Ideas on the concept and realization of solidarity.
- Conceptions and strategies regarding academic freedom worldwide.
- Notes on what universities or bottom-up initiatives may bring to the table in reacting to conflict, war and displacement.

Working Group Presentations

Working Group #1

The working group presented sustainable strategies to support exiled scholars by designing slides. They located three main areas: Economic measures, institutional steps and legislative structure. The economic measures included research funding where the problem of eligibility criteria and time limitations play a role. The economic measures also dealt with maintaining a track record and localized the problem that previous publications are in the respective native language. The strategies they found were:

- Strategy-1: Specific ERC/MCSA schemes for SARs
- Strategy-2: Regular ERC/MCSA with extended time frames
- Strategy-3: Formal validation of exile as a specific type of career interruption
- Strategy-4: Explicit lump sum for translating at least one previous publication as representative sample

On the level of institutional steps they pinpointed internationalization and highlighted the exclusionary mechanisms of the academic labor market. A second institutional area was the hosting environment that showed a lack of mentorship and departmental collaboration. A third institutional step was access to mental health support addressing the problem of psycho-emotional burden of displacement. Finally career services were addressed that deal with experiences with displaced scholars, where job searches are difficult in a foreign environment and one is not yet familiar with the institutions and databases and also exiled scholars find themselves in a void once the risk scholarship opportunities are exhausted after a few years. Finally, they dealt with feedback mechanisms highlighting that there is a lack of direct contact with funding bodies and a lack of evaluation mechanisms for hosting institutions and funders. The strategies they located to address all these issues were:

- Strategy-1: Quotas for non-EU scholars and Bildungsausländer
- Strategy-2: Orientation services and moving assistance
- Strategy-3: Better structured mentorship programs with regular meetings and constructive feedback
- Strategy-4: Involvement in other colleagues' long-term projects, departmental meetings, and networking opportunities
- Strategy-5: Institutional mental health assistance
- Strategy-6: SAR database and other academic job search platforms exist. However, they are scattered and not well organized. The SAR database should be brought to the foreground and structured in a clearer way
- Strategy-7: Post-fellowship career consulting + inclusion in other departmental projects and/or the mentor's own running projects
- Strategy-8: Regular (anonymized, if needed) evaluation procedures for hosts and funders

The working group finally addressed the legislative structure by including immigration policies into their examination, thereby to the key problem that residence permits are limited to the duration of scholarships. Their strategy to address this was:

- Strategy-1: Decoupling of residence permits from scholarship duration/employment status in the case of displaced scholars (i.e.: default residence permit packages)

Working Group #2

Working group two also addressed strategies to support academics with a slide presentation. Their initial question was how to welcome scholars adequately and suggested more orientation programs by funding and host institutions and more interaction with the local community, including those settling and settled. The orientation programs would ideals address how the programs function, what their challenges are, which opportunities exits and how research grants & budgets can be used. Former scholars should be invited to this meeting to give feedback and share their experiences at the events. The group detected the following challenges for international academics:

- Contracts (job, housing contracts etc.)
- Residence permits
- Insurance
- Social security
- Language (hospitals, kindergarden)
- Kindergardens
- Job security
- Lack of familiarity with the academic system
- Lack of coordination (between funding institution, university and fellow)
- Lack of mobility of civil society
- Differences in treatments towards expat and risk scholars
  (by funding and hosting institutions, alumni, supporting administration issues, meetings, travels, follow up short term fellowships, vaccination rights)
- How to settle and do the research together? (one-year settlement period is necessary & connection with host institutions)

The group pointed out a need for a research plans that may include finding flexible research opportunities, entering a mentorship program to navigate between what people are currently doing and will do in the future, thereby giving special attention to current research, publications, future job or research applications and support for current research and future work. The group also highlighted future job applications and examined the need to address the following questions: When to apply, where to apply, where to find out opportunities, how to apply, from whom to get feedback (administrative, academic purposes, research dissemination and publication) and where to receive support from the research office or international office. They gathered the following issues and strategies:

- long term perspective
- residence permit/citizenship
- language courses and settlement period before the start of the fellowship embedded in the funding
- continued contact with the scientific community during unemployment period (for future academic career, coordination with BAMF and job center)
- bridge funds for application to a new funding or job (i.e. through AiS)
- equal treatment and expectations after certain period
- continued contact with scholars at risk to empower each other, share info and work on decolonizing knowledge and science

Working Group #3

The third working group assembled sustainable strategies for supporting scholars at risk and research in exile with a slide presentation. They stressed the need for: 1) the acceptance of the diversity among migrant scholars and the acknowledgement of their skills; what they can bring to the table by stressing their successes and what they can potentially offer. 2) the need to identify the actors who are willing or capable to work towards this goal within and outside of the universities, including the establishment of new bodies, organizations, institutions, etc. to provide support and consultancy and promoting cooperation among these bodies. They grouped these strategies under four categories:

1- **Targeting internationalization of the universities:**
- English (for research, teaching, administrative level, etc.)
- Support and encouragement of diversity
- Reaching out to German professors and colleagues (consciousness raising activities about diversity, inclusivity, other cultures, religions, colonialism, racism, sexism, etc. as well as informative material regarding the problems and needs of the migrant scholars, etc.)
- Making university administrations more transparent and more importantly accessible to "newcomers"
- Options and strategy development to leave academia

2- **Targeting better orientation of the migrant scholars** (in academia and Germany)
- Trainings and opportunities to develop skills
- Professional advising (everyday life, legal issues, bureaucracy, health insurance, retirement, residency, travel, citizenship, etc.) - addressing the unique needs of the migrant scholars
- Positive discrimination for displaced scholars
- Language support for those who wants to learn German (emphasis its non-conditional character)

3- **Academic activities / networking**
- Access to digital libraries
- Opportunities to facilitate collaboration between MS
- Conference, publishing, project writing opportunities

4- **Reformation of the German academic system**
- Elimination of the extremely hierarchical structure organized around the professorship!
- Elimination of the "6 year rule"
- Permanent positions
- Restructuring of the mentoring and "risk status" conditions
- Encouragement of the horizontal solidarity
- Dissemination of the policy suggestions, strategies, suggestions to universities, and other relevant institutions

Working Group #4

The fourth working group chose to make a video that gives an example of a life of a displaced scholar and that could be used in a campaign video to inform the wider public of the life experiences of scholars in exile. The aim of the presentation was to highlight that the forced migration of scholars features as a transnational forced migration by summarizing the various difficulties that derive from this specific characteristic of migration of exiled scholars.
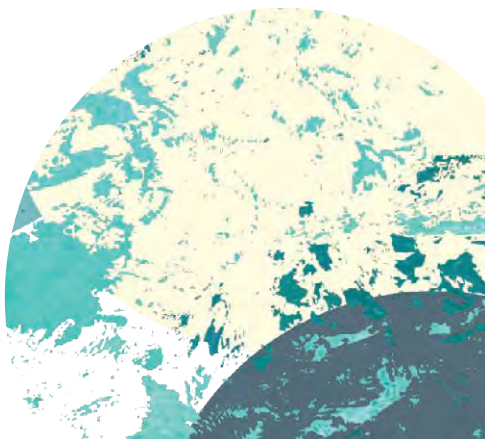
The video begins as a breaking news video headline "Lisa's reloading" from Academics in Solidarity Meeting & Retreat at Wannseeforum that tells the story of a renowned Prof. Lisa from Turkey who lost her job position and her research and has arrived in Germany. A reporter from Ankara tells us the breaking news: Lisa is a 54-year old archaeologist in the Netherlands. Because of the conflicts in her country, she felt threatened for her life and those for her children. She lost her Job and her research materials confiscated by the pro-government research administration. She applied for a scholarship when she was still living in the Netherlands, went to the UK for a short stay and travelled to Germany as a PSI-scholarship holder. She tried to settle in Berlin and find a flat and kindergarden for her children. She had a hard time with the residence permit and finding a good health insurance. Learning a new language was quite a challenge for her. Meanwhile she couldn't find a way to get her research back from her former university. She tried to reconnect to former fellow colleagues to get access to her old data, but some did not speak to her or they moved to other countries as well. She not only lost her data and research field, but also her personal and professional connections. She struggled to find ways to stay in academia and started to look for new networks also outside of academia to feel accepted and to belong. To find a fellowship, she had to change her research field repeatedly: with every fellowship, she had to change her office, department and sometimes even her field again and again. Now, Lisa is making a new application for a year-long fellowship in Leipzig. She is struggling with insomnia due to her anxieties about the future. The video ends with a call for talking about strategies in supporting Lisa in finding her own way to make her settle her life better in social and academic terms.

The video mentions the need for scholars to not only build connections with the academic environment of the so-called ‚host country', but to also keep linkages to the academic circles of their respective ‚home country', because the focus is often on the former within public discourses, thereby pushing crucial questions of losses in the process of migration to the sidelines. The video particularly mentions the loss of research data, the research field and the previous academic networks. Efforts in rebuilding the academic identity of exiled scholars should therefore support and refresh such connections with the data, field and academic communities in the former places of residence, where possible. One point a scholar wished to underline is the need for these scholars to be addressed and named with respect to their research field, interest, and expertise rather than with the label of ‚risk' in the programs, activities, and events organized in the name of supporting exiled scholars in rebuilding their networks and reconstituting their academic position and identitiy in the co-called ‚host country'. The label continuously reduces their academic identity to the category of risk; whereby the latter homogenizes them with no reference to their diverse expertise and academic interests.
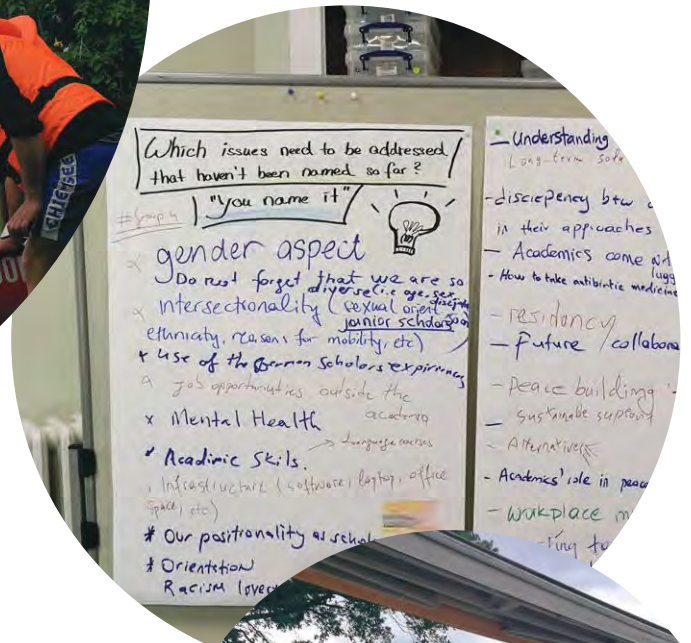
AiS Wishlist

After two days of intense work and discussion, members came up with the following list of improvements that provide inroads for further change.

1. AiS Retreat should lead to a public output, such as a policy brief, article or other public demand giving audience advice of what is needed for exiled scholars

2. The topic of mental health of scholars shall be placed further up on the agenda of AiS and other partner programs, including better counselling on psychological support systems in Germany

3. Information shall be forwarded to the "next generation" of exiled scholars (pinpointing to an Alumni-Structure of AiS)

4. More politicians and other people in power should either be invited to events or informed of the situation of displaced scholars

5. There is a need for more single person support, counselling and also small & continuous collaborations rather than one-time events

6. Need for more diversity in panel participants (from all fields of research) and also a better networking and connection between AiS members from different fields of science. On the other hand, further events could strategically gather people from similar disciplines to achieve better networking

7. Need to implement more bridge funding opportunities and guidance to bridge academic with non-academic labor market just as much as better help for finding financial support and writing applications

8. Workshops of stress management and career planning from a gender perspective

9. Own organization and implementation of intensive German language courses for academic purposes

10. Organize workshops on legal matters that give individuals but also international offices at universities advice about challenges of foreign scholars

11. A central communication tool, where exiled researchers can support each other, exchange information and send each other job opportunities or build support networks. Additionally, groups to find strength individually and collectively to build a better agency within the German academic system

12. AiS can be a model to enhance the community of displaced scholars

13. AiS should not take up people into its program only because they are in exile or at risk, but rather select members according to the political reasons for being at risk now

14. Less known but ongoing crisis areas should become more aware to German institutions, i.e. Sri Lanka
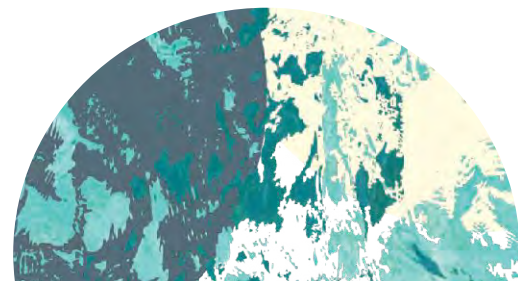
15. More and better coffee

Which issues need to be addressed that haven't been named so far?

#group 4 | "you name it"

gender aspect
- Do not forget that we are so diverse (age, sex...
- Intersectionality (sexual orientation, junior scholars, ethnicity, reasons for mobility, etc)
- Use of the German Scholars experience
- Job opportunities outside the academia
- Mental Health — language access
- Academic Skills
- Infrastructure (software, laptop, office space, etc)
- Our positionality as schol...
- Orientation
- Racism loved...

→ Understanding
- Long-term sol...
- discrepancy btw...
- in their approaches
- Academics come w...
- How to take antibiotic medicine
- residency
- future / collabora...
- Peace building
- Sustainable support
- Alternatives
- Academics' role in peace...
- workplace...

THANK YOU

AiS Thanks Everyone who contributed to this event!

It was a pleasure coming together with all of you and we will keep the AiS Network Meeting & Retreat in our hearts as days to remember. We hope to see you again soon for follow up events of AiS.

academics
in solidarity

Academics in Solidarity
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