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**Between Recognition and Devaluation –
Implications of Refugee Students’ and Exiled Scholars’ Experiences
in Universities in Germany**

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Abstracts

English

Between 2018 and 2021, two projects focusing on refugees in tertiary education were carried out in the Intercultural Education department. In a cooperative project with Bielefeld University, the focus was on the perspectives and experiences of students under the title "In-formal Opportunities and Restrictions of Tertiary Education Reflected in Experiences of Refugees in German Universities." The perspectives and experiences of researchers and teachers in exile were explored together with Betül Yasar under the title "In-formal Opportunities and Restrictions in German Universities Reflected in the Experiences of Exiled Scholars." This working paper documents contributions and discussions from the work-shop of experts on both projects held in September 2021. The documentation is published in German and English (AbIB-Working-paper 1/2022 and 2/2022).

German

Zwischen 2018 und 2021 wurden im Arbeitsbereich Interkulturelle Bildung zwei Projekte mit Fokus auf Geflüchtete an Hochschulen durchgeführt. In einem Kooperationsprojekt mit der Universität Bielefeld standen unter dem Titel „In-formelle Möglichkeiten und Grenzen der Hochschulbildung im Spiegel der Erfahrungen Geflüchteter an deutschen Hochschulen“ die Sichtweisen und Erfahrungen von Studierenden im Mittelpunkt. Die Sichtweisen und Erfahrungen von Forschenden und Lehrenden im Exil wurden gemeinsam mit Betül Yasar unter dem Titel „In-formal Opportunities and Restrictions of German Universities Reflected in Experiences of Exiled Scholars“ erkundet. Dieses Arbeitspapier dokumentiert Beiträge und Diskussionen eines Expert*innenworkshops zu beiden Projekten, der im September 2021 durchgeführt wurde. Die Dokumentation erscheint in deutscher und englischer Sprache (AbIB-Working-Paper 1/2022 and 2/2022).

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1 Introduction

The global increase in refugee migration not least has led to corresponding higher education policy measures focusing increasingly on refugee students at German universities in recent years. The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) in particular, financed by the Federal Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF), has established programmes such as “Welcome” and “Integra” with the aim of enabling refugee students to study in Germany. German universities are also an important reference point for exiled scholars, often because there are fellowship programmes here that allow them to research and possibly even teach for limited periods of time. The measures are part of a recent movement and development within which programmatic guidelines like internationalisation and diversity are being discussed at universities. These guidelines also act as references for organisational development processes at universities. The question of the importance of refugee students’ and exiled scholars’ experiences for German universities is embedded within the universities’ complex and contradictory structures and operating logic. This can be seen in the area of internationalisation, for example: On the one hand, the university as an educational institution is anchored in the national context with its curricula or German as the language of instruction. On the other hand, it has a firmly international orientation, for example with students in Erasmus programmes and in its efforts to recruit international students.

The results of the ErgeS and Exiled Scholars projects pick up at this point and ask whether and how such contradictory structures reveal themselves in the form of inclusive and exclusive, informal and formal structures in the context of refugees and university. Both projects were funded by the Volkswagen Foundation and deal with the university context and the universities’ responses to refugee migration from the perspective of exiled scholars and refugee students. The results of both research projects were discussed in an online expert workshop held in September 2021 (for the programme and participant list, see appendix). The goal was to critically reflect on selected results together with actors from the field. Invitations went out to staff at International Offices who were responsible for exiled scholars and/or students at universities, as well as staff at central science organisations and foundations with programmes for refugees. The starting point and key findings of the discussions in the workshop are described in a summarised form in this document. In the following, the main points from the discussions are expanded on with the intention of encouraging further thought on the workshop and its results. To this end, after the description of the two presentations, four overarching topics that were formulated following the presentations will be elaborated. Finally, these will be reflected on in the outlook.

2 Presentation abstracts

2.1 Refugee students' perspective: Epistemic power relations at universities in Germany¹

ErgeS project team: Yasemin Karakaoğlu, Paul Mecheril and Vanessa Ohm (former project members Lukas Engelmeier and Noelia Streicher)

Studies on refugee students in a university context have repeatedly found that these students face many challenges in accessing universities and during their stays there. The focus is typically on specific problems that refugee students face due to attributed deficits and their current situation. The studies' conclusions especially point out the necessity of additional support from the university or all of society. The research project titled "ErgeS – in-formal opportunities and restrictions of tertiary education reflected in experiences of refugees in German universities" expands this perspective by using a methodological approach that views experiences of refugee students as reflections of general structures at the university. For this purpose, 20 problem-centred individual interviews and seven group discussions with refugee students were carried out at eight universities in Germany. The students had all been studying in Germany for at least three semesters. The study takes an interpretative-reconstructive social research approach, and the interviews were analysed using grounded theory's concept of coding. The students reported² positive experiences of belonging when they spoke of their respective university as a space of successful belonging, and attributed particular importance to the university as a place. At the same time, informal and formal barriers in respect of access to and the organisation of university education for refugee students can be seen in their statements. After all, as a refugee student, they are in a way doubly deviant students: they deviate both from those students defined as "typical" as well as from those defined as "international". The students reported experiences of disrespect and attributed deficits as well as experiences of rejection of the knowledge they had acquired outside of Germany.

This last aspect was a focus in the ErgeS project, for example with the perspective "Epistemic Power Relations at Universities". Epistemic power relations take effect in the way institutions deal with refugee students, whose status is created at universities as a specific knowledge subject³. In the findings, it can be seen that students had various debasing experiences: the experience of separation due to being identified as a subject coded as a natio-racial-culturally Other, and the experience of having their knowledge rejected. Both phenomena point to epistemic power relations and can be understood as moments of informal inclusion and exclusion. These experiences are reflected, for example, when students stated that they were perceived and treated as "not normal students", as Abil (social science Master's student from Syria) discussed:

"I had at that time this same question like anyone else, like, why can I not be enrolled as a normal student? What do I have to do to be just a normal student like anyone else, let's just

¹ The project was carried out in German.

² In the following, only small excerpts of the results can be described, and even these can only be outlined.

³ The concept of the knowledge subject refers to the important subject form for universities, that is, those institutionalised formal or informal norms and expectation structures to which an individual must conform in order to be considered a legitimate subject. At universities, this takes on a specific form of relation to knowledge and intellectual abilities. With these norms and expectations, a differentiation is made between especially recognised students and those who are less recognised. Recognition at universities is conveyed primarily with accepted, recognised, represented knowledge and corresponding assumed intellectual abilities.

say, as an international student, who is coming from another country and just starting directly.”

With a focus on epistemic power relations, it became apparent in the interviews and group discussions that for refugee students, recognition and non-recognition as a knowledge subject was a key issue both at formal and informal levels. This was evidenced in a comment by Wakur (social science Bachelor’s student from Syria) in a group discussion:

‘If I somehow raise my hand to somehow say something, for example that I somehow learned that a little bit differently. Or something like that, what I learned or whatever, then it is directly REJECTED. And they say: “No, no, no, no, no.”’

When analysing various interview passages, a phenomenon becomes apparent that can be termed the rejection of the knowledge of the natio-racial-culturally coded Other. It is an implicitly or explicitly judgemental handling of the academic knowledge refugee students have acquired outside of Germany. This way of dealing with the matter not only affects formal recognition of qualifications such as degrees or coursework the students bring with them – a recognition process that typically takes place before or when starting their studies. This rejection can also be found at the informal level when seminars are held and also in the peer interactions of students.

The students have debasing experiences both in informal assessments in their interactions with their peers or as part of seminar interactions and in formal assessments due to the (non-)recognition of the qualifications, degrees or coursework they bring with them. When distinguishing forms of natio-racial-culturally coded knowledge, we therefore differentiate between recognised and less-recognised subjects.

The material allows us to discern the effects of Eurocentrism and epistemic Occidentalism at universities. Both can be seen in the tendency to underestimate knowledge subjects from the Global South. This can be understood and researched as an expression of Eurocentrism, as the students’ statements indicate that universities in Germany at times privilege occidental traditions (of generating knowledge) both implicitly and explicitly. Post-colonial and decolonial studies point to the historically established power of these traditions, which are also in part based on the fact that they are seldom questioned. This makes it even more apparent that universities and their actors are in many cases caught up in the global epistemic power relations upon which they are trying to reflect.

2.2 “Exclusive Inclusion” and “Academic Humanitarianism”: Core findings of the “In-formal Opportunities and Restrictions in German Universities Reflected in the Experiences of Exiled Scholars”⁴ Research Project

Exiled Scholars project team: Betül Yazar and Yasemin Karakasoğlu

Drawing suggestively across Michel Foucault’s notions of discursive field, subjectivation and governance, and Bourdieu’s concepts of social field, logic of practice and capital, our research utilises 10 semi-structured interviews with representatives of higher education affiliated institutions and universities, and 22 non-structured interviews with exiled scholars, who have various social, natio-ethno-cultural and academic backgrounds. The aim is to reveal how these

⁴ This project was written, conducted and reported in English.

scholars experience German academia after they have entered this field via humanitarian means and support mechanisms. As is the case with ErgeS, this project also evaluates this experiential knowledge as the significant body of knowledge providing further and deeper insights into the modes of operation of the German higher education system. In addition to the interviews, field notes, observations and documents collected from official websites of related institutions and organisations were taken as part of our inquiry. The data collected in the field was analysed according to qualitative research methods and with a combination of narrative and discourse analysis.⁵

We argue that under the impact of the recent forced intellectual migration movement – mainly after 2015 – what happened in Germany was that “Risk” began to operate as a constitutive and framing concept for a wide range of academic and humanitarian policy practices which resulted in the eventual emergence of what we call “academic humanitarianism” as a sub-field taking place at the interface of humanitarianism and higher education. This field serves to constitute academic resources and positions for scholars who enter German academia with the expectation that they will take further steps in their academic career either in Germany or elsewhere. However, they enter the field under the special category of “at-risk-scholar”, which on the one hand provides them legitimate positions in the field and gives them access to resources. On the other hand, however, this label transforms their own subjectivities as professors, assistant professors etc. into one single homogenising category of “at-risk-scholar”. This new subjective position involves some ambivalence as it refers to two distinct qualities at once: “being under risk” and “being a scholar” (i.e. neither totally academic like other international scholars nor totally under risk like other refugees). Their situation may be described as a pendulum between two distinct positions: an international scholar (with academic capital) and a refugee scholar (who is under risk and in need of being rescued). A second dimension which expands their ambivalent position or subjectivity is the fact that these scholars immigrated from the Global South to the Global North, and this proves to have effects on how they experience being acknowledged as knowledge subjects in the field. Both aspects contribute to the transformation of the field into a site of struggle, negotiation and accommodation. It is a field (with its hierarchically structured actors and resources) that also involves inclusive forces and discourses like diversity, inclusivity, migration society, welcoming society etc. These forces not least lead to the implementation of many scholarships and support networks. They transform Germany into an important and relatively more appealing migration destination for exiled scholars. Intersecting subjective and social forces in narratives of exiled scholars shed light on the reasons why – despite this support – only a few scholars continue their academic career in positions provided in German academia or abroad.

Their positions vary in respect of the types of risk they encountered and their expectations from risk scholarships. Some make use of risk scholarships as they allow them to continue work on some risky topics which – for political reasons – they had been hindered from tackling in their home countries. However, some others have to make use of the scholarships to save their lives and find their own ways of surviving in the host country on the basis of their academic capital and identities. The feeling of loss in the narratives of this second group of scholars who have been dismissed from their academic positions, lost their human rights and left to civil death, also echoes Arendt’s concept of statelessness, which signifies a radical breakdown of a basic relationship between state and citizen. Said states that exile means an irrep-

⁵ Because of space limitations, only parts of the results can be presented.

arable separation that is formed between individuals and their homeland, and loss of whatever they had in the past. In the case of the academics it also means a process or re-identification or subjectivation (using Foucault's concept), which starts with a loss and a change in their academic positions from "junior/senior professors" in their home countries to "at-risk" or "refugee scholars" in the host countries. As a consequence, in some interviews, scholars mentioned the danger of scholarship programmes transforming into closed circuits with no exit and no real hope for real inclusion into German academia or higher education on the basis of permanent or non-permanent post-doc and professorship positions, "gaining access to which is very hard even for native and international scholars". This, we claim, might be considered as a very delicate form of "inclusive-exclusion", using the concept put forward by Agamben. Swinging between meritocratic and humanitarian logics, risk scholarships create an undefined grey zone which is neither academic nor humanitarian in which existing problems of the system duplicate themselves and might lead to the further marginalisation of some exiled scholars.

Using Bourdieu's concept, one can analyse this subjectivation process as the transformation of earlier academic capitals into cultural capitals as the previously accumulated academic capitals (from the South) are no longer institutionally recognised but transformed into cultural capitals in the host country. Exiled scholars who proceeded were successful in the contested accreditation process and were able to enter relatively secure positions show common qualities in our sample: they are junior rather than senior, have no family ties but strong international academic experiences and networks not least because of language skills in English and/or German. They represent popular scientific disciplines, which allow them to be flexible in changing topics and thus enable them to adapt themselves to the manifold demands of the academic labour market. They are ready and capable of quickly becoming involved in research activities and projects (rather than teaching). But despite possessing this portfolio of capitals, they may still end up having no chance to continue and progress in academic life simply because they might not have been in the right place and working with the right professors. "Professors are everything in the German system", as has been stated in many interviews with not only scholars but experts, too. The "Chance Factor" is always counted and addressed by scholars in their interviews. Although such factors are the keys to their academic progress, they always have to be tackled in relation to existing structural limitations and in combination with the subjective forces (i.e. capitals) mentioned above. Under the existing, expansive, precarious academic labour market, no matter what their earlier position was, scholars who consider themselves to be in relatively better positions in German academia have no other choice than to work in post-doc positions with limited contracts and as experts of area studies or in popular subject disciplines. This sheds light on the validity of the Eurocentric neoliberal academic market rules that – in the long run – only seem to offer participation opportunities in academic niches assigned to the unexpected new colleagues. Or in the words of one of the scholars:

„Does Germany really need me? Does German academia need my knowledge? (...) No. You can't feel that way at all, that I can have a place here. I do not feel needed here. When I think about the subjects I work on, I not only work on x (name of the country of origin). I study various important topics in the field of political science..."

3 Between recognition and invalidation – central discussion points

In the following, four central points from the discussions on the presentations in the workshop are mentioned. Using the project results, they are thought one step further and clarified.

3.1 Between gratefulness and the experience of epistemic devaluation

In the interviews, both the students and the scholars interviewed expressed their gratitude for the group-specific programmes and the corresponding opportunity to gain – or regain – access to the university system. The gratitude repeatedly mentioned in the interviews with the students was related primarily to the opportunity to study in general or the diversity of supporting programmes and other options. At the overarching level, they recognised the university in part as a space in which they felt safer than in other places and in which they experienced an open and warm atmosphere. In this, the university is not only revealed as an organisation that expands access to university education for refugee students, as other studies have already found. It is also a valuable space of social belonging and recognition for refugee students and exiled scholars.

However, those interviewed also reported experiences of epistemic devaluation when, in their daily lives at university, they referred back to knowledge that deviated from the knowledge that was being used as a reference for the interaction partners in the specific situation. The natio-racial-cultural coding of the subject of this knowledge as a “person with a foreign education” (e.g., from Syria or as a refugee), a coding which takes place either in advance or during the incident, points out the territorialising logic of this epistemic de-valuation.

The experiences of the interviewees show that in the practice of the university actors (in the administration, teaching and peer interactions), knowledge that is associated with the Global South is neither used nor recognised as valuable when the subjects contribute it, which means an implicit, or at times explicit hierarchisation of knowledge is occurring.

The contradiction which is characteristic for universities between the proclaimed universality (claim to universality of the knowledge generated at the university) and the particularity of expected and used knowledge becomes visible in the actions of those involved.

3.2 Between recognition as knowledge subjects and recognition as people in need of assistance

To receive help and support, the refugee students and exiled scholars must represent themselves as vulnerable subjects who are, above all, in need of assistance. At the same time, the academic context demands that they represent themselves as a knowledgeable, competent and especially an independent knowledge subject. This reveals another contradiction, namely, that between the respective expectations specific to the field that regulate recognition as a knowledge subject, and that of the requirement to represent oneself as being in need of assistance in order to lay claim to a certain need for supporting services and/or resources. There is therefore a specific structure of ‘academic humanitarianism’ (Yarar/Karakaşoğlu) that finds itself in a balancing act between the meritocratic demands of the system and individuals.

This point is closely connected to the experience of epistemic devaluation, which makes recognition as a knowledge subject twice as difficult. The discussions of the exiled scholars also point to this conclusion. They report that the curricula in their faculties are very narrow and

allow little leeway for deviating knowledge from the intellectual contexts of the exiled scholars. Since the curricula often do not fit with the research fields of the scholars, who did not join the system through planned processes, they cannot present and position themselves as knowledge subjects. This also applies in a different way to refugee students, who must conform with the knowledge and knowledge-recognition logics of the university to successfully complete their studies.

In order to have their protected status recognised, refugees are forced to reveal their vulnerability, and in return receive assistance and access to specific support measures. At the same time, however, they experience that this endangers their status as competent knowledge subjects, which is the basis of independent studying and coursework (for students) and independent research, publication and teaching (for scholars). This aspect walks the line between the necessity to emphasise difference (to make it visible and enable measures designed to support difference and diversity to work) and the danger of stereotypical reproduction and attribution of ideas of difference

Although this dilemma is unlikely to be resolved with more regulations, it points to the fact that all group-specific measures and the lack thereof should be discussed in regard to their appropriateness. For example, support programmes specific to the target group were evaluated as helpful and necessary by those interviewed (scholars and students) even though these programmes are not oriented on individual needs. Another perspective emerged from the students' interviews. They felt that mandatory attendance for certain courses as a requirement for studying was disrespectful and hardly expedient, as the courses are intended to convey basic knowledge many of them had long since acquired, thereby emphasising the experiences of having deficits attributed and being underestimated. When establishing these kinds of target-group measures, both students and scholars are typically called on as academic subjects, but the implicit message is given that they do not (or cannot) have the necessary prerequisites for joining the existing system and require support and/or help in gaining basic tools of (Western) knowledge acquisition, in particular knowledge of the German language or writing academic texts.

3.3 Categorisation as “refugee”

More contradictions become apparent when looking at the labelling, addressing and categorisation as “refugees”. On the one hand, the categorisation is a condition for obtaining support which, as stated in the section on gratefulness, was positively evaluated by many of the students and scholars interviewed. The university's recognition of the existence of refugees as a group that becomes clear in these programmes requires and effects the use of financial and human resources, for example with advising structures, mentoring programmes or preparatory courses. In this, the university shows its attentiveness and willingness to offer support for the structural and/or particular needs of the refugee students and exiled scholars in a specific situation.

This is also ambivalent, however, as labelling them as refugees goes hand in hand with the danger of homogenising the students and scholars included in the category such that their individual needs are no longer noticed. For scholars especially, being confronted with the new position means accepting their own personal situation, which often includes a loss of status in their career. While international visiting scholars receive invitations and paid opportunities to carry out academic work that reflect their added value for the entire academic system due to

their scientific achievements and respectability in the community, programmes for exiled scholars have the unpleasant feel of charity or a necessity to catch up on qualifications. Those who were themselves professors who researched and taught independently in their countries of origin tend to have even more feelings of unaccustomed dependency when they are attached to established professors (scholars and representatives of the organisations repeatedly stressed the key position of professors in the German academic system). This leads to new and unfamiliar hierarchical relationships that go along with the structural requirement of underscoring one's own vulnerability and need for assistance. The process of recognition requires time, as does the process that helps assess one's own position in the new system to be able to recognise realistic options for the future. This is true not least because of the particular life situation, which can also be accompanied by psychological stress such as trauma and being cut off from the familiar (social) structures.

For students, an additional obstacle is that they need to acquire the right to study. Refugee students must therefore on the one hand articulate their need for assistance and protection in order to legitimise their stay in Germany. In the context of the university, however, they must also prove their independence and self-efficacy in order to show they have the ability and right to study. This becomes especially apparent in the statements of the refugees relating to the differentiation between refugee and international students. Here, once again, an ambivalence arises. While the desire was often expressed to have the status of an international student, differing needs were stated, and at times the students criticised a lack of measures specific to the target group, as they felt the refugee students' particular needs for university access were being ignored.

3.4 Job insecurity in academia

The fact that work in academia is experienced as being particularly precarious directly after a doctorate is a phenomenon that is not specific to exiled scholars at universities. But the example of exiled scholars is particularly illustrative of the structural problems in the university system: job insecurity is exacerbated in two ways for these scholars, who usually only have fellowships lasting for two or three years or have short-term employment contracts and may not be able to be internationally mobile due to their residency status and history as a refugee. The fellowships offered by institutions such as the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation are important resources for exiled scholars' academic survival. Since their duration is very limited, however, the scholars must then find new career paths, often outside of academia due to the very limited number of postdoc positions and professorships in the German university system.

Another obstacle to furthering an academic career is that fellowships often include neither teaching nor the right to examine students, a right held by other academic staff. This means it is difficult for these scholars to fully integrate into the important daily processes in the universities, reducing the identity of the exiled scholars to the aspect of research. In contrast to those scholars who work and were socialised in Germany, exiled scholars have the disadvantage that they are often unfamiliar with the structures of externally funded research, which is an increasingly dominant factor in research in Germany, and these structures are highly complex and thus difficult to access without assistance.

One key requirement for successful grant applications are networks within the scientific community that are usually built up over years or even decades. Exiled scholars must first gain an

orientation and become visible in the system, however, which leads to their applications potentially having lower success rates.

The general problems of the academic system are therefore aggravated for exiled scholars, who also need secure positions in order to create a prospect for remaining in the country. So far, structures are lacking for the long-term integration of exiled scholars into the German university system after the fellowships have concluded. These scholars must assert themselves on an academic job market that is defined and influenced primarily by principles of performance and professional networks.

4 Outlook

The experiences of the refugee students and exiled scholars reveal that the university context is a space where refugees gain opportunities and can shape their future. At the same time, the results of both research projects show that there are structures on formal and informal levels that make it more difficult for refugees to work and study at universities. These include epistemic Occidentalism, which leads to a lack of recognition for the interviewees' knowledge and competences. Categorisation processes and addressing the refugee students as a group, for example in the form of options offered specifically to the target group, lead to homogenisation, attribution of collective deficits and potential stigmatisation as well as the tendency to ignore specific needs and competences. The workshop discussions and overarching topics described above illuminate perspectives on what is to be designated here as a migration-societal opening of the university in light of the experiences of refugee students and exiled scholars on various levels, three of which are:

Knowledge resources. At universities, it is necessary to reflect on the subjects' embeddedness in their national and cultural setting and the knowledge conveyed in this context. This becomes especially clear in the experiences of those refugee students and exiled scholars who were assigned a particular place as "learners" in the system: learners whose contribution to expanding the wealth of knowledge and epistemic perspectives of the system itself is hardly valued, however, and in many cases even ignored. In reflecting on the university's embeddedness in its own location, actors in the university system should take a critical look at the prevailing epistemes and the related knowledge hierarchies in the German university context with a particular view to epistemic Occidentalism. This should be viewed as an outstanding opportunity for the German knowledge system and its orientation on inter- and trans-nationalisation.

Structural and financial conditions. Setting up fellowships as a kind of "first aid" can be done relatively quickly and simply in the system. As a singular humanitarian measure, it is highly valued by the scholars. However, the fundamental prospect (also linked to the programmes) of gaining access to regular employment in the academic system can hardly be realised by these measures. After all, the fellowships exist alongside and not within the structure of the German university system. They are not bound to a social security system that assists the scholars when the fellowships end. In addition, high costs for health insurance disproportionately decrease the budget available to scholars and their family members. Beyond the fellowships, the structure of the postdoc positions in the German academic system is particularly problematic, as there are typically very few academic positions, and these are usually fixed-term contracts that are dependent on professorships. This points out the necessity of creating

positions for exiled scholars following the fellowship programmes, and the positions must be structured such that the exiled scholars can also get involved in teaching with their store of knowledge. Another measure that opens up long-term career prospects for scholars in exile and would also support a boost to epistemic innovation at universities in Germany was developed by the project group. The idea would be to use a special call for applications (e.g., as an initiative of the federal and state governments) for “Chairs for Epistemic Innovation” for which various departments could apply in order to promote the inclusion of epistemic knowledge bases and alternative research approaches from other regions of the world – in particular the Global South – in established concepts of research and teaching.

Time resources. At the scholars’ level, it takes time to settle into the German academic system and become familiar with its specific structures as well as the processes in research, teaching and administration at the respective university. This applies in particular because of the traumatic experiences linked to fleeing their country of origin and the psychological conditions of living in forced exile. Under these conditions, it can be especially difficult to acquire the necessary German language skills as a requirement for matters of daily life in Germany, even if English is spoken amongst colleagues (scholars) or in the subject (students). Learning to speak German proficiently is necessary for the people themselves, but also in regard to integrating family members into a new societal system (schools, authorities, looking for a job for the partner, etc.), something that is typically not included in the time provided in the programmes. For the universities and especially for the ‘hosts’ in the case of scholars, time is also an important factor. Introducing and including exiled colleagues, explaining and assisting with the German academic system, making an effort to find additional external funding opportunities with these colleagues and considering career alternatives for the exiled scholars, possibly even options outside of academia, all require time on the part of the university and its actors.

To refine and identify further nuances to the findings of both projects, it would be beneficial to conduct a comparative study. One option would be to start an international comparison of the experiences of refugee students/scholars at universities in other European countries, and also a comparison at various German universities of refugees with international students/scholars (especially those from the Global South) who have arrived via regular internationalisation programmes.

In the workshop and the documentation, the university space in particular was examined and discussed. In further reflections, it must be kept in mind that the discourse on refugees is always embedded in discourses encompassing all of society as well as in relations of power and domination. The status of “refugee”; focusing on the need for assistance that appears to contradict the meritocratic system logic; the contradiction between the requirement to act as both in need of help and competent at the same time; and the call to adapt to the local system as quickly as possible while also expecting productivity to enter into competitive structures - all the aforementioned are problematic. The university must therefore reflect on itself as a societal institution, thereby questioning, considering and changing its institutional norms and regulations under the condition of migration, globalisation and social inequality as well as its role in these phenomena.

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