Digital Peace
How Does Digitization Affect Conflict Transformation – and vice versa?
Annual Conference of the German Platform for Peaceful Conflict Transformation
Protestant Academy Loccum, 21-23 April 2023

The corona pandemic has triggered a significant surge in digitization in almost all areas of life. At the same time, the great optimism that was once felt toward digital technologies has increasingly faded. Whether social media, digital identities, AI, geospatial information, blockchain, or big data - these technologies not only promote transnational exchange, democratization, and peace. Rather, the digital transformation has progressed particularly in the area of conflict and violence as well as the autocratic abuse of power. In addition, digitization is believed to be inherently conflict-ridden due to the fundamental upheavals it will cause in the mode of economic production, power relations, and interpersonal exchange.

Despite all this disillusionment, the field of digital peacemaking has increasingly established itself in recent years. Through the innovative handling of digitization at the interface between the online and offline world, positive experience was gained for crisis prevention, conflict management, and peacebuilding. However, these activities currently lag far behind the malign, autocratic, and peace-threatening application of digital technologies.

The conference aims to shed light on how conflict management and digitization influence each other. Analyzing this nexus will bring an answer to the question of what practical and political conclusions can be drawn for the further development of the field of civil conflict management. German-English simultaneous translation will be offered in all plenary discussions.

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What is the Annual Platform Conference?
The German Platform for Peaceful Conflict Transformation is an open network that involves 60 organizations and around 110 individuals from the fields of peace work, mediation, human rights work, humanitarian aid, development cooperation, and science. The aim of the association, which was founded in 1998, is to promote civil conflict management. This is done through the exchange of information, conceptual debates or advocacy functions. The annual conference, which takes place regularly in the spring each year, serves this purpose.

The conference is funded by:

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* invited
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DAY I
Friday 21 April 2023

2 p.m. **Welcome Remarks**

Ute Finckh-Krämer, Co-Chair, German Platform for Peaceful Conflict Transformation
Thomas Müller-Färber, Program Director, Protestant Academy Loccum

2.15 p.m. OPENING DISCUSSION| **Conflict – Digitalization – Conflict Transformation**
The interrelationship between conflict and digitization is complex. Whether cyberattacks, hate speech or digital authoritarianism – real-world crises and conflicts have nowadays a significant digital dimension. At the same time, the digital transformation, which is affecting almost all socio-economic areas of life worldwide, is leading to conflicts too since it produces winners and losers. In addition, the field of digital peacebuilding has also developed in recent years. This opening panel aims to outline a panorama of the various connections between digitization, conflict, and digital peacebuilding and to raise central questions that should be deepened in the further course of the conference.

Daniel Duke Odongo, Implementation Lead, Ushahidi, Nairobi

Erik Tuchtfeld, Co-Chair, D64 – Center for Digital Progress and Senior Researcher at the Max Planck Institute for International Law, Heidelberg

3.15 p.m. Coffee & Cake

3.45 p.m. SOCIOMETRIC ICEBREAKER | **What Does That Have to Do with Me? –** Tracing the Double-edged Nature of Digital Technology in the Daily Conflict Management Practice

<u>Moderation:</u> *Bernd Rieche*, AGDF (an Umbrella and Professional Association of Peace Services), Bonn

4.30 p.m. Coffee and Tea Break

4.45 p.m. EXPLORATORY SESSION (PART 1) | **Conflict and the Digital Space –** Which conceptual and analytical approaches to crises, conflicts, and violent events Arise at the interface between the offline and online world?

Conflicts are highly digitized today. At the same time, digitization processes repeatedly lead to conflicts. So, there is a complex nexus between conflict and the digital space. The panel aims to illuminate this nexus focusing thereby on analytical and conceptual approaches and asking – among others – the following questions: How do conflicts occur in the digital space and what digital and real-world effects result from it? Which knowledge about crises, conflicts, and peace concepts can be transferred from the offline to the online world - and vice versa?

In order to explore the interface between conflict and digital space, an introductory impulse panel will take place in the first part. The discussion is then continued in parallel forums using the rotation walk method, which are tailored along four

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fundamental levels of conflictual events in digital space - the individual, social, material, and ideal dimensions.

4.55 p.m. — **IMPULS PANEL**

Anne-Marie Buzatu, Executive Director, ICT4Peace Foundation, Geneva

Mischa Hansel, Head, „International Cybersecurity" (ICS), Institut for Peace and Conflict Studies (IFSH), Hamburg

Elizaveta Kuznetsova, Head, Research Group, „Platform Alogrithms and Digital Propaganda", Weizenbaum Institute, Berlin

Claudia Meier, Europe Lead, BuildUp und Non-Resident Fellow at the Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi), Berlin

BREAKOUT SESSION

FORUM I **Social Level** | Social Cohesion vs. Societal Polarization

FORUM II **Individual Level** | Personal Participation vs. Individual Vulnerability

FORUM III **Material Level** | Inclusive Digital Space vs. Disruption & Instability

FORUM IV **Ideelle Ebene** | Unlimited Knowledge & Ubiquitous Information vs. Disinformation & Confrontational Narratives

6.20 p.m. — Dinner

7.30 p.m. — Breakout Session continues applying the Rotation Walk Method

8.15 p.m. — PLENARY DISCUSION | Report from the Forums folowed by dicussion

9 p.m. — Informal Get-together

DAY II
Saturday, 22 April 2023

8.30 a.m. — Breakfast

9.15 a.m. — ORIENTATION PANEL | **What Do We Already Know About Opportunities and Risks of Digital Peacebuilding?**

Digital peacebuilding is a relatively young field of activity. Nevertheless, relevant practical experience has already been gained in recent years and initial analytical evaluations have been carried out. Both opportunities and risks of digital peacebuilding were identified and a series of crucial questions are waiting for an answer – such as: How can the transition from digital inclusion to digital agency be managed? How can digital peacebuilding be applied without falling into the trap of "tech solutionism"? How to deal with the trade-off between "digital accessibility" and "digital security"? How can a people-centered "local first" approach be

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implemented well in the digital space? How to deal with the platform dependency? How to strike the right balance between offline and online approaches? Etc.

The establishment of digital peacebuilding as a crucial field of conflict management will be facilitated if convincing answers are found to these questions. This orientation panel aims to compile the opportunities and risks of digital peacebuilding as comprehensively as possible.
Impulses from...

... Practice
Emma Baumhofer, Digital Peacebuilding Expert, Swisspeace, Bern

... Science
Andreas Hirblinger, Senior Researcher at the Center on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding, Geneva Graduate Institute, Geneva

... a Feminist Perspective
Rita Costa Cots, Digital Peacebuilding Facilitator, Build up, Barcelona/Utrecht

Moderation: **Nina Strumpf**, Focal Person in the Conflict Transformation Research Department, Berghof Foundation und Representative at FriEnt (Working Group on Peace & Development), Berlin

10.30 a.m. — Coffee & Tea Break

10.45 a.m. — EXPLORATORY SESSION (PART 2) | **Peacebuilding in the Digital Space** – Methods and Spheres of Activity at the Intersection between the online and offline world

Over the past few decades, civil conflict management has shown its competence in numerous fields and has developed a rich set of methods for dealing with crises, conflicts, and violent events. Part of this experience can be applied to conflicts in the digital space – however, adaptations and adjustments are required. The opportunities as well as the risks that were brought together in the previous panel need to be taken into account. Four areas of civil conflict management are particularly suitable for transfer to the online world: (1) Dialog und Meditation (2) Early Warning, Monitoring and Documentation (3) Empowerment and Qualification (4) Pro Peace Messaging, Communication and Awareness Raising

FORUM I: **Early Warning, Monitoring & Documentation** (Room E)

Hadi Al Khatib, Co-Founder "Syrian Archive", Mnemonic, Berlin

Olga Yurkova, Journalist, Editor, Media trainer and Co-founder of StopFake, Kyiv*

George Katz, Digital Investigations, Bellingcat, London

Katharina Ludwig, Researcher, Institute for Media and Communication Studies, University Mannheim**

Moderation: **Nina Strumpf**, Focal Person in the Conflict Transformation Research Department, Berghof Foundation und Representative at FriEnt (Working Group on Peace & Development), Berlin

FORUM II: **Digital Counter-Propaganda, Pro-peace Communication & Awareness Raising** (Room A)

Cora Bieß, Global Learning for Conflict Transformation, Berghof Foundation and Researcher at SIKID-Ethik (Safe and Secure for Children in the Digital World), Tübingen

Christian Cito Cirhigiri, Digital Peacebuilding Officer, Search for the Common Ground and Doctoral Research at the Human Rights Center, University Gent*

Annika Hansen, Head, Research Department, Center for International Peace Operations (ZIF), Berlin

Moderation: tbc

12.20 a.m.   Lunch

2 p.m.   GALLERY PRESENATION | **PeaceTech stellt sich vor** – Software-Anwendungen zur digitalen Friedensförderung
Polis, Phoenix, Remesh, Ushahidi, Consul, Platform4Dialouge – there is a whole range of software solutions that are used in various constellations of digital peacebuilding. With this gallery presentation we will present some software applications and will provide the opportunity for trial.

3 p.m.   Coffee & Cake

3.30 p.m.   **The exploratory session will be continued**

FORUM III**: Empowerment & Qualification**

Marwa Fatafta, Project Manager, MENA-Region, Access Now, Berlin
Björn Kunter, Head, „LOVE Storm Project" – Together against online Hate, Wustrow
Peter Steudtner, Digital Defenders Partnership, Ulex Project, Berlin

Moderation: tbc

FORUM IV : **Dialog & Mediation** (Room A)

Heike Augustin, Head of Department, Communal Conflict Manager at Forum Ziviler Friedensdienst, Jülich

Maude Morrison, Advisor, Social Media and Conflict Mediation Center for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD), Paris**

Rafael Tyszblat, Consultant, Program Designer und Mediator, Soliya.Net, Paris

Martin Wählisch, Head, Innovation Cell, UN-Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (UNDPPA), New York

Moderation: *Carla Schraml*, Advisory Mediation & Negotiation Support, Berghof Foundation, Berlin

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FORUM V: **Open Workspace**
Optional open workspace for all questions that are not considered in the proposed forums but considered relevant by participants.

5.15 p.m.   Coffee & Tea Break

5.30 p.m.   **Four Parallel Writing Workshops: Trying to pen the key results of Forums**

6.20 p.m.   Dinner

7.30 p.m.   **Celebration of the 25 years Anniversary of the German Platform for Peaceful Conflict Transformation**

DAY III
Sunday, 23 April 2023

8.30 a.m.   Breakfast

9.30 a.m.   PLENARY SESSION| **Presentation of the Results of the Forums followed by Discussion**

10.45 a.m.   Coffee & Tea Break

11:00 a.m.   CONCLUDING PANEL | **Key Takeaways and Outlook**

After a brief review of the previous interactive round of evaluation, this final panel is intended to look to the future together.

Adis Ahmetović, MdP (Social Democrats), Member of the Foreign Affairs Committee and Chair of the Sub-Committee on International Climate and Energy Policy, Berlin/Hannover

Tobias Bacherle, MdP (Bündnis90/Die Grünen), Chairman, Committee on Digital Affairs and Member of the Foreign Affairs Commitee, Berlin/Böblingen

Lorena Jaume-Palasí, Founder, The Ethical Tech Society and Member of the Panel for the Future of Science and Technology (STOA) of the European Parliament, Berlin

12.15 a.m.   **Words of Farewell**

Ginger Schmitz, Executive Director, German Platform for Civil Conflict Transformation, Berlin

Christoph Bongard, Co-Chair of the German Platform for Civil Conflict Transformation, Bonn

12.25 a.m.   Goodbye Lunch

12.50 a.m.   Departure Shuttle Bus