New Tools of Citizens' Diplomacy to Find Solutions in Syria

4th Lab
June, 9–12, 2016

About the
Global Diplomacy Lab

Background & Idea
The nature of diplomacy is evolving. It is no longer the strict purview of national governments and international organisations. The Global Diplomacy Lab is a platform for exploring a new and more inclusive diplomacy that goes beyond traditional politics. Creative professionals from various fields are thus needed to explore new tools of communication on the basis of mutual trust and to re-formulate an agenda for collective action.

What should diplomacy look like in the future?
Which competences do we need in order to define our scope of action more precisely?

These are questions that the Federal Foreign Office, under the patronage of Federal Foreign Minister Dr Frank-Walter Steinmeier and in partnership with the BMW Stiftung Herbert Quandt, the Robert Bosch Stiftung, the Stiftung Mercator and the Global Leadership Academy of the giz, are eager to investigate with outstanding members of their networks from all continents.

The Global Diplomacy Lab is managed by a Secretariat based in the Federal Foreign Office and is responsible for organising regular meetings worldwide and fostering a permanent dialogue between partners, alumni and external stakeholders.

The bi-annual Labs
Around forty alumni of programmes run by the Federal Foreign Office, the BMW Stiftung Herbert Quandt, the Robert Bosch Stiftung, the Stiftung Mercator and the Global Leadership Academy are invited to participate in the bi-annual meetings of the Global Diplomacy Lab.

Together with the Global Diplomacy Lab's Dean, Ruprecht Polenz, Chairman of the German Bundestag's Committee on Foreign Affairs from 2005 to 2013, the alumni first gathered in Berlin from 13 to 16 November 2014 to sketch multiple facades of trust portrayed in global affairs. The second edition of the Global Diplomacy Lab took place in Istanbul from 4 to 7 June 2015 and dealt with the issues of fragmentation versus integration, while the broad and complex issue of migration was the topic of the third Lab, which was held in Berlin from 5 to 8 November 2015. In 2016, the Labs will deal with the Significance of International Law and Moral Standards in Diplomacy (Berlin, 9–12 June) and with Global Diplomacy in the Digital Age (Montreal, 3–6 November).

As the form, measures and instruments of international cooperation are changing, new tools of communication based on mutual trust need to be designed. In order to open up original pathways for a more inclusive diplomacy, the Global Diplomacy Lab seeks to identify experimental approaches focusing on cross-sectoral knowledge exchange and on the drawing of a common language.

One of the main ideas of the Global Diplomacy Lab is that the network shall be borne by dedicated professionals. Together, they want to create a long-lasting welcoming platform for joint learning and production of ideas to inspire positive transformations in the diplomacy practised around the globe and to formulate an agenda for collective action in the 21st century.

DiploHack: A People's Diplomacy

Diplomacy in the 21st century requires integrated processes of dialogue where issues and policies reflect a broader consensus from people around the globe. From a diplomacy of states, the emphasis is now moving towards a people's diplomacy, reflective of a larger diversity of ideas. Innovation, cross-disciplinarity, design thinking, and collective creation are elements of a new conceptual platform where the rich multiplicity of a society finds a democratic way to address international issues as an extension of a country's social contract. Citizens want to participate, influence and put their priorities forward in how they engage with other citizens across the globe.

In this context, the Global Diplomacy Lab and the DiploHack show us the way forward as part of an eclectic and growing toolbox of dialogue and co-creation instruments. Through these initiatives, people can articulate their views and build a broader front to move them forward. At a DiploHack, business people, IT specialists, social activists, filmmakers, and traditional diplomats can collaborate with each other and create innovative ways in which diplomatic actions reflect what people want and need. The Global Diplomacy Lab and DiploHack have joined forces and the collaboration has started, yielding an interesting set of proposals.

New Approaches to Urgent Problems: The Open Situation Room

The idea of the Open Situation Room builds on the political "Situation Room" where crisis management teams of one government convene to give advice for urgent foreign policy issues. The Open Situation Room expands this idea by adding a more diverse selection of participants and a creative problem-solving approach to arrive at new perspectives and new possible solutions. The original Open Situation Room was developed by the crstl gmbh under Nicola Forster as part of the "Project Review 2014 – A Fresh Look at German Foreign Policy". One of the aims of the Open Situation Room is to support efforts by various ministries to increase civil society participation in EU-foreign policy and to expand on the methods available to policy-makers today. Several ministries and international organizations are now experimenting with this workshop format to achieve this goal.

The present version of the Open Situation Room is structured around a three-hour working session, a workshop rather than a conference. During this time, top-level decision makers and experts engage and explore a topic with participants selected from distinct disciplinary backgrounds. Architects, social entrepreneurs, medical doctors, designers, NGO representatives and others work together with policy experts and diplomats under time pressure to generate new possible approaches to address complex foreign-policy challenges. Previous OSRs have dealt with containing and fighting Ebola; coping with arms supply to Kurdish Pershmerga; or ways to react to the annexation of Crimea.

Typically, a high ranking decision-maker and topic expert provides a short introduction and important background information that leads to a specific question. The multi-disciplinary participants assume the role of advisors who bring their experience and backgrounds to the fore to produce new actionable ideas for the decision maker. They do so while working under realistic policy conditions, by generating stakeholder maps and identifying interests under great time pressure. These ideas are then sorted, filtered and bundled before they are presented to the decision maker. In addition, the Open Situation Room familiarizes participants with concepts and methods of design thinking as they apply to complex matters of policy-making and policy implementation. Design thinking suggests that human experiences and human interactions provide valuable insights into a given situation and trigger new thinking about a problem that can lead to new action. In the context of addressing complex and sometimes wicked problems, design thinking has emerged as a powerful approach to overcome current entrapment and to develop "what if" scenarios and alternative futures.

The interdisciplinary make-up of the group and the stimulating work environment of the OSR encourage the development of new ideas and perspectives, producing valuable impulses for the decision maker that can lead to a significant reframing of the actual question. The synergies in the room can at times even reshape the relationships among participants and lead to new future collaborations around the topic.

This year's Open Situation Room is co-facilitated by Polis180, a grassroots think tank for European and foreign policy. Polis180 brings innovative ideas and formats to an audience that is largely isolated from the thoughts and recommendations of the young generation.

Realpolitik or Responsibility to Protect: New Tools of Citizens' Diplomacy to Find Solutions in Syria

The global community faces a multitude of challenges: How to deal with the mass migration and refugee movements? What measures can be taken to fight international terrorism? How can we stop and prevent human rights violations and mass atrocities? These are just some of the global challenges that demand major political decisions. Discussions often arise about whether these decisions are made in accordance with international law and moral standards.

This year's Global Diplomacy Lab on the topic "New tools of citizens' diplomacy to find solutions in Syria" wants to pick up this debate and discuss questions such as: Does realpolitik prevail in the end? What about the responsibility to protect? What role do interests, morals, and international law play in such issues? The case of Syria is in the center of this year's creative formats – the DiploHack and the Open Situation room – that aim at finding new approaches to end the war or solve some of the most pressing problems related to it.

According to the UN, more than 250,000 people have lost their lives – other organizations speak of as much as 470,000. The UN has demanded all parties to stop making civilians suffer as a method of war. However, it is stated that all involved parties have committed war crimes such as murder, torture and rape. Government forces are evidently blocking access to food, water and health services through sieges and barrel bombings. At the same time, the so-called Islamic State is waging a campaign of terror, punishing those who refuse to accept its rules by means of public beheadings, amputations and the like.

What are sustainable solutions to end the war? Which role do neighboring states, regional powers and Western countries have to play – during negotiations and in a post-war Syria? Can there be peace despite Assad? How can the Syrian people and civil society organizations be included in long-term strategies for peace? What's more important: democracy or stability?

Discussing solutions to solve the Syrian war, participants looked at both tackling the root causes and symptoms of the war. The results of this creative process are presented on the following pages.

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Experts

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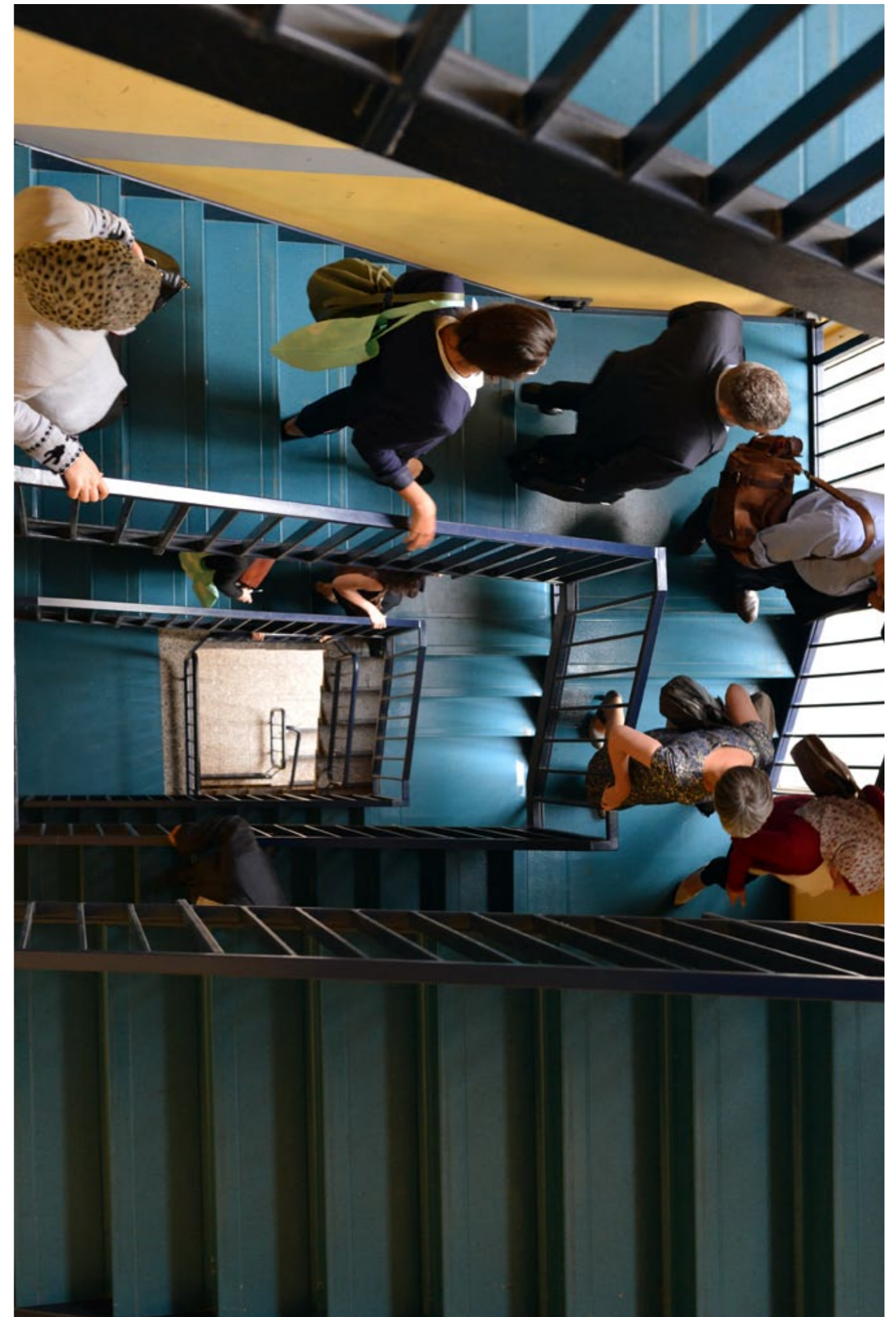Atrocity Prevention, Federal Foreign Office

Facilitators

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supported by Vivian Valencia and Nicola Forster

What you're doing is a new way of making people's voices heard.

Power to the People via Blockchain

What's the objective?
To explore how the blockchain technology could be employed as a means for "democracy 2.0" in any given community

For whom (target group)?
— Syrian Community

With whom (possible partners)?
— The Day After Project

The idea is based on blockchain technology, which has been getting publicity via the bitcoin currency. This technology enables decentralised, secure and verified means of cooperation possibly better and different than any seen so far. The aim is to explore how the blockchain technology could be employed as a means for "democracy 2.0" in any given community. The first real-world pilot could be in a community in Syria when the present phase of conflict and turmoil has ended, for example via the "The Day After Project".

What is the Approach?
Any given community of people who wants/needs to organise their community affairs in a democratic way could do so by coding all principles of their joint affairs in a governance contract, thus becoming an elaborate software using blockchain. People's taxes are administered by the governance contract. Money is allocated to proposals made by anyone from the community, provided their proposal finds enough support from their peers. Any proposals and decisions are voted on by people via their smart phones or other devices. Each individual can choose how many decisions he or she wants to be involved in and which kinds of topics they want to be involved in. Depending on the geographical scope and impact of a decision, the people affected by it can be involved in deciding. To avoid everyone being overwhelmed by constant demands for decision-making, it is also possible to have decisions made by randomised subgroups of a certain target group or to forward it to a peer.

This could be a pilot project with local councils, like liquid democracy.

Cut out governments by providing basic services to the citizens.
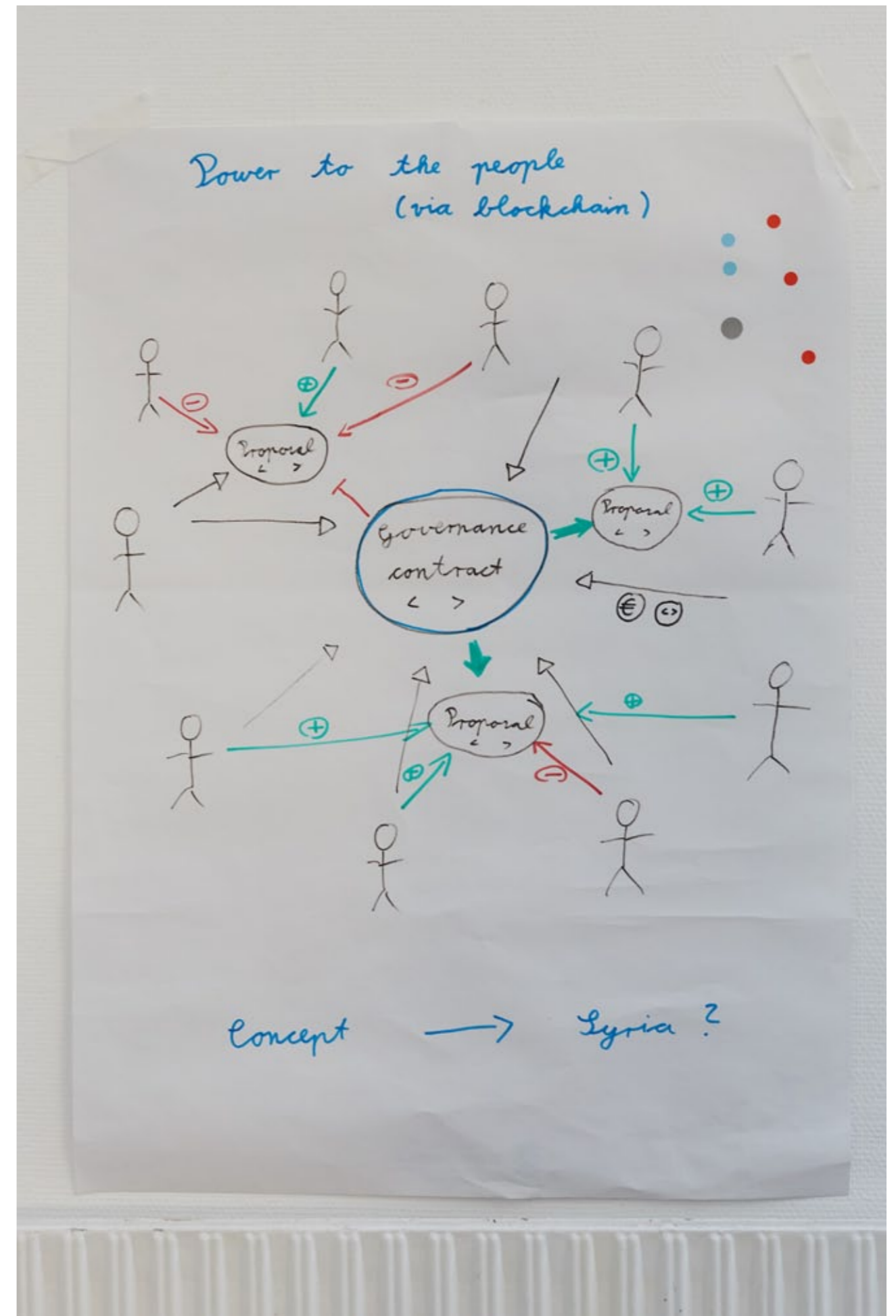
Everyone deserves protection!

That's an idea that represents civil disobedience in the most peaceful way.

Governments failed; we can't wait any longer.

#TheMarch

What's the objective?
Stop the war and protect Syrians on the ground from violence, war crimes and human rights abuses.

For whom (target group)?
— The Syrian people

With whom (possible partners)?
— People from as many countries as possible and their governments
— International media

A large group of people from different countries and continents decides to bring an end to the war in Syria – by walking there themselves. The basic idea is to force governments to protect their citizens on their way and when they enter the war zone. They can only provide safety when they engage in the conflict and stop the violence.

What is the Approach?
Every life is worth protecting. "#TheMarch" of dignity, of human solidarity and of intolerance to the inaction of the international community wants to engage as many people as possible, sending a strong message to the international community and the different war parties in Syria. Also people from countries engaged in the proxy war, like Russia and Iran, will take part in the march to show their sympathy for the Syrian people. This group will undertake a march from Germany to Syria not only to reclaim the right of all human beings to be protected and to have a dignified life, but also to reclaim our power as civilians to change the way decisions are being made by governments.

Along the way, the marchers will also report their experiences, so people all over the world can follow the movement. Moreover, throughout the journey, there will be 'assembly spots' where other supporters can join.

Failure to enter Syria can be part of the action. The message to walk in the opposite direction of the flow of refugees, herewith challenging governments to ensure a safe journey, is, however, a strong one. The project could give a new dimension to the concept of R2P.

We are going there, no one is stopping us.

You are nuts! I absolutely love this idea! You would walk in the opposite direction of the refugees – that's a strong message.
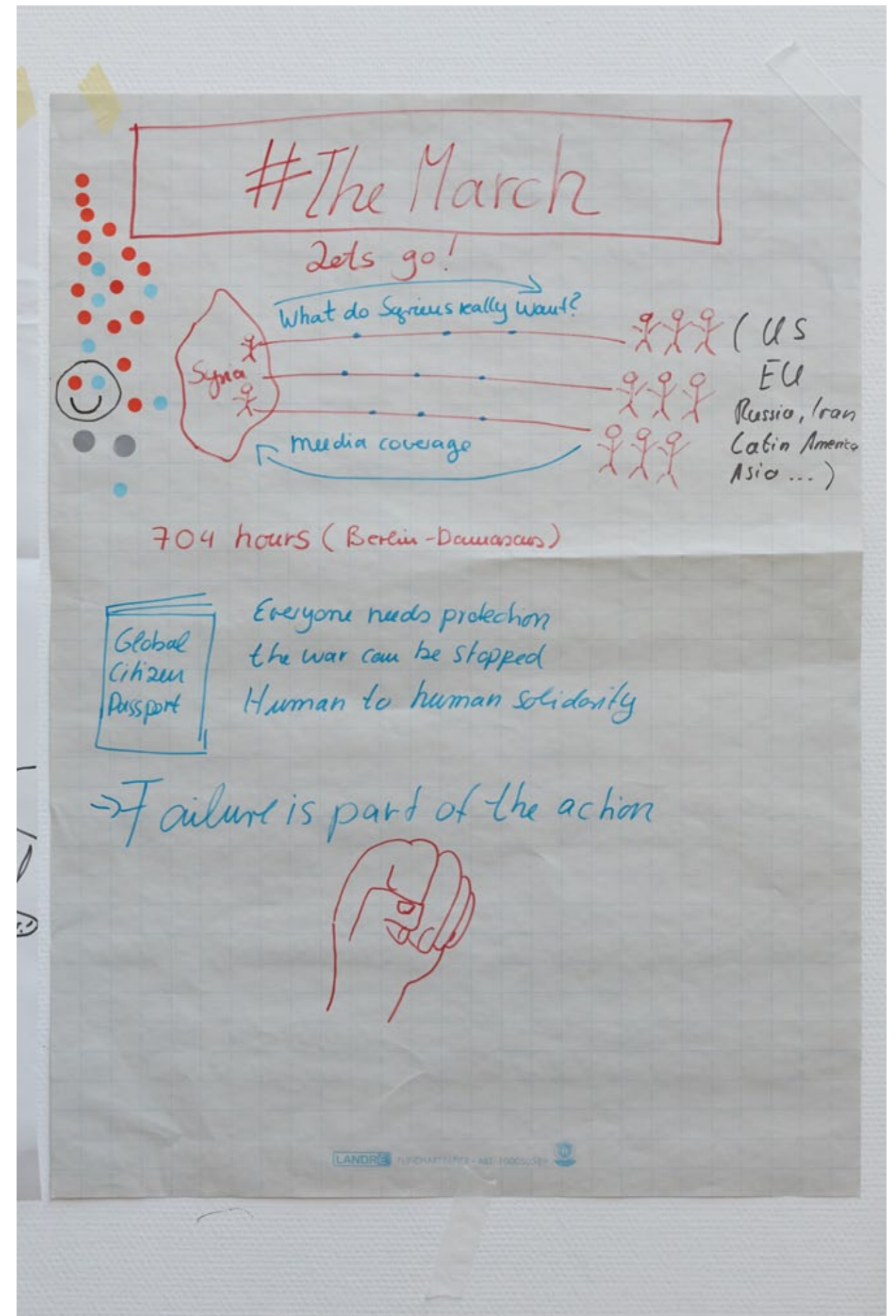
I think it's very feasible and easy to implement.

Cooking for Peace: Re-establishing Trust

What's the objective?
To restabilise trust among the actors of Syrian conflict

For whom (target group)?
— UN Security General Office
— P5 + Turkey negotiators

With whom (possible partners)?
— German Federal Foreign Office
— South African Government
— Bishop Tutu

The idea is to re-establish trust by bringing together the chief negotiators in the Syrian conflict.

What is the Approach?
The chief negotiators will prepare and cook meals together for three to four days at a neutral place that has no bearings on the conflict itself. South Africa can be one of the venues for the first meal, given the country's history of overcoming its own internal conflict. The Nobel Peace Prize Winner Bishop Desmond Tutu could also be invited to the gathering.

The philosophy around this gathering is that as ingredients blend together, conversations flow and people are able to express their true feelings about the situation. Critical to the entire process is that the media is not allowed to cover the event, and that members will not engage in any external communications. The project is a small step towards solving a huge conflict. The project is based on the assumption that all the actors will be ready to come to the table, so to speak.

GDL wants to establish a secretariat from within our group of members and engage the German Federal Foreign Office to provide influence and assistance to bring together the actors including Bishop Tutu, the UN Security General Office, and the chief negotiators of the Syrian conflict. The venue can be at a nature reserve in South Africa.

The one thing that is missing in the conflict is trust.

Sometimes tougher measures are necessary.

If you exclude sanctions, you would really believe that diplomacy works only with words.

Germany/EU to Stop Economic Relations with Iran, Russia and Saudi Arabia

What's the objective?
Stop the war by means of economic sanctions.

For whom (target group)?
— Governments of Iran, Russia, and Saudi Arabia

With whom (possible partners)?
— The German government
— European Union
— Possibly other countries like the US or China

The war in Syria can be labeled a proxy war. Iran, Russia and Saudi Arabia are at the forefront with supplying war parties with weapons and financial resources.

What is the Approach?
This project aims at stoping the war by stopping the involvement of regional actors – by means of economic sanctions. The EU and Germany will stop economic relations with Iran, Russia and Saudi Arabia for as long as they are evidently funding war parties and therefore prolonging the conflict. Other countries might follow Germany's and the EU's example. Details on how to execute the sanctions has to be discussed in a multi-stakeholder meeting, particularly involving the chambers of commerce. This would put immense pressure on Iran, Russia and Saudi Arabia to withdraw from the conflict immediately, otherwise facing heavy economic losses. In turn, both government forces and the so-called Islamic State would lose major funding sources, with the latter becoming more vulnerable to attacks by the international alliance. This could force the parties back onto the negotiation table and this time prepare a rapid transition phase and a roadmap for a post-war Syria.

We need to tackle the root causes: sanctions are a possible way to do that.

Use economic influence as political leverage.

We don't solve the conflict, we treat symptoms. We are aware of it.

We need such crazy ideas!

The Maloba Plan

What's the objective?
To create jobs for Syrian refugees

For whom (target group)?
— Syrian refugees

With whom (possible partners)?
— Private sector

People flee the conflict affected countries in search for safety and a possibility to make a better living for themselves and their children. The Maloba plan seeks to create jobs for Syrian refugees in the host countries.

What is the approach?
The international community will be urged to undertake a two-fold approach to support countries hosting refugees and or help create buffer zone in the conflict country.

I. Through already existing mechanisms and processes, the international community will support the development of decent refugee camps in the host countries with adequate access to social services such as health care and education
II. The international community will engage the private sector to support growth in the industry of the local community. This will help create jobs for both the refugees and the host country population. The developed countries offer incentives (nudge) to the private sector in the host countries so that the private sector increases business with the potential counterparts in the host countries e.g. textile industry in Turkey, digital applications development industry in Jordan etc. A criterion for incentivizing private sector should be based on the commitment of each business to provide trainings and create jobs for refugees. The initiative will build on lessons from campaigns such as 'Made in America' to develop a label that enables consumers to support businesses that are making an effort to ensure a better livelihood for refugees.

The project will take longer time to implement. It will provide opportunities to be replicated in other refugee crises and could be made part of the strategies to deal with the refugee crisis.

We need decent camps.

We need to give refugees a perspective.
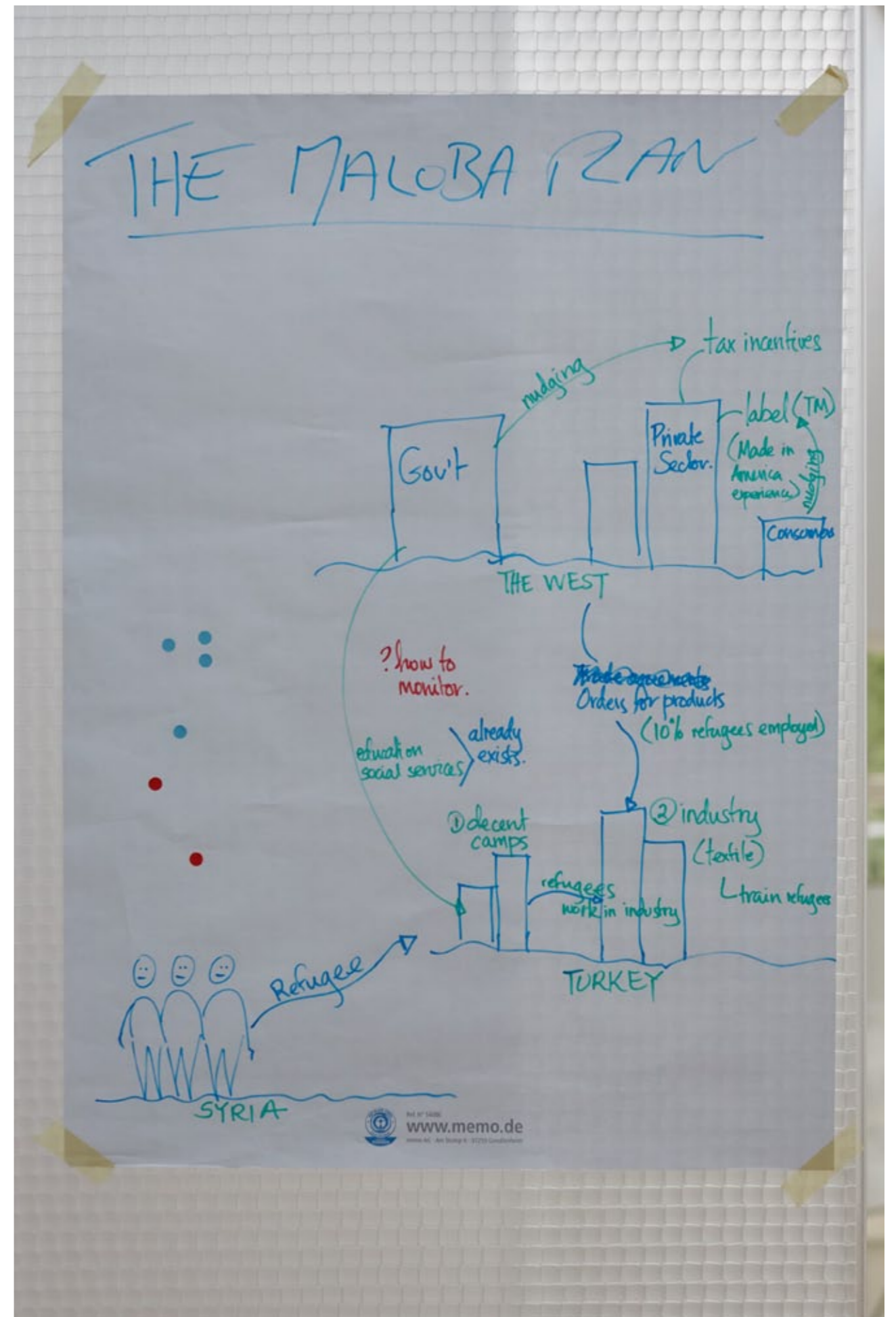
Refugees to Work

What's the objective?
Match Syrian workforce
with open job opportunities
in host countries.

For whom (target group)?
— Syrian refugees

With whom?
(possible partners)
— ICT companies to facili-
    tate the online platform
— Companies and organ-
    isations in the potential
    host countries
— Governments of potential
    host countries

This idea wants to match supply and demand for work force. Companies in Europe
and neighboring countries of Syria need workers. Syrian refugees need a perspective.
A perfect match.

What is the Approach?
An online database which links Syrian refuges with potential employers in other
countries will be developed. This virtual job center can help refugees finding destina-
tions where they and their skills are needed and connect them with their potential
future employer. CVs and descriptions of duties and requirements for the post can be
exchanged. This tool could be the cornerstone of a new mechanism to allocate reg-
istered refugees, providing them with work and a long-term perspective. The project
can reinforce integration, while at the same time it aims at supporting the economies
of the respective host countries. A win-win-situation.

It's implementable!

*Let's match the refugees'
skills with potential needs
of the host country.*
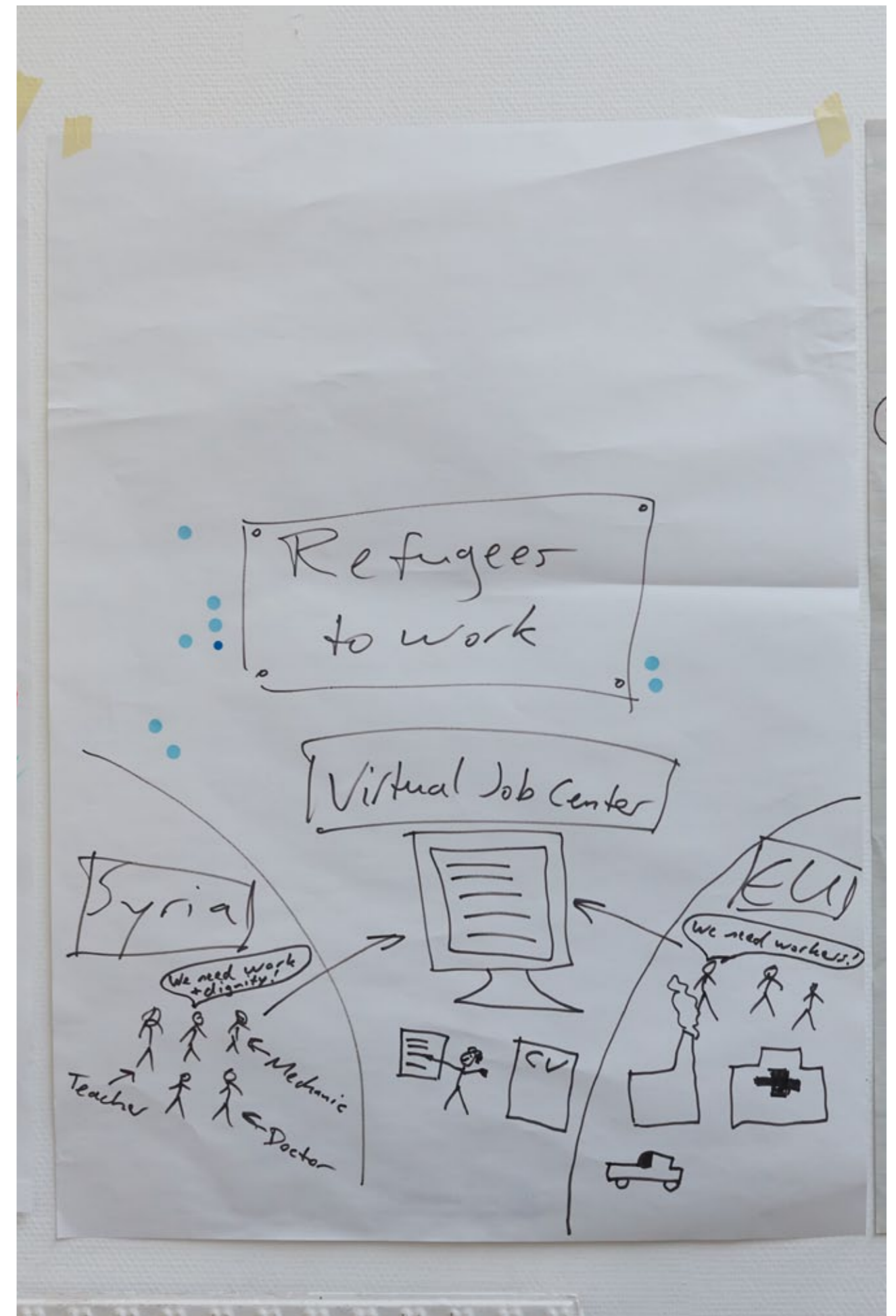
Use technology to make an impact!

The White Drone Project

What's the objective?
Humanitarian aid for Syrians on the ground, especially in besieged areas. Make the Syrians' voices heard through original footage.

For whom (target group)?
— The people in Syria

With whom (possible partners)?
— Tech-companies like Google and Microsoft
— Other donors for food, medicine and technology
— Media allies like BBC, CNN and Al Jazeera

Syrians suffer from all kinds of shortages – food, medicine, communication tools and so forth. Food deliveries are being bombed, supply routes are being blocked, people starve to death. The White Drone Project wants to bring people what they really need and give them the attention they deserve.

What is the Approach?
In safe, neighboring countries, drones will be set up with food and water supplies as well as medicine, smartphones, wifi hotspots etc. and are flown to besieged areas in Syria, where they drop their load. Apart from food and medical supplies, Syrians can use smartphones and the internet connection to tell the international community and the White Drone Project in particular what they need next. Syrians have to be asked what they need and their voices have to be heard. This project could enable this, even in sieged cities and areas, where people are largely isolated from an international audience.

The color of the drones is white as they stand for a peaceful, humanitarian approach. Drones are also equipped with cameras so that media partners like Al Jazeera, BBC or CNN can witness the drop, receive original footage and cover the operation in big features.

Big tech-companies like Google and Microsoft could ensure and sustain funding and help design drones that cannot be located or shot down easily.

We want to tackle big, impossible challenges.
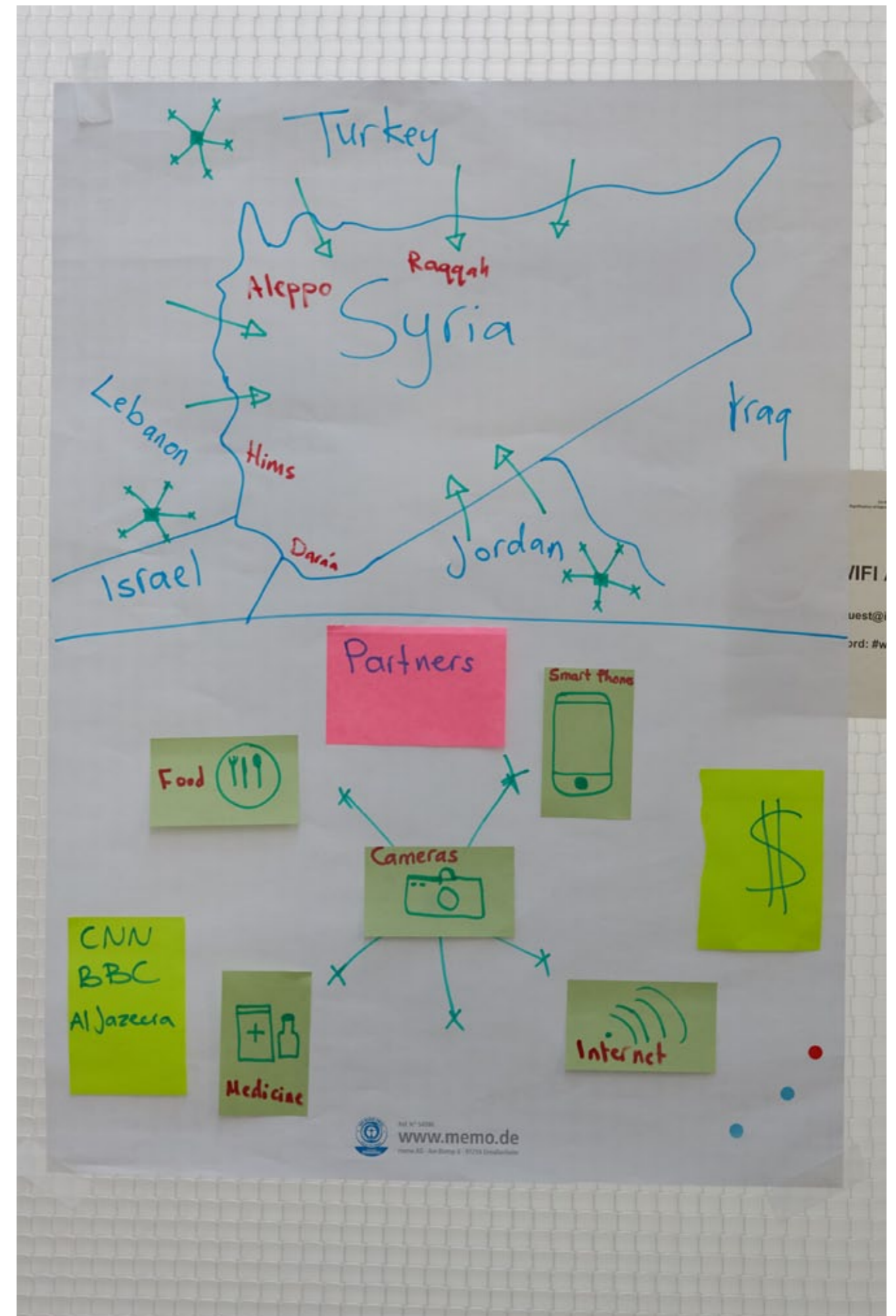
10.000 children have gone missing in the EU!

UProtect VProtect

What's the objective?
Provide wristband to prevent the trafficking of Syrian refugee children coming to Turkey and the EU

For whom (target group)?
— Children in refugee
   camps

With whom (possible partners)?
— IT and legal experts
— Diplomats
— UNICEF
— IOM

According to UNICEF, 10,000 refugee children went missing in the EU last year. The German government released figures in April 2016, stating that at least 6000 refugee children went missing in Germany in 2015. It is suspected that these children become victims of child labour and/or child sexual exploitation. This project aims to track Syrian refugee children as they enter Turkey and the EU so that the number of children who goes missing would be reduced. It is our responsibility to protect these children, and even if we cannot carry out R2P in Syria, we each have the individual responsibility to protect.

What is the Approach?
Wrist bands with in-built GPS tracking device and long-life battery (Google's Physical Web technology) will be given out to children at registration booths in Turkey and entry points in the EU member states. The next-of-kin of these children will be informed of the importance of these wrist bands to keep their children safe. Unaccompanied children will be told in age-appropriate language. Should traffickers attempt to remove the wrist bands from the children, the bands will emit an alarm which will trigger an alert in the system, sent to UNICEF and IOM. These two agencies will be the repositories of the data required to keep track of the children. However, there are issues regarding data protection and resistance from the refugees themselves who may not wished to be tracked or "branded".

The next step would be to convene a hackathon with IT and legal experts, diplomats and other actors to develop a prototype.

I love this project.

We can't carry out R2P in Syria so this project is one way for us to carry out our individual responsibility to protect.
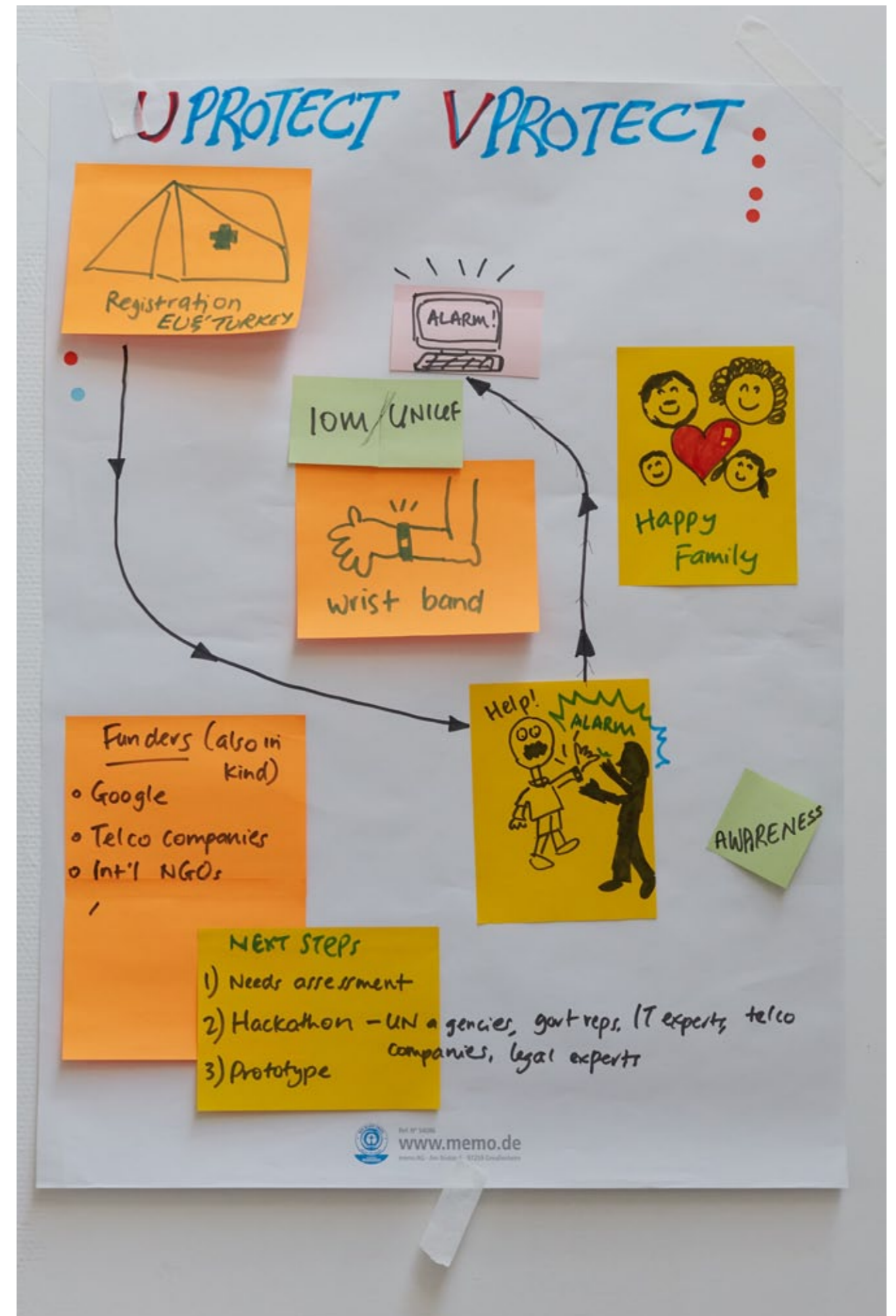
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