

Panel P: Multifaceted connections between the Horn of Africa and its' diasporas (chair: Liisa Laakso; coordinator: Päivi Pirkkalainen)

Decades of violent conflict in the Horn of Africa have been characterised by nation-state failures and the attempts of the international community to bring security to the region. Because these conflicts have led to the dispersal of refugees throughout the region and abroad, the role of the diaspora in these conflicts has received attention. Remittances and other support to the warring parties from the diaspora can easily fuel the conflicts and undermine peace building efforts at the local level. On the other hand, there is a lot of evidence that diaspora communities are involved in the processes of reconciliation and state formation, as well as community development and family life in the Horn of Africa. Their networking activities with their countries of origin are increasingly seen as resources for survival, development and welfare. In the Horn of Africa, remittances clearly exceed the flow of official development aid, and are crucial for the survival of hundreds of thousands of households. In today's social world people stretch between places and communities in two or more nation-states: this spatial turn has been termed as transnationalism. Within multi-sited connectedness and transnational lived world, the issues of development, rebuilding and reconciliation are however not simple. They pose difficult cultural and psychological challenges for the re-interpretation of identity and tradition as well as learning and rejecting new ideas and habits of the surrounding society. These re-interpretations and new ideas are immensely important for the way in which diaspora contribute to development and peace-building activities in their countries of origin. This panel will deal with dynamics and complexities relating to the involvement of diaspora in their countries of origin.

1) Liisa Laakso (University of Helsinki, Finland)

2) Päivi Pirkkalainen (University of Jyväskylä, Finland): Somali associations and leaderships in Italy and Finland: dynamics between integration and transnational involvement

The aim of this paper is to explain mobilisation processes of Somalis in two different settlement country contexts: Finland and Italy. The general theme addressed in the paper is the relationship between processes of inclusion and transnational involvement displayed by Somali associative networks in two different countries. The research questions we wish to put forward are the following: how does transnational engagement and diasporic mobilization in associations relate to processes of inclusion in the Italian and Finnish societies? How is the specificity of Somalis and of the conflict at home reflected in this dynamic? Which factors can contribute in explaining differences and similarities found in the different contexts? Diaspora associations and leaderships seem to be formed at the interplay of various factors, which can be referred to dynamics occurring (and opportunities being present) both in the countries of origin and in the countries of residence, as well as to internal dynamics specific to diaspora organisations. In order to draw a cross country comparison, we have been looking at integration policies and specific measures adopted towards immigrants in Italy and Finland, and in particular at the role that migrants' associations play in the process of inclusion. We have further identified different associations' typologies and trajectories in terms of orientations of scopes and levels of professionalism displayed by the Somali group, focusing also on the leadership issue. The argument we sustain is of a positive relationship between integration and transnational engagement, as *a condition sine qua non* possibly being interested and get involved in development, peace and political processes in Somalia.

The paper is based on the empirical material (interviews and participant observation) collected in various fieldwork periods in Finland and Italy during 2008-2010.

3) Mahdi Abdile (University of Helsinki, Finland)

The study focused on the experiences of Somali diaspora returnees who either have resettled or have returned temporarily and their contributions to Somalia in terms of conflict settlement and peacebuilding. The researcher followed two groups of Somalis from the diaspora who have returned over the past three years to work in Somaliland and Puntland. The first group consists of five individuals who travelled to Puntland and Somaliland to work with the FinnChurchAid Peace Initiative program (PIP) funded by the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs (FMFA). The PIP initiative aims to help resolve inter-clan and prevent inter-clans conflicts but also tackles other resource based conflicts. The second group consists of some fifteen doctors, nurses, laboratory technicians, and dentists who returned from Finland to Somaliland as part of a program of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) that seeks to address the shortfall of professional skills in the health care sector. In 2008 and 2009, most participants of the PIP and the IOM initiatives were working for government agencies, local and international organizations, local hospitals and health centres in the region. The study found that the systematic engagement of professionals from the diaspora first, increases the quality of much needed services e.g. in the health care sector of the home country. Second, the deployment of trained conflict mediators from the diaspora in local conflicts at home proved to be a very successful model also for the transfer of ideas and know-how related to conflict-settlement and peacebuilding. Third, the returnees knowledge and understanding of local language and ritual of clan customs and norms of conflict resolution, mediation and arbitration has given an encouraging and promising results that allow the conclusion that the Somali diaspora can play a third-party conveyer of expertises that blend local traditions with modern mechanism. Finally, the at least temporary return of professionals from abroad and their engagement at home changed the perceptions of many actors involved. The local as well as the diasporic actors exchanged views and learned from each other, not only with regard to the specialisations of the returnees (e.g. health care) but also regarding values of life and peace dominating in the various contexts (Finland and Somalia, in this case).

4) Petri Hautaniemi (University of Helsinki, Finland)

The study proposes to gain new knowledge about the contested Somali male childhood in the 1990s as a resourceful experience, especially in the light of ethnic and clan membership outside Somalia. The aim is to focus on the idea of returning to Somalia in the context of the growing pressure of repatriation. The project will address the dynamics and strategies of repatriation, development aid and personal responsibilities vis-à-vis one's place of origin. It has a specific focus on men and brings forth the generational aspect to the wider research project. It is argued, that multi-temporal processes and time-spanning identifications have been a highly neglected aspect in research on diaspora and development. The aim of the project is to gain new information about emerging subjectivities, the very practices of repatriation, or aspirations of that, at both individual and institutional levels. Further, the objective is to analyse the return as an experience in which social, cultural and economic capital are created, reproduced and sometimes lost from the individual point of view.

5) Marja Tiilikainen (University of Helsinki, Finland): Creating Stronger Persons: Experiences of Healing Among Somali Migrants

The present large-scale Somali diaspora was caused by the outbreak of the civil war. Starting from the conflict in 1988 in the northern Somalia, the events finally escalated into the collapse of the Somali state in 1991. The past 20 years, Somalia has been portrayed as a failed state and its typical imagery has consisted of violence, famine and flow of refugees. Moreover, research has frequently shown that many Somali refugees suffer from traumatic experiences related to the war. It is much more seldom discussed in what ways the country of origin might be a source of support for Somali refugees and migrants. This paper focuses on Somali migrants who return to Somaliland (north-western Somalia) in order to get treatment and medication for ill-health. How are experiences of illness and healing framed by transnational lifeworlds? What does healing entail from the perspective of one's religious and ethnic identity and the sense of being? The paper is based on four months of fieldwork carried out in Somaliland in 2005-2007 as part of my postdoctoral research project. The data was gathered by ethnographic methods including observations and interviews of several local healers and patients from the diaspora. The data suggests that becoming stronger as a person – not only physically, but also religiously, emotionally, culturally and morally – is seen as an important part of healing.

6) Markus Virgil Hoehne (Max Planck Institute, Germany): The role of the diaspora in education and peacebuilding in Somaliland

After secession from collapsing Somalia in 1991, people in Somaliland succeeded in establishing a peaceful social and political order without much international help, but strongly aided by the diaspora. The educational sector, which had been completely destroyed in civil war, developed from very modest beginnings in the early 1990s to manifold offers up to tertiary education a decade later. Due to the limited capacities of the government it is largely in private hands. Many educational institutions have been founded and/or are continuously supported by members of the diaspora. Education in Somaliland is currently in high demand and many young people enthusiastically study. Many Somalis believe that education and economic development are linked. I argue that engaging in education can contribute to overcoming the legacy of many years of civil war in the wider society. The downside of this engagement is that investments are selective and subject to clan-rivalries in Somaliland and abroad. Moreover, the government of Somaliland has no control over the curricula of the schools and universities. Text books from various African, Arabic, Asian and European countries are used simultaneously, which hinders compatibility. Since curricula are always also a political matter, the lack of government control bears certain risks. Finally, follow-up perspectives for most graduates are missing. The structural transformation from a war-torn to a peaceful society, to which the re-building of the educational sector contributes, is endangered by unemployment, poverty and lack of government planning.