ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Towards a theory of diaspora formation through conflict deterritorialization

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Abstract

Building on different cases of conflicts in homelands triggering diaspora mobilization, we develop a theory of diaspora formation through processes of conflict deterritorialization. We argue that an armed conflict in the country of origin can trigger specific processes of diaspora formation in the countries of settlement and in the transnational space, depending on the actors involved and the particular context in both the home and host countries. We suggest that this specific non-linear process of diaspora formation can happen at the individual and collective levels, and can both turn a migrant into a diasporic individual as well as mobilize diasporic individuals for collective action. This mobilization, we argue, builds on narratives about and from the homeland, the country of residence, and the transnational space, and can, in turn, lead to conflict autonomization in diaspora settings.

KEYWORDS

diaspora, conflict, deterritorialization, diasporization, media, mobilization

INTRODUCTION

How are diasporas born? Traditional diaspora studies point to various factors which can lead to the creation of diasporas: empire, trade, or conflicts are most commonly quoted, alongside natural disasters or slavery. In all these cases, the process of diaspora formation, or 'diasporization' – two concepts that tend to be used interchangeably – is understood as occurring through a territorial dispersion that can span over centuries and generations. Most definitions of diasporas include: the dispersal of a seemingly homogeneous group (often due to

a catastrophe or violence); the presence of multiple 'similar' groups in different geographical locations that are trying to build a home 'away from home'; and a desire (or at least, a faint aspiration) to return to the 'homeland' (Cohen, 1999; Safran, 1991).

However, these conceptualizations tend to be both under-theorized and over-used, and result in concept stretching (Brubaker, 2005). Additionally, diasporic groups are often understood as permanent categories reduced to specific histories of migration (Chow, 2010; Demmers, 2007; Gayer, 2007), making it impossible to understand diaspora mobilization without making essentialist claims (Brubaker, 2000, 2005; Vertovec, 1997). One perspective which aims to avoid such reductionism and essentialism is that of understanding diasporas as situational, relational, and contextual processes (Agnew, 2005; Anthias, 1998; Chow, 2010). Diasporas come into being through mobilizations; they are 'projects', stances, and practices rather than groups with a pre-defined destiny (Brubaker, 2005; Sökefeld, 2006). They can dissolve and stop existing or they can expand by mobilizing more individuals. Within this perspective there are a number of diasporization processes which lead to diaspora formation.

In this article, instead of discussing diaspora formation in general, we focus on a specific type of deterritorialized diasporization process. Rather than directly associating diaspora formation to a dispersal (e.g. Cohen, 2008; Safran, 1991) or investigating diasporic mobilization in all its forms, our objective is to highlight a specific diasporization process that is triggered at a distance by conflicts occurring in the homeland and which can lead to the diasporization of migrants or their descendants in the host country. In this specific instance of diasporization, diaspora emergence does not result from dispersion but primarily relates to conflict deterritorialization, and can occur long after migration has taken place. We are following here Floya Anthias' suggestion (1998) to explore a variety of factors which facilitate diasporization, rather than systematically associating them with migration.

In order to do so, we elaborate on the concept of conflict deterritorialization, which notably entails the transposition of ideas, attitudes, symbols, and narratives relating to certain conflicts from their 'original' geographical location so that they can be used, interpreted, and embraced by individuals and groups located elsewhere. In the existing literature, conflict deterritorialization has been described as a complex process that changes the experience of space (Ferguson & Gupta, 1992), and that can entail various phenomena such as transnational insurgencies (Salehyan, 2009), transnational militancy (including among refugee communities) (Checkel, 2013), diaspora mobilization (Rabinowitz, 2000), and conflict transportation between diaspora groups (Féron, 2017). It is important to note that the type of diasporization discussed here can be both the *driver* and the *result* of conflict deterritorialization. In other words, it can both turn migrants into diasporic individuals and intensify the newly awakened identity of the diaspora by referring to the conflict 'back home', thereby further contributing to conflict deterritorialization.

While there is scattered empirical evidence that conflicts occurring in the countries of origin can call diasporas into existence long after migration, when migrants align their discourses and mobilization with events in their home countries, this process has so far not been thoroughly conceptualized. The 1989 Kashmir insurgency, for instance, led many people originating from Azad Kashmir (the Pakistan-administered part of Kashmir) to identify as part of the Kashmiri diaspora. Another well-documented example is that of the Sikh diaspora groups that mobilized after the 1984 'Blue Star' Indian military action against one of the most pre-eminent pilgrimage sites of Sikhism, the Golden Temple in Amritsar (Axel, 2001). These examples suggest that diasporas can come into being at the nexus of the relationship between migrant groups, their homeland, the host countries, and conflicts occurring in the regions of origin. Because it is less common than the mobilization of an already existing diaspora, this process of diasporization has often been overlooked or confused with a mere instance of long-distance nationalism among already established diasporas (Anderson, 1992), and/or reduced to an analysis of how

diasporas contribute to peace-making or peace-wrecking (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2006; Smith & Stares, 2007).

There is, in our view, an urgent need to understand how conflicts in the home country can not only influence migrants and their descendants, and shape their common politics, but also literally lead to the emergence of diasporas and their subsequent mobilization around issues related to these conflicts. Drawing on different case studies, including our own research, we differentiate between the narratives, actors, and spaces of diaspora emergence and mobilization within the context of conflict deterritorialization. We posit that this specific diasporization process can happen simultaneously at the individual and collective levels. On the one hand, conflicts happening in the home country can make migrant individuals aware of their roots, and lead to a process whereby they actively learn about their origins and feel the need to connect with like-minded others. Home conflicts can also, on the other hand, trigger collective mobilization and give birth to new political actors, or significantly alter the agenda and repertoires of action of existing ones. In this article, we show that diaspora formation through conflict deterritorialization can lead to specific discourses and patterns of mobilization, which largely differ from what is observed among pre-existing diaspora groups. In that sense, our article aims to complement existing theories that have so far focused on the mobilization of pre-existing diaspora groups.

It is therefore important to note that we do not use diasporas and (groups of) migrants as synonyms. Although diasporas usually include migrants and their descendants, they can also be made up of people identified by other characteristics, such as religion – for instance, the Jewish diaspora. We argue that migrants and/or groups of migrants may constitute a diaspora if they develop organizational and imaginative elements upon which a common identity as well as emotional and/or practical linkages to a 'homeland' can be built. In a similar way, while there might be some overlap between so-called migrant and diaspora organizations, there is also good empirical evidence suggesting that their activities and focus tend to differ (Halm & Sezgin, 2013).

The article consists of three parts to help us understand diaspora formation through conflict deterritorialization. We start with a discussion of what it means to become a diasporic individual in the context of an armed conflict unravelling in the 'homeland' and we highlight the role played by emotions and modern media in conflict deterritorialization. We then proceed to discuss the contexts and actors which, through their interactions with each other, contribute to diasporization through conflict deterritorialization. The last part of the article discusses how conflict deterritorialization entails an expansion of conflicts into new physical spaces as well as new spaces of meaning. These various dimensions of conflict deterritorialization are complementary and often occur in parallel. Taken together, they help to uncover and explicate the processes of diaspora formation triggered by an armed conflict occurring in the 'homeland'.

CONNECTING 'HERE' AND 'THERE': MODERN MEDIA AND EMOTIONS

Diasporization processes due to wars or military conflicts are primarily triggered by access to information about events occurring in the countries from which migrants and/or their descendants originate. This information is transmitted via modern communication technologies that can also facilitate or create additional connections to the home country, eventually leading to patterns of diaspora formation and conflict deterritorialization. Such vast media coverage can elicit a multiplicity of emotions that can then be mobilized for concrete action; it can also offer possibilities to witness war online, and even to participate in battles virtually. This in turn can facilitate a deterritorialization of the symbols and narratives of the war from the home country into new spaces.

Witnessing the War from Afar

Diasporization due to conflicts in the home country seems to be primarily related to how, how much, and what kind of information circulates. Access to such information has significantly improved since the late twentieth century, thanks to rapid technological developments. In addition to traditional diaspora media outlets and international print and visual media (Kardaş & Yesiltaş, 2017), the internet provides multiple and easy ways to follow the unravelling of geographically distant militarized situations via online resources such as 'live maps', for instance, which stream news about the Israeli-Palestinian and Russian-Ukrainian conflicts in real time.[1] Moreover, the relative availability of smartphones and the internet allows users to create live streaming videos during protests, demonstrations, and even battles, making 'the smartphone and the web […] the technologies that connect the war with the home', wherever that home might be (Shapiro, 2011: 119). In short, modern media technologies have changed both the way wars are reported and how they are viewed (and thus perceived), not only within their primary geographical settings, but also in other locations (Cottle, 2006). Such international mediatization of conflicts makes it possible to witness, albeit virtually, events such as riots, bombings, killings, or the destruction of sacred spaces, which can in turn lead to a renegotiation of the ethnic and/or religious self for migrants and/or their descendants.

Depending on the specific country, the potential prevalence in the news of the home conflict makes it suddenly palpable, real, and important, even if it was not necessarily much talked about until then. Newly disseminated knowledge about the culture, land, or political situation in the home country can also raise the interest of people who do not have any links to it, making discussing the war something similar to 'small talk' (Skrbiš, 1999: 22). Migrants and/or their descendants suddenly become 'experts' on the war in their country of origin, even if they had not identified with it until that point. This external ascription of identity is likely to create new expectations, whereby migrants and their descendants are henceforth supposed to have some knowledge, experience, opinion, or attitude regarding the conflict in their home country. Therefore, even people whose families have been 'assimilated' for years or even generations might suddenly find themselves in a situation where they feel the need to inform themselves about their 'roots and routes', including the reasons for, and the evolution of, the conflict 'back home'.

This process of information-seeking can, in turn, lead to information-sharing, with consequences beyond the individual level. Through the process of rediscovering their homeland, migrants may turn to diasporic individuals and organizations acting as 'cultural brokers'. This was the case with the activities of Syrian diaspora activists on social media, for example, who have succeeded in linking protesters inside the country to the public outside it (Andén-Papadopoulos & Pantti, 2013). Activists can thus transpose voices from the conflict areas into mainstream social media, and collaborate with professional journalists and other actors to adapt the narratives about the relevant conflict to the context of the host country (ibid.). This example demonstrates that, just as the emergence of diasporas can be triggered through conflict deterritorialization patterns, diasporas can themselves also become agents of conflict deterritorialization.

Finally, the possibility of mobilizing new people and raising awareness around the 'cause' has itself become easier through much broader access to modern information and communication technologies. These new developments can lead to the creation of new formal and informal solidarity networks beyond the migrant groups themselves; for instance, through organizations which specifically focus on the distribution of humanitarian aid, or through informal networks where people become friends solely on the basis of a shared attitude towards the ongoing conflict. Thus, solidarity networks can emerge across ethnic, religious, or other types of boundaries, as in the case of the Palestinian cause, which unites not only Palestinians in exile, but also a large part of the political left across the globe (Hecker, 2012). Diaspora formation through

conflict deterritorialization is, therefore, a far larger process that can involve not only migrants but also other actors, as we will further explore.

Long-distance Emotions

Thanks to their potential for manipulating the representation of events in order to construct a coherent narrative – and thus generate a stronger emotional response from their audience – traditional and new media can also play an important role in the process of diaspora formation through conflict deterritorialization. Regular and repeated viewing of footage from the home country can foster a sense of connection to it through the 'witnessing' of violent events, while the mediated 'live' news footage gives the impression that the events are happening there and then, the moment that someone accesses it (Hemmingway & Van Loon, 2011). Consequently, this creates the mirage of one's own participation and can constitute an emotional and/or traumatic experience that can foster the diasporization process.

Such 'witnessing' of traumatic events can 'incorporate the event into regular, everyday reality and memory' (Burkitt, 2005: 685). Often related to religious, ethnic, or other identity issues, these events can generate feelings of shame and guilt, as well as pride and fear, that can arise in an individual for not participating in the conflict. In particular, family, kin, friends, acquaintances, and other networks in the homeland can be powerful factors for mobilizing diaspora members through emotions such as concern, worry, and fear for their safety. Although situated within our individual bodies, emotions reflect the collective experience, and they can be manipulated, empowering or destructive, framed and framing the social and the political around a specific individual (Burkitt, 2014). They have the capacity to unite opposites within the same narrative and can frame participation in collective action. In time, this can interact with the lived sense of temporalities, where certain events seem to stand outside of 'normal' temporalities. This is particularly true in the case of catastrophes and attacks, but also during revolutions or other conflicts (Scannel [1996] in Hemmingway & Van Loon, 2011). Therefore, emotions play a fundamental role in connecting collective and individual processes of diasporization.

In turn, these feelings can be instrumentalized by actors located in both the host and home countries for their own purposes. Hence, emotions are non-territorial and can create a bridge connecting 'here' and 'there', which can then lead to the urge to participate or 'do something' about the conflict in the home country. In sum, the process of diasporization through conflict deterritorialization entails the presence of the home conflict in migrants' everyday lives, but also an entanglement of emotions connecting 'here' and 'there', as well as an identity readjustment. Under these conditions, the individuals concerned are likely to seek out others to whom they can relate, in order to show support or concern and to raise awareness about the 'cause'. These newly established networks mostly build upon a shared attitude vis-à-vis the relevant conflict, and can involve pre-existing migrant groups active in the host countries. Whether they occur within new organizations or in virtual spaces, the development of new activities such as networking, debating, and organizing around conflicts 'back home' is one indicator that a process of diaspora formation is in play.

ACTORS, TEMPORALITIES, AND CONTEXTS OF DETERRITORIALIZATION WITHIN THE COUNTRIES OF SETTLEMENT

Diasporization through conflict deterritorialization is a complex process that entails the participation of a multiplicity of new or pre-existing actors in both the host and home countries, as

well as in the transnational space. It is also significantly constrained by various opportunity structures and temporalities, which explains why conflict escalation in the countries of origin does not automatically trigger diaspora formation and mobilization.

Diaspora mobilization: from the creation to the formalization of diasporic networks

Diaspora formation and mobilization resulting from processes of conflict deterritorialization can be embodied by pre-existing as well as new actors. Well-established institutions, such as churches and other community organizations active in the migrants' countries of settlement, can act as both receptors and amplifiers of the newly enacted – or reinforced – feelings of belonging. By adding an institutional dimension to these emotions, they help to strengthen the emergent diaspora. For example, in her study of the Sikh diaspora in Italy, Gallo (2012) shows how gurdwaras,[2] especially when located outside of metropolitan areas, provide a place to express and perform diasporic solidarity. Similarly, political parties and cultural actors located in the countries of origin can actively participate in diasporization processes by mobilizing and liaising between migrant communities, but also by providing discursive and argumentation elements (Koinova, 2018). Transnational actors such as international federations can likewise be instrumental in these processes, by acting as a driving belt between the contexts in the host and home countries. One example of this is the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front, which is active in both India and Pakistan as well as in the main countries of settlement of the Kashmiri diaspora (Sökefeld, 2006).

Governments in the countries of origin can also actively participate in conflict deterritorialization by putting in place policies and institutions dedicated to supporting the process of diasporization and its mobilization. These policies and institutions are particularly crucial in times of conflict escalation, as migrants and their descendants can prove valuable allies in the fight (Gamlen, 2014). Nonetheless, diasporic institutions set up by home countries can also play a repressive and restrictive role by preventing or countering mobilization in the host countries if they think that such diaspora mobilization is not in their interests (Baser & Ozturk, 2020; Nadarajah, 2018). In parallel, countries of settlement can be drawn into the conflict deterritorialization dynamics through the formation and mobilization of diasporas taking place on their soil. The foreign policies of the relevant host states play an important role here, as they provide the basis for the armed conflict occurring in the home country being framed in a specific way, and also explain why certain countries would choose to support or prevent diaspora formation and mobilization on their territory.

At the local level, the urge to 'do something' discussed in the previous section can translate into the creation of, or participation in, specific organizations in the host countries. Newly mobilized individuals, in pursuit of the 'fellow feeling', might begin searching for existing organizations, or in their absence, organize on their own. This networking is usually built through informal connections, then gradually strengthened through mechanisms of homophily, polarization, and heterogeneity, or a mix of all three (Voytiv, 2019). More specifically, these formal and informal interactions are often built around perceptions of each other in relation to conflict lines and attitudes towards the conflict in the home country, as well as evaluations of neutrality (ibid). The formalization of these types of interaction constitutes another sign that a process of diasporization through conflict deterritorialization is in play.

Further, pre-existing migrant organizations can (re)define their attitudes towards each other based on their respective positions vis-à-vis the home conflict. This can entail politicizing their usual activities and/or trying to enlarge their constituency by attracting new members. As part of the process of conflict deterritorialization, core members (Shain, 2007: 130)

of pre-existing migrant organizations might also decide – sometimes without the agreement of the majority of their membership – to focus primarily on the conflict in their country of origin, thus further entrenching patterns of conflict deterritorialization. Mobilization is encouraged by emphasizing the importance of the conflict, by comparing it to other past or ongoing conflicts, by encouraging individuals to 'help', and by inviting them to engage in 'minority politics' to influence the host country's agenda (Demmers, 2007). There can be calls for humanitarian or social aid, but also violent action. Of course, this aspect of diaspora formation does not happen without resistance, as some individuals who do not want to become involved in politics might resist or leave the organization. At the same time, if an organization does not politicize, it is possible that its most active members will likewise leave and create their own outlet.

The newly-established and pre-existing migrant and diasporic organizations thus follow different paths of mobilization when it comes to conflict deterritorialization: while the first type signals the process of *becoming* a diasporic individual, as triggered by the conflict in the homeland, the latter entails the mobilization of individuals who already have a diasporic identity (albeit to different degrees) due to the conflict in the homeland. The inter-organizational relationship between pre-existing and newly-established organizations will predominantly depend on the extent of overlap between their respective understandings of the conflict in question (Voytiv, 2019). Evidently, organizations with a longer history of activism will have a more dominant position in the organizational field than newly-established ones, which, in the case of disagreement, can marginalize some new organizations as being 'too extreme' or 'not serious enough' within the context of the host country.

These processes of diaspora politicization and mobilization follow specific temporalities which are partly connected to the succession of events in the home country. Thus, they are more likely to appear when the conflict in the country of origin first erupts or becomes more visible, and particularly when there is a dramatic escalation in violence. Hence, the duration of the dispute, the actors involved in military action, the conflict's history and its focus all have a direct effect on diaspora consciousness and mobilization. Axel (2001: 5) shows, for instance, that the 1984 attack by the Indian Army on the Golden Temple played a major role in the emergence of a Sikh diaspora consciousness. Interestingly, Axel also shows that it was the process of diaspora formation which produced the idea of the Sikh homeland, *Khalistan*, and not the other way around, as generally assumed in diaspora studies (see also Shahed, 2019).

In contrast to diasporic memories that are often described as long-term and building upon the distant past (Agnew, 2005), diasporization through conflict deterritorialization is triggered by a sense of urgency and by the instantaneous character of news coming from the home country. Thus, while well-established diasporas may react to events occurring in their country of origin by reactivating pre-existing networks, memories, and feelings of belonging, diasporas enacted through conflict deterritorialization are engineered by an acute need to act or react that is not necessarily backed up or constrained by pre-existing representations or structures. In turn, this can favour a high level of organizational, ideational, and ideological creativity in the diaspora. This ideological creativity can notably entail borrowings and cross-fertilization across movements and organizations that identify with other diasporas and also with different ideological struggles. Sökefeld, for instance, has shown that Kashmiri activism in the United Kingdom has been heavily influenced by other international issues, such as the conflicts in Palestine and Vietnam, as well as by anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist ideologies (Sökefeld, 2016: 29). This suggests there is a need to pay attention to this particular instance of diasporization, as diasporas whose emergence is linked to conflict deterritorialization tend to mobilize in distinctive ways, around different issues, and at a singular pace, compared to already established diasporas.

Opportunities and Constraints on Diaspora Formation through Conflict Deterritorialization

The outbreak or escalation of a conflict in the home country is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for diasporization through conflict deterritorialization to happen. Conditions for engagement in the politics and social life of the home country have so far been explored along two main lines. First, observing the mobilization of well-established diasporas, long-distance nationalism scholars argue that it is safer for these groups to engage in their 'home' countries' politics, since they are basically 'under the protection' of their host countries and do not have to face the direct consequences of that engagement, as opposed to those who are still living in the home country (see Anderson, 1992). However, the suggestion that diaspora mobilization is more likely to happen under regimes that respect the rule of law and offer full protection to their inhabitants has been challenged by recent research showing the development and expansion of transnational authoritarianism (Baser & Ozturk, 2020). In addition, attitudes towards engagement with the home country differ between well-established and newly-created diasporas. In host countries, diasporas that are newly enacted through processes of conflict deterritorialization are often viewed with suspicion and associated with the conflicts themselves and 'terrorism'. As a consequence, their mobilization is likely to be tightly controlled, surveilled, and monitored.

Second, diaspora engagement has been analysed as depending on opportunity structures in the host country, such as whether that country allows voting in the country of origin or dual/external citizenship, for instance (Baubóck, 2009). If the conditions in the host country are favourable, then the diaspora can become a 'democracy in action' for the home country (Gamlen, 2014). It is of course reasonable to assume that the specific context in a country of settlement frames activism and determines the chances of joining a specific organization. For example, there are greater opportunities to become active in a host country with a generally high level of activism, than in a country with an oppressive regime or a tightly controlled civil society. In addition, other factors such as the size of the migrant group and the ratio of people identifying with a certain ethnic, religious, or cultural group in the host society may play a significant role in diaspora emergence and mobilization. Another important factor is how one's legal status as a refugee, asylum seeker, or undocumented migrant impacts on the capacity for mobilization (Demmers, 2007). In that regard, citizenship and civic participation models also play a fundamental role in diaspora formation (Mohammad-Arif & Moliner, 2007).

Besides the two larger strands of argument discussed above, a few other possible constraining and facilitating factors can have a strong impact on diaspora formation through conflict deterritorialization. As already mentioned, freedom of access to information and the internet opens spaces for cultural interactions and negotiations of identity. However, viewing the internet as a decentralized and egalitarian space where each actor has the same opportunity of access and knowledge production is problematic and perhaps even naïve (Bernal, 2006). Internet usage depends on literacy and access to a computer as well as a good quality internet connection. Age is another relevant factor that shapes the ways the internet is used, which can therefore affect the types of information available. Newly arrived diasporans tend to be younger and more inclined to use social media, and are thus more likely to take part in deterritorialization processes. However, many countries where there are significant migrant groups restrict access to the internet, such as China, Iran, and Russia, and the internet is also frequently used as a means of surveillance and for repression of so-called dissidents in the diaspora (Baser & Ozturk, 2020). Consequently, the capacity of new media to contribute to diaspora formation through conflict deterritorialization is highly dependent on other situational elements.

Another determining factor relates to the relations (or lack thereof) between the respective host and home countries. More precisely, some armed conflicts will receive more publicity and media attention than others, depending on the location and international politics of the country

where the conflict is taking place. For example, when the revolution erupted in Ukraine's capital Kyiv in 2014, the state media of the Russian Federation provided extensive coverage of the situation, which was not without misinformation and fake news (Hutchings & Szostek, 2015). Thus, depending on the country of residence, the context and history of migrant group interactions in that country, and the mediatization of the conflict in the country of origin, conflict deterritorialization can take highly diverging paths.

Last but not least, different types of discrimination as experienced by migrants in their host countries appear to play a fundamental role in the dynamics of conflict deterritorialization (Demmers, 2002; Piazza, 2011). In particular, economic discrimination and a lack of access to the labour market have been shown to lead to a process of identity (re)discovery, leading young migrants in particular, as well as the descendants of migrants, to invest themselves in conflicts taking place in their country of origin (Baumann, 1996). Consequently, experiences of racism and other forms of discrimination in the host country can create the conditions for individuals to turn to their home country in their search for belonging, and thus potentially contribute to diaspora formation (Féron, 2013).

SPACES AND NARRATIVES OF DIASPORA FORMATION THROUGH CONFLICT DETERRITORIALIZATION

Conflict deterritorialization entails an expansion of conflictuality into new physical spaces on the one hand, and into new spaces of meaning on the other. While this expansion is not specific to diasporas enacted through conflict deterritorialization, and is sometimes visible among well-established diasporas, its specificity with regard to newly awakened diasporas lies in the disruption of established orders that these new mobilizations can engender.

The Multiple Spaces of Diaspora Formation through Conflict Deterritorialization

Countries of settlement are arguably the first places that will be affected by diaspora formation through conflict deterritorialization, along four main dimensions. First, the processes described in the previous sections are likely to lead to high levels of political mobilization among migrant groups and to the creation of diasporic organizations. These can become highly visible on the political and media scenes, and attract large numbers of active members. Interestingly, existing research shows that diaspora emergence and mobilization can be contagious, as the increased awareness and activism of one community can lead to similar processes in another. Baser, in her work on Kurds and Turks in Sweden, has shown how Kurdish activism elicited mobilization on the Turkish side (Baser, 2013: 114). Such multiple mobilization processes can dramatically alter the political scene in the host countries.

Second, conflict deterritorialization processes can have a deep impact on relations between migrant groups living in the same country of settlement, generating a process of conflict transportation, or importation, whereby newly emerged diasporas identifying with different parties in the home conflict clash in their host country (Féron, 2017). The example of clashes between Kurdish and Turkish communities living in different European countries is a case in point. In these situations, diaspora formation turns the countries of settlement into new decentralized, yet connected, conflict battlegrounds.

Third, the emergence of a diaspora and its mobilization can increase the visibility of the relevant conflict in the host country, thus leading to the involvement of the wider population. The situation of the Kurds in Syria, Turkey, and Iraq, for instance, has generated support in countries where Kurdish groups are active. Similarly, the 2019 protests in Hong Kong have been mirrored by migrants in the US, Canada, and the UK, thereby bringing the pro-China

versus the pro-Hong Kong discussion to the outside world (Haas, 2019). Thus, conflicts which occur in the home country can become political issues in the host countries, and potentially major issues within international politics as well. Depending on the orientation of the host state's foreign policy, higher levels of political mobilization and activity might even lead to tensions between the home and host states, as shown by the tensions between the US and Turkey over the proposed extradition of Turkish activist Fethullah Gülen from his home in Pennsylvania. All three of these dynamics can in turn lead to the fourth dimension of *securitization* in the host countries, whereby newly emerged diaspora groups as a whole are suddenly regarded as a major threat to security, even if up until then they had not necessarily attracted a great deal of political or policy attention (Lucassen, 2005).

In parallel, countries of origin are also affected by diaspora formation, although along different lines. The involvement of diasporas changes the conflict configuration in the home country by opening up new options for actors in the conflict, but also by creating new potential constraints. Conflict deterritorialization can lead to the direct involvement of newly formed diasporas in the home conflict through, for instance, the sending of remittances, weapons, and ammunition, and sometimes through participation in the physical combat itself. Such processes have already been extensively studied with regard to pre-existing diaspora groups (see e.g. Horst, 2008; Lyons, 2007; Shain & Barth, 2003). However, because they are less likely to be tied to particular political or military actors in the home country, newly created diasporas might not follow pre-existing lines of division and engagement, and could therefore significantly impact the power balance between actors in the home country. Depending on their size, networks, and outreach capacity, newly emerged diasporas can become powerful allies or enemies of actors in the country of origin, and thus dramatically change the conflict configuration. Similarly, the space for conflict resolution and peace-building can significantly expand through the intervention of newly emerged diaspora groups, and might open up options for dialogue by bringing in new ideas, actors, and frames of analysis (Petrova, 2019). Hence, conflict deterritorialization can also entail peace-building deterritorialization dynamics.

Nonetheless, it is mostly in the transnational space that the expansion of conflicts through diaspora formation and mobilization is most visible. Virtual spaces, especially on social media and other internet forums, constitute a crucial battlefield for this expansion at the transnational level (Brinkerhoff, 2009). They allow for different narratives and opinions to clash, but they are also instrumental in creating new connections and transactions between actors, and for organizing mobilizations. So while these connections are central for understanding diaspora formation processes, they can also help to expand conflicts beyond the diaspora groups involved by mobilizing other actors fighting for similar causes or values or originating from the same region. The establishment of these connections is particularly important for newly formed diasporas since, contrary to well-established diasporas, they cannot rely on pre-existing alliances. For example, during the ongoing conflict in eastern Ukraine, a number of rallies were held across Southern and Western Europe by organizations that were both critical of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and that wanted to show their support for the insurgents. It is therefore important to note that conflict deterritorialization can also result from horizontal contagion, whereby the emergence of a diaspora leads to the mobilization of other groups and thus expands well beyond the specific host country.

Shifting Narratives and Expanding Spaces of Meaning of Conflict Deterritorialization

The expansion of the conflict into new spaces does not happen without affecting the way it is told and talked about. Because migrants often live in different cultural and political universes than actors in the home conflict, they can develop their own understandings and ways of talking

about the conflict. This process of 'conflict autonomization' in migrant and diaspora settings (Féron, 2017) entails the development of new paradigms and narratives through which the events in the country of origin are transmitted and interpreted by new audiences, both in the host countries and beyond. This process is particularly enhanced if the newly emerged diaspora groups are able to frame the issues around the conflict as being somehow universal and/or in line with what is viewed as important in their country of settlement (e.g. the defence of human rights, gender equality, etc.). This can often constitute a notable difference with the discourses of well-established diasporas, which tend to favour narratives closely articulated with those of political actors in their home country (see Senay, 2013, for example). Of course, newly created diasporas are not the only actors who might be expanding the conflict's spaces of meaning: international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), humanitarian organizations, and journalists also play a fundamental role in these processes. However, because migrants and their descendants are seen as 'natural' sources of information and opinions about what is happening in their home country, they play an important role in defining and framing such narratives.

At the same time, this expansion of meaning facilitates the building of transnational solidarities, for instance around human rights, decolonization, the fight against racism, or development issues. This enables actors that are *a priori* external to the conflict to appropriate what is at stake for their own purposes: thus, conflicts in the home country can be discussed in debates and forums related to different cultural and political universes. Conflict deterritorialization can therefore occur beyond specific migrant groups, through the development of solidarities that are based on religion, region of origin, and/or experiences of colonialism. Second and subsequent generations in the diaspora seem to be particularly active in this respect, building transnational solidarities as well as bridges between different political and cultural struggles (see Toivanen, 2019). The organizational, ideational, and ideological creativity within newly created diasporas that we have previously mentioned means that they might be more open to creating alliances across ethnic, religious, or linguistic lines than older members of the diaspora. As a result of conflict deterritorialization dynamics, home conflicts can therefore take on truly transnational features, involving not only their primary actors in the country or region of origin and the respective migrant groups, but also many others located elsewhere, not necessarily defined by specific ethnic, religious, or other identity-specific factors. These groups are therefore able to mobilize the authorities and public opinion in their host countries, as well as other like-minded groups, thus considerably enlarging and complicating the configuration of the conflict.

The role played by religion proves particularly interesting and important for understanding this aspect of diaspora formation through conflict deterritorialization. Diasporic emergence and solidarity indeed frequently build on religious linkages, and are often connected to conflicts. This is particularly true of second-generation members of the diaspora living in Western Europe, especially Muslims, who face discrimination and marginalization and who tend to identify with other suffering believers (Humphrey in Akbarzadeh & Mansouri, 2007: 114). The nexus between religiosity and conflict builds on a discourse of victimization which directly connects the discrimination faced 'here' to a wish to commit oneself to ending the suffering 'over there'. In these cases, the fact that conflict deterritorialization may not be taking place in regard to the particular migrant's own country of origin is explained by religious solidarity and linkages. The deterritorialization of the Palestinian conflict is a good case in point (Hecker, 2012; see also Smith, 2008, who describes Palestine as a 'globalized conflict').

In the foregoing sections we have discussed how the contexts of the host and home countries can shape diaspora formation through conflict deterritorialization. However, it is important to avoid putting these two contexts into separate analytical boxes. We suggest that conceptualizing the interaction between home countries, host countries, the transnational space, and migrant group(s) is crucial in order to accurately capture the phenomenon of diaspora formation through conflict deterritorialization. When we understand this multi-dimensional relationship

as an ongoing interaction process, we see the potentiality of all these contexts to 'mix together' and to be co-constructed.

CONCLUSION

The concepts of diasporization and conflict deterritorialization are central for understanding diasporas as *processes*, rather than as specific actors or groups. Notably, they demonstrate that diasporas are not necessarily the products of a dispersion from the country of origin, and that diaspora formation can be triggered long after migration has taken place. Shedding light on the dynamics of conflict deterritorialization shows that diasporas are not essential and ahistorical entities. Happening at both the individual and collective levels, processes of conflict deterritorialization can suddenly turn a migrant into a diasporic individual, or mobilize diasporas through a sense of urgency and the incorporation of emotions. Diasporas formed through conflict deterritorialization can appear and disappear with time, and their contours can evolve dramatically, as a function of what is happening in the host and home countries as well as in the transnational space.

It is worth keeping in mind that diaspora formation processes through conflict deterritorialization are neither automatic, nor linear. The outbreak or escalation of conflicts in the home country seems to be a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for triggering diasporization and the subsequent involvement of the diaspora concerned. As we have seen, other factors also play an important role, such as the size, history, and consistency of the specific migrant groups, as well as the political and economic conditions in their host countries. In addition, the nature, actors, history, and duration of the conflict might contribute to framing the sense of urgency to act. The interaction of all these variables explains why not all migrant groups politicize or mobilize to the same extent (if at all) or follow the same rhythm.

Many questions remain open as to what happens after this phase of diaspora formation has passed, especially if the conflict ends or de-escalates. For instance, how are the identity and mobilization dynamics of the diaspora affected? In his study of the Kashmiri mobilization in the UK, Sökefeld (2016: 38–39) suggests that after the initial conflict deterritorialization process and an intense period of mobilization during the 1990s vis-à-vis the situation in Kashmir, the Kashmiri diaspora dispersed and fragmented, separating around Indian and Pakistani allegiances. Later, however, during the 2000s and 2010s, the younger generation of British Kashmiris seemed to identify primarily as Muslims, rather than as Kashmiris. Scrutinizing the mobilization patterns of diverse migrant and diaspora groups over the longer term, therefore, would provide crucial insights for unpacking the dynamics of conflict deterritorialization further.

Finally, it is in our view important to continue building towards an encompassing theoretical conceptualization of conflict deterritorialization as a larger process, including different sets of actors and phenomena and not limited to diasporization patterns. As briefly mentioned in the Introduction, conflict deterritorialization processes can entail other types of political mobilization and action at the individual and collective levels, some of which have already been well analysed (such as transnational militancy or conflict contagion), and some others which are not yet fully understood. For example, understanding conflict deterritorialization patterns in relation to the building of transnational solidarities around certain conflicts would be particularly useful. How and why do some conflicts – the Israeli-Palestinian one, for instance – become an integral part of individual and collective political value sets and a major dividing factor of many political scenes around the world?

Deterritorialization does not mean that territory, or territorial claims, do not matter anymore. However, it indicates that feelings of belonging, identity, and solidarity are not necessarily bound to a specific place. Achieving a better understanding of how these changes are

reinforcing, but also reshaping and shifting patterns of mobilization around conflicts is an essential task for future research.

NOTES

[1] See https://liveuamap.com/

[2] A gurdwara, meaning 'door to the guru', is a place of assembly and worship for Sikhs.

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