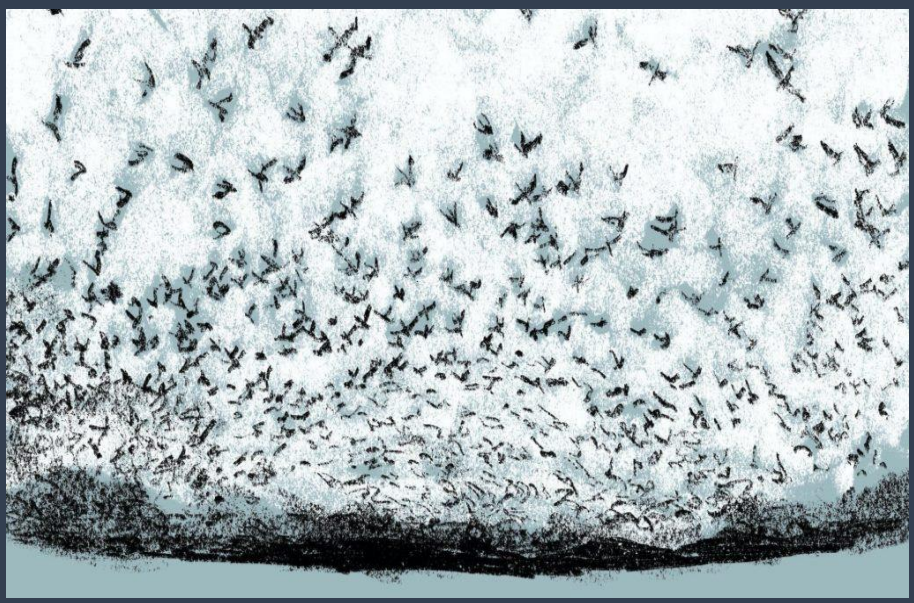
DIASPORAS AND CONFLICT TRANSPORTATION:

Challenges and Creative Practices

Edited by Cæcilie Svop Jensen and Élise Féron



Illustrations by Karstein Volle

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This handbook is a guide for practitioners working with migrant and diaspora communities. It focuses on inter- and intra-diaspora relations in countries of settlement, as well as on relationships between diaspora organizations, policy makers and policy making. It describes the challenges that diaspora groups originating from areas of conflict face in host country contexts, and further highlights transformative creative practices that can be developed by both diaspora groups and policy makers for overcoming these challenges.

This handbook was developed as part of the DIASCON research project "Diasporas and conflict transportation: Inter-group dynamics and host-country responses", funded by the Academy of Finland (2019-2023). It is based on interviews with diaspora organizations, with institutions working with diasporas and migrants, with relevant NGOs, as well as on additional research conducted in the frame of the DIASCON project. It also relies on the results of workshops held at regular intervals in 2020 and 2021 gathering researchers, civil society organizations, diaspora representatives, and policy makers located in various European countries (notably Denmark, Finland, Italy, Sweden, Ukraine, and the UK).

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PART 1: CHALLENGES

Diasporas are *complex and often divided along multiple lines*, but these divisions are not always well understood by policymakers. Diasporas originating from areas of ongoing conflict in particular face challenges when tensions are transferred to host countries, for instance when opposing groups from the country of origin reside in the same areas in the country of settlement. Policy makers need to adopt conflict sensitive approaches to deal with these issues.

Diasporas from areas of conflict face challenges in relation to *stereotyping, racism and xenophobia* in host countries. This essentialization foregrounds their conflict experiences and ignores other aspects of diasporic experiences and identities, which can be problematic for inclusion and wellbeing in the countries of residence. These negative representations also lead to discrimination and segregation.

Originating from areas of conflict can also affect the *inclusion of diasporas in policy making* in different ways. If conflict is ongoing, divisions in the diasporas themselves can make it difficult to organize with a unified voice, especially since policy makers often focus on larger umbrella organizations. The political stance and perhaps involvement of the host country in the conflict in the country of origin also affects the level of involvement that diasporas enjoy. In most cases, diasporas are included only in policies relating to their 'home' countries.

Top-down approaches tend to be preferred to more hands-on approaches by policy makers when they interact with diasporas, and policy makers rarely spend time among diaspora communities themselves. This makes contact between diasporas and policy makers mainly formal and public. Paired with the lack of direct, informal contact, it creates challenges to the development of trust and understanding between diasporas and policy makers.

Generational differences are important for policy makers to address when working with or in diasporic communities. These divisions are visible along four main dimensions: issues that are considered important are often different from generation to generation; patterns of mobilization can be different across generations making joint mobilization challenging; ways of framing issues in both home and host countries can be different across generations; and there can be deep divisions between organizations, facilitating power struggles between 'old' and 'new' diaspora organizations.

Collaboration among diaspora groups across borders is also difficult to establish, but building strong transnational ties facilitates the exchange of knowledge, enhances representation, helps alleviate isolation in host countries, and is particularly valuable for diasporas originating from areas of conflict. Strong cross border collaboration has positive potential for policy makers as well. If policy makers engage more actively in supporting transnational ties it fosters inclusivity, but it also makes mapping and tracing these networks easier.

Young people and women tend to be less represented in diaspora organizations, a result of for instance migration patterns, reproduction of patriarchal patterns of relations, and securitization of youth with a foreign background in countries of settlement. The participation of young people and women can be limited to very specific fields and they are often excluded from political debates. Being aware of this differentiated access is a first step in order to acknowledge that male diaspora representatives do not necessarily speak for entire groups.

PART II: PRACTICES

Diasporas tend to be used as *tools or recipients rather than actors* in policy making in host countries, and the specific challenges faced by diasporas originating from conflict areas are overlooked. The management of diasporas is often related to migration, for instance asylum or accommodation practices, return policies and repatriation, or handled through surveillance and securitizing policies.

Local level management of diasporas originating from conflict areas is important as local authorities figure more prominently in the everyday lives of diasporas. Often, there is a lack of training and knowledge on conflict-generated diaspora groups and on conflict sensitive responses. Needs and issues can also vary a lot between municipalities depending on the sizes and nature of the concerned diasporas. Targeted training focusing on intra-diaspora conflicts, intercultural dialogue and with sustained inputs from local diasporas would be beneficial and improve inclusivity.

Diaspora organizations display a *striking diversity in focus areas and patterns of mobilization* which can be useful for policy makers to pay attention to as it expands the possibilities available to constructively engage with diasporas. Rather than being recipients of services, diaspora organizations provide a multitude of services to members, act as important community builders and create spaces for dialogue and knowledge-sharing that can be valuable to policy makers.

Diaspora groups are often forced to interact and work with each other even in instances of rivalry or divisions. Perhaps as a result of this, *accommodation and dialogue practices* are quite common among diaspora organizations. Sometimes the silencing and avoidance of contentious issues make it seem to outsiders like there are no difficulties in these interactions and collaborations. It is important for policy makers to be aware of these dynamics as they might help explain difficulties in implementing programs or defining common priorities.

Tensions among diaspora individuals and groups are visible in everyday practices. These practices fall under two broad categories, namely avoidance and positive practices. Avoidance can take the shape of segregation, endogamy or avoiding certain topics and issues in certain spaces. Positive practices include engaging in connecting opposing groups and facilitating dialogue, building and showcasing friendships across group boundaries, or focusing on common ground. Policy makers benefit from understanding and supporting these overt and covert everyday practices.

Bypassing and overcoming deep divisions within and between diaspora groups is important as they hamper access to policy making and impact at the broader level. Collaborations are still built despite these divisions, through focusing on trust-building, meeting on neutral grounds and creating opportunities to sustain relationships. Policy makers can facilitate this through regular interaction with local diaspora organizations and an awareness of these, sometimes deep, divisions among them.

Open conflict among diaspora groups or individuals is the exception rather than the rule. *Fostering peaceful coexistence* can be done through the transportation of everyday practices of peace to the host country, or because the host country offers a new context that can impact coexistence in a positive way. Issues dividing communities in their countries of origin can also be reframed in a more accommodating way in the host country. In addition, the formalization of contacts between diaspora leaders and organizations can provide institutional methods of solving disagreement.

PART III: TRANSCENDING CONFLICTS

Putting the stress *on common goals and building bridges* among diaspora groups and organizations can serve to transcend conflict. Building a unity of purpose can be particularly important when diasporas originate from conflict areas. While this can evolve out of developments in the home countries such as natural disasters, third-party facilitation can also help make spaces for collaboration, by creating neutral and safe spaces to meet and discuss.

Communal and neutral spaces can be created with clear rules for discussion. While some avoidance practices are seen as negative, focusing on having neutral spaces, where conflict and politics are not discussed, and spaces where they are, can facilitate an environment where everyone has the opportunity to express their opinions freely. Everyday spaces of interactions between diaspora communities such as sports, public transport, places of worship, schools and so on, could be established as neutral spaces, facilitated and led by diaspora organizations.

Local and digital spaces can offer useful tools for transforming and transcending conflictual relations and addressing challenges among diaspora groups. Local realities can differ from municipality to municipality and everyday needs and experiences of diaspora groups can therefore vary significantly. Digital spaces constitute an immense knowledge-bank for policy makers and can facilitate youth inclusion and interactions between groups and authorities.

Art is a powerful tool for fostering peaceful coexistence. As a non-verbal mode of communication, art can offer modes of expression less directly tied to conflict narratives, while still conveying meaning and emotions. Artistic practices can be used for promoting dialogue and conflict resolution through participatory theatre, photography, pottery, quilting, or multimedia development. Realizing the transformative power of artistic approaches and implementing them could be encouraged by policy makers and diaspora organizations alike.

An intersectional approach is necessary to grasp the differentiated and complex ways in which aspects of identity can shape diasporic experiences. This means, for instance, designing cross-community programs, actions, or events targeting individuals as defined by age, time

of arrival, gender or socio-economic status. It helps create solidarities based on other things than ethnic, religious or political identities which can be cemented in communities affected by conflict.

Creating safe spaces to speak up is vital for engaging with mitigating and transforming conflictual relations. Conflict sensitivity is necessary in this context to avoid any unintended deterioration of relationships and to be aware of conflict dynamics. This includes paying attention to 'good' practices of avoidance, as well as access to psychological and anonymized support or creating community-based spaces for dialogue run by mediators.

While many initiatives have been implemented for mediating conflicts in diasporas, they are often short lived and lack *proper follow up*. Sustaining dialogue platforms after such initiatives are made could be beneficial not only for diaspora organizations, but for policy makers as well. Good communication channels help to build on previous initiatives, and to sustain lasting relationships with civil society organizations who hold knowledge and trust of diaspora groups.

Boundaries between diaspora groups and the wider society need to be addressed and deconstructed to ensure good relations among diaspora groups, as these boundaries can influence diaspora engagement. Improving general knowledge about diasporas, including among policy makers, could be a useful way to help break the barriers between diaspora groups and the wider society in host countries.

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Workshop participants and interviewees

Interviews and workshops informing this handbook were conducted between October 2020 and July 2021. Below is the list of organizations and institutions who participated in both workshops and interviews, and provided invaluable feedback on the draft versions of this handbook:

Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment (ELY), Tampere, Finland

Danish Refugee Council Diaspora Programme, Copenhagen, Denmark

Finnish Somali Network, Helsinki, Finland

Finnish Syrian Friendship Association (SSYS), Helsinki, Finland

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Helsinki, Finland

Ukrainian Institute for Contact with Diasporas Back Home (IIEC), Kyiv, Ukraine

Union of Ethnic Associations in Sweden (SIOS), Stockholm, Sweden

INTRODUCTION

This handbook has been developed as part of the DIASCON research project, which focuses on conflict transportation in diaspora settings. The term 'conflict transportation' refers to processes where conflicts raging in home countries can be reproduced or maintained in the diasporas' countries of settlement. The transportation of conflicts can be discursive, symbolic, physical, or social, causing tensions for instance within or between diasporas in the country of settlement, between diasporas and the country of settlement, or between the country of settlement and the country of origin. DIASCON investigates what triggers conflict transportation in diaspora settings, what prevents it, and how host countries respond at the local, regional, and national levels.

Diasporas are more often than not targets rather than actors in policy making, and many have limited access to decision makers and/or to decision making in host countries; and some are viewed as a security concern. Strengthening the links between research, policy making, and civil society organizations in the field of diasporas is of great importance in order to address these issues. The DIASCON project seeks to act as a bridge-builder between institutions at different levels in host societies, NGOs working with diaspora groups and diaspora organizations themselves. We hope that the handbook can contribute to this objective. In part, the development of the handbook is based on the acknowledgement that while interest in engaging diasporas and their positive contributions to for instance development and peacebuilding is nothing new (cf. Horst et al. 2010), there continues to be a limited understanding of diaspora complexities in policy making and among policymakers and practitioners working with diasporas. The handbook draws attention to the challenges emerging through a more nuanced understanding of diaspora dynamics and puts forward suggestions on how to overcome them. By looking at local everyday practices of civil society organizations (CSOs) and institutions in different host country settings, the handbook develops recommendations for more constructive and inclusive interactions between diasporas, host country institutions and policy makers.

The handbook is meant to be used as a guide to practitioners working with migrant and diaspora groups in different contexts, and to offer insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by these groups. It has been developed in part through interviews with diaspora organizations, with institutions working with diasporas and migrants and relevant NGOs, as well as through research conducted in the frame of the DIASCON project. It is also partly based on the results of workshops held at regular intervals in 2020 and 2021 gathering researchers, CSOs, diaspora representatives, and policy makers located in various European countries (notably Denmark, Finland, Italy, Sweden, Ukraine, and the UK). In addition, the handbook includes artistic work produced within the frame of the project and designed to illustrate our discussions and research results. In that sense, the handbook has been relying on the principles of knowledge co-production, of collaborative writing and of dialogue, not just between the team researchers, but also between researchers, diaspora representatives, policy makers and the project's artist. It is meant to be used as a reference work and does not have to be read from front to back cover. We have inserted cross-references between sections, as well as to other material, such as blog entries.

The handbook addresses the following questions:

1. What are the main challenges to working with diasporas in host societies?

2. Which best practices/positive experiences can be used to overcome these challenges?

3. How can the challenges and best practices help develop a toolkit for working both with and as diaspora organizations in host country settings?

The DIASCON research project

The project's main objective is to investigate what triggers conflict transportation in diaspora settings, what prevents it, and how host countries respond at the local and national levels. Our core hypothesis is that individuals belonging to conflict-generated diasporas do not necessarily wish to become involved in conflicts still happening in their countries of origin. Likewise, diaspora members do not necessarily transport these conflicts in their host countries. In this perspective, the project:

1. concentrates on the contexts in which conflict transportation happens and how host societies cope with it;

2. explores transnational mobilizations and their impact on the potential internationalization of conflicts;

3. examines the autonomization of conflicts, studying the impact of host societies on the changing forms and dynamics of antagonistic relations between diaspora groups;

4. investigates the configurations in which peaceful coexistence prevails, and highlights practices and discourses conducive to peaceful dialogue between these communities.

To do so, the project draws on eight interlinked ethnographic field studies (France, Germany, Sweden, Denmark, Italy, Finland, the UK and Belgium). Together, these studies develop a multi-sited ethnographic methodology illuminating the complexity of diasporas' relations to 'homeland' conflicts from contrasted contexts and provide the practical and theoretical substance underpinning our collective work. The project also builds on various other methodologies, such as document analysis and digital ethnography, particularly suitable given the Covid-19 context.

The project aims to overcome the challenges that are present in today's academic and policy-related literature on diasporas, such as for instance: ethical challenges, where suspicion is put on entire communities because they originate from conflict areas; methodological challenges, where nations or states continue to be the treated as main or natural units of analysis; and analytical challenges, realizing that assuming the presence of conflict transportation will affect the conclusions. Taking these challenges into account, our project promotes de-securitized and fluid perceptions of diasporas and provides new avenues for research and policy making.

This, we argue, is all the more important since relations between diasporas matter for broader community cohesion. Possible societal 'tensions' do not solely occur between the host society and the diasporas but also within diasporas, with consequences on their societal integration (or lack thereof). Our project thus ambitions to promote more inclusive societies by fostering a better understanding, participation and inclusion of local diaspora groups.

How is the handbook different from existing ones?

The handbook adds to an existing pool of handbooks on diasporas intended for policymakers, diasporas, and practitioners in host countries (cf. Horst et. al 2010; INFOCON 2011; IOM 2011). Previous handbooks have focused on the positive links between diasporas and development, highlighting practices to reap the benefits of these linkages and increase the participation of diasporas for development purposes (Horst et al. 2010; IOM 2011). Little attention, however, has been given so far to the inter- and intra-diaspora cleavages that are central to this handbook. Similarly, the focus on everyday local practices for mitigating and transcending conflicts in diaspora settings has not received much attention.

Structure of the handbook

The handbook is divided into three parts which can be read chronologically, or simply used to look up sections of interest.

Part I gives an overview of the potential challenges that arise from working with diasporas and conflict and the different ways the links between these two play out in countries of settlement. For instance, how the divisions and cleavages within and between diaspora communities develop and are expressed; generational differences; how host countries (willingly or unwillingly) contribute to maintaining cleavages; constraints on collaboration among diaspora organizations; and the involvement of young people and women.

The second part delves into the existing practices when working with diasporas in countries of settlement and focuses on *everyday local practices*. This includes host country responses at macro and in particular micro levels; the diversity in approaches undertaken by diaspora organizations; accommodation practices; everyday practices for managing conflict; and successful practices of peaceful co-existence.

The third part builds on the knowledge of the previous parts and brings forward creative and transformative practices to help improve inclusivity and the mitigation of conflicts in host country settings. This includes a focus on alternative spaces for dialogue; building on practices of avoidance; artistic approaches to transcend conflict; intersectionality; and building solidarities beyond divisions.

In addition, the handbook includes external links to relevant platforms and organizations. Throughout the handbook case studies are provided to exemplify certain challenges or best practices related to the different topics.

1. PART I: Challenges when working at the nexus of diasporas and conflict

In this first part, we examine the challenges pertaining to working with diasporas and conflict, and the different ways the links between diasporas and conflicts play out in countries of settlement. We start with a description of the divisions and cleavages existing within and between diaspora communities and their origins; we discuss the obstacles that diaspora groups originating from conflict areas face in their countries of residence, such as racism, segregation, but also exclusion from policymaking. We also explore some challenges relating to generational differences, to collaboration among diaspora groups, and to the inclusion of women and youth in diaspora work.

In our view, the complexities present within diaspora communities are too often overlooked by policy makers, although they are highly significant as they shape the behavior of and the possibilities available to these communities. One of our recommendations is therefore to acknowledge these intricacies in order to constructively engage with diasporic communities in host country settings.

1.1. Conflicts within and between diasporas

Diasporas are *complex and often divided along multiple lines*, but these divisions are not often well understood by policymakers. Diasporas originating from areas of ongoing conflict in particular face challenges when tensions are transferred to the host countries, for instance when opposing groups from the country of origin reside in the same areas in the country of settlement. Policy makers need to adopt conflict sensitive approaches to deal with these issues.

Diasporas are heterogeneous, complex, and often divided along political, religious, or ethnic lines. This creates specific challenges for policy makers who work with diaspora communities, especially as these divisions are often not very well known or understood. In particular, conflicts existing between or within diaspora groups are important to note, as group dynamics influence the range and nature of activities used by or available to diaspora organizations. Sometimes, divisions between diaspora groups can be expressed openly, as is the case of for instance Turkish and Kurdish communities in Europe, but cleavages can also exist in a less obvious manner yet still influencing the cooperation between, and the mobilization of communities. Mobilizing for common causes, or even just promoting a better integration in countries of settlement, can be difficult in situations where these types of divisions are significant.

When diasporas originate from countries where a conflict is ongoing, it can result in a situation where opposing groups in the country of origin reside in the same areas in the country of settlement, thereby leading to a reproduction of tensions and cleavages in the host countries. It is important to remember, however, that people originating from conflict areas are fleeing violence and do not want to bring it with them. Many of them do not want to be associated with the 'home' conflict divisions anymore and try on the contrary to promote reconciliation in their countries of origin. In spite of this, in many cases, divisions pertaining to the 'home' conflict can also be found in the countries of settlement, notably because the factors underpinning these divisions - such as linguistic or religious differences - are still dividing diaspora groups.

This 'transportation of conflict' from the home country is often assumed to be a mere reproduction of the 'home' conflict, because diaspora groups tend to position themselves in relation to actors in the country of origin. Some diasporas indeed tend to adopt the same discourses and ideologies than the conflict parties in the home countries, and to coalesce around the same 'sides'. They also tend to identify along similar lines, be they religious, political, or tribal/ethnic[1].

Conflicts and divisions between diaspora groups can become visible in different ways. In the most extreme cases, physical violence can occur between and within diasporas, for instance between groups that support different ideologies or actors in the countries of origin. This can lead to fights or riots during street demonstrations, to episodes of destruction of private and

[1] see for instance the DIASCON blog post on diaspora clashes as proxy wars: https://www.diascon.eu/reports/blog/transporting-the-nagorno-karabakh-conflict-to-europe-and-beyond-diaspora-clashes-as-proxy-wars/

public property, and sometimes to killings. More commonly, transported conflicts materialize in verbal and symbolic violence, for instance in negative and vilifying discourses about the 'other side', in the organization of competing public events - for instance commemorations of different historical dates - and in the creation of organizations with diverging aims and discourses. It is also not uncommon to see these divisions lead to physical separation or even segregation between diaspora groups, with groups inhabiting different neighborhoods, sending their kids to different schools, socializing, and marrying within their own group. To the outside eye, and at the exception of episodes of physical violence, these instances of conflict transportation remain essentially invisible. In the few cases where they lead to physical violence, they are often (mis)understood as being related to criminality and criminal networks (see also BOX 1.2.1).

For policy makers, being aware of, and knowledgeable on, these conflicts is no easy matter. Diaspora groups are often treated as unitary and consistent groups of 'migrants', who are primarily identified by the country they come from - Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Somalia, and so on - without a connection made to divisions and conflicts occurring in these countries. Conversely, if conflict in the country of origin is escalating, violent diasporas' conflict experiences can foreground all other aspects of their identities in their dealings with the countries of residence (see section 1.2). Another difficulty lies in the fact that diaspora groups, as well as migrants, often fall under the responsibility of ministries and departments which don't have the necessary expertise about 'far-away' conflicts, something that ministries of foreign affairs usually specialize in. As such, diasporas coming from conflict areas fall in between usual ministerial portfolios.

Another difficulty lies in the fact that although divisions between and within diaspora are often related to the situation in their countries of origin, they are not mere reproductions of conflicts in countries of origin. In fact, transported conflicts are deeply influenced by the context in the countries of settlement. While tensions, or in some cases violence, between communities in host countries can mimic the dynamics in home countries, there is often a deep change in structure and content of these transported conflicts. Assuming that 'home' conflicts are simply replicated in host country contexts can therefore lead to dangerous misunderstandings.

In light of these challenges, policy makers can benefit from adopting a conflict sensitive approach when engaging with diasporas. Starting from the principle of 'doing no harm', conflict sensitivity helps develop an awareness of how to engage in conflict situations without inadvertently contributing negatively to conflict dynamics (see also INFOCON 2011). Training on conflict sensitivity as such could facilitate better interaction with as well as understanding of diaspora communities.

In the subsequent sections, the DIASCON handbook explores some of these challenges and, based on the data collected through the project, proposes options for addressing them creatively.

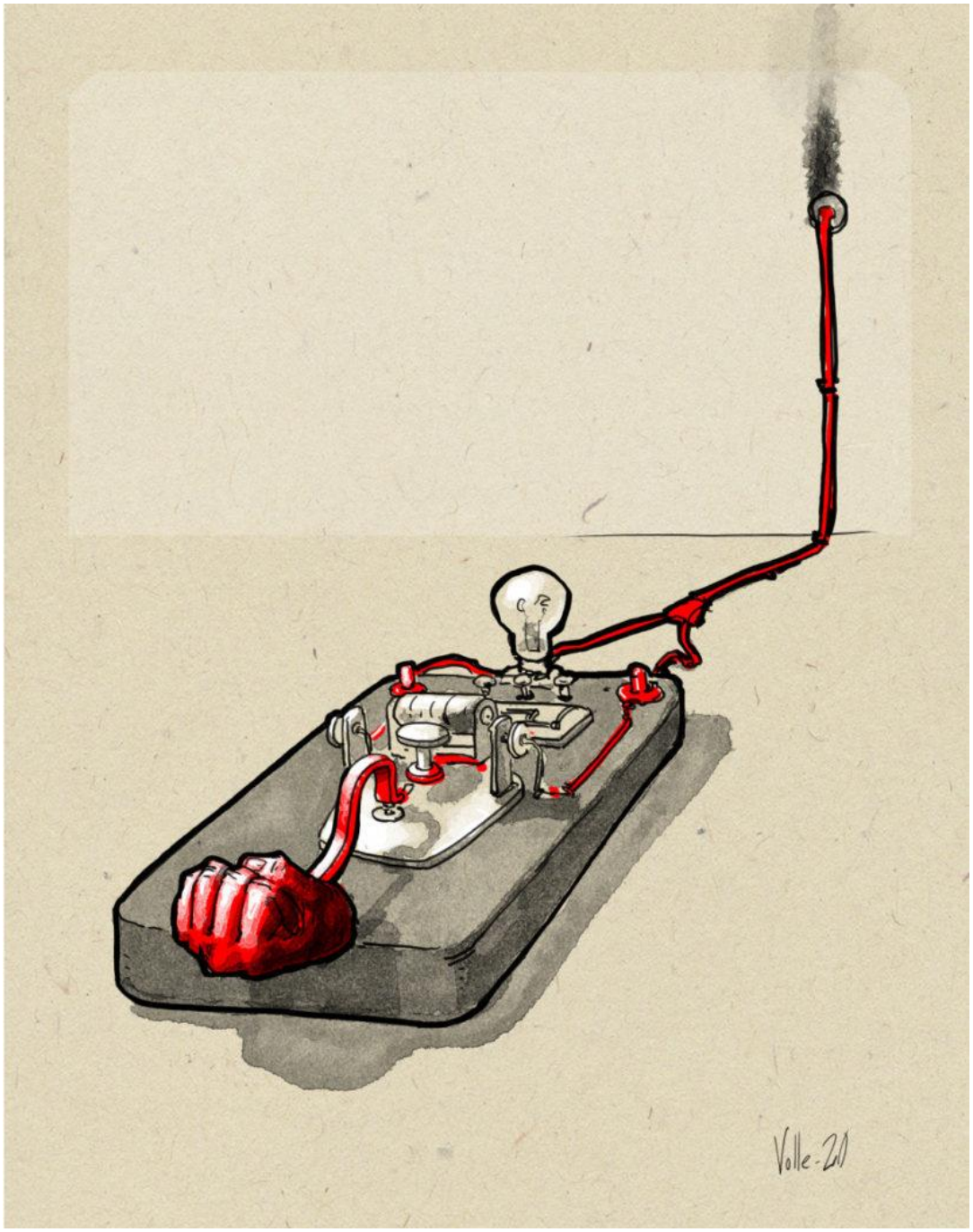
Box 1.1.1. on diaspora engagement in 'other' conflicts

Written by Élise Féron

In addition to being interested in the situation in their countries of origin, and just like any other individual, diasporas can become involved in conflicts occurring in countries from which they do not originate and have no prior affiliation with. This is exemplified, for instance, in the solidarity movements for Palestine that have been active all around the world. This involvement can include mobilizing and lobbying in countries of residence, economic support, or even going to fight alongside parties to the conflict. Chechen diasporas joining the Syrian Kurds in the war in Syria, is an example of the latter.

This involvement often builds on a feeling of solidarity with the people experiencing the concerned conflict, and can be strengthened by religious, linguistic or other cultural linkages. Solidarity can sometimes also be triggered by other factors, such as a common or similar colonial or imperial experience.

Understanding the triggers and mechanisms underpinning such involvement is crucial for policy makers and helps moving beyond simplistic representations and discourses pertaining to diaspora or migrant 'radicalization'.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1.2. Stereotypes, racism, segregation, and discrimination facing diasporas

Diasporas from areas of conflict face challenges in relation to *stereotyping, racism and xenophobia* in host countries. This essentialization foregrounds their conflict experiences and ignores other aspects of diasporic experiences and identities, which can be problematic for inclusion and wellbeing in the countries of residence. These negative representations also lead to discrimination and segregation.

Although this can vary from country to country, diasporas originating from conflict areas tend to face certain negative representations in the countries where they settle. They might for instance be suspected of bringing conflict and insecurity with them, of being 'radicalized', of not being familiar with values of tolerance and accommodation, and so on. Blatantly ignoring the fact that the immense majority of these migrants have in fact fled the violence and been the first victims of conflicts and of radicalization, these discourses feed racism and negative stereotypes in countries of settlement, thereby justifying practices of segregation, of discrimination, but also of surveillance and monitoring. Racist practices can thus deploy themselves both at the institutional/structural and interpersonal levels and penetrate every instance of diaspora lives.

The tendency to reduce diasporas to their geographical origins also participates in this trend, notably because it essentializes members of diasporas and reduces their personal histories to experiences related to the conflicts occurring in their countries of origin. This can also be an unanticipated and perverse effect of asylum procedures, which tend to incite migrants to foreground their conflict-related experiences in order to be granted asylum, but also in their subsequent interactions with home countries' institutions. Of course, this is not to say that conflicts do not play a major role in people's decision to migrate. But pushing migrants to put the stress on this aspect of their identity at the possible detriment of others, can translate in their activities and opinions, including in their involvement and focus in diaspora organizations. Foregrounding the violence occurring in countries of origin thus partially structures the nature of interactions between conflict-generated diaspora groups and home countries' contexts.

Some diaspora groups also have to face stereotypes deriving from religious intolerance, misinformation and perceptions relating to religious wars being transported with and by diasporas. In the Global North, Muslim migrants, and/or migrants who are assumed to be Muslim, are particularly targeted by these types of assumptions, for instance in radical right groups' discourses. Here, the suspicion is double: in Western European countries for instance, radical right groups not only suspect migrants, for instance originating from the Middle East, of generating religious tensions with the 'majority', but also of bringing their 'religious wars' with them. These discourses build on a centuries-long association between religions and wars sometimes found in academic and political discourses, and on the idea that certain religions would not be 'compatible' with 'modernity' as supposedly embodied by Western European countries. While these opinions are not shared by the majority of those who live in Western Europe, they permeate many public discourses and debates.

Segregation and discrimination in the educational, housing, and employment fields, among others, directly derive from these racist stereotypes, discourses, and practices, and further impede the integration of conflict-generated diaspora groups in host societies, and therefore their involvement in public debates. All of this adds to their exclusion from policymaking, but also from broader policy and political debates, as we will further explore in the next section (1.3).

In order to fight racism and discrimination facing diasporas originating from conflict zones, it is therefore important to unpack stereotypes attached to the reasons for their departure from their countries of origin, but also to their assumed religion. For instance, it would be important to allow space for diasporas to share their stories in the public sphere, notably thanks to non-conventional means of communication, for example using art, photography, but also comics or video games, in order to reach out to a broader audience. The valorization of their pre-existing professional and educational skills should also be encouraged, for instance via a better international recognition of diplomas.

BOX 1.2.1: Diasporas and framing in media and policy making

Written by Cæcilie Svop Jensen

The inherent transnational dimension of diasporas brings challenges to the study of these groups. Fallacies include methodological nationalism, ethnic or national essentialism and securitization (see Faist 2012; Féron and Lefort 2019; Féron 2020). As Faist notes, methodological nationalism treats the state as a semi-natural political and social configuration, while fetishism with ethnic and national ties homogenizes diaspora communities (Faist 2012). Viewing state institutions as the main social context in which migration occurs makes the state the only relevant entity for the study of migration. This renders invisible dynamics among diaspora communities not limited to state boundaries or frameworks and as such limits the understanding of diasporic behavior. The challenges to research on diaspora groups, however, exist not only in the research arena, but figure in media coverage and policy making concerning diasporas as well.

The violence erupting in Dijon in France in 2020 serves as a useful starting point for discussing the framing of diaspora communities and their behavior by media and policymakers and the implications these framings have for understanding the configurations at play in these communities. The violence broke out following an attack of a 16-year-old member of a Chechen community (*AFP* 2020). During a 4-day period of unrest, torching of cars and bins as well as physical violence took place in Dijon and the area of Gresilles. The riots were described in several media outlets and by policy makers as ‘gang related’, ‘criminal activity’ and ‘Chechen violence’ (*Al Jazeera* 2020; *Dailymail Online* 2020; *The Guardian* 2020; *BBC* 2020) and Marine Le Pen, far-right political leader, called for ‘tougher action’ on immigrants in order to control the violence and prevent other similar situations (*Euronews* 2020).

Féron argues that the analyses of and literature on diasporas often fail to grasp their complexity and configurations as political actors operating in and across national and transnational spaces (Féron 2020, p. 28). This is often reproduced in the way media and policymakers engage with and understand the actions of diaspora communities. She argues how diaspora politics needs to be treated as a series of actors not limited to home and host states – instead of this bilateral approach to diaspora politics, the disruptive nature of diasporas in interstate politics needs to be recognized (ibid). In the case of Chechen diasporas, for instance, much media coverage on the incident in Dijon reflects such a bilateral approach and perpetuates the above-mentioned essentialism; actors are largely homogenized as 'the Chechen diaspora', the events reduced to a 'settling of scores' between Chechen community and residents of Dijon or described as criminal activity (see *BBC* 2020; *AFP* 2020; *Dailymail Online* 2020;).

Framing the activities as criminal affects how the *agency* of the actors is viewed. It criminalizes their motives and makes superfluous the study of deeper relationships while simultaneously presenting the violence in Dijon as representative of entire diasporic communities. One coverage noted that 'at the core of this unrest is the thirst for revenge in the Chechen community' (EuroNews 2020 , 1.00 min). Political motives of diasporic communities, for instance, are glossed over – in the coverage, it remains unclear against whom exactly the actors want revenge. The ways in which local actors engage with national, regional, and/or transnational actors are similarly ignored. The broader interconnections figuring in the contentious spaces in which these groups operate seem to be somewhat disregarded by media coverage and by policy makers. Diasporas need to be seen as 'hybrid political actors' (Féron 2020), not limited to home and host state politics and ties. Not taking stock of what Féron refers to as diasporas' ability to move across levels and spheres of engagement (Féron 2020, p. 28) makes it hard to understand the dynamics at play in diaspora politics and the intersections of diasporic communities. This understanding is paramount when engaging with these communities – failure to acknowledge this results in an inability to act and respond properly in situations involving diasporas.

Violence involving Chechen diasporas have occurred recently in Nice and Toulouse as well, and in Dijon, people allegedly arrived from Belgium and Germany to partake in the violence (*The Guardian* 2020) – these translocal and transnational ties are mentioned but left largely unexamined. As Le Pen's comment illustrates, there are obvious consequences to this essentialist framing. Sökefeld (2006) states that although diasporas can be understood as imagined communities, they have very real consequences and effects. Research suggest that diasporas and their actions and strategies are very much shaped by and shape the country of settlement and the home country, but several other factors operating in both national and transnational spaces indeed affect diaspora communities as well (see for instance, Baser 2016; 2017; Féron 2017). Focusing on criminal activities only or limiting coverage to violent clashes in and among the communities render these configurations invisible. As has been previously noted, investigating how diasporas sometimes mobilize for conflicts in countries or regions from which they do not originate is of great interest (Féron 2017). The Chechen diasporas, for instance, have been mobilizing in support for the conflict in Ukraine and Syria and members of the diasporas residing in several European countries have gone to fight for the

separatists in the Donbas region and in conflict zones in Syria (*Berlingske* 2014; Altantic Council 2018). It serves as just one example of how diaspora behavior and politics are not limited to home or host state frameworks. Essentialist framings help problematize diasporas as a security problem as well. Violence-centric coverage leaves out other ways in which diasporas engage and do not engage in conflict. Another useful example is the coverage of Kurdish and Turkish diasporas in Europe, where clashes and violent behavior are amply covered, though rarely beyond essentialist and securitized visions of diaspora behavior.

The framings in media and policy making are important as diasporas and migrant communities are profound global phenomena. In 2019, the UN reported that the number of international migrants reached 272 million (UN 2019) making critical media coverage that engages with diasporas as complex hybrid actors all the more necessary. In this context, research plays an important role as well. Research on how this framing might impact policymaking, in terms of the policing of diaspora communities or immigration and integration policy, could help shed light on the very real effects of this type of coverage on diasporas. In this vein, it is equally necessary that researchers build solid links with policymakers as well as make research more easily accessible. Strengthening these links is vital for better engaging with diaspora communities at both the policy level and in society as a whole.

Resources

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1.3. Exclusion from policy making

Originating from areas of conflict can also affect the *inclusion of diasporas in policy making* in different ways. If conflict is ongoing, divisions between and within the diasporas themselves can make it difficult to organize with a unified voice, especially since policy makers often focus on larger umbrella organizations. The political stance and perhaps involvement of the host country in the conflict in the home country also affects the level of involvement that diasporas enjoy. In most cases, diasporas are included only in policies relating to their home countries.

The lack of inclusion of diasporas in host countries' policy making entails a great number of challenges for diaspora communities and limits their range of possibilities. What are some of the challenges to the inclusion of diasporas in policy making, in particular in the specific case of diasporas originating from areas of conflict?

It should be noted that levels of inclusivity can vary greatly depending for instance on the host country's structures, the presence of multicultural schemes of inclusion, and the nature and size of the concerned diaspora groups. Some diaspora groups are better included because they have been around for longer and have built better connections with policy makers and to political fields. The size of diaspora communities can also affect this, as larger groups might find it easier to draw attention to their agendas than smaller diasporas. Levels of inclusivity can also be affected by host country's biases for or against specific diaspora groups (see section 2.1.). Policy makers might sympathize with specific causes or issues brought up by diaspora organizations, while others are left unnoticed or ignored. When it comes to diasporas originating from areas of conflict this can be particularly prevalent as conflict areas can be highly politicized in the host countries as well. At the practical level, exclusion can manifest as limited access to policy makers, for instance in the difficulty to arrange meetings with politicians or time-constraints when presenting cases and issues to policy makers.

The lack of inclusion of diaspora organizations in policy making can be fueled by divisions among diaspora groups themselves, divisions that can be more cemented in diasporas originating from areas of conflict. Policy makers tend to focus on larger organizations or umbrella organizations which leaves small organizations with limited possibilities. In situations where diasporas are fragmented and policy makers might see larger organizations as representative of entire diaspora communities, it leaves little room for divided groups to have access to policy making or making themselves heard. Failure to consider the sometimes-deep divisions within diaspora groups can result in a worsening of relationships among diasporas, and/or perpetuate feelings of discrimination and exclusion towards the host state.

As mentioned above, the lack of inclusion can also be related to the conflict occurring in the home country. For diasporas originating from these areas, gathering support or gaining access to policy makers might be highly dependent on the host countries' political stance towards, or possible involvement in, conflict areas. In cases where opposing groups from conflict areas reside in the same country, these biases can both fuel divisions within diaspora communities and generate feelings of discrimination among those diaspora groups negatively affected by the political reality of the host country. For instance, some diasporas feel like they cannot

speak out or tend to avoid political topics in the host countries, because of these biases. Host countries sometimes prefer to deal with these issues at the diplomatic level rather than managing them nationally or engaging with residing diasporas. The strong focus on diplomatic approaches inevitably hampers the inclusion of diaspora groups or organizations working on the same issues in the host country. It also disregards the potential contributions to be made by diaspora groups in relation to the conflict areas.

Additionally, diaspora groups from conflict zones are often framed through what is happening in their 'home' countries which leads to ignoring other issues of importance to these groups. The fact that groups originate from areas of conflict ends up superseding other aspects of their diasporic experiences, therefore limiting their scope and possibilities to engage with actors in the countries of residence.

As mentioned above, the lack of attention to smaller organizations by policy makers can pose challenges to diaspora organizations. In the eyes of policy makers, umbrella organizations ensure a better representation of the diaspora communities they include, as well as facilitate collaboration between policy makers and diaspora organizations in general. Because they claim to gather larger diaspora groups these umbrella organizations tend to be favored by the authorities in the countries of settlement and end up monopolizing all exchanges with them, silencing minority or dissident voices. While umbrella organizations can facilitate advocacy, they often mask the diverse approaches and goals of the groups they represent. This means that it can become difficult for small organizations to get their message through and gain access to policy makers. Additionally, political opportunity structures (POS) in some countries of settlement impede the possibilities for smaller organizations to receive state funding, as they compete alongside larger and more resourceful organizations in the country (see also Horst et al. 2010).

The interest in and promotion of umbrella organizations in policy making can unintentionally deepen divides or make continued collaboration between diaspora organizations more complicated. Setting up diaspora umbrella organizations can have detrimental effects in terms of efficiency because the exchanges within these organizations are frequently based on an avoidance of conflict and of contentious issues, sometimes leading to paralysis.

Conversely, according to some DIASCON research participants, diasporas umbrella organizations that do not represent any 'side' can act as platforms and create spaces for exchanges between different diaspora groups or between opposing sections within diaspora groups. 'National' non-governmental or even governmental organizations from the countries of settlement can also sometimes play this role, for instance by organizing meetings around fundraising or trainings, open to all diaspora groups. These meeting opportunities may help to create linkages and common interests between rival diaspora groups or at least help to fight mistrust. This however supposes some sort of continuity and sustainability (see also section 3.7.) on the part of the organizers of such meetings, as well as some sort of stability in the leadership of the diaspora organizations.

Policy makers do approach diasporas in countries of settlement for various reasons. This approach, however, tends to be mono-directional and focuses on how the diaspora can be instrumentalized for the benefit of the country of settlement, for instance for foreign policy

purposes, rather than resulting in significant exchanges of knowledge or resources. Several DIASCON participants explained that access to authorities was indeed made easier when it served as a benefit for the host country government as well. Additionally, exclusion from policy making tends to be discussed from the point of view of diaspora organizations, which is not necessarily the best angle as diaspora organizations can themselves be excluding, for instance through the exclusion and/or marginalization of young people (see section 1.7). These are processes that need to be taken into account as well when discussing exclusion from policy making in the country of residence, as it evidently affects the representativeness of diaspora groups.

It is worth mentioning that exclusion from policy making is not necessarily done on purpose, but that the structure of the systems in place in host countries, can end up *de facto* excluding diasporas and diaspora organizations. Sometimes this is also the result of no existing engagement policies on the part of host country governments. One CSO in the DIASCON research project explained that they had been sent to an international meeting on diasporas as representatives of the government because the government itself had no appropriate representative to send. Policy makers should think of how to incorporate strategies for the management and engagement of diasporas and think jointly on how to improve the access of diasporas to policy making as well as how diasporas can themselves improve access. This includes looking at the structural constraints in the countries of residence and being aware of the particular inter- and intra-diaspora dynamics that can make access even more difficult.

BOX 1.3.1: Policy inclusion and exclusion of diaspora organizations in host countries

Written by Cæcilie Svop Jensen

Diaspora organizations face constraints in host countries, among other things with regards to their level of access to policy makers as well as to the larger political opportunity structures (POSs) in the host countries (see for instance Baser 2017; Ong'ayo 2019).

Diaspora mobilization and behavior are directly related to the possibilities and limits imposed by the host country (Østergaard-Nielsen 2003). These larger policy structures have a very real local level impact on the everyday lives of diasporas and diaspora organizations having to navigate these and these links are therefore important to investigate in order to fully grasp diaspora dynamics. The interviews conducted as part of the DIASCON research project help shed light on some of the strategies developed by diasporas who operate in these structures, which in turn can help expose some of the opportunities for alleviating the negative effects of POSs at the local level. Constraints are often multi-dimensional, and several factors can influence the spaces for mobilization of diasporas simultaneously. Constraints in the host countries can pertain to for instance lack of access to resources, difficulty in getting the agendas of organizations acknowledged in policy making or limited and difficult funding mechanisms; but the legroom for diaspora organizations also depends on the foreign policy of the host country and the relationship of the host country with the country of origin (Baser 2017, p. 677).

The research done by the DIASCON research project offers valuable insight into these particular dynamics. During the course of the DIASON research project, several interviews were conducted with CSOs and representatives of diaspora organizations which helped shed light on the ways exclusion from and inclusion in policy making materialize in different contexts and shape the actions of the organizations. Often, policy makers do not grasp the complexity of the diaspora communities, or as one interviewee put it, 'sometimes policy makers do not know to whom they are speaking'. It poses challenges as organizations try to form a unified voice but need to navigate in a highly complex and often politicized community, challenges that are likely to be even more prevalent in diasporas where conflict in the country of origin is ongoing (see for instance Féron 2017; Koinova 2016). This is only made more complicated as umbrella organizations tend to be prioritized as interlocutors by host countries over smaller organizations because they are often perceived to be more representative. In reality however, this is rarely the case. Diasporas are heterogeneous and complex and often have multiple and contradictory agendas simultaneously, which does not fit well with a structural preference for umbrella organizations. Among diasporas originating from areas of ongoing conflict these differing goals and agendas can be especially conflictual and needs in the country of residence can be significantly different from those diasporas who do not originate from these areas. In this context, ensuring representativity is challenging but glossing over these processes can unintentionally fuel competition and division within or between diaspora organizations in host countries.

Moreover, diasporas are rarely involved in policies that affect or influence their opportunities for mobilization in the country of residence, nor the foreign policies related to the country of origin. In excluding diasporas from these processes, policy makers run the risk of missing out on valuable insights and contributions and wasting the positive potential of diasporic communities. In fact, when diasporas are 'utilized' they are often operationalized for the benefit of the home or host country, and often without direct contact between policy makers and members of the diasporas. There are also risks of perpetuating or instigating conflicts in the diasporas when policy makers address issues in the diasporas without paying attention to their internal differences. It is therefore not just a matter of inclusion but inclusion *in the right way*. Additionally, diasporas originating from conflict areas tend to be framed by what is happening in the country of origin alone thereby overlooking other aspects of their diasporic experience, including their interests in the country of residence. All of these processes influence the everyday behavior of diaspora organizations; how they interact with local authorities, what they do to gain access and the way they frame their activity. It also influences the issues they take up and the way they choose to do so. It is important to emphasize that diaspora organizations can themselves be excluding, for instance by lacking the representation of young people or women, and that processes of exclusion therefore should not be understood as solely a matter of policy making and structures in the country of residence.

The ways in which policy makers engage diasporas and the influence of the opportunity structures in the country of residence on diasporas, are important yet complex dynamics that warrant more research. In order to understand and properly engage with diaspora communities, it is necessary to shed light on the ways these dynamics influence the everyday mobilization of, and strategies adopted by diaspora organizations when navigating constraints

and opportunities in the host country. While existing research on diaspora mobilization, POSs and home and host state configurations embrace the need for complexity in understanding these processes, there is still much to be learned from looking at local experiences in this context.

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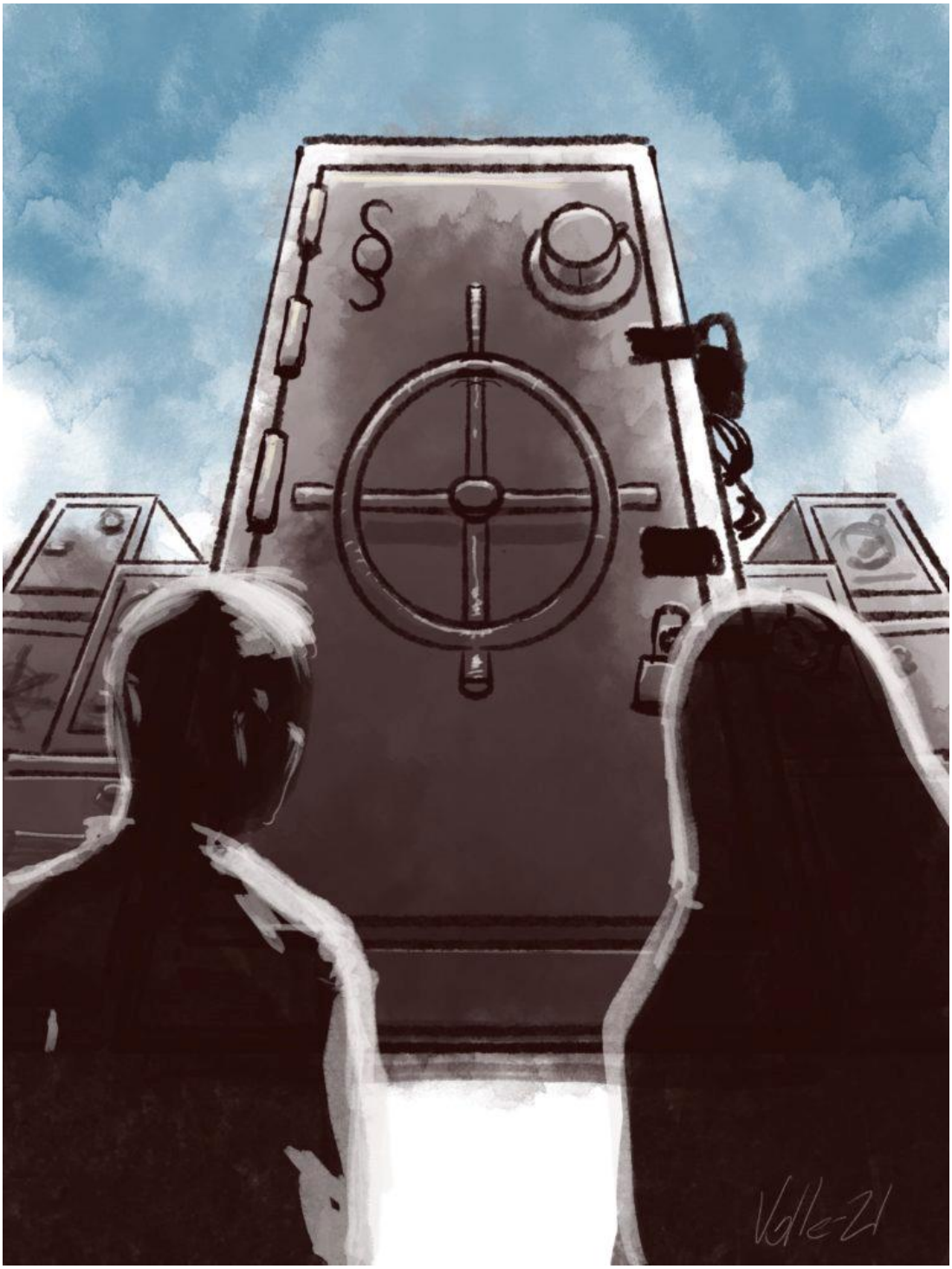

1.4. Obstacles to direct interaction with policy makers

Top-down approaches **tend to be preferred to more hands-on approaches by policy makers in interactions with diasporas, and policy makers rarely spend time among diaspora communities. This makes contact between diasporas and policy makers mainly formal and public, and paired with the lack of direct, informal contact, it creates challenges to the development of trust and understanding between diasporas and policy makers.**

Policy makers often have limited interaction with diasporas and spend little time in diaspora communities in countries of settlement. Conflict-generated diaspora groups are sometimes living in deprived neighborhoods which policy makers rarely visit. In some cases, these neighborhoods are perceived as dangerous, and areas where large sections of diaspora communities live therefore are seen (and framed by media and policy makers) as security concerns - perceptions that are only reinforced by the limited presence of policy makers in these neighborhoods.

Top-down approaches (for instance securitization policies) are often preferred to a more hands-on approach when it comes to engaging with diaspora communities. Some mediated approaches, for instance through religious authorities (e.g. in France where attempts at managing diaspora-related issues have been made through imams), could offer first options to bridge this gap, but little importance and attention is given to the direct interaction with diasporas in the areas in which they live.

Consequently, the arenas in which policy makers and diasporas interact are often formal and/or public. This is for instance through meetings in political institutions, arrangements designed for policy makers or political organizations or, in judicial matters, in courtrooms. Little time is spent by policy makers on 'going to the field' and exploring diaspora communities to get a better understanding of their challenges, potential, and needs. The formality of these arenas of interaction creates obstacles to fully grasping diaspora dynamics. Similarly, policy makers might/tend to go through third parties to access diasporas such as CSOs working with or supporting other migrant or diaspora organizations. While this might facilitate access, it simultaneously reduces the incentive for direct contact with the communities or makes superfluous initiatives for more informal interactions by policy makers.

The lack of interaction with diasporas in informal, everyday settings reduces the level of trust between policy makers and diasporas. Similarly, the use of third-party mediators/brokers is bound to either maintain or widen the gap between policy makers and diasporas, further complicating the development of trustful relationships. Additionally, some diaspora organizations experience easier access to policymakers if they are represented by, or in collaboration with, a native in the country of residence, which can remove feelings of ownership and make trust-building even more difficult.

There are challenges to more direct and informal interactions between diaspora communities and policy makers as well. Resources can limit the amount of time and therefore reach

available to policymakers. Not being able to visit or spend time with different communities equally, run the risk of policymakers being seen as taking sides or favoring certain diasporas over others. The already limited presence of policy makers in diaspora communities creates important challenges both in terms of simply figuring out 'whom to talk to' as well as finding gatekeepers, mapping the diaspora communities and so on. Linguistic issues can pose an additional challenge as policy makers and diasporas might prefer different languages of communication, might not speak the same language, lack access to interpreters and so on.

BOX 1.4.1: Challenges to constructive cooperation at the Syrian grassroots in Finland

Written by Cæcilie Svop Jensen

Diasporic grassroot organizations can face significant challenges in countries of settlement, especially when conflict is ongoing in the countries of origin. For instance, the lack of trust in institutions can be very difficult to manage in diaspora communities who originate from areas with high levels of corruption or repressive regimes. This challenge was mentioned several times during the DIASCON research interviews by representatives of Syrian grassroot organizations in Finland. In these cases, building trust in the diaspora organizations themselves can be the first necessary step to mobilizing diaspora members who might be very critical towards civil society institutions. Lack of trust also brings out the divisions in the communities as diaspora members can perceive the leaders of organizations as 'taking sides' in the conflict and representing a specific political agenda. According to the interviewees, this stands in the way of executing larger projects because the issues of trust have to be addressed before anything else. It can also result in multiple simultaneous mobilizations of the diasporas for the same cause; one interviewee mentioned that you sometimes see five demonstrations for the same issue, because everybody wants to do it 'in their own way'. Trust in civil society organizations can (and should) be facilitated by policy makers and authorities at different levels in the countries of settlement, and being aware of these challenging dynamics is vital in this context.

1.5. Generational differences within diaspora groups

Generational differences **are important for policy makers to address when working with or in diasporic communities. These divisions are visible along four main dimensions: issues that are considered important are often different from generation to generation; patterns of mobilization can be different across generations making joint mobilization challenging; ways of framing issues in both home and host countries can be different across generations; and there can be deep divisions between organizations, facilitating power struggles between 'old' and 'new' diaspora organizations.**

For anyone working with diasporas, another important challenge to address is that of generational differences among diaspora communities. Apart from divisions relating to politics, ethnicity, or religion, generations influence the dynamics and cleavages within diasporas as well. These divisions are visible along four main dimensions. First of all, issues that matter to diaspora communities might differ from generation to generation. What matters to 1st generation migrants might not be as important to 2nd or 3rd generation migrants, creating important constraints to cooperation and mobilization for specific causes in both home and host countries. Regarding issues related to countries of residence for instance, first generation migrants can be interested in their own very practical integration and settlement - acquiring citizenship, learning the language, accessing the job market, and so on - whereas second and third generation migrants might be focusing on partially different issues such as fighting against racism and discrimination.

Second, mobilization patterns can be different across generations, with younger diaspora members more likely to use online communication tools, and social media (for further discussion on these issues, please see section 3.3.), when older diaspora members tend to rely on more traditional communication and mobilization tools such as associations, meetings, newsletters, and so on. This can also generate specific challenges for reaching out to these groups and for organizing common events, as using different communication tools might be required. Likewise, different generations might be interested in different types of common activities, for instance sports or music for younger diaspora members, or political discussions for older generations.

Different generations might also frame issues relating to both home and host countries in different ways. This is specifically the case of people originating from conflict areas. Because of their specific personal experiences and positions, first generation diaspora members are more likely to closely follow what is happening in their home countries, and to be related to individuals and collective actors over there. Younger diaspora members, on the other hand, might develop different framings of what is happening in their countries of origin, for instance by relating the colonization history of their countries of origin to their experience of racism in countries of settlement. Younger diaspora members can also inherit their parents' sense of history and experience of the conflict that can influence their narratives. This can lead to a fragmentation of narratives regarding the situation in home countries, sometimes impeding common mobilization, and perhaps also generating confusion in the eyes of the authorities in the countries of settlement about the diasporas' positions and opinions.

Finally, these generational divisions also matter at the organizational level. According to several participants in DIASCON's research, diaspora organizations, many of which are 'one-man organizations', tend to be monopolized by first generation members. This tends to keep subsequent generations away, first of all because they feel excluded from decision-making - they are very rarely invited to participate in these organizations' boards - but also because their interests and foci do not always coincide. With time and generations passing, this can translate into power struggles within diaspora organizations, between the 'old' and the 'new' members, and it can also lead to the disappearance of certain organizations, and/or of certain issues and areas of focus within diaspora circles.

For policy makers, it is important to recognize these generational differences and needs, notably because the different foci and potential exclusion of younger diaspora members also means that they are less easily located and contacted. In that sense, the attention paid to diaspora organizations as the main 'representatives' of diasporas' interests and needs might actually be detrimental to younger diaspora members (for more discussion of these points please see sections 1.3. and 1.4.).

BOX 1.5.1: Remembering the past and generational differences: genocide commemoration in the Rwandan diaspora in Belgium

Written by Élise Féron

One of the fields in which generational differences within diasporas can be traced is through memory and commemoration activities. For first generations of conflict-generated diaspora groups, remembering the conflict that forced them to migrate, as well as their country of origin more generally, is often seen as crucial for maintaining the group's identity. For many first-generation members of the Rwandan diaspora living in Belgium for instance, commemorating and remembering the 1994 genocide is crucial and constitutes the main focus of many of their diaspora organizations.

The ways in which second generation members in the Rwandan diaspora remember and relate to the genocide can however differ. Instead of systematically focusing on the genocide, many of their memorialization activities touch upon other experiences of violence that Rwanda has witnessed, notably related to colonization, which leads to a 'de-centering' of the genocide experience in the Rwandan diasporic identity. Second generation Rwandans also tend to organize joint activities, to build transnational solidarities, and even to create joint organizations with other diasporic groups living in Belgium, and originating from the same region, notably from Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. These organizations usually focus on the experiences of colonization in the countries of origin and of racism in the countries of settlement, rather than on specific episodes of violence that their home countries have witnessed.

The types of activities they organize also differ from what first generation members seem to favor: rather than organizing official commemoration events or political meetings, they mobilize online, organize trainings but also walking tours in Belgian cities, during which they

trace and denounce the maintenance of colonialism, racism and patriarchy in contemporary Belgium[1].

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[1] See for instance the websites of Mémoire Coloniale: https://www.memoirecoloniale.be and of the Centre Féministe de réflexion et d'action sur le racisme anti-Noir·e·s: https://www.bamko.org

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1.6. Cross border collaboration among diaspora organizations

Collaboration among diaspora groups across borders **is also difficult to establish but building strong transnational ties facilitates the exchange of knowledge, enhances representation, helps alleviate isolation in host countries, and is particularly valuable for diasporas originating from areas of conflict. Strong cross border collaboration has positive potential for policy makers as well. If policy makers engage more actively in supporting transnational ties it fosters inclusivity, but it also makes mapping and tracing these networks easier.**

Collaboration can be difficult to establish, not just between opposed sections of the 'same' diaspora living in the same country, but also between diaspora groups originating from the same conflict zones but living in different countries. Building transnational networks and engaging in collaboration with diaspora organizations across borders can be particularly useful for diasporas who are generated by conflict or where conflict is still raging in the country of origin. Developing strong transnational ties can facilitate the exchange of knowledge, enhance representation, help alleviate isolation in host societies, and carries positive potential for policy makers as well.

People who flee their countries of origin because of a conflict often do so in a hurry without previously building transnational ties and networks of solidarity. This entails isolation in host societies, which is slowly remedied by the establishment of diaspora organizations. The building of transnational linkages between these organizations is not an immediate priority for the concerned diaspora groups because of their focus on integration and help for individuals, and therefore it takes more time to materialize. This issue can be particularly salient for newly established diaspora groups, where the eruption of conflict is recent or is still ongoing. For smaller diaspora groups, building alliances with other diaspora groups can be necessary in order to make themselves heard (e.g. alliances between Turkish Cypriot and Turkish diasporas, between Azerbaijani and Turkish diasporas, or between Greek Cypriot and Greek diasporas). Both smaller diaspora groups and newly established ones might additionally lack the resources and knowledge to develop or build these networks.

Transnational networks are particularly useful for the exchange of knowledge and skills. During the interviews conducted as part of the DIASCON research project, one participant explained that their transnational ties helped build digital learning platforms in Europe for displaced children in their country of origin and that combining the skills and expertise of diasporas across borders greatly improved both the process and content of the project (see BOX 1.6.1).

Diaspora organizations engaging in conflicts in the country of origin tend to focus on 'their own' home country/conflict and therefore collaboration across borders with organizations representing different diaspora groups is difficult to establish. It is a prevalent idea that each conflict situation is specific and solidarities beyond words are difficult to build. While conflict situations are indeed specific it does not necessarily hinder the development of networks across borders. Several participants in the DIASCON research project mentioned that common goals not related to the conflicts in countries of origin had facilitated transnational

collaboration in the past (see section 3.1. on unity of purpose in diaspora organizations). There are many cases in which diaspora organizations have built links with other transnational social movements focusing on human rights, anti-fascism, democracy and so on.

Policy makers rarely pay attention to these networks nor encourage their development through for instance funding or by facilitating meetings between diaspora members from different host countries. Engaging more actively in supporting transnational networks not only fosters inclusivity but also helps the mapping of diaspora communities in general.

While it can be difficult for diaspora groups to build transnational networks and solidarities, it can pose an additional challenge for policymakers to trace these networks. Facilitating the establishment of transnational networks can therefore be particularly useful as it helps ease this challenge as well as increases the understanding of diaspora dynamics beyond national contexts.

BOX 1.6.1: Transnational networks in conflict-affected diasporas: Syrian learning platforms

Written by Cæcilie Svop Jensen

Transnational networks are used for many purposes in the diasporas and preserving these can be both highly important and highly challenging in diasporas where conflict is ongoing in the country of origin. Among Syrian diasporas, online learning platforms have been developed to reach and educate children in Syria whose access to education has been impaired by the conflict. Wassim from Syria, who lives in the Netherlands, runs such an online platform. The platform is called the Syrian Education Virtual Platform and it conducts IT classes for children in Idlib using the online platform Zoom. The platform runs on a volunteer basis, through and by diasporas in Europe and North America. Volunteers consists of Syrian teachers in the diasporas and includes members from France, Canada, Finland, Germany and the Netherlands. The courses focus on IT skill development such as programming, and Wassim says that one of the challenges to running the platform is to agree on the kinds of knowledge and education they provide without involving politics, and the reason why they have chosen to focus on IT. In Wassim's experience, the creation of non-political spaces helps the volunteers to connect despite ideological differences, but it is not always an easy task.

Mania is a board member of SSYS in Finland and her organization supports teaching for IDP's in Syria financially. They employ local teachers who teach Mathematics, English and Arabic to displaced children in different areas of Syria. Mania notes how a pertinent challenge is the politics related to specific areas of Syria, that locations carry political weight. Therefore, agreeing on places to fund teaching initiatives as well as gathering money for funding is challenging as people in the diasporas want to support 'their own' projects or areas, and question where the money goes and to whom. She mentions how this politicization of physical spaces teases out groupings in the diasporas, making transnational cooperation difficult.

The above examples show both the potential and challenges to transnational networking in cases where conflict is still raging in countries of origin. While transnational networks facilitate the organization and scope of efforts to mobilize in the country of origin, they can

carry challenges due to the sometimes highly politicized nature of diasporas tied to conflict areas. Redirecting focus and working with depoliticized spaces can be a useful way to build and develop these networks (see also *BOX 2.4.1*).

1.7. Involving young people and women

Young people and women **tend to be less represented in diaspora organizations, a result of for instance migration patterns, reproduction of patriarchal patterns of relations, and securitization of youth with a foreign background in countries of settlement. The participation of young people and women can be limited to very specific fields and they are often excluded from political debates. Being aware of this differentiated access is a first step in order to acknowledge that male diaspora representatives do not necessarily speak for entire groups.**

In conflict areas, and although some important exceptions can be found here and there, positions of power are often monopolized by politicians and military leaders, who on average tend to be male, and to belong to older generations. Youth and women are therefore likely to be excluded from policy making and public debates, especially when these debates pertain to political opinions and choices. These patterns of exclusion tend to be reproduced in diaspora settings, in terms both of generational differences as we have seen in section 1.5., and of gender inequalities. In addition, gender inequalities can be related to migration patterns, whereby male family members migrate first, before family reunification can happen. This means that male members of the family are more likely to be familiar with the context in the countries of settlement, in terms of access to services, of familiarity with the language, of networks, and so on, therefore creating and/or reinforcing women's dependency on their male family members.

It is also well known that diaspora settings are likely to favor the reproduction of patriarchal patterns of relations, which are often equated with traditions from the home countries, even though home countries' cultures are in fact frequently less patriarchal and hierarchical than assumed. Research has shown, for example, that diasporic women were expected, perhaps even more than men, not only to uphold the traditions from their countries of origin, but also to abide by stricter codes. Any unseemly behavior is seen as potentially damaging the reputation of the whole community, leading male diaspora leaders, for instance religious or political leaders, to try to control and ascertain the behavior of women and children.

As a consequence, the participation of youth and women can be limited to certain very specific fields, and they tend to be excluded from political debates. This differentiated access to the public sphere in host countries is illustrated by the lower involvement of women and youth in diaspora organizations, especially if measured in terms of participation in organizations' boards and leadership structures. According to DIASCON research participants, male first generation migrants often try to monopolize structures of mobilization within diaspora communities, in particular the leadership of diaspora organizations. This pattern can however be reversed or at least made less pregnant with the passing of generations, or simply countered by women- or youth-led activism. As mentioned by several research participants, when excluded from male-dominated diaspora organizations, women and/or youth sometimes create their own separate organizations, thereby diversifying and improving the representativity of diaspora organizations as a whole.

One of the factors that is contributing to the exclusion of youth is that young people with foreign background, especially male, are looked at with suspicion and tend to be securitized in societies of settlement. This negative image of young male diaspora members reinforces their feelings of social isolation and marginalization. Sometimes diaspora leaders themselves hold negative stereotypes about diaspora youth as they see some of them as potential troublemakers, and as generating a bad image for the whole diaspora community. For both policy makers and diaspora leaders, young males tend to be treated as 'problems' to be addressed, rather than as potential partners and allies in decision making processes. In parallel, young women are often assumed to be submissive and to be constrained in their choices by their communities and/or cultures of origin. As a consequence, many policy makers in countries of settlement think that the underrepresentation of women in diaspora organizations is 'normal' and do not try to contest or reverse these patterns.

The challenge is therefore to find ways to break these patterns of exclusion, especially if these exist in countries of residence too, for instance if women and youth have low levels of participation in public life in general, regardless of their origins. Oftentimes the question of gender equality and of youth inclusion among diaspora settings is therefore tightly related to broader changes needed in the countries of settlement.

Being aware of this differentiated access is a first step, which means to acknowledge that diaspora groups are not homogeneous, and that older male diaspora representatives do not necessarily speak for the whole group (see also section 3.5.). Women and youth can also be targeted specifically, by offering specifically designed programs, modes of participation, trainings, and activities. In addition, introducing criteria of diversity in participation to events organized by host countries' authorities (for instance in terms of gender or age) can help, also because they tend to make diaspora organizations more aware of the need to introduce diversity in their board membership.

BOX 1.7.1: Authoritarian Home States and Diaspora Youth in Europe: Insights from the Turkish Case

Written by Gözde Böcü and Bahar Baser

In late June 2020, episodes of violent clashes erupted between members of Turkey's diaspora in the neighborhood of *Favoriten* in Vienna, Austria. The clashes between Kurdish and Turkish ultranationalist groups lasted for four consecutive days after leftist groups including Austria's Antifa and several Kurdish and leftist groups had organized a demonstration against fascism.[i] While tensions between Turkey and European states that arose during Turkey's recent elections are not forgotten, spill-over of Turkey's domestic conflicts to Europe continues to damage the country's invested interests in diaspora diplomacy and soft power. While the Austrian and Turkish government summoned their respective ambassadors, and blamed each other for the violence, the incident only highlights the tip of the iceberg in the growing intra-diasporic polarization within Turkey's communities in Europe and perpetuates ongoing skepticism towards Turkey's new state-led engagement with its diaspora in Europe.

Although many states around the world now engage their diasporas, Turkey's investment in reclaiming its diaspora in the last two decades has been perceived by European policymakers as Erdogan's attempt to consolidate his power through strengthening Turkish nationalism on European soil.

With the foundation of various new institutions which aim to re-strengthen ties with the Turkish community abroad and tap their social, political, and economic resources Turkey continues to enhance its influence in Europe. A significant portion of its policies have been dedicated to diaspora youth with the hope that future generations in the diaspora could help Turkey to create a more positive image by bridging differences between generations and countries in the transnational sphere. In this context, Turkey's diaspora actors, for instance, recently made news across Europe for their unprecedented response in the fight against COVD-19 within their communities across host country contexts.[ii] A pivotal but unusual actor, in both negative and positive contexts was diaspora youth. While some youth actors violently clashed with members of their own community in Vienna,[iii] others provided masks, distributed food or offered additional services to the most vulnerable parts of society.[iv] *How can we make sense of such ambiguous forms that Turkey's immigrant youth take on the diaspora?* Can positive actions by diaspora youth ameliorate security concerns among European policy makers and public opinion?

Old Patterns, New Dynamics: Turkey's New Diasporas and Youth Engagement

In Europe, diaspora youth from Turkey has traditionally been approached by their respective host countries through a racialized and securitized perspective depicting immigrant youth as unassimilable despite living in various host country contexts in the third and fourth generation. With the impact of 9/11, followed by rising Islamophobia as well as the rise of an authoritarian regime in Turkey, these trends have only deepened. The historical roots of securitized approaches towards diaspora youth, however, go far back into the 1980s. Already in the 1980s when the Turkish-Kurdish conflict erupted in Turkey, radical groups clashed in violent street fights across different European host country contexts. Most prominently in Germany, ultranationalist Turkish groups often hijacked pro-Kurdish demonstrations, while Kurdish ultranationalists attacked Turkish shops and diplomatic representations abroad. In this context, it was predominantly young actors who engaged in contentious politics, often triggering debates on their ability to integrate into their respective host countries accompanied by sharp surveillance and security measures. In the old debates, it was the diasporas themselves that were accused of importing conflicts from their home countries. In current debates, however, we observe that it is the Turkish state and its ruling elite that are blamed for exporting conflicts to Europe. How did this discursive change come into play? We argue that Turkey's diaspora engagement policy, with its institutions and versatile actors are the main reason for this perception change. We further stipulate that even positive engagement by the Turkish state in youth's transnational space are shadowed by the ideological burden of the diaspora engagement policy and the current Turkish regime's political agenda in and outside Turkey.

Turkey's New Diasporas and Youth Engagement

Although intra-diasporic conflict between diaspora youth is not a new phenomenon, there is a new component that requires imminent attention by both academics and policymakers alike. While Turkey adopted a rather reactive and passive stance towards citizens abroad over the last decades, in the 2000s the AKP has been highly proactive in reaching out to its diaspora – most prominently through electoral mobilization. A recent claim, however, targets future generations in the diaspora, namely young diasporans abroad. President Erdogan's growing interest in shaping a pious generation of young citizens in Turkey as well as the regime's concerns of brain drain into the West, have resulted in a growing interest to engage the youth both at home and abroad. In this context, youth actors in Turkey's diasporas around the world are being increasingly mobilized through state-led initiatives spearheaded by Turkey's Presidency For Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB). A review of Turkey's diaspora policies reveals not only that the Turkish government has steadily expanded its outreach towards young diasporans since 2013, but that initiatives launched target a specific kind of audience susceptible to regime-loyal propaganda. In order to form a regime-loyal generation of young diasporans to come, Turkey has launched various programs that reveal its intentions to mobilize Muslim youth in favor of Turkey by putting emphasis on Islamophobia and exclusionary discourses in European host country contexts. In this context, initiatives such as homeland tours, stipends, international conferences, and educational fairs are used to brand Turkey as an economically strong nation leading the Muslim world counting on its global diaspora youth to carry its message into the foreign policy sphere.

Most recently, youth actors have also become prominent in the context of Turkey's transnational efforts to foster closer ties with diasporans and present itself strong developmental actor during the COVID-19 pandemic. Amongst Turkey's transnational responses to the pandemic such as the repatriation of citizens abroad and the establishment of various new and at times digitalized services to diasporans,[v] Turkey also actively incentivized the involvement of young citizens abroad in the fight against the pandemic. With the establishment of a COVID-19 response fund initiated by the YTB on April 3rd, 2020, for instance, Turkey asked diaspora actors to get actively involved in activities to prevent the spread of the pandemic within their diaspora communities, and called for projects from within the diaspora to support diasporans during the pandemic.[vi] In this context, youth actors across Europe became frequently involved in various pandemic related campaigns such as producing and distributing masks and health equipment to diasporans, while also reaching out to the most vulnerable parts of the diaspora by taking on grocery shopping responsibilities.[vii] Moreover, Turkey's YTB also incentivized young diasporans involvement throughout the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic by using existing digitalized spaces such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Twitter, while also introducing new digitized formats such as digital concerts '*Dijital Konserler'* by famous diaspora artists and young talents[viii] or by offering Turkish language education '*Türkçe Saati Dersleri'* to engage the youth throughout the pandemic.[ix] In addition, YTB established a children's program '*YTB Çocuk'* offering series of Turkish language fairytales for Turkish speaking children covering fairytales from Turkey to Central Asia.[x] While the main purpose of Turkey's new digitalized outreach was to ensure continued presence in and access to the diaspora, the majority of initiatives clearly targeted Turkey's ongoing identity building efforts towards young members in the diaspora through the newly emerging digitalized sphere. By investing in such initiatives, the state authorities make sure to strengthen ties between the

diaspora and the homeland, spread domestic propaganda abroad and work towards creating loyal communities outside its borders. These efforts do not go unnoticed by European policy makers who perceive Turkish diaspora youth as a tool under the pawns of the Turkish regime and as a threat to these young people's loyalties towards the country in which they currently reside.

Conclusion

Turkey's new transnational strategy towards young diasporans could be perceived as a benevolent attempt to empower marginalized immigrant youth in Europe. Taken as a whole, however, the content and target of its new youth engagement reflects an ambiguous form of engagement. On the one hand, Turkey's attempts to generate gains from future generations during crucial domestic elections serves the purpose of legitimizing the competitive authoritarian regime. In addition, diaspora youth are used as brand ambassadors who may successfully lobby host country governments and further Erdogan's foreign policy gains in Europe. On the other hand, however, by constructing a homogenous type of pious and regime-loyal diaspora youth, the regime seeks to generate future generations which will operate as guardians of the Turkish regime abroad. Thus, regime-loyal youth become multipliers of regime propaganda and repression who are ready to partake in violent clashes on behalf of the regime abroad.

By engaging in such ambiguous forms of engagement, Turkey's policies not only impede with the integration policies of host countries, but also deepen skepticism and prejudice among European policymakers. Moreover, as Turkey's new diaspora engagement towards pious and nationalist youth continues, youth actors that oppose the authoritarian regime such as Leftist, Kurdish or Alevite diaspora youth who are often excluded and at times repressed by Turkish state actors, continue to join forces against the regime. Ultimately, Turkey's recent attempts to use diaspora youth for the benefit appear to backfire and generate outcomes that do not really go hand in hand with the objectives of creating a soft power tool.

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Footnotes

[i] https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/turkey-austria-trade-barbs-over-kurdish-turkish-clashes-in-vienna/

[ii] https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/avrupa/fransada-yasayan-turklerden-saglikcilara-yardim-41491367

[iii] https://kurier.at/chronik/wien/krawalle-in-wien-favoriten-wer-sind-die-akteure/400957196

[iv] https://www.sabah.com.tr/dunya/2020/03/20/almanyadaki-turklerden-corona-virus-yardimi

[v] https://www.dailysabah.com/opinion/op-ed/closer-transnational-ties-during-pandemic-turkeys-diaspora-engagement-policy

[vi] https://www.ytb.gov.tr/guncel/diaspora-covid-19-destek-ve-is-birligi-programi

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[viii] https://www.ytb.gov.tr/haberler/ytbden-dijital-konserler

[ix] https://www.ytb.gov.tr/haberler/ytbnin-turkce-saati-proje-destek-programina-basvurular-basladi

[x] http://www.ytbcocuk.com/

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2. PART II: Practices when working at the nexus of diasporas and conflict

In this second part, we explore the practices that have been designed by both diaspora organizations and by policy makers in the countries of settlement, in order to work with conflicts within and between diasporas. We put a specific focus on everyday, mundane and local practices, as it is at this level that most diaspora organizations have developed and implemented mitigating initiatives. We also touch upon host country responses at the national and local levels, highlighting how these could be further improved, notably by interacting more directly with diaspora groups themselves, instead of resorting to diplomatic tools targeting countries of origin.

All in all, we underscore the diversity in approaches adopted by diaspora organizations, as well as the multiplicity of potential accommodation practices. We also explain why, in our view, everyday practices of conflict management, and mundane practices of peaceful co-existence seem to be the most promising and should be supported.

2.1. Host countries' responses at the national level

Diasporas tend to be used as *tools or recipients rather than actors* in policy making in host countries, and the specific challenges faced by diasporas originating from conflict areas are overlooked. The management of diasporas is often related to migration for instance asylum or accommodation practices, return policies and repatriation, or handled through surveillance and securitizing policies.

How host countries respond to diaspora issues naturally affects the opportunities available to diaspora groups and helps shape the challenges faced by diaspora organizations in the countries of residence. This is for instance visible through the exclusion from policy making discussed in section 1.3 of this handbook.

Most often, and at least in the countries covered by the DIASON project, authorities in countries of settlement tend to resort to diplomatic tools when responding to or managing diasporas originating from conflict areas - that is, they rarely deal directly with diaspora groups themselves. This includes mediation or negotiation with governments and conflict parties in countries of origin, and, if conflicts are ongoing, humanitarian assistance in conflict areas or in adjacent areas affected by the conflict.

In this context, it is important to draw attention to the ways in which countries of origin also utilize or engage 'their' diasporas and how this affects host country responses. Some governments in the countries of origin have well-developed policies for engaging diasporas which can influence diaspora dynamics in the countries of settlement, for instance by encouraging diasporas to mobilize for home country politics or facilitate absentee voting. Engagement policies by home countries can also include encouraging diasporas to 'report' on members of the diasporas that are critical to the home country government, which can be particularly divisive for diaspora communities in host countries. Host countries tend to respond to this by addressing the home country government, rather than by engaging directly with the diaspora communities residing within their own borders, for instance by banning extraterritorial election campaigns or criticizing political leaders in the home countries for causing unrest (see also BOX 1.7.1).

Host countries also participate more directly in conflict areas, for instance by financially supporting conflict parties, or through the deployment of troops. Consequently, host countries can be involved in conflict areas from where diasporas in the host country originate. This results in a situation where the host country government and diaspora groups are actually engaged in the same conflict on the same or opposing sides. Policy makers should be aware of these processes as they not only shape the attitudes of the diasporas towards the country of origin and the country of settlement, but also affect the way the diasporas mobilize for these conflicts, and the dynamics within diaspora communities.

Host countries' management of diasporas originating from conflict areas can additionally be centered on reducing the intake of migrants from conflict areas, adapting return policies for residing diasporas, or offering repatriation. The policies adopted by host countries affect the diasporas and might even cause divisions within the diasporas themselves. In the interviews

conducted by DIASCON, one participant highlighted how the issue of return policies in the host country had been a cause of conflict within the concerned diaspora. When asked by the government if the diaspora could contribute or assist, the diaspora members who had been in the country of settlement longer favored contributing, whereas those who had more recently arrived were opposed to it. Although the government wished to include the diaspora in the process, the inclusivity occurred not in the development of policies but in their implementation. This tendency to instrumentalize diasporas might cause cleavages or fuel conflicts in the countries of settlement and policy makers should pay attention to these dynamics.

As the example above helps illustrate, diasporas are often used as tools in policies rather than actors in policy making. This plays out both in the ways diasporas relate to the country of origin, for instance assisting the government in the implementation of return policies or the strong focus on how diasporas can contribute to development, but it also relates to how diasporas themselves facilitate the management of diaspora communities in the countries of settlement. During the interviews conducted by DIASCON, several participants noted that contact with authorities occurred mostly in the context of integration related matters. When diaspora organizations provided support such as assisting in opening bank accounts, helping to write funding applications, finding housing, or getting children enrolled in schools, the access to authorities was easy. One interviewee noted that interactions with the social office and doctors in their municipality happened all the time. In these instances, the organizations act as extensions of authorities and 'take over' governmental tasks for supporting the everyday issues faced by individual diaspora members. Though often perceived as recipients of subsidies, diasporas are rarely the targets of subsidy policies. More frequently, diasporas are instrumentalized for the benefit of authorities in the countries of settlement, rather than being actors in, or beneficiaries of, policies.

It is worth mentioning that the size as well as the political profile of the concerned diaspora groups greatly influence the responses made by authorities in the countries of settlement. Governments in host societies run the risk of favoring one side because of biases existing at the political level; some 'sides' of conflict or causes are more popular than others which leads to higher public profiles for some diaspora organizations as well as better policy outreach.

Host countries' responses to diasporas originating from conflict areas are diplomatic in nature or related to migration, through for instance asylum or accommodation practices. Ways to 'manage' diasporas often also take the shape of surveillance and securitizing policies because of perceptions surrounding these communities (see also section 1.2). The interlinkages and overlaps between these different types of responses (e.g. through diplomacy, migration services, security-related) are seldom explored and the specificity of the case of conflict-generated diaspora groups is not conceptualized and thought-through.

A multilevel dimension of responses, carefully considering these interlinked complexities, is necessary to improve host country accommodation and management of diasporas' needs and dynamics. This includes paying attention to local levels and everyday consequences of policies that affect diasporas. It also pertains to facilitating their inclusion in policy making by adopting targeted policies that more actively engage diasporas, and paying attention to issues that might fuel or deteriorate relationships.

BOX 2.1.1: Diaspora management in Finland

Written by Cæcilie Svop Jensen

In Finland, although the term 'diaspora' figures rarely in ministry discourses, the management of diasporas is fragmented across several governmental entities as well as across regional and local authorities. Finland does not have a specific diaspora policy. In practice, diasporas fall under a multitude of different categories such as asylum seekers, (im)migrants, refugees, highly skilled laborers, used by authorities and in policy making in Finland. It is important to note that these categories do not take into account those members of the diaspora who are not migrants, but still see themselves as part of a diaspora. When diasporas are mentioned, it is in relation to their involvement in the countries of origin. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) explicitly uses the term diaspora. Some diaspora organizations have for instance been invited by the MFA to comment on the development of country specific strategies, and their contributions to development are taken into account in policies related to such strategies. Additionally, some diaspora representatives have been invited to discussions on how diaspora organizations can help with matters of voluntary return.

Apart from the MFA, it is the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, the Ministry of Justice, and the Police and Border Control who at the national level deal with 'diasporas', albeit under the above-mentioned different labels. The Finnish Immigration Service (MIGRI) handles matters of residence, refugee status and citizenship and provides information about immigration to the authorities. Apart from national entities, regional and local offices oversee many of these responsibilities on a more regular basis. Here, the Centers for Economic Development, Transport and Environment are in charge of regional management of work permits and of tasks related to integration and good 'ethnic' relations. Issues related to education, health and inclusion fall under the Ministry of Education and Culture as well as the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. Municipalities have since 2017 been obligated to design their own municipal strategies, and their autonomy makes each local context different when it comes to their priorities regarding immigration, inclusion and so on. In addition, diasporas organize as part of the civil society and therefore compete for funding and support alongside other organizations in Finland, despite the fact that diaspora organizations can have vastly different constraints when applying, for instance related to language issues or lack of resources.

We can therefore say that diaspora management (and diasporas) only exist in the eyes of various Finnish official institutions in the context of diasporas' contributions to their countries of origin, and even here in a limited way. In this context, both the needs and potential of diasporas, and in particular those originating from areas of conflict, are likely to go unnoticed, as are the specific challenges that they face in Finland.

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2.2. Policy makers contributions at the local level

Local level management of diasporas **originating from areas of conflict is important as local authorities figure prominently in the everyday lives of diasporas. Often there is a lack of training and knowledge on conflict-generated diasporas and on conflict sensitive responses. Needs and issues can also vary a lot between municipalities depending on the sizes and nature of diasporas living there. Targeted training focusing on intra-diaspora conflicts, intercultural dialogue and with sustained inputs from local diasporas would be beneficial and improve inclusivity.**

As mentioned in section 2.1., host country responses at the macro level often take the shape of diplomatic, migration-oriented, or securitized approaches to diasporas originating from conflict areas. Local responses are important too, especially since the everyday lives of diasporas entail more contact with local authorities than with national government entities. Often, however, there is a lack of specific knowledge and training both on the conflicts in the areas from which diasporas originate, and on how to deal with them. This is especially true for police services for instance, where training seldom exists on the specific communities that diaspora constitute. Some municipalities have larger diasporas than others, making local level efforts even more important, as needs and challenges can vary greatly from area to area. Often, large communities of diasporas are concentrated in specific areas necessitating local responses to be very local. What needs must be addressed and what approaches can be adopted vary considerably among municipalities, depending on the characteristics of the diasporic communities in that municipality.

Without training in and knowledge of the diaspora communities and their dynamics, for instance in terms of intra-diaspora conflicts and cleavages at the local level, responses to these dynamics will remain either deficient or non-existent. This can play out in different ways.

For instance, local authorities run the risk of working with organizations that are not representative or representative of only one ‘side’. Favoring some groups over others, intentionally or unintentionally, can reduce trust between authorities and diasporas but also negatively affect the relationships between diaspora groups themselves. Linguistic and intercultural dialogue issues can also be more prevalent in some municipalities than in others, and in most cases these issues are unacknowledged. Training for policy makers or local authorities on these matters are almost non-existent. In line with, or fueled by, these processes is the lack of training available for police services, training on the different (and at times very local) dynamics in diaspora communities that can be relevant for engaging with them in a positive and constructive way. This includes awareness of what can fuel or create tension, and conversely on which basis good relationships between authorities and diasporas as well as between diasporas themselves can be built. Knowledge on local diasporas, their challenges, needs, and contributions are essential to this end.

It is important to bear in mind that local policy makers also operate under constraints that influence both the process and structure of responding to diaspora needs and dynamics. Especially when it comes to diasporas originating from conflict areas, rapid changes in legislation on matters of for instance asylum or accommodation practices in the host country

makes continued and systematic efforts complicated. In cases where conflicts are still ongoing in the country of origin, local policy makers are also constrained by external, diplomatic pressure and have to be mindful of the larger dynamics at play between for instance the host and home country governments when making decisions and policies involving the diaspora communities.

Examples of good practices highlight how local responses to and engagement with diasporas can be fruitful and secure inclusion of diasporas in the processes and policies that affect them. One DIASCON participant explained that their municipality had initiated workshops with diaspora groups to discuss coming policy changes to get their input in the process. Diaspora organizations possess valuable knowledge of their communities and can be important for grasping for instance the on-the-ground implications of policy changes. They can also help draw attention to issues not necessarily considered by local authorities. Despite this, very few strategies for organizing inputs from diasporas exist at the local level (or national for that matter).

Responses at the local level as such could greatly benefit from organizing targeted training for local policy makers as well as other authorities engaging with diasporas on a daily basis such as police officers. Targeted training should focus especially on intra-diaspora conflicts and cleavages, as well as on intercultural dialogue, and it should include initiatives for organizing sustained inputs from local diasporas.

BOX 2.2.1: 'They don't understand what it is like': Policy makers and engaging with communities at the local level

Written by Cæcilie Svop Jensen

Sometimes diaspora members and organizations have the impression that policy makers are far removed from the reality of what their life is like, and that policies targeting or involving diaspora communities therefore tend to be deficient or fail to address important issues. In one of the DIASCON research interviews the participant noted that "most of the time, the people making these rules and regulations and planning, they are not in touch with our different people, so they just make these rules from top-down and then say 'OK do it'. They don't understand the profile and the people and what kind of life they're living and what it's like".

A first step towards understanding the role that policy makers and authorities can play at the local level therefore involves spending time among the communities and developing policies not only from a top-down approach, but also on the basis of a real understanding of the lived experiences of diasporas at the local level. Local authorities can play important roles in this process, as they are in closer proximity to diaspora communities. As such, local authorities have the capacity to act as driving belts between national authorities and diaspora groups themselves. In this perspective, the nature of interactions between local authorities and diaspora communities could be important to rethink. At the local level, interactions with diaspora communities are often quite formal and creating spaces for more informal

engagement could constitute a way forward to improving host countries engagement with diaspora communities.

We're here to help. Don't worry.

2.3. Diversity in approaches of diaspora organizations

Diaspora organizations display a *striking diversity in focus areas and patterns of mobilization* which can be useful for policy makers to pay attention to as it expands the possibilities available to constructively engage with diasporas. Rather than being recipients of services, diaspora organizations provide a multitude of services to members, act as important community builders and create spaces for dialogue and knowledge-sharing that can be valuable to policy makers.

Organizations representing diasporas originating from conflict areas do not all deal with matters related to the concerned conflict. Some are primarily interested in fostering integration in host countries, some promote reconciliation between and within diaspora groups, while others indeed focus on home conflicts and on awareness raising around these conflicts, and sometimes even on other conflicts with which they do not have direct links.

Keeping in mind the diversity of diasporas, it is important to pay attention to the diversity of approaches used and key issues addressed by diaspora organizations. Diasporas utilize a wide range of actions and mobilize for a variety of causes. Drawing attention to the many ways in which diasporas mobilize expands the possibilities available to policy makers and institutions to constructively engage with diasporas.

Diasporas are often viewed as recipients rather than as suppliers of services, although this far from reflects the reality of diaspora organization and mobilization. As mentioned in section 2.1, diaspora organizations in some cases act as providers of (non-monetary) social services and assist with everyday difficulties faced by for instance recently arrived diaspora members.

One essential role that diaspora organizations play is that of community builder, providing spaces for diaspora members to interact with each other and with members of the wider community in the countries of settlement. Additionally, diaspora organizations share information, not only regarding issues in the countries of settlement, but also on developments and news from the country of origin. This can be particularly important for diasporas originating from conflict areas where violence is still ongoing. In other cases, organizations facilitate the preservation of language and identity in the countries of settlement, for instance through organizing language courses or cultural events. Diaspora organizations can also be huge assets when it comes to facilitating or initiating cooperation among diaspora organizations themselves as well as between diaspora organizations and other organizations in the countries of settlement. They also facilitate transnational cooperation although they rarely have the resources to develop and sustain strong international ties.

Often, organizations are involved with not just one of these issues but several at the same time, illustrating the complex workings of diaspora organizations. This overlap of agendas as well as the diversity of approaches have to be kept in mind when dealing with diasporas. While it should be considered a source of strength, it can also cause confusion for policy makers and the wider public, especially when organizations take on several issues at the same time, or when policy makers have limited knowledge of how the diasporas are organized in general.

However, realizing the many ways in which diaspora organizations contribute to the provision of services, the establishment of community-based spaces for dialogue and knowledge-sharing, and the immense knowledge they possess about 'their' residing diasporas is valuable for policy makers. They can assist in mapping the diaspora networks, ensuring the right kind of support for diaspora communities and counter essentialist perceptions of how diasporas organize and contribute to community building at the local level.

BOX 2.3.1: Sri Lankan diasporas in Italy between participation and conflict

Written by Anna Quattrone

I recently analyzed the processes of identification and mobilization of Sri Lankan diasporas in Italy. It has proved of great interest, given the lack of comprehensive academic work on their political engagement in home and host countries beyond the peace vs war maker dichotomization and the LTTE's politics. My objective was to explore how Sri Lankans in Italy perceive themselves in relation to both their countries of origin and of settlement, and how their social and political participation is configured. Particularly, the aim was to investigate whether the homeland inequalities and lines of tension have been transported to the host land, or whether they have taken different configurations under the influence of new asymmetries of power.

Italy represents an especially interesting case in relation to Sri Lankan diasporas as, conversely to traditional patterns of migratory segregation, it hosts both Sinhalese and Tamil communities. These connections were built on a history of migration and education inspired by the Catholic Church, whose ecumenical policies allowed foreign priests to take educational trips to Italian cities (Benadusi 2015; Brown 2011; Pathirage, Collyer 2011; Interview E). Hence, when Sri Lankan priests who travelled to Italy in the late 1970s met Italian families interested in hiring domestic workers, they helped to establish transnational employment networks between the two countries (Brown 2014; Ferrario 2019; Pathirage, Collyer 2011). While first migratory generations were induced to leave Sri Lanka because of their socioeconomic hardship in the homeland and the desire to uplift their status, following flows mainly comprised both Sinhalese and Tamils forced to flee by violence escalation and insecurity during the civil war (Benadusi 2015; Brown 2012, 2014; Dissanayake, Senadhi 2018; Henayaka-Lochbihler, Lambusta 2004). Therefore, the situation in Italy allows to overcome the dichotomization usually associated with the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka and to appreciate the political activism of Sinhalese and Tamils in Italy: in fact, their complex and nuanced understanding of Sri Lankan conflictual dynamics significantly influences their forms of mobilization in Italy.

In the host land, Sri Lankan diasporans belonging to the first generation often hold a more nationalist and conservative view as compared to their compatriots in the homeland (Interview A), showing a form of long distance nationalism (Baser 2014, 2017; Demmers 2002; Féron 2013; Féron, Lefort 2019). This is because they have remained rooted in crystallized conceptions of the homeland and its contentious politics (Interview A): according to these static imaginaries, Tamils usually describe the Sri Lankan government as a dictatorship that

perpetrated a genocide against them, while Sinhalese often consider Tamils as those who have supported the civil war and terrorism in the homeland (Interview F). The political activism of Sri Lankan diasporas has also entailed the transportation of homeland conflictual dynamics to the host land, even though this process has been highly context dependent. In northern and central Italy, conflict transportation seems almost absent, as both groups coexist peacefully, and their relationships are characterized by practices of mutual sharing. This process might be the result of the interaction between the pluralistic and welcoming societies of these regions and, perhaps, the more economically oriented diaspora sections settled there. Conversely, in southern Italy the homeland conflict has been transported at the social and discursive levels, taking the form of mutual avoidance, spatial segregation and inter-group distrust. In this case, the more conservative and traditionalist attitudes that sometimes characterize southern regions might have nurtured the already existing cleavages, making diasporic communities reinforce their crystallized views of homeland dynamics (Interviews B and A).

Moreover, in the Italian context the transported conflict has taken different configurations as compared to Sri Lanka: discriminatory practices and violent behaviors have disappeared, while new issues and repertoires of action have emerged (what we can call conflict autonomization). In fact, both Tamil and Sinhalese diasporans are becoming engaged in Italian politics as well, focusing their activism on the achievement of a better socioeconomic (racism and discrimination) and political (citizenship) integration into the host land (Interviews D, B, A and C). Furthermore, the political activism of Tamil second generations has taken new forms and issues, as they actively lobby Italian institutions for the recognition of their peculiar identity and of the genocide -«a second silent Shoah»- perpetrated against their people in Sri Lanka (Interviews B and C). To mobilize in different contexts of settlement, they have opted for more effective repertoires of action rooted in the host land: in contrast to the militant nationalism and public protests of first generations, young diasporans have begun to pool their competencies together in order to find a political solution to Sri Lankan contentious dynamics (Hess, Korf 2014; Rasaratnam 2011; Interview B).

Both Sinhalese and Tamils in Italy display a significant open-mindedness in relation to the civil war, as they blame the homeland government for capitalizing on ethnic differences and express the wish for a future of peaceful coexistence, where all ethnicities would be equally granted rights and citizenship (Coccaro 2009; Interviews D and G). Although the legacy of the conflict is still burdensome and continues to be present in the imaginary of diasporans, the sense of estrangement and the need to overcome common difficulties in the host land may have promoted new inter-ethnic alliances, in the absence of new lines of tension based on the situation in Italy. In this context, diasporic activism has developed on two political fronts -Sri Lanka and Italy- and young generations have begun to look at their homeland as a land of opportunities (Interview A). Perhaps, with their new competences and different attitudes they may pave the way for a bottom-up change in inter-ethnic relations and power structures, although political parties and identity entrepreneurs are powerful actors that cannot be overlooked when analyzing the future of Sri Lankan society.

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2.4. Diaspora organizations and practices of dialogue and cooperation

Diaspora groups are often forced to interact and work with each other even in instances of rivalry or divisions. Perhaps as a result of this, *accommodation and dialogue practices* are quite common among diaspora organizations. Sometimes the silencing and avoidance of contentious issues make it seem to outsiders like there are no difficulties in these interactions and collaborations. It is important for policy makers to be aware of these dynamics as they might help explain difficulties in implementing programs or defining common priorities.

Ensuring peaceful exchanges between and within diaspora groups is not always easy, especially when there is tension or competition between them. However, such appeased dialogue is sometimes necessary, in particular for smaller diaspora groups which struggle to be heard in societies of settlement, and which might need to build alliances with other groups in order to increase their outreach. This trend is reinforced by the fact that policy makers in host countries tend to focus their interactions on large diaspora organizations, leading to the creation of umbrellas and networks of diaspora organizations (see section 1.3.). Within the frame of these network or umbrella organizations, rival diaspora groups are forced to interact and work together, putting aside, even for a moment, their disagreements.

The need for dialogue between diaspora groups or organizations representing rival groups, clans, or ideologies, is also particularly strong when the 'home' conflict is transported in the countries of settlement (see section 1.1.), and especially if this process of conflict transportation leads to episodes of physical, verbal, and symbolic violence between and within diaspora groups. In these cases, dialogue and de-escalation initiatives led by diaspora leaders and organizations can prove extremely useful in order to avoid a further degradation of the situation.

In that sense, accommodation practices between diaspora organizations can have different aims, from the most ambitious ones such as ensuring a peaceful coexistence or even reconciliation between opposed diaspora organizations, to less ambitious ones such as maintaining a minimal level of dialogue, and to in-between scenarios including the organization of common activities. Diaspora organizations involved in solving potential conflicts in their countries of origin might also want to start with the conflicts and tensions they themselves encounter in their countries of settlement, before moving on to propose reconciliation activities in their home countries.

According to DIASCON research participants, such accommodation and dialogue practices are, if not widespread, at least quite common among diaspora organizations, especially when they have to collaborate to have access to public funds and /or services. In order to prevent clashes, dialogue can be limited to very practical matters and questions; likewise, diaspora groups manage tensions mostly by avoiding contentious and difficult issues, notably related to political and/or ideological matters. There is also a tendency, among diaspora leaders, to consider that these matters are 'internal' diaspora matters, and that they should therefore be dealt with outside of external scrutiny. For an external observer, these silencing and avoidance practices (see also section 3.2.) can create the impression that there are no cleavages or

conflicts whatsoever, and that diaspora organizations are always happy to cooperate with one another - which of course also happens!

Being aware of these potential tensions and conflicts between diaspora organizations is however important for policy makers at both local and national levels, as they can for instance explain difficulties and stumbling blocks arising during the implementation of certain programs, or around the definition of common priorities. These cleavages can entail practical difficulties, for instance regarding the meetings' location, the identity and number of the participants, the presence and identity of mediators, but also pertaining to the vocabulary used and the setting of the agenda, and so on. Here again, a good knowledge and understanding of the relevant diaspora groups is needed, indicating the need for tools such as mapping diaspora organizations and their constituencies. Such field knowledge is indispensable to avoid giving the impression of favoring (or ignoring) one 'side', and to generate avoidable tensions.

One of the major dilemmas facing policy makers is to ensure representativity by interacting with all 'sides' of potential conflicts, without unwittingly reinforcing ethnic, religious, political, or linguistic identities and divisions. Inviting diaspora leaders as 'representative' of specific diaspora groups can indeed participate in entrenching and showing how these identities can open access to policy makers. This is why paying attention to identity categories that are less obviously political, such as age or gender (see section 1.7.), can be particularly important for fostering dialogue and exchanges between and within diasporas. Inviting representatives of diasporic women and youth, alongside representatives of political, religious, ethnic, or linguistic identities, can open up the scope of dialogue and help loosen protracted situations.

In any case, according to DIASCON research participants, an important good practice is to adopt a flexible and adaptative approach to each case, also paying attention to temporalities: depending on the specific context (e.g., a sharp escalation of the conflict in the home country) pushing for a direct dialogue or cooperation between diaspora groups is not necessarily the best strategy.

BOX 2.4.1: Transnational online networks and cooperation in the Syrian diasporas as a space for bridge-building

Written by Cæcilie Svop Jensen

Transnational networks are not only focused on involvement in countries of origin, but can serve many other purposes too. A vast network of Facebook pages connects Syrian diasporas across many regions of the world with a specific focus on career and skill development. These pages range from focusing on start-up businesses, early career development, marketing skills or portraying successful business ventures and are all run and used by Syrian diaspora members.

When interviewing Tameem, who lives in Finland, he explains that a common feature of these platforms is that no politics are allowed, because collaboration is based on careers. He says that this 'temporary accept' works well online, because people accept each other based on their profession and are therefore able to cut across ideological cleavages. When political

posts or statements occur, he says, they are immediately deleted. In online spaces like this, Tameem experiences a greater level of acceptance between groups, because of the very clear motive and purpose of the groups, that are far removed from sensitive topics. The recognition of these spaces can be important for using the positive potential of digital spaces for bridge building, and further shows how clear goals and purposes focusing on cross cutting sections of identity can help facilitate dialogue and cooperation among divided communities.

2.5. Everyday practices of accommodating conflicts within and between diasporas

Tensions among diaspora individuals and groups are visible in everyday practices **and these practices fall under two broad categories, namely avoidance and positive practices. Avoidance can take the shape of segregation, endogamy or avoiding certain topics and issues in certain spaces. Positive practices include engaging in connecting opposing groups and facilitating dialogue, building and showcasing friendships across group boundaries, or focusing on common ground. Policy makers benefit from understanding and supporting these overt and covert everyday practices.**

As we have seen in section 2.4., rival diaspora organizations can develop dialogue and cooperation practices, even in the midst of tensions. But how are these tensions managed in the everyday life of diasporic individuals? What are the mechanisms through which community leaders, but also individuals, try to mitigate issues through everyday practices? What are the strategies for managing everyday conflict outside of formal arenas?

It is possible to divide these practices into two broad categories. On the one hand, everyday practices of dealing with conflicts can mostly rely on avoidance. These avoidance practices can be overt or covert. On the overt side, individuals simply avoid being in contact with members of opposing groups. This includes physical and social separation, for instance in the form of housing segregation and of living in different neighborhoods, of going to different schools, shops, places of worship or of leisure. It often entails participating in different organizations or events. In other words, individuals from opposing groups tend to socialize in different cultural spheres, leading to practices of endogamy, whereby people tend to develop relations, friendships, and to marry within their own political, ethnic, religious, or linguistic group. Those who belong to other groups are rejected as unsuitable for any close relationship, especially marriage.

On the covert side, avoidance is more subtle, and does not necessarily mean that individuals physically avoid each other, but rather that they avoid situations where differences in opinion or in beliefs are expressed openly. For instance, it can entail eschewing political issues that are likely to be divisive and remaining silent when hearing opinions or viewpoints that clash with one's own. In such situations, some diasporic individuals who wish to avoid conflict can pretend not to know or understand what the other is talking about. It can also mean shying away from political or other types of potentially divisive events, and refusing to participate in 'sectarian' activities, to belong to 'sectarian' organizations, or to reproduce 'sectarian' discourses. By dragging their feet, or by refusing to bow to social or family pressure, individuals can thus diffuse conflictual situations of tensions. It is also worth mentioning that covert avoidance is sometimes also practiced at the intergenerational level when parents refuse to talk about the conflicts in their home countries to their children, or refuse to pass on divisive narratives about the past.

On the other hand, everyday practices of dealing with conflicts can also include positive practices, such as practices of rapprochement or even conciliation, which can also be overt or covert: in opposition to the previous category, overt practices of rapprochement mean actively trying to maintain connections and dialogue with members of the opposing group, but also to

build, maintain, and showcase friendships and connections in spite of differences. These practices also include participating in cross-communal activities or in cross-communal organizations, organizing joint events, participating in joint mourning activities, protecting each other's places of worship, and so on. In some cases, members of different religious groups can even share common places of worship, as observed in the case of the Sri Lankan diasporas in Italy by one member of the DIASCON team (see also BOX 2.7.1). Advocating for a rapprochement and even a reconciliation can also be done openly, for instance by trying to convince relatives and acquaintances of the necessity to leave divisions behind, and to start rebuilding positive relations in the countries of settlement. This can begin at a very local and mundane level, by sharing food, exchanging small favors and/or advice, helping each other with dealing with the administration in the country of settlement, and so on. Relations of trust that are built at this interpersonal level can then constitute building blocks for broader rapprochement initiatives at the group level.

Rapprochement practices can also be less direct. Instead of speaking about divisive issues, in their interactions individuals can focus on a 'common ground', on common issues faced in the host countries, or on less contentious issues. In this way, covert practices of rapprochement can open up spaces where ethnic, political, religious, or linguistic belonging does not matter, and/or can be ambiguous. These open spaces can be physical – like a café, or an organization's premises – but they can also be immaterial, virtual, or symbolic, like an Internet forum, or a newspaper's comments section.

In everyday diasporic life, these multiple overt and covert practices of avoidance and rapprochement co-exist and overlap. They are not necessarily very visible in the eyes of the external observer, but they help explain why cases of violent conflict transportation in diaspora settings are relatively rare, in spite of the number of diasporas originating from conflict areas. It is through this everyday management of tensions and differences that conflicts between and within diaspora groups are maintained at a low level of intensity, or can even be resolved.

In order to help dealing with tensions between and within diaspora groups, policy makers can support these everyday practices of dealing with conflict, for instance by funding or discursively supporting initiatives that allow peaceful interactions. It is also important that policy makers understand that practices of covert or overt avoidance, while not as positive as practices of rapprochement, are not necessarily bad, because they help limit clashes and tensions. They constitute the bedrock upon which pacified relations can be built in an incremental and respectful manner.

Box 2.5.1. Everyday memories in diasporas

Written by Bruno Lefort

Remembering events related to their regions of origin is one of the main visible aspects in the life of diasporic communities. Commemorations often outline conflicting visions of the past both between and within diasporas[2]. However, while the importance of memory in diasporas is put forward, it relates most of the time to collective manifestations, often with clear political agendas, or to artistic productions that remain reserved to an intellectual elite. Mundane practices of remembering are much less well-known, probably because they are not immediately noticeable. It does not mean these everyday memory practices are not important in shaping diasporic experiences.

A first form of these mundane memory practices can be seen as being in-between official collective commemoration and everyday forms of memory. For example, some routinized religious practices are often experienced as a way to remember and maintain customs inherited from the homeland. Among many possible instances, the case of Christian communities from the Middle East is a good illustration. A great number of them only visits churches during the celebrations of Christmas and Easter. In Canada, they have been sometimes nicknamed the "C&E people", including by clergymen or religiously active people criticizing this habit. In that example, it seems that what matters most is not religion as such but the continuation of practices that revive the belonging to a distinctive heritage. In a word, going to church in these precise occasions is as much an act of remembering one's origins than an act of faith.

A second form relates to domestic practices that evoke or maintain reference to a past imagination of the homeland. Food related practices come in mind immediately, but they are not the only ones. Interior designs, furniture or daily objects inside diasporic homes are all material memories of habits, landscapes and environments as they existed or are imagined having existed in the homeland. One example is a cooking pilon presented in 2002 in the exhibition "*Min Zaman*" [*So long ago*] retracing the memories of Syrian and Lebanese populations in Montreal. This particular object, 20 pounds heavy, has been carried by a family throughout their journey towards Canada despite its weight. It became well known in the neighborhood because of its characteristic sound it made on weekends when the family was cooking. The object enabled the neighbors to identify the family and its origins while giving the family a sense of continuity and roots in their new environment.

Finally, there are also mundane practices that explicitly engage with memories of the homeland. Many people living in diasporas engage in some sort of personal remembrance activities like, for instance, writing their childhood memories from their home country. Some keep these memoires for themselves or their families, but, with the help of social media, others share these stories with larger circles. One could describe their former village, writing a portrait of all the inhabitants they remember. In some cases, these mundane practices turn into

[2] See also DIASCON blog post: https://www.diascon.eu/reports/blog/when-memory-conflicts-live-on-from-afar-remembering-the-levantine-diaspora-in-montreal/

rituals as the audience wait every week for a new entry, or even collaborative endeavors as people now living across the globe complete together the picture of a more or less distant past, they all remember from their own point of view. These often-emotional activities could somehow be seen as a contemporary version of the many village associations that have been – and continue to be – at the heart of remembering among diasporas.

These examples, among countless others, illustrates how mundane memory practices are ways of building a sense of intimacy with the environment people live in. In many ways, they relate to forms of nostalgia, not to be understood as a longing for a home that is no more but rather as a process of remembrance that helps people to make sense of their presence in the here and now. Indeed, academic research among diasporas has shown how much nostalgic feelings and mundane forms of remembering are part of the home-building process in the host societies. Contrary to a view commonly presented in the public debates, the maintenance of these memory ties is not hampering but facilitating inclusion into the new home. Nostalgic feelings and integration are actually complementary rather than contradictory as they contribute to the forging of a sense of familiarity and comfort in the host society. However, it is important to note that these everyday practices do not outline one single memory that would be the manifestation of a unique cultural or national heritage. On the contrary, looking into unofficial and mundane remembrances reveals how much parallel and sometimes contested strands of memories coexist at the same time among diasporas. It is important to take them into account to avoid the confiscation of memory by politically motivated narratives that silence the many fragments making up the links between diasporic populations and their past.

2.6. Relations between diaspora organizations

***Bypassing and overcoming deep divisions within and between diaspora groups* is important as they hamper access to policy making, and impact at the broader level. Collaborations are still built despite these divisions, through focusing on trust-building, meeting on neutral grounds and creating opportunities to sustain relationships. Policy makers can facilitate this through regular interactions with local diaspora organizations and an awareness of these, sometimes deep, divisions among them.**

Diasporas originating from conflict areas can be characterized by an especially high degree of diversity which affects the relationships between established diaspora organizations in the countries of settlement. In cases where diasporas representing different 'sides' of the conflict in the country of origin reside in the same country of settlement, relationships between organizations can naturally be difficult to develop. But even organizations identifying with the same 'side' can have different views and strategies and sometimes even strongly differ on ideological grounds. This tends to mirror divisions occurring in home countries. In host country contexts, bypassing or overcoming these divisions is especially important because fragmentation hampers access to policy making and impact at the broader level. It is therefore necessary to look at how these relations are built and sustained in a context of divisions within and between diasporas.

During the DIASCON interviews, one participant noted that some organizations tried to bypass divisions by meeting on 'neutral' issues and avoid discussions on topics that were too polarized or politicized. Creating a common space for diaspora organizations to collaborate helps build trust and can facilitate and inspire collaboration in the future. Indeed, one participant explained that some issues, which were previously avoided due to disagreements, had become acceptable to discuss among organizations after extended periods of collaboration on other topics. Such changes in relations among the diaspora organizations are vital for creating strong networks, representative umbrella organizations, and ensuring stronger impact. Situations where these processes of trust building and development of mutual goals might occur can be arranged by diaspora organizations themselves but should be facilitated by policy makers and local authorities in the countries of settlement as well, provided that they have sufficient training in and knowledge of the diaspora organizations and their networks.

How are collaborations built and sustained in a context of divisions within and between diasporas? Several DIASCON interviewees mentioned that trust-building is essential to maintaining relationships and that this is built through continued contact or extended periods of meeting on 'neutral ground'. Once established, cooperation and relationships might not last long or might be connected to a single case or cause. The effort to sustain these relationships is therefore of equal importance. The development of umbrella organizations is one such way but having regular cross-organization meetings or setting up liaison offices are relevant as well. The development and continuation of relationships among diaspora organizations is not only important among those organizations belonging to the same 'side' of a conflict. Cooperation at the national level has to happen as well across conflict divisions and between diaspora organizations representing different diaspora groups.

This does not involve policy makers and local authorities alone. Acquiring this knowledge involves talking to the diaspora communities and making use of other organizations or entities who have the information needed. Local authorities can support and share knowledge with organizations who work to facilitate collaboration between diaspora organizations such as the Diaspora Programme run by the DRC in Denmark. As mentioned in section 1.3., the focus on umbrella organizations by policy makers can make it difficult for smaller organizations to be included or achieve their goals. In terms of building relationships however, umbrella organizations can serve an essential role. Organizations dedicated for instance to rights in the countries of residence such as language rights or anti-discrimination, provide a space for diaspora organizations to come together and interact across a variety of different diaspora groups.

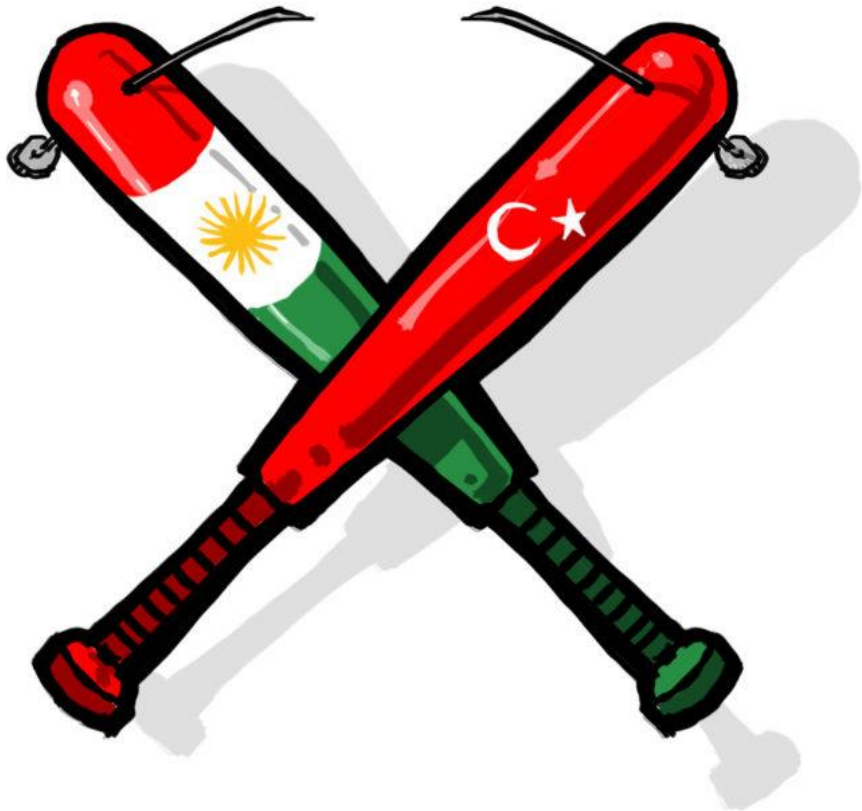
Initiatives that help to build relationships between diaspora organizations, and organizations in the countries of residence that facilitate these, can be supported at local and national levels by national and local authorities and policy makers. Facilitating the cooperation between diaspora organizations not only benefits the organizations themselves, but it also ensures vital knowledge of these organizations needed for policy makers to positively engage with them. This includes a special awareness of the sometimes-deep divisions that can run across and within diasporas originating from areas of conflict.

Box 2.6.1. 'Taking sides' during escalations of conflict

Written by Sofiya Voytiv

Sometimes organizations can split based on some of their members' wish to support one or another side in the conflict. Neutrality in such cases can be understood as a *de facto* alliance with the 'other side'. For example, when the Russian-Ukrainian conflict erupted, some members left their respective organizations if those would not take a clear stand on the conflict.

Similarly, when one of the Ukrainian organizations organized a holiday celebration with other diasporic organizations (including Serbian and Russian ones) based on common religion (orthodox Christianity) in Sweden, several other Ukrainian diasporic organizations took it as a sign of them taking the Russian side in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. Thereafter they would avoid collaborating with this Ukrainian organization. However, while getting increasingly distanced from Ukrainian diasporic organizations, this organization managed to build across-group solidarities based on other common identities like religion or region of origin, or even common experiences of the Soviet Union.



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2.7. Fostering peaceful coexistence between and within diasporas

Open conflict among diaspora groups or individuals is the exception rather than the rule. *Fostering peaceful coexistence* can be done through the transportation of everyday practices of peace to the host countries, or because the host countries offer a new context that can impact coexistence in a positive way. Issues dividing communities in their countries of origin can also be reframed in a more accommodating way in the host countries, and the formalization of contacts between diaspora leaders and organizations can promote institutional methods of solving disagreement.

Just as most diaspora individuals used to live peacefully side by side in their countries of origin, peaceful coexistence can be sustained in countries of settlement too, even between diaspora individuals and groups supporting opposing sides in the conflicts 'back home'. Actually, as we have seen, open conflicts between diaspora groups or individuals are the exception rather than the rule, even when they originate from areas where violence is widespread. Several reasons can explain this situation.

First, everyday practices of peace can be transported from countries of origin to countries of settlement. In home countries, different ethnic, religious, linguistic, or political groups sometimes live together in mixed settlements, share friendship ties, go to the same shops, schools, and even places of worship. It is indeed worth remembering that in many cases of conflict, violence is committed by a minority of individuals, and/or by state agents, and does not primarily take the shape of intercommunal strife. This means that many of these pre-existing linkages can be reproduced or even strengthened in host countries, especially after the often lengthy and dangerous migration processes which migrants have to undertake, and which can feed a sense of shared hardship.

Second, the new context and environment in the countries of settlement can impact the coexistence of opposing diaspora groups in a positive way: for instance, the urban environment in which diasporas usually settle can induce a geographical proximity between individuals and groups that had lived apart in home countries, thus encouraging them to interact more. It is also worth taking into account the different demographic and political balances in the countries of settlement, which mean that enmities existing in home countries are redeployed in a completely different context, in which no diaspora group can impose its will or opinions upon the other, and where all have to contend with their minority status. As we have seen in section 1.6., the host country context can force opposing diaspora groups to collaborate in order to be heard by local and national authorities in countries of settlement. It is also worth remembering that diaspora groups usually encompass several generations, including some who have been born and raised in the host countries, and therefore who might not be familiar with, or even interested in, conflicts in home countries. For diasporic youth, the wish to build solidarities across groups with similar origins might transcend the temptation to reproduce cleavages inherited from the 'home' conflict.

Third, it appears that issues dividing communities and individuals in their countries of origin can be reframed in a more accommodating way in countries of settlement. In particular, other issues facing diaspora communities, such as the fight against racism, inequalities, or

discrimination, can lead to alliances between otherwise opposed diaspora groups. Facing common difficulties can lead estranged diaspora groups to realize that more unites than separate them. Views and opinions on the home conflict held by the host country media, politicians, and wider population can also have a positive impact on diaspora coexistence, especially if the host country population and authorities are supporting peace efforts in the home country. These discourses in favor of peace can lead diaspora groups to reframe their own narratives towards more accommodating stances.

Research has also shown the role played by the institutionalization of contacts between the leaders of rival diaspora groups, because it encourages them to use institutional methods of solving disagreements, and of fostering peaceful coexistence. In that sense, the formalization of diaspora groups in diaspora associations and organizations can be a trigger for appeased relations – although it admittedly also formalizes divisions within and between diaspora groups. One of the incentives that local authorities and governments in countries of settlement could therefore use in order to foster peaceful relations and to facilitate exchanges between diaspora groups could be the setting up of dedicated arenas and forums. Institutionalizing dialogue and giving a frame for discussion and conflict resolution purposes would of course not solve all issues, but it would allow the multiplication of bilateral exchanges.

It is important to recognize the multiple voices and opinions existing within diaspora groups, and to give them a chance to express themselves, because silencing has been shown to lead to radicalization. As we have already discussed (see section 1.2.), authorities in countries of settlement tend to reduce diaspora groups to the countries they come from, often without acknowledging their internal diversity. Embracing that diversity notably entails allowing the access of diaspora groups to various institutional, political, and administrative tools facilitating dialogue between them.

In parallel, diaspora organizations can choose to foreground some non-confrontational issues in order to foster peaceful coexistence, such as non-controversial culture and traditions (music, food, dance, and so on) in the country of origin, or issues related to integration in the countries of settlement such as access to housing, education, and so on.

BOX 2.7.1: Sri Lankan diasporas in Italy and the positive potential of religious syncretism

Written by Anna Quattrone

Despite a three-decade long ethnic conflict, Sri Lanka is a multicultural country characterized by the peaceful coexistence of different religious worships. Although «the social landscape of the country tends to show an association between ethnicity and religion», as Sinhalese people mainly practice Buddhism (70,2%) and Tamils primarily follow Hinduism (12,6%), syncretic practices are widespread and, in some cases, both ethnicities are Catholic believers (Scroope 2016). Since worship practices in the homeland as well as in diaspora settings display fluid interactions, the possibility of investigating whether religious syncretism and

intersectionality have the potential to overcome ethnic cleavages in the host land is of great interest.

For Sri Lankan communities living in Italy "religious syncretism" and "spiritual cosmopolitanism" are important elements of identity building and communal cohesion, as they allow migrants to reproduce in the host land the religious practices and relations with the sacred that characterize the homeland, while appropriating new social spaces and resisting cultural assimilation (Benadusi 2015; Burgio 2003, 2016; Goreau-Ponceaud 2018). Although religiosity is an essential element of identification processes, it does not have the effect of dividing communities, instead it contributes to create bonding relationships and shared practices of worshipping. In this sense, an interesting case is represented by Hindu Tamils living in Palermo -a town in southern Italy- who do not have a specific place where they can celebrate their religious rituals. Hence, they have to share their place of worship with other Hindu believers belonging to different ethnicities and, in addition, they usually participate in Catholic rituals (Altavilla, Mazza, Mercatanti 2012; Brunetto 2005; Burgio 2003). For instance, on Sundays some Hindu Tamils wake up early to join the procession toward the Pilgrim Mount, which is held in worship of Saint Rosalia according to the Catholic ritual (Burgio 2003; Colosi 2000; Interview A). In a festive and spiritual atmosphere, Tamil families meet at the slopes of the mount and begin the ascent together: when they arrive in proximity of the sanctuary, they kneel to complete the path toward the cavern of the Saint and the altar where they light a candle (Brunetto 2005). The sanctuary carved in the rock reminds Hindu Tamils of their homeland temples and it has a deep symbolic value for them, as it represents an emotional threshold to Sri Lanka: on the Pilgrim Mount Tamils could formerly hope for the end of the war and the advent of peace, and nowadays they can pray for their beloved people far away, and they can offer to the Saint their most intimate feelings (Brunetto 2005).

The syncretism emerging from this description can be explained by the nature of Hinduism whose theology is open to dialogue with other faiths. Although for Tamil believers there is a difference between being Catholic or Hindu, it is not irreconcilable: this is because Deity is unique but has many expressions and Tamils respect any of them, included Saint Rosalia (Burgio 2003; Interviews A and B). This attitude is reciprocated by Catholic Tamils who participate in Hindu rituals, as they believe that faith is a universal force encompassing different worships (Burgio 2003): this conception is further reinforced by the educational patterns experienced in Sri Lanka, as in homeland schools Tamil students are taught both Hinduism and Catholicism in order to have a comprehensive knowledge of the two religions (Burgio 2003; Interviews A and B). This is what happened to two Tamil sisters, who have grown up with the idea that «there is no difference between religions» and that «although any worship has its name and its God, faith is unique and universal». For this reason, they were encouraged to attend classes of Catholic religion at Italian schools and syncretism became part of their daily rituals in many forms: in their prayer rooms Hindu Deities lay side by side with the Crucifix and both women usually go both to Hindu temples and Catholic churches, as the form of religiosity is not important, but rather «with what heart, with what purity you pray» (Interviews A and B). This configuration is common within Sinhalese communities as well: a Catholic interviewee who married a Buddhist woman told me that Sinhalese people

share many social spaces and organize activities together despite their different worships (Interview C).

When investigating whether shared practices of worship have the potential to overcome ethnic and identity tensions in order to achieve an encompassing integration in the host land, based on mutual respect for differences, it is important to consider the influence of the host land context. In Italy indeed, where homeland sacrality and rituals of daily religiosity are missing, it may be more difficult for Sri Lankans to practice their native worships and the need for spirituality might find new forms of expression, especially since the presence of Buddhist and Hindu temples is limited (Interviews D, C and A). Although in rare and contingent occasions religious syncretism and intersectionality prevails over ethnicity, for instance during special Catholic pilgrimages in Sri Lanka (Interview E) or with mixed diasporic communities in Northern Italy, the healing potential of shared religiosity is limited. Empirical evidence show that different worships coexist and merge only within the same ethnic group, while Sinhalese and Tamil believers tend to remain separate even if they belong to the same faith. This is mainly due to the fact that the two ethnic communities often live in separate neighborhoods and they celebrate the same rituals in different languages (Interview F): these obstacles significantly reduce opportunities to meet and interact, and therefore to build bridging relationships with both the other ethnicity and the local society. In conclusion, in Italy religion does not succeed in creating new spaces for mutual recognition and dialogue conducive to more peaceful relations between Sinhalese and Tamil diasporas; on the contrary, it may involuntarily end in perpetuating patterns of ethnic segregation.

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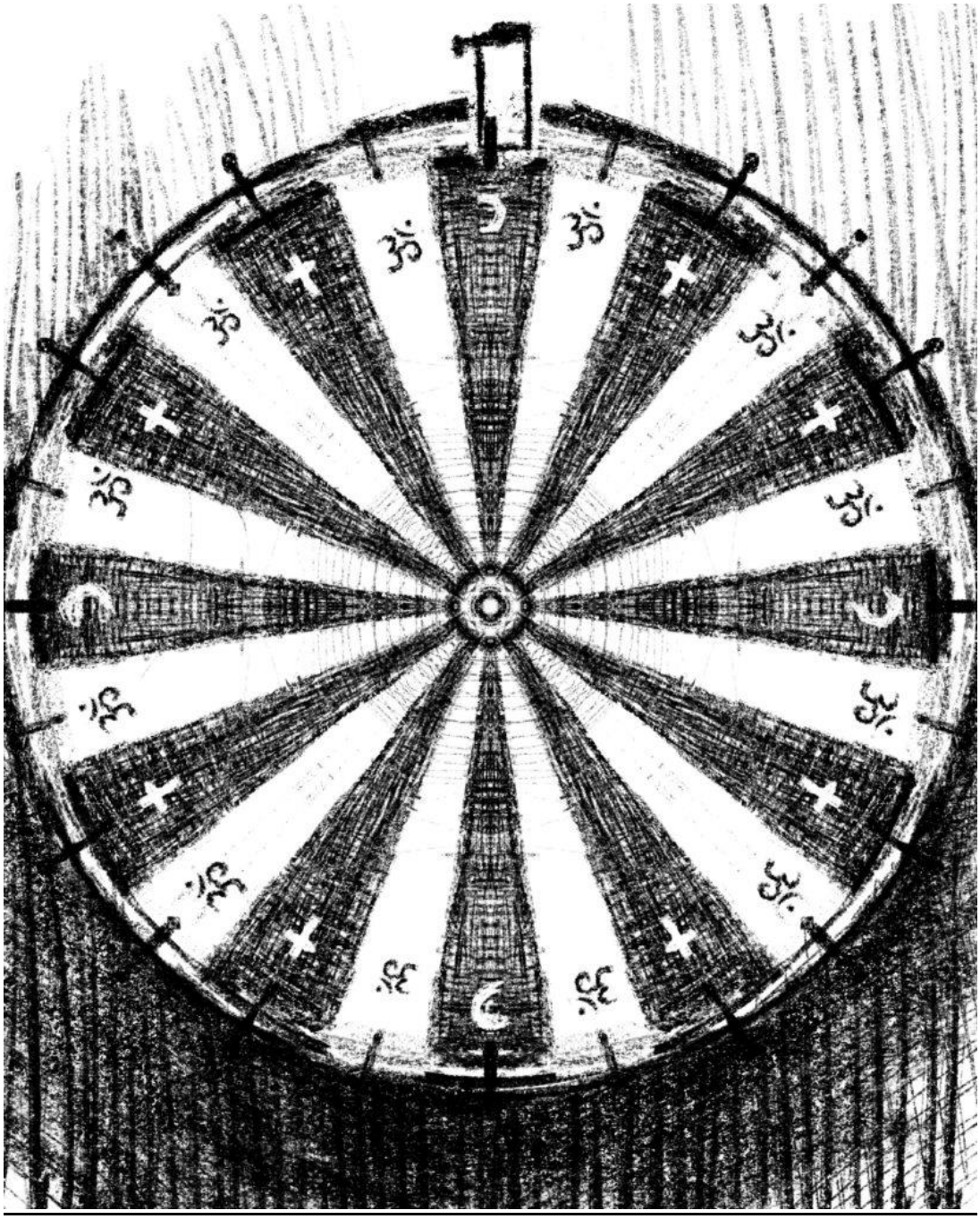


3. PART III: Creative practices for transcending conflicts in and between diasporas

In this third part, we build on the knowledge and insights of the previous parts and discuss which creative and transformative practices could be imagined or further developed in order to help improve inclusivity and the mitigation of conflicts within and between diasporas in countries of settlement. We notably look at how having a unity of purpose can help transcend divisions within and between diasporas, how creating neutral spaces, as opposed to communal spaces, can help to maintain peaceful relations between diaspora groups, and where to build alternative spaces for dialogue.

Thinking creatively about fostering the peaceful coexistence of diaspora groups notably entails building on everyday practices of conflict avoidance, harnessing the potential of artistic approaches in order to transcend divisions, or building bridges and solidarities across different groups and with the broader society, based on other identity dimensions, such as age, gender, or other common interests.

3.1. Having a unity of purpose as bridge-building in and between diasporas

Putting the stress *on common goals and building bridges* among diaspora groups and organizations can serve to transcend conflict. Building a unity of purpose can be particularly important when diasporas originate from conflict areas. While this can evolve out of developments in the home countries such as natural disasters, third-party facilitation can also help to make spaces for collaboration by creating neutral and safe spaces to meet and discuss.

As briefly touched upon in section 2.6, having a unity of purpose can be especially fruitful for building bridges in and between diasporas and diaspora organizations. During the DIASCON research, several participants shared examples of this, highlighting how putting the stress on common goals can serve as a way to transcend conflicts inherited from home countries. In cases where diasporas originate from areas of conflict, building on a unity of purpose can be especially important as both internal divisions as well as relationships with other diaspora organizations and diaspora communities can make cooperation complicated. How are spaces of collaboration facilitated and what kinds of strategies are used to foster bridge-building between diaspora groups and organizations?

Participants in the DIASCON research noted that natural disasters in countries of origin had created situations where diasporas and diaspora organizations mobilized for a common purpose, for instance by collecting money for humanitarian aid or in other ways sending help to the disaster-struck areas. Natural disasters as such provided a space that in some cases superseded other divisive issues and resulted in collaboration across regular cleavages. Admittedly, focusing on an issue that for instance, through its non-politicized nature, avoids disagreements and facilitates collaboration, does not help to tackle or engage with these disagreements at a deeper level. However, as several participants emphasized, these collaborations initiate trust building and can lay the foundation for building good relationships. Extended periods of working together or participating in events for a common purpose can foster mutual understanding between groups that would have otherwise not engaged with each other.

Host country contexts can also lead to coalition-building between different diaspora groups, who are otherwise not heard at a policy level (see section 1.3.). Common experiences of exclusion, discrimination, or racism for instance, can build bridges between diaspora groups who work to improve conditions in the host country. These processes can occur also between groups with the same imperial past or similar experiences of discrimination in the country of origin as well. Other divisive issues or conflicting interests as such become secondary to the common experiences of marginalization in the host country. One organization highlighted how collaboration was created on the basis of rights in the country of settlement and that this aspect was reiterated regularly in meetings and when new members joined the organization. The condition for joining was a commitment to this unity of purpose which provided a space where diasporas from a multitude of different areas, political opinions and identities came together to work for a joint cause.

Shifting the focus on building bridges needs not only pertain to natural disasters or negative experiences in the countries of settlement. Focus can also be put on other common issues such as gender, religion, age, education, and so on. Focusing on intersectionality to highlight commonalities (which will be discussed in more detail in section 3.6) can be useful as an entry point for collaboration or to build on established solidarities.

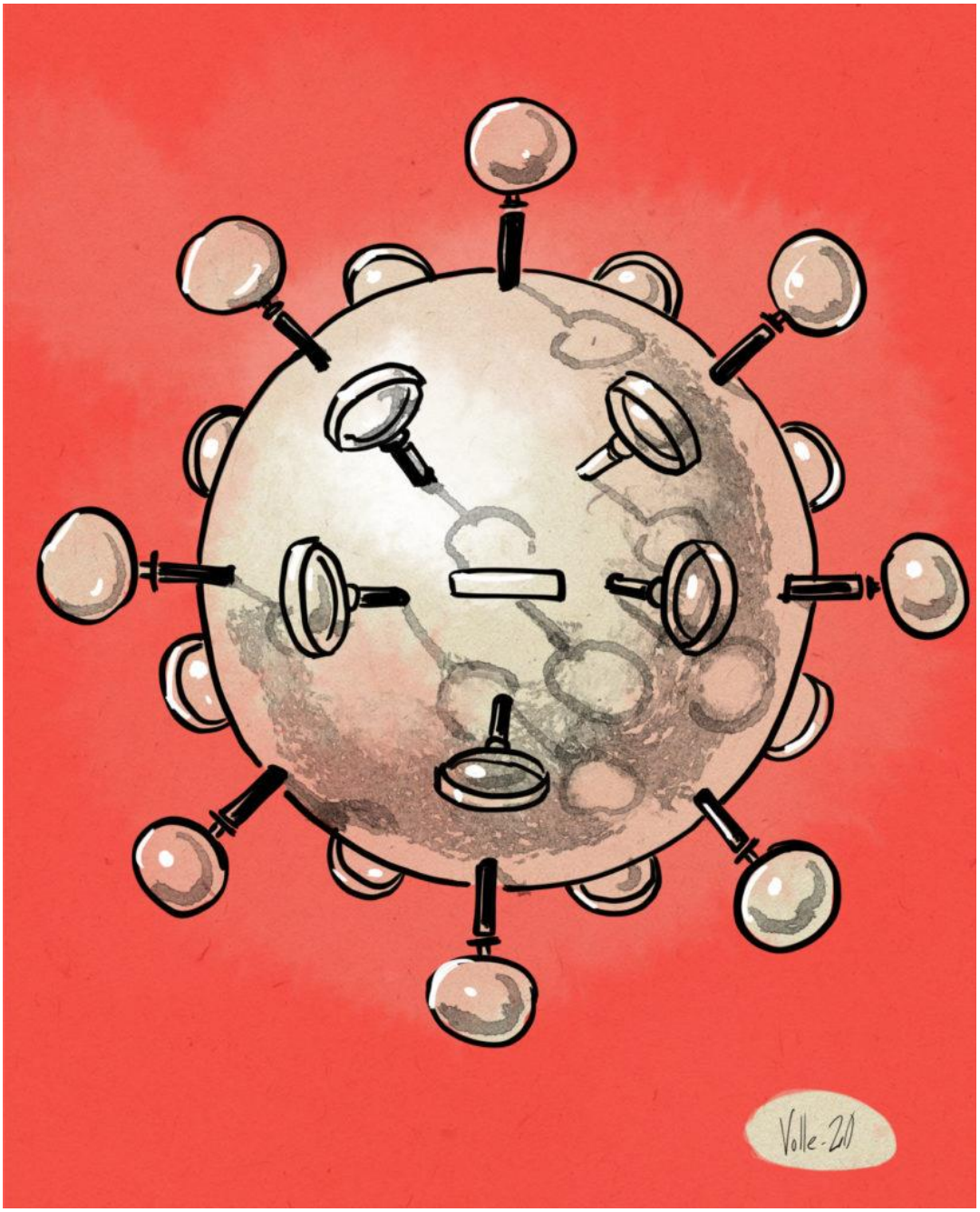
Third-party facilitation can also help to create successful spaces for collaboration. In the experience of DIASCON participants, relying upon an organization perceived as neutral or trusted by other diaspora organizations or by diaspora communities in general, can prove useful. While maintaining ownership, diaspora organizations can use third party entities to organize meetings to discuss difficult issues in a safe or neutral space (which has for instance been the case in the Diaspora Programme in Denmark), or to ensure that topics discussed will not diverge from the agreed-upon common goals or non-politicized issues.

Box 3.1.1: Transcending cleavages in states of emergency: The COVID-19 pandemic

Written by Élise Féron

As the COVID-19 pandemic has shown, diasporas, countries of origin and countries of settlement sometimes have to face similar challenges, although their capacities to respond to them might differ. Even if it has brought disasters to many areas, for diaspora groups the COVID-19 pandemic cannot be compared to wars and disasters occurring in the homeland. It has indeed affected both host and home contexts, and sometimes more severely host contexts, which has in some cases led to "reverse worry" - that is, family members who have stayed in home countries worrying about the health and security situation of their relatives living in host countries, and not vice versa. It has also brought different types of anxieties, related to the impossibility to travel and meet loved ones in either host or home countries, and to send help when for instance oxygen or hospital beds were lacking. In many ways, it has reshuffled usual patterns of relations between diasporas and their countries of origin, and in that sense it could potentially lead to a redefinition of relations between home and host contexts, but also within each of these contexts.

Like other disasters that have wrecked either home or host countries, such as the 2004 tsunami in Sri Lanka, the COVID-19 pandemic has transcended preexisting political cleavages and barriers, and has, on occasion, given to both diasporas and populations in the home countries a unity of purpose. The COVID-19 pandemic has also highlighted that vulnerabilities can cut across divisions that usually matter in diaspora settings, such as cultural, political or religious ones. In that sense, the example of the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates that divisions within and between diaspora groups are not a fatality and can be transcended.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3.2. Creating neutral, and preserving communal spaces

Communal and neutral spaces **can be created with clear rules for discussion. While some avoidance practices are seen as negative, focusing on having neutral spaces where conflict and politics are not discussed, and spaces where they are, can create an environment where everyone has the opportunity to express their opinions freely. Everyday spaces of interactions between diaspora communities such as sports, public transport, places of worship, schools and so on, could be established as neutral spaces facilitated and led by diaspora organizations.**

In order to transform potential conflicts between diaspora groups, censorship does not work much better than wishing that people would simply let go of divisive opinions or ideologies. While everyone has a right to express their opinions, beliefs, and culture – as long as these are not causing harm to others – it is also important to establish the conditions for the peaceful coexistence of diaspora groups. How to solve this dilemma?

As we have seen in section 2.5., diaspora groups and individuals often develop everyday practices of avoidance that lower the risks of open confrontation. For instance, when in public spaces, many avoid discussing contentious questions or issues, and/or stay away from people who hold opposed opinions. In everyday interactions, many also try to foreground other issues than those related to conflicts or divisions in countries of origin, for instance by discussing common concerns and problems.

These practices of separation and avoidance are usually not viewed positively by peace and conflict scholars, who tend to describe them as a 'negative peace', by opposition to a 'positive peace' that would go hand in hand with genuine reconciliation and peaceful coexistence. Separation and avoidance certainly cannot be equated with conflict resolution, and they do not constitute an option for ensuring sustainable peace. However, experience and empirical data show that in certain cases they can ensure that the level of physical violence between opposing groups remains low. Thus, under some circumstances, the separation of opposed diaspora groups can facilitate the creation of communal safe spaces where their cultures, symbols, and opinions can be expressed freely without shocking others and raising objections.

Of course, the idea here is not to say that opposing diaspora groups should always be separated, but rather that there should be spaces where everyone can express their opinions freely and without fear of generating conflicts, in addition to neutral spaces where such expressions should be prohibited or strictly controlled. In that sense, it seems important to facilitate the creation of neutral spaces in addition to communal diasporic spaces, and to set up a clear distinction between spaces where conflicts or issues related to home conflicts and politics can be openly discussed (for instance at home, with close relatives and friends, in dedicated diaspora organizations etc.), and spaces where these issues are not discussed, where some divisive symbols are not displayed, and so on.

Everyday spaces of potential interaction between opposed diaspora groups such as sports facilities, public transportation, schools, places of worship, shops, could therefore be

established as neutral spaces. In these neutral spaces, some issues would not be talked about, some derogatory words and insults would be banned, some symbols would not be displayed, etc. Diaspora organizations could play an important role in these processes because they can offer communal spaces, regulate and open neutral spaces of interaction, draw up the rules of this 'peaceful separation', and also raise awareness on the need to respect and abide by these rules.

As we have seen in section 2.7., research has shown that the institutionalization of contacts between diaspora leaders and organizations leads to a decrease in tensions and conflicts between diaspora groups. In this perspective, diaspora leaders could play a major role for managing conflicts and tensions through the regulation of everyday practices. From a policy making perspective, a good awareness of the need to preserve the delicate balance between the individuals' needs to express their opinions and the need to preserve peaceful coexistence, is important. Policy makers could encourage this process by respecting, being mindful of, and even supporting the development of different spaces where opinions can or cannot, be expressed. This could mean, for instance, organizing meetings open to different participants and following different rules, from restricted meetings during which contentious issues can be openly discussed, to open meetings where the discussion of other, common issues are privileged. In all cases, setting up clear rules beforehand seems to be a precondition for success.

BOX 3.2.1: On the importance of neutral spaces: the example of the Cypriot Community Centre (CCC) in London

Written by Élise Féron

Creating spaces where all members of a conflict-generated diaspora group are welcome regardless of their political, religious, linguistic, or ethnic affiliation is a difficult task. Oftentimes, diasporic communal spaces are established by diaspora organizations that represent specific sections of the community and are therefore not seen as neutral by others. In other cases, these spaces are created in a top-down fashion by authorities in countries of settlement, and do not necessarily correspond to the needs and expectations of the diaspora groups themselves. There are, however, exceptions, such as the Cypriot Community Centre (CCC) in London, which was established in 1979 by 12 founder organizations, both Greek and Turkish Cypriot, broadly affiliated to the leftist AKEL party (the Progressive Party of Working People). The AKEL party promotes a demilitarized and federal solution to the Cyprus problem.

The CCC offers a meeting place for all Cypriots regardless of their ethnicity, religion, and mother tongue, in the form of a coffee shop where visitors can watch satellite TV and read newspapers 'from home'. The center also provides daycare, banqueting, conference, and catering services, among other facilities. Great care is put into avoiding to feed internal diasporic cleavages, with an absence of contentious symbols that could be identified with either side of the divide. Likewise, posts and announcements on the walls are written in

English, Turkish and Greek. One of the stated objectives of the CCC is to "provide a bridge of communication between all sections and religious denominations with the Cypriot community – Greek, Turkish, Maronite, Armenian, Latin, Mixed Marriages and also other communities"[1]. Although the Centre is certainly not attractive to those members of the Cypriot diaspora who don't feel close to AKEL ideology, it certainly demonstrates that creating safe spaces for a very divided diaspora is not an impossible task.

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[1] See https://cypriotcentre.com

3.3. Focus on local and digital spaces

Local and digital spaces **can offer useful tools for transforming and transcending conflictual relations, and for addressing challenges among diaspora groups. Local realities can differ from municipality to municipality, and everyday needs and experiences of diaspora groups can therefore vary significantly. Digital spaces constitute an immense knowledge-bank for policy makers and can facilitate youth inclusion and interactions between groups and authorities.**

In order to transform and change conflictual relations and to address existing challenges in diaspora communities, it is important to investigate alternative spaces where these conflicts and challenges can play out and where transformative potential might exist. This includes, for instance, focusing on local contexts and exploring digital spaces where diasporas act and interact.

The local offers an important space where conflicts between diaspora can be transcended, for instance by focusing on common issues and problems relating to everyday life in the countries of settlement. This can for instance be related to access to school, transportation, social services, and so on. A focus on common experiences at the national level is important (see section 3.1), but the local and everyday experiences of diasporas can differ a lot from municipality to municipality, and coalition building at the local level is therefore equally important. As mentioned earlier, the sizes, levels of organization and diversity of diasporas can vary greatly from municipality to municipality, making diasporic experiences highly local and context dependent. Needs and conflicts therefore vary accordingly, necessitating a focus on local spaces both for localizing these issues as well as finding constructive ways of transforming them. Many diaspora organizations already work on very local issues, but the recognition of this needs to happen at the policy level as well.

In an increasingly digital world, everyday presence and 'life' online has become the norm. Consequently, the activity of diasporas on social media as well as other online platforms such as news sites or blogs, can serve as a crucial tool for addressing and transforming conflict. Indeed, digital spaces can offer important arenas for expression of identity and for forming social bonds. How can the digital be harnessed to positively influence the challenges mentioned in this handbook? How can we utilize this platform of interaction to foster inclusivity, mitigate cleavages, and facilitate collaboration?

Digital platforms, when properly moderated, are ideal for fostering dialogue and exchange. In the moderation of these platforms, what is acceptable online behavior needs to be clear beforehand. This moderation and cultivation of online spaces can be facilitated both by diaspora organizations themselves as well as by organizations or authorities seeking to gather information on specific issues, or to just create a space for discussion across physical distances. Spaces like this can facilitate the circulation of good practices and knowledge across spaces, generations, and cultures. The benefits and potentials of this are manifold.

The digital represents an immense knowledge-bank. It provides alternative access to diaspora communities for policymakers for instance, who might not be able to engage in 'offline'

interaction with many different communities. It can also serve as a way to gain insight into diasporas while containing the risk of being seen as partial to which communities are being visited or paid attention to. While it of course should not replace offline meetings and interaction between policy makers and diasporas, online spaces inevitably make engagement less time consuming and diasporas more accessible. Creating platforms for policy makers and diasporas to interact online as such both facilitates diaspora access to policy makers and helps policy makers better understand diaspora dynamics.

Digital spaces can make it easier to interact for instance when discussing difficult or divisive issues. The 'safe space' of distant communication can facilitate dialogue if, as mentioned above, proper attention is paid to rules of conduct in these spaces. Of course, communicating from a distance can also make destructive or destabilizing comments or discussions easier, but it should not serve as a reason to disregard the positive potential of online spaces. Developing online fora, discussions sites as well as blog posts, headed by diaspora organizations or trusted third parties for instance, can initiate dialogue on topics that might be more difficult to do in person. This includes the possibility of anonymity online as well. Many diaspora organizations and communities already engage in many of these activities with good results. Digital spaces can similarly facilitate collaboration across borders. As exemplified in BOX 1.6.1, transnational learning platforms led by diasporas facilitated access to education in conflict zones. As a vessel for the exchange of information, improved accessibility and dialogue, the utilization of the digital provides valuable opportunities that have yet to be fully exploited.

Additionally, digital platforms can be a way to improve youth engagement in diaspora organizations, which is a recurring problem (see section 1.7). Young people, having grown up in a deeply intertwined digital/analog reality, are often highly skilled at navigating in digital spaces. Youth can be particularly useful for online activities and focusing on online spaces can be a constructive way to facilitate their mobilization and engagement in diaspora organizations for instance by spearheading online campaigns or taking charge of organizations' online activity.

Furthermore, it should be emphasized that digital platforms are an intrinsic part of the diasporic experience. Digital spaces are used for staying connected to people in the country of origin, as well as an important channel for getting information on developments in conflict areas and therefore intrinsically linked to diaspora communities with members originating from conflict areas. This also pertains to for instance 'online transported conflicts' (but always or often linked to offline activities as well) and conflict-mitigation efforts in online spaces.

Of course, access to the digital space is limited by factors such as internet literacy, access to an internet connection, generational gaps, as well as potential censorship from countries of origin and sometimes countries of settlement. This has implications for the representativity of diaspora communities as well, highlighting the necessity of hybridity in the use of online and offline spaces. For policy makers however, digital platforms represent an important tool that remains so far mostly untapped, despite its ability to provide useful information, gain insight into diaspora communities, and facilitate spaces for dialogue, engagement, and collaboration.

Local authorities should play an important role in making online spaces central. Additionally, the development of more strategic approaches to, or policies for, utilizing digital spaces should be undertaken both by diasporas as well as policy makers in order to fully harness the positive potential of these spaces. This includes linking digital and local spaces, and realizing the everyday, local aspects of digital practices.

BOX 3.3.1: Kurdish and Turkish diasporas in Denmark and the potential of online spaces

Written by Cæcilie Svop Jensen

The digital space is useful for gaining knowledge of diaspora networks, tracing cooperation patterns and events in diaspora communities. In Denmark, where large communities of Turkish and Kurdish diasporas reside, online mobilization can shed light on some of the ways diasporas mobilize vis-à-vis conflicts happening in their countries of origin. Kurdish organizations are highly mobilized in Denmark and many of these with a presence online. A number of active Kurdish Facebook groups arrange offline and online events, provide information on topics related to their mobilization and write updates on conflict developments in Syria and Turkey in Danish. Through for instance event-pages on Facebook, tracing networks of cooperation and determining key actors can be facilitated, while at the same time gaining insight into when and how Kurdish diasporas mobilize. Often, pictures from demonstrations, videos of offline speeches and meetings are made available as well.

In addition to Facebook groups, several online platforms act as news sites and contain blog entries written by diaspora members, which both comment on developments in the countries of origin as well as issues related to being a resident in Denmark. All of this is easily accessible, available in Danish (even more is available in Kurdish and Turkish) and provides deep insights into some of the current focus areas and issues faced by the diasporic communities. For policy makers and diaspora organizations alike, these online fora should not be underestimated. Although the online space is just one site of mobilization, it still serves as both a knowledge-bank and as an entry point for engaging more directly with diaspora members and communities.

Valle-20

3.4. Artistic practices as a way to transcend conflict

***Art* is a powerful tool for fostering peaceful coexistence. As a non-verbal mode of communication, art can offer modes of expression less directly tied to conflict narratives while still conveying meaning and emotions. Artistic practices can be used for promoting dialogue and conflict resolution through participatory theatre, photography, pottery, quilting, or multimedia development. Realizing the transformative power of artistic approaches and implementing them could be encouraged by policy makers and diaspora organizations alike.**

Among all the tools that can be used in order to foster peaceful coexistence between diaspora groups, art is probably one of those with the most untapped potential. Since many artistic practices rely on non-verbal communication, they differ from most other dialogue and mediation tools, and have the potential to transcend cultural and political differences. Indeed, conventional tools of dialogue and conflict resolution usually rely upon verbal tools of exchange like negotiation and mediation. The problem is that words are loaded and can be understood in different ways depending on where you stand and where you come from. Words can also be easily traced back to ideological or political stances.

By contrast, art in most of its different types can offer modes of expression that can be less directly connected to conflict narratives in their ideological or political forms, but that can still convey meaning, emotions, and experiences. Art is also accessible by, and attractive to, people who might not be interested in, or able to access, conventional tools of dialogue and negotiation. It can touch people regardless of culture, education, age, gender, social class, or political opinions. In that sense it can create more inclusive and encompassing ways of relating to the home country, and to the situation experienced in the host countries.

Although art can also be used to express grievances or political opinions, it can provide a tool for creating spaces free of political references and symbols, and where the focus is put on other aspects of identity and culture. It is also worth mentioning the fact that whereas most conventional negotiation and mediation approaches follow western views on how conflicts should be managed, and how dialogue between opposing groups should be organized, art can transcend such frames, especially when it reflects artistic practices in countries of origin.

Art is increasingly being used in various parts of the world as a tool for promoting dialogue and conflict resolution at the local level. Participatory street theatre, quilting, pottery, dances, or singing, have for instance been used in various post-conflict settings in order to help individuals deal with the trauma and legacies of the conflict period, and to rebuild exchanges between estranged groups. It is therefore possible to see how it could be used as a mitigating tool for transported conflicts among diaspora communities.

Within the DIASCON project, we have chosen to rely on artistic illustrations and comic strips to illustrate our debates, but also to trigger awareness around issues facing diasporas originating from conflict areas. Visual illustrations can indeed convey messages, raise issues, foster discussions across groups regardless of gender, age, religion, or political opinions, and without necessitating specific linguistic or educational capacities. Many other artistic

practices could, and have sometimes already been used, in order to trigger similar effects, such as film festivals, or photography. For instance, visualization with photographs is a powerful technology of practical representation that enables multiple interpretations of events. To date, there have been several projects documenting migration processes with photographs, with a lot of pictures taken of people on the move, in refugee camps, crossing the Mediterranean, or arriving in countries of settlement.

However, such projects tend to use photographs – or other types of artistic supports – mostly as testimonies or representations, and the potential of photographs to be used as a basis for dialogue and exchange is often overlooked. Even though photography has been used in some peacebuilding activities that promote alternative discourses of peaceful co-existence, such photos are often one-sided, as they often carry only pictures of smiling faces and peaceful activities that appear 'unnatural' and 'fake' and do not show the complexity and multifacetedness of everyday lives. For these reasons they are not always taken seriously by observers, thus being deprived of mobilizing effect within a wider audience.

In the DIASCON project, we propose to harness the power of artistic visual illustrations, photographs, theatre, dance, music, and so on, in order to ask important questions, raise awareness, and usher dialogue around issues that matter for diaspora groups. Art can also help to create links and a better understanding between diaspora groups and the rest of the population in countries of settlement. Far from being frivolous, these means of expressions should be encouraged and supported by policy makers and diaspora organizations alike.

BOX 3.4.1: 'You need fun too': on artistic practices as a tool to transform relationships

Written by: Cœcilie Svop Jensen

In one of the DIASCON research interviews, we discussed the meaning of art in transforming relationships. Art can be a powerful tool for transforming relationships and can work in different ways. For instance, as noted by the DIASCON research participant, a Helsinki based artist, "it makes everything more accessible, and it also paves the way for lateral thinking. We come up with completely new approaches." Art-based activities can also be a relief from the everyday and give people a renewed sense of purpose and distract them from otherwise overshadowing issues of conflict. As a non-verbal kind of communication, it opens up new avenues for understanding that can be both provocative and bridge-building. Humor, for instance through illustrations, can be a way to express complicated issues in a simple way, but it can also provoke discussion on difficult topics, sometimes even to the extent that it is harmful to transforming relationships.

These balances are important to bear in mind. As a tool for transforming relationships, art "adds a huge layer of fun – and you need fun too". It can become a non-conflictual way to engage either directly with topics that are detrimental to coexistence, or indirectly by focusing on artistic practices that take the focus away from divisive factors. Countless practical examples of the positive potential of art as a tool for bridge- and peacebuilding support these

arguments. As our interviewee states, “it can give people a strategy to also better themselves and better their own situation”. As such, artistic practices are not only about affecting group dynamics, but also about individual growth and change.

Volle-21

3.5. Raising awareness on identities cutting across diaspora divisions

***An intersectional approach* is necessary to grasp the differentiated and complex ways in which aspects of identity can shape diasporic experiences. This means, for instance, designing cross-community programs, actions, or events targeting individuals as defined by age, time of arrival, gender, or socio-economic status. It helps to create solidarities based on other things than ethnic, religious, or political identities which can be cemented in communities affected by conflict.**

As we have seen previously, diasporic individuals experience conflicts and divisions in their home countries in many different ways, depending on their age, gender, religion, socio-economic status, and so on. They also do not share the same experiences regarding life and mobilization in countries of settlement. According to some DIASCON research participants, several factors are particularly relevant in order to understand these differences, such as age and generation (see sections 1.5. and 1.7), but also socio-economic status, and gender. Other factors matter too, such as religion, date of arrival in the country of settlement, or even sexual orientation. All of these factors are likely to affect how conflicts back home as well as divisions in the host country are perceived and experienced. In academic language, taking into account the multiple positionalities of an individual and how these can affect the individual's exposure to inequality, discrimination, or conflict, is called an intersectional approach. Research has for instance established that in many countries, the combination of being poor, of being a member of a minority ethnic or religious group, and of being a woman, exposes an individual to higher risks, for instance in terms of health but also of exposure to various forms of violence. In other words, the intersection of the different identity categories can create specific weaknesses – and strengths.

Applied to divisions between and within diaspora groups, an intersectional approach is concerned with these aspects of identity that can bridge divides between groups and/or can help reimagining relationships between them. It aims at finding commonalities between individuals, which cannot be related to group identities and opinions. This approach can be seen as complementary to that of building a unity of purpose (see section 3.1.), where external circumstances are used to build bridges, such as natural disasters or rapid political changes. With an intersectional approach, the focus is put on the individuals' 'internal' characteristics, rather than on external events and factors.

Linkages and solidarities can for instance be built through the organization of activities specifically targeting young people or women belonging to different diaspora groups (see also section 1.7.), regardless of other aspects of their identities. Specific programs or events, for instance targeting the needs of diasporic youth, can also be put in place, thus opening the possibility that relationships between youth will develop even when they belong to different diaspora groups.

What is surprising is that diaspora policies, when they exist, usually treat diaspora groups as relatively homogeneous and consistent entities, and do not pay attention to differences existing between diasporic individuals. As we have seen, this tendency results in an essentialization of diasporic identities, and in a misunderstanding of, or even obliviousness

towards, divisions that cut across diaspora groups. It is important to recognize the fact that diasporic individuals hold multiple other identities, not just the one 'given' or assumed by their belonging to a specific diaspora group. For some individuals, gender, age, or religious identity can indeed be more important than the country they come from. Solidarities can for instance emerge around similar experiences of racism amongst diasporic youth, among women wearing a veil, and so on.

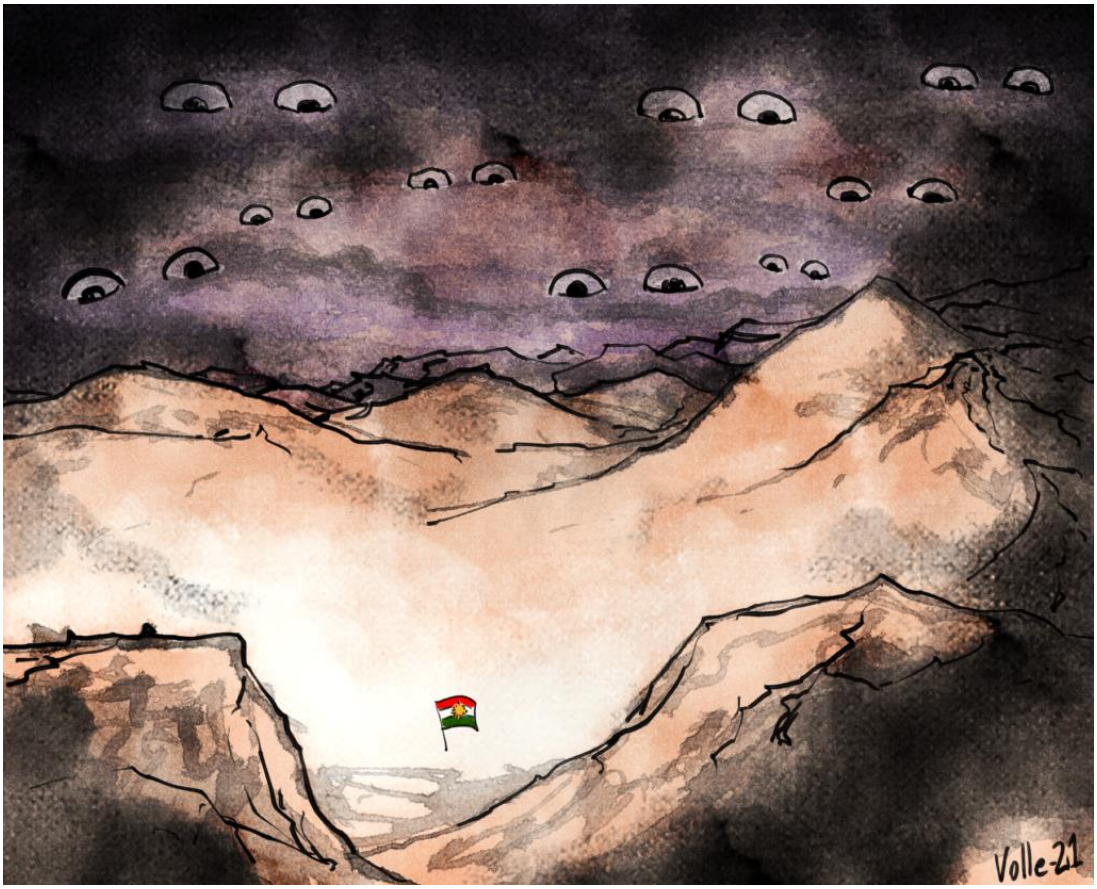
In policy making terms, taking individual identity factors into account constitutes an interesting strategy for building bridges within and across diaspora groups. It can help to create solidarities between groups which would not be based on usual ethnic, religious, or political identities, but on identity dimensions which cut across and bypass these differences. In other words, it offers options out of the usual political divisions and cleavages. In concrete terms, this means designing cross-community programs, actions, groups, or events targeting individuals as defined by their age, date of arrival in the country of settlement, gender, socio-economic status, and so on, rather than by their ethnicity or nationality. Policies addressing gender-based violence, building sports facilities for youth, informing youth about available training options, supporting specific cultural and sporting activities per age category, and of course supporting cross-community organizations, constitute therefore some of the promising options that an intersectional approach to conflicts between diasporas can open.

BOX 3.5.1: Demonstrations and contentious symbols

Written by Cæcilie Svop Jensen

Symbols can be of significant importance in diasporas originating from areas of conflict and where conflict is still ongoing. Interestingly, some symbols can convey solidarities across cultural, ethnic or religious groups. Flags for instance can carry significant political meaning in conflicts related to statehood and statelessness. Sometimes, however, the use of these symbols can generate frictions.

In Helsinki in 2021 for example, a Syrian organization held a demonstration supporting Palestine. While the demonstration was not about the conflict in Syria, a participant brought a Syrian regime flag and raised it, causing agitation and yelling from other members at the demonstration. Despite repeated attempts by the organizers to make the participant take down the flag, he kept raising it and was eventually escorted away from the demonstration by the police. In an earlier demonstration in 2013, when the organization carried out a demonstration opposed to the Syrian government advances in Idlib and Aleppo, a Kurdish flag was raised which caused a lot of verbal fighting and discontent. As such, demonstrations can be a space for intra- and inter-diasporic contention through the use of unwelcome symbols. Diaspora organizations are often highly attuned to these dynamics and try to avoid these contentious symbols in contexts where it can fuel conflict.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3.6. Creating safe spaces for people to speak up

Creating safe spaces to speak up **is vital for engaging with mitigating and transforming conflictual relations. Conflict sensitivity is necessary in this context to avoid am unintended deterioration of relationships, and to be aware of conflict dynamics. This includes paying attention to 'good' practices of avoidance as well as access to psychological and anonymized support, or creating community-based spaces for dialogue run by mediators.**

The creation of safe spaces for people to speak up as they engage in the mitigation and transformation of relationships within and between diasporas, but also between policy makers, diasporas, and other CSOs, is crucial. Often, policy makers working with diasporas and diaspora organizations tend to forget about conflict sensitivity thereby exposing them to the risk of deteriorating relationships or fuel conflict. Among diasporas themselves, creating spaces for the safe expression of differing or hegemonically deviant opinions can be equally difficult.

A strategy for creating safe spaces is the aforementioned practices of avoidance (section 3.2) that are used in order to mitigate potential conflicting situations by avoiding topics that might cause these. In this context, it is important to understand that expressing opinions about the home conflict is not necessarily a bad thing. These are part of individuals' experiences, and also connected to factors such as experiencing trauma and PTSD. These feelings and emotions can be necessary for individuals to express, to be able to make sense of them and maybe to be able to move on if need be.

In this vein, there is a need to ensure that people originating from conflict zones have access to psychological and anonymized support in order to express and address what they have been through. Societies of settlement tend to forget that migrants have often gone through extremely traumatic experiences of physical (including sexual) and nonphysical violence, and that these traumas are frequently passed on to their children. Neglecting or failing to address these experiences can explain why opinions towards the situation in the country of origin can become so tangled and difficult to overcome.

Additionally, public and/or community-based spaces for diasporas to speak up, can be of particular importance when conflict is ongoing in areas of origin, and divisions or cleavages run deep. In these cases, venues for expressing concerns and grievances, as well as for discussing different opinions can be useful to diffuse tension. Initiatives like this can be spearheaded by diaspora organizations themselves but can also be led by policy makers or CSOs, who might be perceived as neutral mediators.

As such, safe spaces need to accommodate different needs and be developed for different purposes. This includes spaces to address psychological needs and issues but of equal importance is the need for public as well as community-based spaces where issues related to everyday life, collaboration, co-existence, and disagreements can be addressed.

Who are the actors responsible for creating these safe spaces? First of all, authorities in the countries of settlement have a primary responsibility in this through providing access to social

and psychological services. Additionally, diaspora organizations play an important role in creating community-based spaces for discussion and fostering dialogue where differing opinions can co-exist. For instance, they can be instrumental in allowing the expression of opinions that might differ from the hegemonic views held in the concerned diaspora group, as some individuals' experiences and opinions might differ from the majority's. Issues related to hegemonic narratives within diaspora communities need to be tackled, facilitated for instance by a focus on intersectionality (see section 3.5.) to allow plurality of experiences and opinions to come out. This can be a complicated process and sometimes speaking up can be mixed with a fear of exclusion from the communities. In some cases, anonymity can be preferred in order to avoid backlash, or the willingness to participate in these dialogue processes can be very limited. In this context, recognizing a long timeframe for implementing and carrying out these initiatives can be necessary to make sure people feel 'ready' to speak up.

CSOs in the countries of settlement can play an equally important role in creating these safe spaces. One of the DIASCON participants explained that they had, as a CSO supporting diasporas in the country of settlement, arranged spaces for discussion of difficult topics in the diasporas they worked with. Upon request from the diasporas themselves, the organization had provided a venue and acted as mediator for the members of the diaspora groups. As participants had all worked with the CSO prior and trusted them to be neutral and respectful, a safe space was created based on mutual trust and ownership of the process by the diasporas themselves.

BOX 3.6.1: Creating safe spaces through third party mediation in Denmark

Written by: Cæcilie Svop Jensen

An important tool for creating safe spaces to speak up can be through third party mediation. During the DIASCON research interviews, one participant working for the Diaspora Programme in Denmark explained how they helped facilitate constructive and neutral spaces that even paved the way for discussing difficult topics. One of the main things they highlighted was the necessity of trust. The Diaspora Programme has worked with diasporic communities in Denmark for a long time and has built relationships that make room for bringing up contentious topics within the communities because they view them as neutral third-party interlocutors. The interviewee stated, "that's what's happening along the side of working with the groups for so many years that they now bring up those topics themselves and say, we want to discuss that".

In this sense, long-term collaboration between communities and such third-party mediators can provide not only a space for discussing difficult topics, but also a willingness, rooted in trust, to engage in these discussions. And this trust is not only related to the relationship between the diaspora communities and the mediators, it also affects the relationship between the communities themselves: "Now the same organizations have been working together for long enough to actually build their own trust and discuss (...) What I think the advantage of an organization like ours and maybe others that work with diaspora is that we can create a

space because we are the convener". As such, safe spaces provided by third party mediators can both facilitate inter- and intra-diaspora dialogue, and it is vital to acknowledge and harness the positive potential of these mediators.

3.7. Ensuring good follow up

While many initiatives have been implemented for mediating conflicts in diasporas, they are often short lived and lack *proper follow up*. Sustaining dialogue platforms after such initiatives are made could be beneficial not only for diaspora organizations, but for policy makers as well, as good communication channels help to build on previous initiatives and lasting relationships with civil society organizations who hold knowledge and trust of diaspora communities.

A lot of initiatives have been implemented for mediating conflicts within diasporas but very often they are not sustained over time. They tend to correspond to specific projects whose duration is limited and when the funding runs out, mediation and dialogue activities are stopped. This can generate feelings of being neglected among diaspora groups, a general wariness towards external initiatives for mitigating conflicts, and a subsequent reluctance to engage with these initiatives.

Incorporating good follow-up measures is therefore necessary in projects dealing with conflict transportation and/or internal divisions in diaspora groups. This matters at a governmental level but needs to be implemented at the local level and within communities too. One problem often related to the lack of good follow up is the relatively short time frames within which these projects are implemented. When coalition building and mitigation is initiated, it often pertains to a specific cause or issue that ends after x amounts of workshops or the fulfillment of predetermined outcomes. This is influenced by the nature of funding mechanisms that puts the stress on projects with tangible results within relatively short time periods. In the efforts to mitigate conflicts or change relationships however, short timeframes rarely fit the bill and they risk wasting the potential of projects to have a long-term effect on bettering relations.

For policy makers it would be important to sustain dialogue platforms once they are established in order to prevent any progress made from dissolving. This effort could be undertaken in collaboration with CSOs involved in these initiatives, who often hold the knowledge and trust necessary for continuing good dialogue. Maintaining these platforms is not necessarily onerous or costly, it essentially means keeping channels of communication and exchange open over time. For instance, through online channels that are properly managed to ensure good conduct or recurring meetings with groups and organizations involved in the projects.

Additionally, rather than merely repeating past initiatives, it is important to build on them for long lasting results. Among diaspora groups, there is often the feeling that external actors keep reinventing the wheel without learning the lessons of past experiences. This suggests that keeping track of what has been done and tried would be a good idea for improving existing follow up measures.

In line with this, creating local databases related to internal diaspora dialogue, or to conflict resolution initiatives could be useful. Structuring and logging these initiatives systematically, not only provides a platform for sharing best practices but similarly facilitates the process of building on top of, rather than repeating the past. Furthermore, it ensures a certain stability,

for instance ensuring that knowledge is properly passed on to new staff. This in turn helps to ensure their accountability, which can facilitate building trust between diasporas and project staff and interlocutors.

3.7.1: Follow up and sustained inclusion in policy making

Written by: Cæcilie Svop Jensen

During the DIASCON workshops, mechanisms of in- and exclusion in policy making have been a recurring topic. It was highlighted for instance that it is important to get the agendas of diasporas into the country-strategies related to countries of origin, but inclusion can also be facilitated through ensuring good follow up and sustainable relationships between diasporas and policy makers. One participant noted that it is necessary to change the structures to include rather than exclude, and that this for instance means that diasporas need to be involved earlier in policy making processes. Diasporas have in some cases been able to comment on country specific programs (for instance in Finland where Somali diasporas have been invited by the Foreign Ministry to discuss the new Africa-strategies in 2020), but participants in the workshops mentioned the need for more *sustained* inclusion. Sometimes diasporas are included in policy making on a case-to-case basis, with inclusion often taking place late in these processes.

Without practices that help sustaining relationships with diaspora organizations, these patterns of inclusion can result in situations involving only 'the usual suspects', rather than engaging more broadly with diaspora communities. In this context, inclusion, as one participant noted, becomes 'tokenistic' rather than meaningful. Building sustained relationships with diaspora organizations and having strategies that incorporate them earlier in policy making processes can have a positive impact on the relationship between politicians, policy makers and diasporas in host countries.

3.8. Build solidarities beyond diaspora divisions

Boundaries between diaspora groups and the wider society **need to be addressed and deconstructed to ensure good relations among diaspora groups, as these boundaries can influence diaspora engagement. Improving general knowledge about diasporas, including among policy makers, could be a useful way to help break the barriers between diaspora groups and the wider society in host countries.**

Existing research clearly shows that episodes of conflicts between and within diasporas can be related not just to events happening in their countries of origin (see section 1.1.), but also to racism and discrimination, as well as to a lack of integration experienced in countries of settlement. For that reason, ensuring good relations between diaspora groups cannot be achieved unless the boundaries between diaspora groups and the wider society are addressed and deconstructed.

For instance, feeling rejected by the country of settlement can lead diasporic individuals to (re)invest in identities, opinions, and symbols that are perceived to be meaningful in their countries of origin, thus potentially reenacting 'home' conflicts and divisions. This generates a vicious circle whereby (re)investment in home country politics and divisions leads to the perception of the concerned diaspora groups as potential troublemakers, and as not fully integrated in countries of settlement. In turn, this feeds racism, ostracism, discrimination, as well as further estrangement between diaspora groups and the wider society in the countries of settlement (see also section 1.2.).

In addition, existing research on diasporas and conflicts shows that the economic and political context in the countries of settlement plays a fundamental role in perpetuating tensions between diaspora groups. In particular, the social and economic integration of diaspora individuals, as well as their civil and political integration, in function of different citizenship laws and political participation models, largely determine the level of activism within diasporas. They also determine whether this activism will be oriented towards home or host country politics, or both. For instance, the recognition of specific cultural, ethnic, or religious groups at the political and institutional levels, as it happens in multicultural settings, has been shown to favor diaspora activism, but mostly with regards to countries of settlement. On the other hand, making access to citizenship difficult is likely to alienate diaspora individuals, and to feed their investment in home country politics.

While the context in countries of settlement is by no means the only explanation for tensions and conflicts between diaspora groups, it is important to acknowledge that it plays an important role. This does not mean, of course, that integration has to be enforced and that anyone has to abandon their identity. Beyond debates on the need for diaspora individuals to assimilate or to integrate, recent research shows that the focus should be moved towards *mutual* integration, that is a process through which both diaspora groups, and host societies, make the necessary changes to adapt to one another. This is, of course, tremendously complicated to achieve.

Beyond legal and institutional changes, one of the ways in which these barriers between diaspora groups and the wider society could be removed would be to improve general knowledge about diaspora groups, including among policy makers, notably by sharing their stories, by raising awareness on common issues faced by diaspora individuals and the rest of the society, and so on. Just like building links between individuals sharing the same identity characteristics, such as age or gender (see section 3.5.), can foster solidarity across opposing diaspora groups, it can also increase mutual recognition and awareness between diaspora groups and the rest of the population. For instance, efforts for attracting youth from all cultural origins should be made when designing programs or events – including by providing information in different languages, and through various means of communication.

In parallel, diaspora organizations could also try to more systematically associate the wider public to some of their activities – admittedly, some of them already do – for instance around themes that are likely to be of interest to people beyond the concerned diaspora group. Again, the idea here is not to encourage any group to lose its specificities, but rather to lower down some barriers and boundaries that impede communication, and that stand in the way of peaceful coexistence.

Box 3.8.1. From diaspora engagement to wider solidarities

Written by Bruno Lefort

A portrait from the Palestinian diaspora in Canada

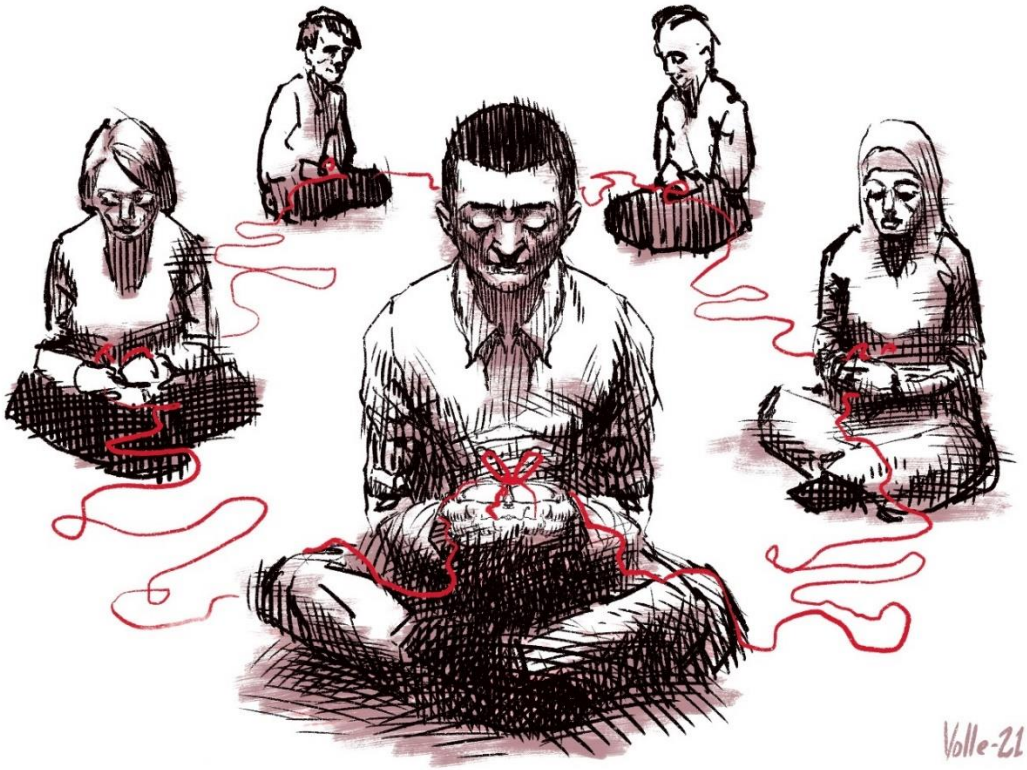
Mariam* currently lives in Montreal, Quebec. She was born in the 1970s in a Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon. She moved to Canada with her family when she was still a child and completed her secondary education in Montreal. It was during her high school years that Mariam became active in defending the Palestinian cause. She rapidly joined a diasporic youth association, but this initial engagement would little by little lead her toward new horizons.

Her first commitment beyond diasporic networks materialized almost immediately. One day, during an event, she met environmental activists. Because of the centrality of the question of the land in Palestine, their cause immediately resonated with her own activities. From her childhood in a refugee camp, she had been de facto sensibilized to the needs of recycling materials and practicing a thoughtful use of all available resources, especially water. Mariam hence started to be an advocate for the protection of nature and fight against climate change. This development even translated in her professional trajectory, as she worked several years for a federal environment agency.

This experience led to many more. Along the years, Mariam became engaged in associations and networks active in labor union struggles, women rights advocacy, First Nations and indigenous rights, against racism, as well as in the field of housing and participatory local democracy. She also participated in movements defending the use of the French language in Canada and supported the right of auto-determination for the province of Quebec. Ultimately, she even run for Parliamentary elections in Canada. All these, she said, were the logical consequences of her initial engagement for the Palestinian cause. Her original commitment

to the Palestinian cause gave birth to a genuine intersectional solidarity reaching far beyond the traditional diaspora activities. After all, she once said, “being involved is my way of life”.

(*) The name has been changed to protect her anonymity.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4. PART IV: Resources and further reading

This section provides readers with a few additional non-academic resources for exploring and engaging with some of the issues raised in this handbook:

Horst, Cindy; Rojan Tordhol Ezzati; Matteo Guglielmo; Petra Mezzetti; Päivi Pirkkalainen; Valeria Saggiomo; Giulia Sinatti; & Andrea Warnecke (2010) *Participation of Diasporas in Peacebuilding and Development. A Handbook for Practitioners and Policymakers*, PRIO Report, 2. Oslo: PRIO. Link: https://www.prio.org/Publications/Publication/?x=7305

This handbook from Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), focuses on how diasporas can contribute in different ways to peacebuilding and development. As such, it engages specifically with the ways CSOs and policy makers can support and facilitate this, as well as the more specific challenges related to diasporic participation in peacebuilding and development.

Féron, Élise and Orrnert, Anna (2011). *The INFOCON Mousebook: Challenges for transnational Communities - and how to address them*. ELDIS. Link to the full text

The INFOCON Mousebook is an online handbook that addresses the challenges faced by transnational communities. It focuses on CSOs and how they shape, structure and represent diasporic communities. It specifically addresses the challenges that CSOs face in their everyday activities, related to their relationship with local and national authorities in countries of settlement, their transnational nature as well as high internal diversities.

DIASCON project website: www.diascon.eu

The DIASCON website contains academic publications by the team, a list of our collaborators as well as our blog which covers all kinds of topics related to the nexus between diasporas and conflict. Through the blog, you can read about the development of our research, case studies and emerging issues in researching diasporas.

iDiaspora project: https://www.idiaspora.org/en

Within the framework of the UN, iDiaspora is a relatively new platform aimed to connect, inform and engage diasporic communities as well as other actors working with these communities. The platform has a large quantity of resources ranging from publications, manuals, online courses, governmental documents and an expert database.

DEMAC project: https://www.demac.org/

Diasporas Emergency Action and Coordination is a global initiative aiming to get a deeper understanding of diasporas as humanitarian actors and to improve coordination between diaspora organizations and the humanitarian system. Their page offers a large resource library and a 'Diaspora response map' where you can see and search for diaspora initiatives by organization and where they are located.