



Working Paper No. 6

**Engagement Dynamics between
Diasporas and Settlement Country
Institutions:
Somalis in Italy and Finland**

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October 2010

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DIASPEACE Working Papers are published by the research project *Diasporas for Peace: Patterns, Trends and Potential of Long-distance Diaspora Involvement in Conflict Settings. Case Studies from the Horn of Africa (DIASPEACE)*, which is a three-year research project funded by the *European Commission* under the *7th Framework Programme*. The project seeks to generate policy-relevant, evidence-based knowledge on how exiled populations from conflict regions play into the dynamics of conflict and peace in their countries of origin. It has an empirical focus on diaspora networks operating in Europe, which extend their transnational activities to the Horn of Africa. The project is coordinated by the *University of Jyväskylä* involving six partners from Europe and two from the Horn of Africa and will conduct field research in both Europe and Africa. All published papers have been refereed by at least two experts in the field.

WEB: www.diaspeace.org

ISSN: 1798-1689

ISBN: 978-951-39-4064-5



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1. Introduction

This study presents a comparative work on engagement dynamics occurring between the Somali diaspora¹ and authorities in two countries of settlement, namely Italy and Finland. The analysis focuses on cooperation dynamics, on the one hand looking at how 'external actors' (governmental and non governmental)² attempt to engage diaspora in development and peacebuilding in Somalia, and on the other hand how the diaspora³ attempts to get support from external actors for their efforts in development and peacebuilding in the country of origin⁴.

The cross country comparison between Somali diaspora engagement strategies in Italy and Finland responds to the following three research questions:

1. Which actors and opportunities can be identified in diasporas' engagement dynamics in Italy and Finland?
2. Have different opportunities in the countries of settlement shaped diasporas' engagement towards the country of origin and if so, how?
3. Have similar dynamics, partnerships and strategies been observed in these two settlement countries?

The migration - development nexus has become increasingly a debated topic in recent years in development cooperation discourses. Development institutions and governments in the migrants'

¹ Around the notion of diaspora there has been an extensive debate in recent years, classically diaspora has been used to refer to physically existing homeland and yearning for it, typically as in the case of Armenians and Jews (eg. Safran 1990). Other and more recent definitions have considered diaspora as a particular form of consciousness or identity (eg. Anthias 1998; Hall 1990; Brahn 1996; Clifford 1994). The definition adopted in this working paper considers diaspora not as static entities but as communities of co-responsibility that have organisational and material aspects, whereby the focus is on mobilisation processes (eg. Kleist 2007; Sökefeld 2006).

² External actors here refer to governmental and non-governmental actors at the international, inter-governmental and national levels. In this study the focus has been mainly on governmental authorities at the national level, such as ministries, and additionally in the case of Italy on the local authorities; non-state actors include large development NGOs as well as smaller civil society organisations (CSOs).

³ Diaspora here refers to organisations and individuals. In this paper diaspora organisations refer to those established by people of Somali origin, or which have most of their board members of Somali origin. Many organisations are registered in Italy and Finland. We use the term native/autochthonous Finnish/ Italian NGOs referring to those organisations set up and consisting mainly of members/ staff of native Finns/ Italians.

⁴ The study is part of a broader research project funded by the European Commissions' 7th Framework programme, namely "DIASPEACE" - Diasporas for Peace: patterns, trends and potential of long-distance diaspora involvement in conflict settings. More specifically the research has been conducted under the working package four which is analysing the cooperation patterns between the external actors and the Horn of Africa diaspora groups in peace building. Under this working package the empirical research has been conducted in Finland, Norway, Germany, the Netherlands and Italy.

settlement countries as well as in their countries of origin seek ways to engage diaspora groups to contribute more effectively to the development of their countries of origin, varying in their modes, willingness and abilities to effectively engage with diasporas. Diasporas can be incorporated in development policies and cooperation in many ways, such as through involving immigrants in policy formulation; building the capacity of diaspora organisations to manage development projects; funding the projects of diaspora organisations; recruiting diaspora members to projects designed by development agencies; or involving immigrants into return programmes of different types (de Haas 2006: 4). This topic is much discussed in the policy domain, whereas engagement processes and dynamics between different actors in the peace and development fields still remain largely unexplored.

From a theoretical perspective the study examines the notion of political opportunity structure (POS), and tries to develop it further by adding dynamic elements to it. The aim is to contribute to the literature on immigrants' participation and transnational activism by focusing on the strategies adopted by the diaspora and interactions between different actors in two different countries of settlement. The assumption is that engagement dynamics are influenced not exclusively by factors in the countries of settlement and origin, or at the international level, nor just by specific diaspora characteristics/agency, but in the interrelations of these elements.

The definition of peacebuilding adopted in this study is very broad involving both activities directly connected to peace as well as those relating to development. The term peacebuilding in this study is considered comprising "all activities that directly or indirectly seek to mitigate the causes and effects of conflict, foster reconciliation of exchange between conflicting groups or help to overcome acknowledged grievances on the material or immaterial levels" (Warnecke 2010: 10).

In the next section the conceptual framework, the rationale for comparing the cases of the Somali diaspora in Finland and in Italy, and the methodology adopted in this work will be described. Section three offers background information on the two country contexts in terms of opportunities available for migrants. Section four contains the analysis based on the empirical research. The last section traces the findings and the concluding remarks.

2. Assessing Patterns of Engagement: Conceptual Framework, Rationale for Comparative Research and Methodology

Conceptual Framework

Many comparative ethnic and migration studies have adopted a political opportunity structure (POS) approach to explain variations in the forms of migrants' grassroots organising, mobilisation, participation and engagement. The POS approach has been developed in social movement theory (see for example Tilly 1978; Tarrow 1994; Kriesi et al. 1995). One of the most cited definitions on the notion of political opportunity structure can be drawn from Tarrow (1994: 85): "By political opportunity structure, I mean consistent – but not necessarily formal or permanent – dimensions of the political environment that provide incentives for people to undertake collective action by affecting their expectations for success or failure". In social movement theory several specifications on what constitutes the POS notion have been developed over the years. Kriesi et al. (1995: xiii), for example, have defined the POS as consisting of four components: 1) national cleavage structures; 2) institutional structures; 3) prevailing strategies; and 4) alliance structures⁵.

The POS notion has been applied to migration studies since the early 1990s. In particular Patrick Ireland in his seminal work *The Policy Challenge of Ethnic Diversity* (1994) has introduced an 'institutional channelling' framework⁶ in the study of ethnic mobilisation. Ireland's contribution has been used as a starting point by several authors who have drawn on his perspective, adding new insights to it (see for example Koopmans and Statham 1999; 2000; Hooghe 2005; Vermeulen 2005; Koopmans *et al.* 2005). As the POS approach was originally developed in social movement research it has been claimed to have lost some of the complexity in its application to ethnic and migration research (Bousetta 2000: 232). The POS approach has been largely criticised, firstly, as being too general. Koopmans *et al.* (2005: 19-20) suggest that in addition to the general institutional structures of the state, the issue-specific dimensions of opportunity structures (such as integration policy) should be taken into account. Moreover, the analysis should consider not only the POS at the national but also at the local level. Secondly, POS analyses have often offered static explanations to mobilisation patterns ignoring for example aspects related to networks and social capital (see above Kriesi et al. 1995 fourth component of POS). As argued by Koopmans *et al.* (2005: 21) "collective actors never mobilize in a vacuum. They are always confronted with established actors who already occupy certain positions in the "playing field" with whom they enter into relations of competition, alliance or opposition".

⁵ For other specifications see for example Tarrow 1994: 86-89; McAdam 1996: 27.

⁶ In Ireland's definition the structure of opportunities in the host societies is represented by: migrants' legal situation; social and political rights they enjoy; citizenship laws and naturalisation procedures; education, housing and labour and welfare policies (and *non*-policies).

Thirdly, POS approaches have been criticised for focusing too much on institutional factors, and undermining the agency and strategies used by migrants. As highlighted by Bousetta, the POS framework seems to forget immigrant/ethnic organisations' internal and identity construction processes, thus "misinterpreting immigrants' true role (...) and portraying them as passive agents whose actions are determined by institutional structures alone" (Bousetta, 2000: 235).

In this study, the political opportunity structure (POS) approach is applied in its rich form, including specific policies (concerning immigrants' integration and diaspora's engagement in development cooperation) of the settlement countries; the analysis focuses on the local in addition to the national level (when relevant); and finally it also investigates networks and interactions between different actors, considering the relevance of diaspora's own strategies and pro-activity in this process.

The aim is to put forward a dynamicisation of the POS approach by focusing firstly on diaspora's strategies, which were found to be similar in Italy and Finland despite the different opportunity structures; secondly, on processes of interaction between the different actors involved. Here, taking inspiration from Patricia Landolt (2008), the concept of '*institutional interlocutors*' has been adopted in the study for providing 'a more dynamic account of the role of patterned dialogues and relationships between migrant organisations and other institutional and civil society actors' (Landolt, 2008: 54).

'Engagement' dynamics is a term which does not belong to the academic literature, but rather to the more pragmatic policy language. Other terms would certainly be preferred in the literature on ethnic and migration studies such as 'participation' and 'mobilisation' which, however, present the side effect of bringing along a tradition of studies that does not offer a straightforward analytical framework suitable for our empirical research material. From a theoretical point of view, the aim of this paper is twofold: on the one hand to frame the engagement notion in the existing academic literature on political opportunity structure (POS), with the objective of adding new content to it; and on the other hand, to specifically maintain and adopt the term 'engagement' as it usefully poses the accent on dynamic mechanisms of interaction between different actors. The study presents different patterns of interaction and engagement which can be understood as a *continuum*, representing in some cases a developmental process of engagement that moves from *exclusion*, to *empowerment*, *recruitment*, and finally to dynamics of *partnership* between the diaspora and institutional actors.

Rationale for a Comparative Research

The focus of the study is on engagement dynamics between the diaspora and different external actors in two settlement countries: Italy and Finland. The rationale for comparing the two countries derives from

several differences between country contexts, namely migration history, policies on integration and development cooperation as well as funding structures available for diaspora organisations. These differences in opportunity structures provide a good starting point to enrich the POS approach, showing as the Somali case demonstrates, that despite different contextual opportunities in Italy and Finland, numerous similarities can be found in diaspora's engagement dynamics in both countries. The study thus offers a shift in the angle through which comparative research on migrants' participation and engagement has been analysed, strongly affirming that these dynamics are not exclusively guided by policies (formal and informal) in the host countries, but rather need to be assessed by trying to identify existing 'diaspora's potential strategies', which forge engagement dynamics with institutional interlocutors in the countries of settlement.

Methods and Empirical Data

The study is based on empirical data collected in Finland and Italy. In both countries, the analysis involved both state and non-state actors. In Italy, local and regional contexts were analysed in addition to investigations at the national level, both because Somalis are extremely scattered on the Italian territory and because most of the dialogue between institutional actors and migrants occurs at the regional level.

In Finland, instead, the majority of Somalis are concentrated in a few urban areas. The data collection took place in the metropolitan area of Finland, firstly because it has the largest concentration of Somalis, and secondly because the institutions involved in this dynamic operate mostly at the national level. In Finland, however, the local context becomes relevant when looking at immigrants' integration, which is not addressed in the present work as the focus is on peace and development activities.

The data in both countries was collected through semi-structured interviews and participant observations that followed shared data collection guidelines. Field research in Italy was conducted in five regions/cities, in particular: (a) Piemonte-Turin; b) Lombardia-Milan; c) Toscana-Firenze; d) Lazio-Roma) and e) Provincia di Trento⁷. From August 2008 to May 2010 44 interviews were carried out (16 with institutional and non

⁷ Turin is a historical destination of Somalis Italy, Milan and Rome are the two metropolitan areas, where Rome is also the city where most Somalis have settled; Florence is a destination of new arrivals, and Trento represents an interesting laboratory on engagement dynamics between Somalis and more in general diaspora groups and institutional actors.

governmental actors and 30 with Somalis/Somali organisations). Under this research phase the team also participated in four events conducting participant observation⁸.

In Finland fieldwork was carried out in the metropolitan area (cities of Helsinki, Espoo and Vantaa). From August 2008 to May 2010 a total of 50 interviews were collected (33 with Somali organisations/Somalis; six with officials at the ministries and 11 with non-governmental actors), and participant observation was carried out in four events⁹.

3. Comparing Contexts: Italy and Finland

a) Historical background and Somali Migration to Italy and Finland

A striking difference between Finland and Italy with regard to Somalis is the historical link with Somalia, which has generated very different migration histories. While southern Somalia is a former Italian colony, the historical link between Finland and Somalia is limited to active development cooperation with Somalia in the 1980s. In addition to refugees and asylum seekers who arrived in Italy from the late 1980s/ early 1990s due to the civil war in Somalia, Italy hosts a historical Somali community, largely composed of local elites, who arrived in the country since the colonial times (Aden and Petrucci, 1991; Farah, 2003). In Finland, instead, the community consists mostly of those who arrived from the 1990s onwards as asylum seekers or through chain migration and family reunification programmes. Somalis represent in Finland the first and largest group of migrants coming from Africa (and the fourth largest group of all immigrants) (Statistics Finland, 2007), and have therefore attracted interest from policy makers and academics.

As a colonial legacy, Italy was one of the main recipient countries of Somali immigrants both before and after the 1991 state collapse, but this has changed over time. In 2008 the Somali community in Italy consists of 6663 individuals¹⁰ (Istat, 2009), retaining thus a smaller community when compared to other

⁸ The following events: fund raising event organised in Florence, October 2009, by an intercultural organisation; Seminar organised in Rome, November 2009 as part of the DIASPEACE project, where both institutions and diaspora organisations were invited; Seminar organised by a diaspora organisation in Turin, November 2009; Meeting with NGOs working in Somalia in Rome, May 2010.

⁹ The following events: board meeting of the Finnish Somalia-Network, October 2009; “Wednesday – club” (discussion forum that has been initiated in 2009 by the Finland-Somalia Association and organized once a month to discuss issues relating to the situation in Somalia as well as to issues concerning the Somali community in Finland), October 2009; Cooperation seminar, organized as part of DIASPEACE WP 2 in collaboration with the Finnish Somalia-Network and the Academy of Finland funded research project “Security, Governance and Identities in Flux: The Role of Diaspora in Development in the Horn of Africa”, October 2009; and the final conference of IOM MIDA Somali diaspora health professionals – project, December 2009.

¹⁰ This number does not include naturalized citizens.

European countries such as the United Kingdom, Norway and the Netherlands (Warnecke ed., 2009; Mezzetti and Guglielmo, 2010). The reasons for this shift include low social benefits, housing and employment opportunities offered in Italy to refugees, which have prompted Somalis to relocate to other countries where opportunities are better. In the early stages, Somali flows towards Italy were composed predominantly by women who were the wives of diplomats and Somali politicians. This partly explains a large number of well educated Somali women in Italy, who are active in establishing diaspora associations as well as autochthonous civil society organisations (trade unions, political parties, grass root organisations, NGOs, etc.).

Somalis started to enter Finland in the early 1990's as asylum seekers, many of them arriving via the Soviet Union (Aallas, 1991). There were Somalis studying in the Soviet Union who provided linkages to people fleeing the civil war in Somalia. When the Soviet Union collapsed in the early 1990's it was no longer able to host Somalis and as Finland happened to be the closest Western country many Somalis applied for asylum in Finland. Insofar as Somalis arriving from the early 1990s onwards have been the largest ethnic group applying for asylum in Finland, this period forms a milestone in the Finnish history of immigration. (Alitolppa-Niitamo, 2004). After 1992, Somalis have continued entering Finland through official family reunification programmes (*ibid.*) or as asylum seekers. In 2008, Finland had a community of 10.647 (Statistics Finland, 2008) people who spoke Somali as their mother tongue out of which 6352 (*ibid.*) were born in Somalia (out of this figure 3346 are men and 3006 women). A considerable part of the Somali community in Finland consists of youth and children (Tiilikainen, 2003; Hautaniemi, 2004) and many Somalis are now Finnish citizens¹¹.

b) Legislation on immigration and measures for integration

In Italy, although immigration has become a stable phenomenon during the last 20 years, the 'immigration discourse' is still framed in terms of security and emergency. Italy's recent experience with immigration coupled with the need to homogenize its policies with other European countries has produced 'strict and often contradictory legislations' (Pastore, 2004), governed by anti-immigrant rhetoric as well as recurrent shifts between inclusion and tough exclusion measures (Bolaffi and Damiani 1996; Zincone and Caponio 2006). Italy is the only EU country which does not have a comprehensive refugee legislation¹². Somali

¹¹ The first Somali naturalization took place in 1994, when one individual received the Finnish citizenship. In 1995 and 1996 only one Somali per year were naturalized; in 1997, 10 Somalis and from 1998 onwards these figures rose considerably up to many hundreds per year (peak in 1999 with 1.208 naturalisations) (Statistics Finland, 2009).

¹² Legislation on the matter of refugees and asylum seekers exists in terms of legislative decrees, together with the establishment of programmes at the local and territorial level in favour of asylum seekers and aiming at sustaining the

citizens cannot receive a permit of stay for longer than twelve months at a time, of which six months are spent waiting for a permit renewal. This puts Somali citizens in Italy in a 'legal limbo', where it is difficult to satisfy any of the basic survival needs, such as finding a job or renting an apartment. In addition to legislative constraints and anti-immigrant rhetoric, the lack of economic resources further affects the implementation of integration policies. (Mezzetti and Guglielmo, 2010).

Finland, in contrast, has effective policies and measures for integrating immigrants/ refugees, and social allowances are available¹³. Upon the settlement of immigrants municipalities are in charge of realizing the integration plan, and during the time for realizing this (three years) immigrants are entitled to allowances. Although the integration system includes social allowances, in reality resources have been criticized as being insufficient¹⁴ and the process of integration for being too much 'authority-driven'.

c) Funding structures for diaspora organisations: Decentralized versus centralized systems

In Italy no national level policies exist on the migration – development nexus. The Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for example does not have specific guidelines nor an explicit vision for engaging diaspora groups, nor has it developed any dedicated funding mechanisms for diaspora organisations. Italy has a decentralized system for engaging diasporas in development initiatives, as most of the initiatives involving diaspora groups and associations take place at the local level. This is partly due to the lack of economic resources for civil society organizations, which affects negatively the growth of professional diaspora associations, generally regarded by national funding institutions as less accountable than national CSOs. In the late 1990s, based on Law 40/1998 which established a National Fund to support integration measures promoted by the regional and local authorities (Chaloff, 2005), migrants' associations proliferated at the local level and started dealing with relevant social matters such as housing and employment opportunities for migrants. Due to the lack of capacity building measures for the benefit of the newly born migrant's associations, initial funding experiments were often unsuccessful as associations were left alone in dealing with issues they were unprepared to manage. As a result, migrant associations imploded; in some cases they reoriented their scope towards communities and mutual-aid initiatives, in other cases they died or lost

integration of refugees. The major problem, however, is often rooted in the lack of available resources for implementing policies, initiatives and providing support. This affects migrants and refugees alike and has a stronger impact on the most vulnerable (UNHCR, 2008).

¹³ The Act of Integration (L 493/1999, §2) came into force in 1999, and was amended in 2006 (L1296/2006). One of the main aims of migrant integration was defined as adopting the main characteristics of Finnish culture while maintaining his/ her own culture, language and religion.

¹⁴ For example the reimbursements given to municipalities for settling immigrants have not been raised since 1993 (Ministry of the Interior 2009, 113).

the most active members who joined autochthonous organisations. In general, national and local authorities in Italy have preferred to delegate migrant integration issues to Italian civil society organisations (both lay and religiously based) which were offering better guarantees. The latter ended up speaking in the name of migrants, generating a *crowding out effect* vis-à-vis migrant organisations (Caponio, 2005). Some new initiatives are, however, under way especially in the field of training and capacity building directed at migrants' associations engaged in development. These initiatives cannot, however, be considered as part of a national programme as they are often few and experimental, funded through EU projects, Bank Foundations or municipalities, and usually managed by NGOs or directly by local authorities (Mezzetti *et al.*, 2009).

In Finland development cooperation is centralized, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs being the responsible institution. The initiatives regarding in particular migrants' involvement in peace and development issues are taking place at the national level. In Government Resolutions migration is recognised as a development issue and, if properly managed, it is also considered to contribute to development (see for example Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs 2004). There are, however, no guidelines on how to engage Finnish-based diaspora groups in development activities in the country of origin, nor is there a governmental-level policy specifically on engaging diasporas. Regarding the immigrant organisations in general, in Finland a few projects focusing on capacity building and training on how to run associations successfully and in line with the Finnish bureaucratic requirements exist, and they are often run/coordinated by native Finnish NGOs¹⁵. Immigrant associations working with the integration activities have accessed funding for example from the Ministry of Education under the framework of its multicultural program in the fields of education, culture and sports¹⁶; but also from the cities/ municipalities, as well as private initiatives such as the Finland's Slot Machine Association (RAY). As for the development project funding, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (under its' NGO development cooperation budget line) funds projects by NGOs, which several Somali associations have managed to access. This funding is disbursed to NGOs responding to calls for proposals where Somali associations have been openly competing with other development NGOs/CSOs without any specific quotas or schemes (see more in detail about this in section 4.2).

¹⁵ For example "Järjestöhautomo"-project run by the Finnish Refugee Council, and the Finnish Somalia-Network. See more on these in section 4.2.

¹⁶ The Finnish Ministry of Education supports multiculturalism in terms of maintenance of the migrants' culture and language of origin and also in order to prevent racism.

4. Diaspora's Engagement Dynamics in Italy and Finland

The following section shows the results of the empirical research assessing firstly the actors involved in both country contexts (section 4.1) and secondly patterns of engagement between the diaspora and institutional interlocutors (section 4.2).

4.1 Mapping the Actors: Somali Diaspora and 'Institutional Interlocutors'

Somali organisations in Italy and Finland

Our fieldwork highlighted four macro-types of Somali diaspora organisations: 1) Community-based organisations; 2) Development organisations; 3) Intercultural organisations; and, though less prevalent, 4) Youth/ second generation organisations and/or discussion groups. These categories should be considered as "ideal-types" as in reality most diaspora organisations stretch their scope and activities across and above these categories. Most organisations engage in different types of activities simultaneously both in the country of settlement and of origin (see also Kleist 2007).

1) *Community based Organisations*. In Italy, the study identified three examples of Somali community organisations. Here the membership is composed of individuals, often connected to the former Somali ruling class. In the past these organisations played a role as reference points for the whole Somali community/newcomers etc. Today, however, these organisations are less structured than in the past and do not enjoy a wide membership to the extent that they do not function as 'community-based' organisations as mutual aid or as reference points for the 'community' any longer. The reason for this crumbling process lays in the extreme fragmentation which affects the Somali diaspora, as well as clan divisions and dynamics that tend to discourage the formation of such associations. Examples include associations or federations which mostly work at the 'regional' level and are today rather interested in establishing and maintaining ties with diaspora associations at the transnational level (in other EU or non-EU countries). Entry into *transnational politics* (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003) represents a 'shift' in their scope/orientation over time. The members/leaders active in these associations gained experience in Italian politics and are therefore interested in transferring these acquired 'competences' (*political remittances*) to Somalia¹⁷. Importantly, however, participation in transnational politics occurs mostly at the individual level - albeit through associations as a 'legitimising' forum.

¹⁷ The lack of political opportunities in Italy forced different leaders to find opportunities at the transnational level, especially by taking part in the national reconciliation processes.

In Finland, there are several examples of small community organisations. They often carry out activities to facilitate the integration of Somalis into the Finnish society, as well as activities to maintain the Somali culture and language. In addition to small community organisations, there is one umbrella organisation functioning as a 'guardian' for the rights of the Somalis and as 'facilitator' for integration of Somalis in the Finnish society. In addition to these two tasks, the umbrella organisation functions as a point of reference for Finnish institutions and is 'recognised' as an 'official interlocutor' with regard to integration issues of Somalis¹⁸.

2) *Development Organisations*. This category includes organisations operating in Somalia¹⁹ to implement development projects. Often the development activities are conducted in the places of origin of the diaspora organisation's leaders and members. Some of these organisations have developed their capacity over time and today operate just like any other CSO, displaying a mixed membership, in partnership with other organisations in the country of settlement and through local counterparts that are sometimes run by returnees²⁰ in Somalia (Pirkkalainen, Mezzetti, Guglielmo, *forthcoming*).

3) *Inter-cultural organisations*. These organisations are mostly oriented towards the country of settlement. Both in Italy and Finland, this typology includes intercultural organisations and immigrant aid associations with a strong focus on gender. Here too, membership is mixed, which is a striking difference when compared to the first type, and often includes migrants with different backgrounds. The major focus area of these organisations is 'immigration politics' (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003), including women's integration and empowerment as well as the facilitation of multiculturalism.

4) The last type is represented by groups of *young Italians/ Finns with Somali origins*. In the Italian case these tend to be informally organised discussion groups where the members are well educated and skilled (writers, journalists, etc.). They are mostly interested in discussing identity and pan-African issues, rather than the situation in Somalia. In the Finnish case the aim of these organisations is to 'serve' youngsters in the countries of settlement by organizing common activities, and to function as a meeting point for young Somalis.

In Italy, development associations and intercultural organisations show differences in their level of formalisation and professionalization; in some cases these organisations have overcome the totally

¹⁸ The Finnish Somalia-Network is another umbrella body in Finland for organisations focusing on development work in Somalia, see more about it in section 4.2.

¹⁹ In the Italian case mostly in South Central, in the Finnish case in addition to South Central regions also in Somaliland and Puntland.

²⁰ On the issue of returnees see: Peter Hansen 2007.

voluntary character and have moved towards a more professional structure, with salaried members among their staff. Both development and intercultural organisations often present a highly qualified and professionalised membership. Importantly, as mentioned above, the membership is mixed and includes people from the host country, or migrants with different backgrounds. In the Finnish case associations within each typology are mostly registered. Concerning the orientations of associations and shifts over time, many associations had started with activities concerning immigration politics, shifting once these objectives were achieved towards development activities in the areas of origin, and currently maintaining both activity levels simultaneously. Thus a clear cut difference between community based organisations and development project oriented organisations is often difficult to make. In general, in both countries the associational field of Somalis is characterized by continuous change (Pirkkalainen 2009; Mezzetti and Guglielmo 2010).

In Finland there are over 100 registered Somali associations out of which around 40-50 are functional. These figures are estimates and the exact number of functioning Somali associations is very difficult to set as the field is continuously changing: new ones are set up; some “die”; some exist only “on paper” (registered but not functional); names are changing; and old associations are re-established. In general Finland, together with the other Nordic countries, counts for a very high number of voluntary associations compared to other countries in the world (see for example Siisiäinen 2008), and immigrants, in particularly refugees have been active in establishing voluntary associations (Saksela 2003; Pyykkönen 2005). The establishment of an association in Finland is rather easy, and it is a common way to participate to Finnish society. According to Finnish association law (Yhdistyslaki 26.5.1989/503) a minimum of three people are required to form the board of an association.

‘Institutional Interlocutors’ in the countries of settlement: Governmental and Non-governmental Institutions

In both settlement country contexts, institutional interlocutors that have engaged the Somali diaspora include ‘governmental’ and ‘non-governmental’ actors²¹. In the Italian case ‘governmental actors’ can be further divided between central and local authorities; in particular, central authorities are the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Interior, while local authorities are Regions, Provinces and Municipalities. In the Finnish case governmental actors include central authorities, namely the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland (MFA) and the Ministry of Interior. ‘Non-governmental actors’ are native Italian/Finnish larger professional NGOs and smaller voluntary CSOs, grassroots organisations, trade unions, etc.

²¹ These terms are also used by Landolt (2008).

A) The Ministries of Foreign Affairs

The Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MAE) has been articulating its activities with the Somali diaspora under two different departments/ Directorates: the Development Cooperation General Directorate for (DG/CS) and the Sub Saharan Africa General Direction (DG/ASS).

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland (MFA), in particular the unit for the Non-Governmental Organisations, and the regional unit for the East and West-Africa have been directly engaged with the Somali diaspora. An additional focal point for informal consultations and communication with the diaspora members is the Foreign Ministers' Special Representative for African crises (Green Party MP Pekka Haavisto).

B) The Ministries of the Interior

In Italy the Ministry of the Interior has established indirect and individual relationships with the Somali diaspora. The branch of the Ministry involved in 'diaspora affairs' is the Department for Civil Liberties and Immigration. This department is responsible for two programmes that involve, although indirectly, the Somali diaspora. The first one is a programme for the protection of refugees named SPRAR (System for the Protection of Refugees and Asylum Seekers), offering housing support to asylum seekers and refugees.²² The second is the 'Territorial Commissions Programme' which consists of local organs responsible for processing the applications submitted by immigrants who apply for asylum and refugees status²³. Until 2002 there was only one commission in Italy responsible for these decisions, but as of January 2008 there are seven Territorial Commissions, located in different cities.²⁴

In Finland the Ministry of the Interior is responsible for immigration and integration policies. The actual tasks related to immigration, integration and good ethnic relations are carried out by the immigration units of the Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment at the regional level. The

²² For more information about the SPRAR system cfr. <http://www.serviziocentrale.it/ita/documenti.asp>.

²³ The territorial commissions for the Recognition of the Refugee Status represent the body which decides on immigrant's application for the recognition of the refugee status. The Territorial Commissions have the competence in examining the applications for the recognition of the refugee status which have been previously submitted by applicants to the Provincial Police Authority (Questura). Until 2002 there was only one commission in Italy responsible for this decision, and as of January 2008 there are seven Territorial Commissions in Italy, located in different cities. After the passage of the legislative decree number 25. With Law n. 189/2002 and the relative implementing rules, (dpr n. 303/2004) seven commissions have been established: Gorizia, Milano, Roma, Foggia, Siracusa, Crotone and Trapani. Cfr <http://www.interno.it/mininterno/export/sites/default/it/temi/asilo/sottotema0021/>

²⁴ After the passage of the legislative decree number 25. With Law n. 189/2002 and the relative implementing rules, (dpr n. 303/2004) seven commissions have been established: Gorizia, Milano, Roma, Foggia, Siracusa, Crotone and Trapani.

ministry engages immigrants mainly through the Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations (ETNO), which has also a representative of the Somali community. ETNO is a broad-based expert body set up by the Government, and its purpose is twofold: “to promote interaction between Finland’s ethnic minorities and the authorities, NGOs and the political parties in Parliament, equally at the national, regional and local level”, and secondly, “to provide the ministries with immigration policy expertise in the interests of furthering an ethnically equal and diversified society” (Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations, Intermin website).

C) Local Authorities

Local authorities (in Italy namely municipalities, provinces and regions) have a certain degree of autonomy from the central state; for instance, they can enact their own norms, laws and regulations, provided that these are in line with the constitution. Five out of the twenty regions in Italy enjoy special autonomy in the administrative, normative and fiscal fields. Similarly to the national level, in Italian local authorities two separate departments usually have the mandate for welfare/immigration policies on the one hand, and for international relations/decentralised cooperation on the other.

In Finland, local authorities do not play a major role in the Somali diaspora engagement process in the fields of peace and development²⁵.

D) NGOs

In Italy non governmental organisations are those private voluntary associations that are active in the development field through a non-profit approach. By definition, Italian NGOs are transnational as they are headquartered in Italy but operate in developing countries. Made up of professionals and volunteers, NGOs operate independently from, but in accordance with, the Italian national guidelines for international cooperation and development²⁶. They generally have an Italian office which sets policies, raises funds and administers resources, and various local offices in developing countries which manage development projects, mainly in partnership with counterparts/local NGOs.

In Finland, non-profit organisations engaged in development cooperation work can be distinguished into two broad categories: large professional NGOs (so called partner organisations of the MFA) and small voluntary CSOs²⁷.

²⁵ In integration measures local authorities (cities/ municipalities) do play a role but this issue is out of the scope of this paper.

²⁶ As defined by the national Law 40/87.

²⁷ In this paper only cases of native Finnish NGOs/CSOs that work in Somalia/Somaliland are discussed.

E) Inter-Governmental Organisations

The IOM Regional Office in Helsinki is responsible for IOM activities in the Nordic and Baltic regions, and has been actively engaged and carried out concrete activities with the Somali diaspora in Finland.

Similarly in Rome, the IOM regional Office, responsible for the Mediterranean region has been conducting several MIDA Programmes²⁸ for engaging diasporas towards the countries of origin (e.g. Senegalese, Ghanaians), launching more recently also a MIDA-Somalia. Although the funding for these initiatives comes from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, the IOM is functioning as an intermediate organisation between Somalis and governmental bodies and is thus a central actor in engagement dynamics.

4.1. Types of Engagement Initiatives

The interaction among the actors mentioned in the previous section have generated a variety of activities and projects that are taking place between Somalia and the two countries of settlement, through the involvement of the Somali diaspora. The aim here is to present a typology illustrative of migrants' engagement dynamics and interlocutions - in two different recipient contexts (at the national and when relevant also at the local level) explaining the reasons for similarities. This section will report a few explanatory cases that illustrate several engagement types established and found both in Italy and Finland, even though not aiming to provide an exhaustive description of all existing initiatives, nor a comprehensive evaluation of these. In general, in this typology four types of interaction/engagement have been observed, which refer to different levels of diaspora 'inclusion/roles' adopted by institutional interlocutors in both recipient contexts through opportunities made available for diaspora organisations, and endorsed by diaspora groups through strategies put in place by the Somalis themselves.

The typology of engagement - which should be understood in a sort of developmental *continuum* – includes the following types of interaction: '*exclusion*', representing the extreme case which implies an explicit decision made by institutions to exclude diaspora individuals and organisations from development and peacebuilding discourses and practices. Here institutions do not see any added value for collaborating with diaspora individuals or organisations for a variety of reasons; '*empowerment*', including all those activities that institutional interlocutors have promoted to strengthen Somali diaspora organisations in terms of capacity building, training and networking capacity; '*inclusion*' of diaspora individuals and organisations in

²⁸ "Migration for Development in Africa" (MIDA) is a capacity-building programme, which helps to mobilize competencies acquired by African nationals abroad for the benefit of Africa's development. Source: www.iom.int.

existing mainstream development initiatives, either through direct recruitment of diaspora individuals as professionals, consultants, informants (both formally and informally), or through the involvement of diaspora organisations in existing development projects in their quality as implementers or funders; ‘partnership’, which implies that decision making as well as implementation processes have been shared among different ‘partners’, belonging to the diaspora as well as from institutional interlocutors. In this last engagement typology an array of nuances are included. For instance, there are cases where an external funder sponsors a diaspora initiative to be implemented by or with an international NGO, others where the diaspora organisation ‘owns’ the initiative which in turn is implemented by local counterparts/diaspora partners at home; and still others where the diaspora co-funds the initiative in partnership with an international NGO, or with a local counterpart/partner, etc.

a) Somali Diaspora’s Engagement towards Empowerment

Italy

Both at the national and at the local level, there are cases where the Somali diaspora has been engaged by Italian actors with the ultimate aim of being empowered. At the national level these experiences have mainly resulted in pilot projects and are few in number.

The Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MAE) has engaged the Somali diaspora in the project ‘Gender and Peace in Somalia–Implementation of Resolution 1325’. The process started in 2006 and led to a one day meeting held at the MAE in June 2007 on the role of women in peace building²⁹. The Ministry exhorted a few selected Somali women to further engage the Somali diaspora in this process. These Somali women organised themselves in a Somali women’s umbrella association based in Italy (formalised in April 2008), with the mandate of working towards the empowerment of women, both in Somalia and as migrants in the diaspora.

The project saw the involvement of the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (UN-INSTRAW) as the institutional mediator between the diaspora and the Ministry. The initiative led by the umbrella of Somali women’s organisations did not come without criticisms, especially from other members of the diaspora. The most serious criticism was the perceived

²⁹ The former International Cooperation Under-Secretary and a group of Somali women activist met in Bamako during the World Social Forum, and discussed the possibility of launching a project for supporting dialogue between women of the Somali diaspora in Italy, women’s organisations in Somalia, representatives of the Somali Transitional Government Institutions and international stakeholders, under the implementation of the UN Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on Women and peace and security.

lack of transparency in the selection process, which appointed one person/organisation against others. Although the project had undoubtedly the positive effect of bringing attention to the Somali situation and to the potential involvement of Somali women in political processes, the wrong assumption made by the MAE was that women diaspora groups would collaborate because the gender aspect would eliminate other divisive factors.

The second project set up by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the IOM is the MIDA-Somalia. Just as the project mentioned above, MIDA-Somalia was established after a meeting in Bamako in March 2007.³⁰ The aim of this specific project was to empower Somali diaspora associations, especially women's organisations, in order to develop cooperation projects in Somalia. The first phase of the MIDA-Somalia project developed from February to July 2009. In order to carry out the activities the IOM signed a cooperation agreement with an Italian NGO. This NGO was perceived by the IOM as very connected with the Somali diaspora (as personnel with Somali background work within the organisation, and these are strongly connected to the Somali community/diaspora, as described below). Moreover, this NGO has been historically present in Somalia where it managed different development projects. It is important to underline that the first phase of the project, consisting mainly of a mapping exercise of Somali diaspora organisation in Italy, has been influenced – both negatively and positively – by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' previous experience in engaging Somali women. The negative impact was essentially due to the Somali diaspora perception of the MIDA Project being a sort of continuation to the previous MAE- led initiative. The positive aspect was the effort of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to find a strategy for engaging the Somali diaspora. The second phase, which has just started, has different lines of action, including networking and empowering activities, capacity building etc.

At the local level, the Province of Trento³¹ represents an advanced, and to some extent exceptional example of Somali diaspora engagement towards empowerment for peace and development activities in Somalia. A tremendous development of NGOs and associations in the Province of Trento is supported and guided by local authorities that avail a considerable budget for financing decentralized cooperation activities with third countries through local associations and NGOs³². NGOs and associations can apply to this budget by following specific guidelines and a one-off registration procedure to the Province, which

³⁰ During the Bamako meeting the Italian delegation from Ministry of Foreign Affairs promised a substantial effort in order to empower and aid the Somali women diaspora in Italy. This is why Italy, despite incomplete experience of the ADEP, took steps in order to involve Somali women associations in other projects.

³¹ Provincia Autonoma di Trento is a province of the autonomous Region of Trentino Alto Adige. This region is characterized by a high degree of decentralization after which the Province of Trento also enjoys exceptional freedoms in terms of its own legislation and administrative structure.

³² By law, 0,25% of the regional budget is annually devoted to international cooperation, which in 2009 amounts to Euro 10 million for development and Euro 200.000 for emergency interventions.

certifies their capacity to operate on transnational level. Diaspora associations and NGOs are also encouraged by the local authority through start up funding and training initiatives. Trento's virtuous diaspora engagement model has in fact generated various diaspora NGOs, which directly apply to local government funding and implement development and peace building projects in their country of origin. Successful examples come from the diaspora from Guinea Bissau, Ivory Coast, Togo, Brazil and from the Balkan area.

The latter example, as the one concerning the Municipality of Milan described below, advances potentially a model of collaboration which moves from an *empowering* strategy to forms of *partnership*, in terms of accessing external funding, as well as by fostering new partnerships between different actors engaged in development. The Municipality of Milan launched in 2007/2008 a three year programme for co-funding projects developed by diaspora organisations towards their countries of origin, with the aim of simultaneously sustaining initiatives that have an impact on migrants' integration processes in the territories of residence. Two calls for proposals have been realised (in 2007/2008 and in 2009/2010). In the first edition 10 projects (out of 68 presented) were co-funded for a total amount of 400,000€, while the second edition is currently being evaluated (91 projects have been presented for a total budget of 1.5 million €). Following the first edition, the municipality decided to organise a training course on how to plan projects and how to manage associations: three Somali women, representing three different diaspora associations, took part in it.

The Municipality directly sustains diaspora organisations financially, but it also tries to favour – as a guarantee but also as part of a broader cooperation approach – partnerships with autochthonous NGOs, Universities and the private sector, including diaspora organisations at the transnational level. In the first edition two projects on Somalia were presented by diaspora organisations, but were not financed. In the second edition only one project has been presented by a Somali diaspora organisation. This has, however, been built through a strong partnership with an Italian NGO which is competent on the substance of the project, demonstrating thus an upgrading in the ability of the diaspora organisation to reach out in building strategic partnerships and alliances.

Finland

In the Finnish case a number of Somali diaspora organisations have accessed funding from the NGO development unit of the MFA. This funding for NGO development projects is divided into small-medium

size CSO/NGO project support and large NGO programme support³³. The total share for support to NGO development, one of nine development cooperation budget lines, represented some 12.7 % of the total annual budget in 2008³⁴. Development cooperation carried out by NGOs complements Finnish multi- and bilateral cooperation as well as the EU's development cooperation. The overarching objective of NGO development cooperation is to further the UN Millennium Development Goals and to strengthen civil society in developing countries. A total of some 200 Finnish NGOs is currently involved in implementing development cooperation projects in over 80 countries, or in sharing information on topics related to development³⁵. An indication of the activity of the Somali diaspora and its rather extensive level of networking with external actors compared to other diaspora groups in Finland comes from the NGO development unit at the MFA, which during the past years has received a large number of development project applications from Somali diaspora organisations, but only very few from other diaspora groups (such as Kurdish, Ethiopian and Ghanaian organisations). The first development project carried out by a Somali association obtained external funding from the MFA in 2000. In 2009 a total of 141 small or medium size CSOs and 10 MFA partner NGOs were granted funding. Out of these, ten were Somali organisations and the absolute majority native Finnish NGOs/CSOs³⁶. It is, however, important to stress the funding criteria of the NGO development unit of the MFA: there is no 'Somali quota', thus all project proposals of NGOs/CSOs are evaluated on the same basis and those with the best project proposals and organisational capacity get funding.

The problem from the MFA's point of view has been the low capacity of the Somali diaspora organisations in terms of management, reporting and their more general ability to follow the demanding bureaucratic procedures required in the running of their associations, in writing good quality applications and in realising development projects. The MFA has, however, directly contributed to support the capacity building measures for Somali organisations by funding the Finnish Somalia-Network³⁷. The MFA was not involved in the establishment of the network, which was founded in 2004 by a few Somali and native Finnish

³³ In 2010, 11 native Finnish NGOs have a partner organisation status. The total share of funding for partner organisations is over half of the whole budget for NGO development cooperation. Organisations apply to get this status in open calls for proposals.

³⁴ Source: MFA, NGO development cooperation website. See www.formin.fi/Public/default.aspx?nodeid=15339&contentlan=2&culture=en-US.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ These numbers have been estimated by the author by going through the names of organisations in the list of NGO development projects funded in 2009 (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland 2009). On the basis of the authors' familiarity with them, Somali organisations and native Finnish CSOs/NGOs were easily identified. The MFA does not differentiate diaspora associations and native Finnish NGOs in the selection processes.

³⁷ See www.somaliaverkosto.net.

NGOs/CSOs working towards development in Somalia in order to improve the quality of development cooperation of associations working in Somalia, as well as to produce and exchange information on issues relating to Somalia. Since its setup and until 2009, a native Finnish NGO – a partner organisation of the MFA with several development projects in Somalia – has functioned as the coordinating organisation for the Network. In 2004 the board of the Network met with officials from the MFA and a project proposal was submitted. The proposal was approved and the Network has been receiving funding from the MFA for the period of 2005-2010. In 2010, the Network had 28 member associations (25 Somali and three native Finnish ones). This figure shows that not all Somali associations have joined the Network, based on an estimated number of 40-50 functioning Somali associations in Finland, out of which many are involved in development work in Somalia (Pirkkalainen 2009). The Finnish Somalia-Network arranges courses and training, events and discussions. The Network registered itself as an association in 2009, and in 2010 an executive director (a native Finn with a long research background on Somalis) was appointed in order to strengthen the Network and search for future funding. Financial support for an additional three year period was recently refused by the MFA, as the initial funding provided was seen as temporary in nature and the MFA states that it does not have a suitable funding mechanism for ongoing support to this kind of network. The future functioning of the Network therefore remains an open question. The network has recently started cooperating with the Finnish Refugee Council in a project for the capacity building of immigrant associations (*Järjestöhautomo*). The aim is to make a training plan for each member organisation in the Network and carry out training to improve the functioning of associations. The *Järjestöhautomo* project is creating a system of certificates to associations: each association fulfilling the requirements set for the certificates can then use them in project proposals to show that the association is run in a professional manner. The Network is much appreciated by the member organisations and many state to have greatly benefitted from its trainings. Some Somali associations outside the network, however, are suspicious of it.

Some Somali associations outside the network have participated in general training open to all NGOs and CSOs on development cooperation project management, reporting and proposal writing provided directly by the Service Centre for Development Cooperation (KEPA).

Examples of capacity building measures both in Italy and in Finland represent a model of collaboration that moves gradually from an *empowering strategy* to forms of *partnership* in terms of Somali diaspora associations that can access public funding, such as the MFA in Finland or Municipalities in Italy.

b) Somali Diaspora's Engagement towards Inclusion

Including diaspora into mainstream development work can take various forms: inclusion of diaspora organisations through *collaboration* in existing projects; and inclusion of individuals through *recruitment* (both recruitment of Somalis by settlement country NGOs and recruitment of Italians/ Finns by the diaspora) as well as *consultation* (formal and informal) processes.

Collaboration in Existing Projects

Italy

With regard to including diaspora organisations through collaboration on development projects, there is an interesting case of an Italian NGO from Trento which has sought diaspora's collaboration for delegating part of the organisation's activities in Somalia, with the aim of ensuring the programme's financial sustainability in the short term and the operational sustainability, through complete handover to the diaspora organisation, in the long term. Within this *inclusive engagement* typology management and programming are in the hands of the leading Italian NGO, whereas the diaspora organisation supports it through fund raising activities and technical advice. It is worth noting that this model seems to be efficient in its division of labour and effective in terms of results that the organisation manage to achieve in Somalia, despite the prolonged conflict.

The Italian NGO was set up by a prominent Italian cleric, who devoted his entire life to Somali people before the outbreak of the civil war. At this time it intensified its activities for war-orphans in partnership with an association founded by a respected Somali woman who was the daughter of the last Sultan of Merca. This Somali woman used to come to Italy for fundraising activities and sensitisation campaigns, and her charisma and genuine commitment towards her people was remarkably effective in terms of establishing networks and links for peace initiatives in Somalia. When she died in 2007, the Italian NGO solicited the involvement of a Somali diaspora NGO in Piemonte³⁸. That NGO currently plays an active role in providing technical and financial support to the entire health program the Italian NGO has in Somalia.

³⁸ Piemonte Region in northern Italy is the main recipient of the first Somali diasporic wave in Italy during the early 1960s and throughout the 1980s. Most of the Somalis who came to Piemonte during that period are now educated professionals, with Italian citizenship and a high social position in the Italian society. Some of them recently grouped to build up a civil society organisation with high technical and fundraising capacities.

Finland

In Finland the IOM Helsinki office³⁹ coordinated one-year pilot project within the MIDA health programme, ‘Strengthening the Health Sector in Somaliland and Puntland through the Engagement of Somali Diaspora Health Professionals from Finland’, can be considered as recruitment of diaspora into an existing project, although the initiation of the project involved diaspora pro-activity. The project was launched in 2008. The preparation of the project took several years, and the Somali diaspora in Finland has consistently been active in promoting the idea. Before the actual launch of the project, the IOM office had close contacts with health professionals of Somali origin, and was reassured that there were enough health professionals of Somali origin willing to return temporarily to Somalia, to transfer skills, build capacity, etc. In the planning phase the relationship between diaspora members and the IOM was inclusive and participatory, but when the actual project started the management of it shifted entirely to the IOM. From the IOM’s point of view the commitment and motivation of health professionals of Somali origin was the necessary basis for applying funding for the project from the MFA’s Unit on East and West-Africa. Even if the pro-activity of Somalis was strong during the initiation phase, from the participants’ point of view they had very few opportunities to contribute to the actual project plan. The project partner in Finland was an association of Somali health professionals, and in total 22 short-term assignments of health professionals from Finland to local health institutions in Somaliland and Puntland were arranged.

Recruitment

Italy

A less evolved inclusive type of engagement in Italy is the one of *recruitment*: this includes both recruitment of Somali professionals into autochthonous NGOs, usually to senior positions, and informal recruitment of political analysts for policy advice, and recruitment of Italian professionals into diaspora founded NGOs. In fact, it is interesting to note that recruitment has been also a strategy adopted by Somalis, mainly women who have recruited Italian professionals in diaspora-led organisations in order to benefit from the social and professional capital that Italian professionals can bring to the organisations.

³⁹ In addition to the MIDA health project, IOM office in Finland is involved in a joint project with UNDP “The Qualified Expatriate Somali Technical Support – Migration for Development in Africa (QUESTS-MIDA)”. The purpose is “to tap into key technical expertise among the Somali diaspora in a bid to help rebuild key governance foundations in parts of the country.” It targets “Somalis with professional expertise in policy and legislation, human resources management, and public financial management living in North America, the UK and the Nordic countries.” IOM office in Finland started the outreach work among the Finnish Somalis in autumn 2009.

These organisations have not been perceived by authorities as ‘diaspora organisations’, but have been set up as Italian NGOs, formally headed by an Italian president who is usually a prominent member of Italian civil society organisation (i.e. the ACLI⁴⁰). However the leadership is often informally in the hands of Somali women, who in many cases are the ‘owners’ of the entire project idea. The president brings his/her social capital to the organisation, establishes contacts with local institutions and serves as a ‘trustee’ for the NGO ‘promoter’, the Somali woman who brings into the organisation the workforce and local Somali networks. This model, which was found in several cases in Trentino, seems to have been informally guided by the existence of a vibrant civil society in terms of organisations/networks in the region. This represents an alternative to the Somali diaspora-based organisation model, within which in-country divisions and tensions are often reflected. These Italian/Somali diaspora NGOs set up from the late 1990s onwards are engaged in development projects and emergency assistance in Somalia, and in awareness campaigns in Italy.

Regarding Somalis recruited by Italian NGOs, there are four Italian organisations with a long tradition in Somalia: in one case an NGO has recruited two second generation Somali professionals who were in charge of assisting the general director in the headquarters; in the other cases the NGOs recruited a few Somali women who had been living in or had strong links with Italy and had returned to Somalia. It is important to specify that this engagement pattern involves only a specific group of the Somali diaspora in Italy, i.e. those who came to Italy before the collapse of the Barre Regime or soon thereafter. These Somalis are usually well educated professionals, and in some cases second generation, who despite being part of the diaspora in Italy are not perceived as such. Some of them have become permanent staff members at NGO headquarters; others keep informal relationships with the NGOs as ‘key informants’ on the Somali crises, while some use their acquired Italian citizenship to freely move between Somalia, Kenya and Italy in their twofold quality as Italian NGO senior staff and Somali diaspora individuals and professionals. The same does not apply to Somalis who arrived in Italy after the mid-1990s, when the conflict had become chronic, nor to newcomers as they are perceived as deeply involved in Somali crises and sometimes as spoilers of peace.

Finland

In Finland the “two-way” recruitment processes of both Somalis being *recruited* into the Finnish NGO and Somalis *recruiting* Finns into their initiatives (mainly by bringing a development project idea to an existing

⁴⁰ ACLI stands for Associazioni Cristiane lavoratori Italiani (Italian Christian associations of workers) and is a system active nationally, where various associations, sharing the same vision and ethic, build a network for mutual help and support. This ACLI system directly engages with and carries out lobbying activities towards local and central authorities.

Finnish CSO) can also be observed. In the Finnish case, however, the recruitment of professional Somalis to native Finnish development agencies or NGOs seems not to be very frequent.

An interesting example of the pro-activity of Somalis is an attempt to *include diaspora-initiated projects into native settlement country CSOs*. Some Somali individuals have been unwilling to create their own associations, but have rather chosen another 'path' for accessing NGO funding at the MFA. There are cases of individuals who have initiated, or brought their project idea to an existing native Finnish NGO or to an intercultural organisation. In all identified cases these were small voluntary based CSOs rather than large professional NGOs. The first project of this kind funded through the MFA started in 2003. In the few identified cases, Somali individuals have been active in approaching existing associations, and cooperation has been based on tight and trusted personal relationships between native Finns and Somalis. In these cases Somali individuals have in a way recruited a Finland based CSO in order to establish a development project in Somalia. Coordination of a development project in Somalia through a well established association, where the organisational structure is in place, can in fact be more beneficial than starting up a diaspora association, which often requires considerable and time consuming efforts in terms of meeting the bureaucratic requirements (management of an association, gathering the own funding required for the MFA funded projects etc.). This recruitment strategy was found in particular in small, voluntary-based CSOs, as they see an added value in engaging diasporas in their work. In many cases the active native Finns in these organisations affirm that without the Somalis they would not be working in the country at all – not only for security reasons but also for the sake of local contacts. The case may be different for larger professional development NGOs, which have international branches and local offices in developing countries and thus do not necessarily see the same added value in working with the diaspora. For example, in one case a Somali individual approached a large development NGO in Finland with a project plan in Somalia, but was not involved in the actual planning and running of the project. In this case the implementation of the project was done through the local branch of the NGO in Somalia; thus no added value in working with the diaspora was perceived.

On the other hand, large development NGOs have adopted diaspora recruitment strategies, although this is a rare phenomenon. An example of this kind – particularly interesting as it is the only example of a direct peacebuilding project - is offered by Finn Church Aid, which initiated a project to support traditional and religious leaders in peace processes in Somalia. The initiation of the project, however, involved the pro-activity of diaspora members. The project, started in 2008, is carried out in Somalia by Finnish Somalis who have been selected to carry out the work on the basis of their qualifications and expertise. Finn Church Aid does not, however, perceive this as being a diaspora project in a sense that it is not run in partnership with a diaspora organisation. The project has local institutions in Somalia as the formal project partners, and activities are carried out together with the Danish Refugee Council. Within the funding institution, the MFA,

this particular peacebuilding project is considered important and innovative - being the only of its kind - but it has not come without scepticism from some members of the Somali community in Finland.

Formal and Informal Consultation Processes

Italy

As mentioned above, in Italy the second branch of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that showed a certain degree of interest in the Somali diaspora was the General Department for Sub Saharan African Affairs (DG/ASS). Even if the level of the relationship with the diaspora is based on individual ties, the general need of information and analysis of the Somali conflict has pushed different diplomats within this division to establish strong and long-term relationships with key informants of the Somali community based in Italy, especially in Rome. These relationships, established at the individual and informal level, are useful to better analyse the information on the Somali conflict provided by the Italian Embassies based in the African continent. However, in this respect the Somali community seems to represent an exception, which is probably due to the fact that the complex situation in Somalia requires constant monitoring. This informal practice has also been adopted by some NGOs, in particular one which holds informal consultations with Somali diaspora members for its political analysis and peace building policy.

Finland

In Finland rather widespread contacts between the Somali diaspora and the MFA were observed. Many Somali groups and individuals are actively lobbying for issues concerning Somalia at the MFA. Active communication and information exchange is taking place between the Somali diaspora members and the Foreign Ministers' Special Representative for African crises (Green Party MP Pekka Haavisto, whose mandate covers the areas of Sudan and the Horn of Africa: Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia).

c) Somali Diaspora's Engagement towards Partnerships

In the previous sections some initiatives have been understood as implying a shift for example from 'empowerment' towards partnership. This is the case of the Municipality of Milan, of Trento, and of the MFA NGO development funding in Finland. How do partnerships unfold?

Italy

An Italian NGO in Toscana developed a long-term Somali diaspora engagement strategy and vision, which has roots in the very beginning of the NGO's history. In fact, the NGO started working in Somalia in response to a request by a Somali woman who had been living in Italy during the early 1990s. Once back to Somalia, where she helped her family during the civil war, she contributed to the establishment of a local NGO. The Italian NGO started working in Somalia in direct partnership with the newly created Somali NGO, and this partnership is still alive and fruitful. Their joint work ranges from development activities and emergency assistance to political engagement of Somali diaspora women in the fragile Somali political setting. Policies are reportedly decided in Somalia and the local NGO has a strong ownership in programming and implementing all the project phases. The effect seems to be very successful and of benefit for both NGOs, as well for the beneficiaries of development activities. More recently, the Somali NGO has set up a 'diaspora branch' of the organisation in Italy, with the aim of organising fund-raising activities and dissemination events on the situation in Somalia. The organisation based in Italy has been able to approach local public authorities, obtaining their sponsorship for the organisation of dissemination activities, which have brought active civil society organisations from Somalia to Italy. This has helped to offer a different image of what the society in Somalia looks like: not only devastation but also civic activism.

Finland

The access of some Somali diaspora organisations to MFA's NGO development funding can be seen as one form of partnership. Project ideas are coming from diaspora organisations (who often claim they respond directly to the needs and preferences of the locals in Somalia), funding is applied externally (however, organisation contribute with their own funding) and finally implementation is done by the local partner organization, which has been identified by the diaspora organisation. Existence of a local partner and its centrality in decision making and implementation is made explicit in the requirements set by the MFA (see MFA 2005). Some of the interviewed Somali organisations expressed as their ultimate aim to develop the capacities of their organisations in order to become a partner organisations of the MFA (i.e. to become professional development NGOs).

d) Exclusion

In both countries there are also cases of institutions that are not cooperating with diaspora members in their activities in Somalia. In these cases, the institutions either do not see any added value for collaborating with diaspora individuals or organisations, or collaboration is not feasible for some concrete of reasons. In some cases the collaboration is not taking place as the settlement country institutions

working for peace and development perceive diaspora members as part of the problem rather than part of the solution to the Somali crises, or perceive them to be culturally distant from the local situation and thus prefer to work directly with local organisations/people. In other cases the perception of diasporas' involvement is positive, but it is not considered feasible for structural reasons. For some stakeholders, such as certain units of the ministries, it is not always possible to support civil society groups (including diaspora organizations) directly, but funding has to be directed through governmental institutions or international organizations. Equally the Red Cross, for example, cannot work directly with diaspora organisations, as the work must be carried out through the International Committee of the Red Cross, or directly with the local Red Cross/ Crescent Society.

5. Major Findings

The examples given so far clearly indicate that the discussion on engagement strategies must take into consideration the bilateral perspectives and dynamic mechanisms of interlocution and interrelation between institutional interlocutors and Somali diaspora actors. Both have developed their own engagement strategies and the initiatives described above are the result of this mutual interaction.

In the Italian context 'opportunities' - regarding the existence of explicit and strategic objectives/policies and guidelines for engaging diasporas, both within the country of residence and towards the country of origin - are mostly implicit. Engagement dynamics between institutional interlocutors and the Somali diaspora do not follow a vertical model. Rather, they follow a *horizontal* and *highly decentralised* model, where institutional interlocutors have been putting in place different political opportunity structures (funding mechanisms, informal mechanisms of consultation, explicit as well as implicit policies on immigration, etc.), which then often result in different approaches depending on the sensitiveness and openness towards the diasporas' various needs and on the perceived potential contribution of diaspora groups towards the institutions' priorities and projects.

The Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for example, does not have specific guidelines or a strategic and explicit vision for engaging diaspora groups, nor has it developed any funding mechanisms dedicated to diaspora organisations. It is important to underline that both initiatives described above funded by the Development Cooperation directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not result in the direct involvement of the Somali diaspora as a group (nor of any other diaspora group), but through intermediaries such as international/intergovernmental organisations and NGOs. Not even the "Gender and Peace in Somalia - Implementation of Resolution 1325" project was the consequence of an open debate on the potentials of the Somali diaspora, but was the result of individual initiative set up by the previous

Undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in order to promote the role of women within political reconciliation processes. Other experiments conducted with other diaspora groups have included the mediation of international/intergovernmental organisations or NGOs (eg. in the case of several MIDA Programmes, funded by Italian cooperation in Senegal, Ghana and Latin America managed by the IOM regional office in Rome).

With regard to the Ministry of the Interior, just like in the case of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, there are no specific policies on engaging diasporas within its immigrant and refugee agenda. However, members and key individuals of Somali origin have been employed as ‘cultural mediators’ for the so-called ‘territorial commissions’ either *indirectly* (through Italian cooperatives working on immigrant issues, supported by the Ministry of Interior’s funds) or *directly* on the basis of individual ties between the Provincial Police Authority and Somali individuals, although criteria for involvement are not explicit nor transparent. It is interesting to note that in both cases Somalis have been involved individually and locally due to their level of ‘professionalism’ (such as their good knowledge of the Italian language, their capacity to deal with ‘newcomers’, their social capital).

Some of the Italian local authorities have, instead, developed their own opportunity structures which have resulted in engagement approaches depending on their level of activism towards migration issues, on their understanding of migrants’ potential role in their region, and probably on geographical proximity with migrants’ countries of origin⁴¹. As a general observation, local institutions often have preferred to support directly and indirectly ‘intercultural associations’ rather than community-based ones. The presence of autochthonous members (not only of Somali origin) has served as a ‘bridging factor’ which connects Italian institutions with associative realities, downplaying any ‘ethnic’ dimension. This is equally true in the case of ‘development organisations’ (diaspora organisations oriented towards Somalia), where the existence of partnerships and the presence of autochthonous members has represented a strategic guarantee in the eyes of institutional interlocutors for downplaying for example the clan dimension.

In the Finnish case ‘*the Government Resolution on Development Policy*’ (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland 2004) defines migration as one of the areas to deal with in the development policy coherence framework. The resolution states that ‘the Government will consider issues relating to migration and immigration more coherently from the perspective of development policy. It aims to support the positive effects of migration and prevent harmful effects, especially trafficking in human beings, prostitution, and other crimes associated with illegal immigration’ (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland 2004, 25). Migration is recognised as a development issue, and if properly managed, as having potential to contribute

⁴¹ This decentralised approach is in line with decentralisation process that has been taking place in Italy since the mid 1990s.

to development (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland 2004). Within this policy framework there are, however, no guidelines on how to engage diaspora groups based in Finland into development activities in the countries of origin.

Engagement and cooperation thus take place within existing mainstream policies and frameworks. This reflects the Finnish integration policy based on the ideals of an egalitarian welfare state, which aims at integrating and “equalizing” all its members. From this perspective, Finland does not have differentiated structures for diasporas but the aim has been to integrate them into the existing systems. This being the case, the key issue is the capability of certain diasporas to ‘get their voice heard’ among the Finnish actors and to access funding structures available for all citizens. Somali organisations access MFA funding through a call for proposals in which they compete with native Finnish development NGOs and CSOs.

In Italy, interactions between the Somali diaspora and autochthonous NGOs have generally been scarce, and relate mostly to early/pre-war Somali diaspora waves. Often the interaction was initiated by diaspora individuals, by people who had lived in Italy and returned to Somalia (*returnees*), and are often still active and successful, both at the individual and the organisation level. On the other hand, there is a greater level of mistrust and a suspicious attitude by Italian NGOs towards that part of the Somali diaspora which arrived during the late 1990s, as well as towards the majority of diaspora associations in Italy. Most Italian NGOs do not see the added value of involving these late-comers into their development programs in/for Somalia, because they see them as directly involved in conflict dynamics or as bearers of personal interests, willing to exploit the NGOs’ resources for their personal or clan profit. In one case, the same NGO that recruited two Somalis among its permanent staff, rejected requests by ‘newcomers’ to intervene in a project on the ground in a southern location. The same argument was used by another NGO with regard to health projects in southern Somalia. In another case it was pointed out how the typical economic relationship between diaspora and the home country is inverse in the Somali case, where entire Somali diaspora communities in western countries are financially sustained by in-country Somali nationals who take advantage of the war-economy. The same observer was keen to stress the remarkable diversity between the older Somali and the newcomers, highlighting that new Somali immigrants are not as likely to be involved in supporting relatives in Somalia as they have difficulties in making ends meet in Italy.

This mistrust by Italian NGOs towards the Somali diaspora in Italy, with the exception of those individuals who were known by the organisations before the beginning of the war, has led to infrequent interaction between Somalis in Italy and Italian NGOs operating in Somalia, and to neglect of engagement dynamics. This is confirmed by all the NGOs that were interviewed on the Somali diaspora engagement approach, except for two (one Toscana and one in Trentino).

In Finland the contacts and recruitment of Somalis into Finnish professional development NGOs does not represent a frequent engagement strategy. As there is no historical pre-war Somali community in Finland, the relationships have been created with Somalis who arrived to the country as asylum seekers after the late 1980s/early 1990s. As mentioned above, cooperation and engagement taking place between diasporas and small voluntary CSOs have often been based on individual contacts between CSO activists and active Somali individuals. A few small voluntary CSOs have started working in Somalia through the diasporas' contacts, implementing projects initiated by Somalis and perceiving an important value added in working with the diaspora. In the Finnish case the reasons why larger development NGOs do not cooperate extensively with the diaspora does not relate to their perceptions of the diaspora as bearers of personal interests or impartial to the conflict, but rather to the organisational structure of NGOs and thus preference for working directly with local partners (or branches of large NGOs) in Somalia. For larger NGOs, however, recruitment of individual diaspora members is a strategy for engagement, as has been the case of Finn Church Aid peacebuilding project.

6. Concluding Remarks

The cases presented in this study show that despite all the substantial differences between the two countries, many similarities exist. The similarities can be summarised in the different strategies adopted by diaspora organisations/individuals to engage settlement country institutions and individuals. Factors shaping how and if Somalis engage towards development and peace must be understood in the context of dynamic mechanisms and processes of interlocution occurring between the different actors. From a theoretical perspective the study suggests the need to complement the political opportunity structure (POS) approach applied to migration studies with a more polyhedral one, which can take into account two key elements: first, the strategies used by the diaspora implying their pro-activity and second, alliances and networks available in the countries of settlement.

When assessing the engagement dynamics in both countries of settlement, the Somali diaspora did not come out as a passive actor. The study found that while Somalis in both countries tend to respond to what is available in terms of 'opportunities', they put in place their own strategies to engage with institutional interlocutors at different levels.

These strategies have been analysed in terms of different types of engagements: the first one identified was 'recruitment' - both direct and indirect - of Somalis within settlement country institutions, in which they find their ways as salaried professional staff into NGOs and governmental offices. This offers Somalis the

opportunity to build social capital through personal relationships with the local actors they work for, establishing high-level networks which can turn out useful in the future.

Another strategy is the establishment of diaspora organisations in the form of CSOs with an 'ethnically mixed' membership - Somalis and native settlement country people - taking advantage from the diversity that each member brings to the organisation. In Italy this strategy is seen in cases in which Somalis 'recruit' (or co-opt) outstanding host country representatives who often have a strong institutional or associational background to share with their organisations. In Finland the strategy is reflected in examples of Somalis recruiting small CSOs and their organisational capacities to carry out development projects in Somalia. 'Social capital' held by individuals and organisational capacity of native settlement country CSOs is thus acquired by the diaspora, who can take advantage by gaining, for example, free of charge office premises, institutional contacts and in general receiving assistance in running the association.

Moreover, on top of the engagement strategies, what the study found to be common in both countries is the interest for political activism in the country of settlement as well as of origin. In a number of cases both in Italy and in Finland, individuals belonging to the Somali diaspora have participated in local elections and have joined political parties or trade union organisations. It is worth noting that political activism is an important shaping factor when analysing engagement dynamics of Somalis in Italy and in Finland, which can be further transferred to the transnational level as knowledge or political remittances. In particular in the case of Italy, often the lack of opportunities for Somalis in the political sphere at very high levels (national government) in Italy, together with openings found at certain periods of time in Somalia (especially during the Peace Processes Conferences in 2000, 2007, 2008) have led to a renewed interest in transnational political practices.

In both country cases the ability of diasporas to navigate in a given environment, knowing the language and institutional interlocutors, the initial and acquired (through migration) human and social capital, in one word migrants' level of *integration*, is key for developing engagement strategies that allow them to get involved in peace and development activities in the country of origin. This study underlies the strong and positive link between migrants' level of integration and transnational activism.

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