

# Diaspora and Development

*Transnational engagement among members of  
the Somaliland diaspora in Norway*

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Diaspora and development – transnational engagement among members of the Somaliland diaspora in Norway.

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## List of abbreviations

IOM	International organization of migration
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LDC	Less developed country
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
SNM	Somali National Movement
SWO	Somali Welfare Organization
UNDP	United Nation Development Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

# 1 Introduction

*The diaspora has brought Somaliland to where it is today*<sup>1</sup>

According to estimates from the United Nations Development Fund (UNDP), as much as 700 million USD was remitted to Somaliland in 2004 (Sheikh & Healy 2009:4). This by far exceeded development aid by governments and NGOs, and has been crucial for rebuilding a nation that was in ruin after the civil war. Moreover, the Somaliland diaspora<sup>2</sup> has for long been actively engaged in the political realm. Ten ministers in a cabinet of 24 are diaspora returnees, and two of the three political parties are led by returnees (ibid:15). These numbers tell us that there is a high level of homeland engagement among members of the Somaliland diaspora. The aim of this thesis is to contribute to increased understanding about the transnational engagement among Somalis in Norway.

People have crossed country borders throughout history. However, the magnitude of the migration and the social and economic consequences it has on both host and home countries, make this topic especially relevant today. According to the International Organization of Migration (IOM)<sup>3</sup> there are 214 estimated international migrants in the world today, and 15,2 million refugees. International migration has been both provoked and facilitated by globalization, and is related to global inequality. Different living standards and livelihood possibilities have provoked migration from less developed countries (LDCs) to Western countries, whereas improved possibilities for transportation and communication have made it easier to sustain relationships across borders (Nyberg Sørensen 2004:3).

A substantial amount of studies have supported the fact that migrants do not simply 'leave' their homeland. Instead they maintain bonds and ties with their families and

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<sup>1</sup> A quote by Somaliland's Minister of foreign affairs Edna Aden, when visiting London in 2004 (see Hansen 2006:124).

<sup>2</sup> 'Diaspora' refers to a dispersed population that has settled in multiple locations, and that maintain a collective idea of an existing or imaginary homeland (Kleist 2008b:1129).

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.iom.int/jahia/Jahia/global-estimates-and-trends> (accessed 02.12.09).

communities left behind, by sending remittances, visiting, creating transnational organizations for social, cultural or political purposes, and lobby for political and economic support. Through these various transnational activities, members of diasporas have the potential to act in ways that can protract conflict or contribute to peace, post-conflict reconstruction and development (see Brinkerhoff 2008, Collier and Hoeffler 2006, Demmers 2002, Horst 2008a, Østergaard-Nielsen 2006, Vertovec 2006).

In relation to this, there has been a change in the way we think about development and migration. In the 1990s the main idea was to reduce migration by creating local development, and thereby combating the root causes of migration. However, scholars have now acknowledged a ‘third transnational approach’, where mobility is seen as an essential condition for economic and social development. In line with this thinking, understanding remittances, return and political engagement becomes crucial (Nyberg Sørensen 2004:10). This has also led to changes in the policy and donor arena, and international NGOs and development donors are increasingly acknowledging the role of diasporas in developing countries (Horst 2008b:1). There are complex links between migration, diasporas, transnationalism, and development, yet all of these processes and concepts are intertwined. Theorizing diasporas’ transnational engagement is therefore challenging. In line with the above trends, most scholars assessing the links between migration and development today use a transnational framework (Nyberg Sørensen 2007:6), which is the case for this study as well. Transnationalism is seen as the only approach that reflects and captures migrants’ continuous movement and engagement (Hansen 2007:132). However, in order to explain transnational engagement, there is also a need to look into literature on why migrants want to maintain these strong ties to their homeland.



## 1.1 Research questions and conceptualization

The importance of studying the link between diasporas and development can hardly be underestimated in a world where thousands of people leave their homes every day, and there are several knowledge gaps that need more research. According to Mohan & Zack-Williams (2002:212) the interest for this link has mainly been played out in the policy arena. There is thus a lack of academic literature. Brinkerhoff (2008:1-2) argues that there is a lack of understanding of the nature of diaspora contributions, how to mobilize them, and how to best maximize this expanding resource. There is therefore a need to look into what factors that can explain the engagement. Furthermore, she asserts that the negative focus has overshadowed the growing positive impact of diasporas related to social and political contributions. According to Kent (2006:450) the attachment to 'home' is critical for diasporas' involvement in the development and post-conflict reconstruction of 'home'. He therefore argues that the key questions about diasporas concern the degree of connectedness and involvedness in existing networks and with their homeland, as well as what factors that limit and promote a stronger relationship. These arguments make clear that there is a need for better understandings of transnational engagement.

This thesis will focus on members of the Somaliland diaspora in Norway and their transnational engagement directed at Somaliland. According to Hansen (2006:8) Somaliland's positive development and relative success present the Western diaspora with the question of how to relate to their homeland. Should they settle in Somaliland despite the lack of international recognition, or should they stay in the West and contribute to the political development and reconstruction through remittances and political lobbying? The overall research question is therefore: **What is the scope of, and what can explain, transnational contributions to development by members of the Somaliland diaspora in Norway?**

In order to have more specific questions, two sub-questions are formulated. The first sub-question aims to look into the different ways the members of the Somaliland diaspora can contribute to development.

- *What transnational activities that can be seen as contributing to development do members of the Somaliland diaspora in Norway engage in?*

As this question implies, not all transnational activities lead to development. However, since the main research question is concerned with ‘contributions to development’, transnational activities which are believed to contribute to development will be in focus. This does not imply that I will be measuring effects or impacts for development, as this would be too comprehensive for this thesis. In order to determine if the activities can contribute to development, I will follow existing literature and the opinions of the interviewees. Importantly, as I will show, this is not always a straightforward issue. Development is broadly defined and understood along the lines of mainstream development, but I argue that it is also important to look into how the informants understand development.

In order to understand more about the link between diasporas and development, there is also a need to investigate the factors that influence their engagements. This is useful in order to gain a better understanding of transnational contributions to development, and hence prospects for better policies. The second sub-question therefore aims to examine the factors that can explain the engagements.

- *What factors can explain the transnational engagements by members of the Somaliland diaspora in Norway?*

With these research questions I intend to contribute to the burgeoning literature exploring the relationship between migration and development. There have been several studies of the relationship between diasporas and development (see Al-Ali et al. 2001a and b, 2002, Brinkerhoff 2008, Horst 2008b, Mertz 2007, Mohan 2002, Nyberg Sørensen 2004, Nyberg Sørensen et al. 2002, Portes 2009, Van Hear 2002). Hansen (2004, 2006) has done extensive research about return migration and the role

of transmigrants in the reconstruction of Somaliland. Kleist (2004, 2007, 2008) has studied transnational engagement among Somali-Danes. Adamson (2002) and Østergaard Nielsen (2006) have studied the political engagement of Kurds in Europe. Somalis in Norway have been studied by Fangen (2007a, b), Engebrigtsen & Farstad (2004), Engebrigtsen & Fuglerud (2006), and their transnational engagement and contributions to peace building by Horst (2008a). What separates my study from these is the focus on the Somaliland diaspora in Norway and the focus on development.

When studying diasporas' transnational engagement the researcher must decide upon the analytical level of interest. One can study diasporas, as in 'the Somali diaspora', 'the Tamil diaspora' etc. The danger of this approach is that one risks understanding 'the diaspora' as one homogenous group and lose sight of the diversities that exist, which has been criticized in the literature (Horst 2008b:2, Abdile & Pirkkalainen 2009:7). Another option is to study individuals within a diaspora and their transnational networks, which according to Portes et al. (1999:220) and Vertovec (2004:973) is most appropriate of methodological reasons. I have therefore decided to study members of the Somaliland diaspora. Due to the limited number of Somali organizations with only people from Somaliland, it does not make sense to focus on organizations in this thesis. One limitation of an actor-centered approach is the risk of overlooking the larger structural conditions, which are important since structural macro processes and institutional factors influence transnational engagement. Yet, actor-centered approaches have the "advantage of emphasizing motivations, meanings and the place of people as their own agents in processes of change" (Vertovec 2004:973), which can explain why this approach is most suitable for the purposes of this thesis.

In much of the literature, 'refugee' and 'migrant' are used interchangeably. Most of my interviewees came to Norway as refugees when the civil war started, but as I will show in the chapter about Somali migration, the dispersal of the Somaliland diaspora is characterized by complexity. Although refugees are distinct from other kinds of migrants by international law, many scholars focusing on transnational engagement

choose not to emphasize this distinction since many immigrants to the West can fit into several of the categories of migrants. Al-Ali & Koser (2002:4) and Assal (2004:53) therefore argue that these categories have little value as a mix of factors like political violence, economic crisis, or family reunification, often works together in inextricable ways. In this thesis I will use both ‘migrant’ and ‘refugee’, as I will use literature from both domains. However, I will use the label ‘migrant’ when this distinction is not of importance, as most of my respondents have lived in Norway for many years. In terms of using the label Somaliland/Somalilander, a short clarification is in order. By ‘Somaliland diaspora’ I refer to Somalis originating from Somaliland who are living in the diaspora. Using the label Somaliland does not mean that I take any stance in the question about international recognition. Whereas the ethnicity is Somali, the term Somalilander is by some used to refer to a political identity. I will therefore not use this term unless I refer to it in this way or to interviewees or other scholars who use it.

## **1.2 Why Somaliland?**

For nearly two decades, and particularly since the civil war, Somalis have left the country in large numbers. Since the civil war started in the North in the 1980s, more than half the population fled the borders of Somaliland (Hansen 2004:7). It is today estimated that more than 1 million Somalis live outside of Somalia (Nyberg Sørensen 2004:6). Somaliland is situated within the borders of the former British protectorate and declared independence from the rest of Somalia after the fall of Siad Barre in 1991. However, international recognition is yet to be achieved. In contrast to the South, which is the most complete and intractable case of state collapse in the world, there has been peace and relative stability in Somaliland for the last 13 years. One of the main reasons for the success of Somaliland is said to be the collaboration between the diaspora and the local communities led by a strong and committed leadership (Höhne 2007:233-236). Some claim that “the links that tie the Somaliland diaspora to the homeland are so many and so strong that the two are virtually inseparable” (WSP

report 2005:32). By delimiting my study to Somaliland then, it makes sense to speak of post-conflict reconstruction and development. In contrast to the South, which is still in a state of emergency, the diaspora has an influence on the development in Somaliland.

According to a report by the Norwegian ministry, there are approximately 22.000 Somalis in Norway (Regjeringen 2009:9). Although the majority of Somalis in Norway originate from the Mogadishu area, the majority of those who arrived at the end of 1980s came from Somaliland (Horst 2008a:327). Moreover, the Somaliland diaspora in Norway is very active, in particular in terms of remittances and political development. Some have even returned to physically contribute to development.

### **1.3 Thesis outline**

After this introductory chapter, the theoretical framework will be explained and accounted for. This chapter will be a mixture between a theoretical approach and a literature review, since there is not one established theory that can explain transnational engagement. Moreover, a discussion of the link between diasporas and development will provide a context for the discussion later on. In chapter 3 the research design and choice of methodology will be presented. In line with most studies of transnational engagement on an actor-level, qualitative research with interviews as the main source of data collection is the chosen methodology. Chapter 4 is a background chapter, where the aim is to give an introduction to Somali culture, migration, the conflict and post-war situation in Somaliland, and the situation for the diaspora in Norway. In chapter 5 I will present and analyze the various transnational activities of the diaspora in Norway. The interviewees' understandings of development will also be discussed in this chapter. The aim of the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter is to explain the engagement, which will be done by using 'push' and 'pull' factors. The last chapter is the conclusion, where I will present my findings and some recommendations for policy regarding transnational contributions and future research.

# 2 Theoretical approach

## 2.1 Introducing framework and concepts

In order to analyze the contributions to development by members of the Somaliland diaspora in Norway, a multidisciplinary approach is required. The study of diasporas and transnationalism has since the 1990s attracted scholars from a wide variety of disciplines, which tends to fall into two broad categories. The first are writings situated within the postmodern and post-colonial discourses, and the second writings that adhere to political economy approaches. The first category has to a large extent been dominated by anthropology and is concerned with issues related to identity and hybridity, whereas the second category is concerned with the globalization of capitalism, labour migration, and transnational corporations. Al-Ali et al (2001a:591) argue that there is a need to combine these two approaches in order to get a socially and materially grounded approach where cultural and personal implications of transnational spaces are not forgotten. In relation to this, Mitchell (1997:110) argues that “it is geographical context and thus geography as a discipline that is best placed to force the literal and the epistemological understandings of transnationalism to cohere”. However, Nyberg-Sørensen (2007:6) argues that “this division in approach and interest has obscured the fact that it is exactly in the duality of ‘transgression’ and ‘fixation’ that migrant diasporas’ transnational engagement may contribute to development”. Drawing on these insights, the literature overview and theoretical approach in this thesis are multidisciplinary, but with geography as the point of departure.

Furthermore, there is need for a theoretical approach that both can explain migrants’ engagement with their home country and account for the scope of the engagement. There is a substantial amount of literature on the links between migration and development, but much of it is policy-oriented and concerned with how to maximize the developmental effects. Transnationalism is seen as crucial to assess the scope of the engagement, but literature about social capital, kinship ties and cultural knowledge

is valuable to assess factors that can explain the engagement. This chapter will begin with a short discussion of how the concepts of diaspora and development are understood in this thesis.

### **2.1.1 The concept of diaspora**

The concept 'diaspora' was originally used to describe the Jewish quest for a homeland. Today, however, it has grown in popularity and is by some used to refer to any dispersed migrant population. There are therefore some conceptual challenges when using this concept. Some studies focus on diasporas in a descriptive manner as dispersed populations, whereas others employ the concept to conceptualize conditions for identification (Kleist 2007:47). Moreover, there are many ways to describe diasporas. Two of the most cited scholars in this respect are Safran (1991) and Cohen (1997), who conceptualize diasporas as certain kinds of migrant populations. Cohen (1997:26) defines a diaspora as a population that has been dispersed to two or more countries; that has a collective memory and myth about the homeland and collective commitment to its safety and maintenance; that has developed a collective return movement; that possibly has a troubled relationship with the host-country due to lack of acceptance; and solidarity with co-members of the diaspora. Some scholars have criticized this definition and prefer to equalize a diaspora with a transnational community. Demmers (2007:9) claims that although diasporas can evolve into transnational communities, more conceptual clarity of transnational communities is needed before one can see them as equivalent. In line with this, some scholars argue that a diaspora can be seen as a specific form of transnational community, where being in exile is an important element (Wahlbeck 2002:228, Faist 2000:195). An important criticism from Anthias (1998:558) is that the conceptualization of diaspora often places too much emphasis on 'origin' and ethnicity, as well as ignoring internal power dynamics and differences within the diaspora.

In the Somali context, the term diaspora has been used in various ways as well. Some scholars have used the concept to refer to *the* dispersed Somali population without

separating between host countries. Other studies have focused on Somali populations in one country or city, like Horst (2007, 2008) and Assal (2004). They mainly focus on diasporas as expatriate populations and thereby follow the approaches of Safran and Cohen. The diaspora concept is also widely used by policy makers, and in these circumstances the diaspora usually refers to Somalis in the West with potential resources (Kleist 2007:49). The term diaspora has recently entered the vocabulary of Somalis, in particular leaders in the diaspora and politicians. Interestingly, the term is used both to address particular groups or clans, and to claim a unified stance of all Somalis living abroad. Kleist (2008b:1128) argues that the diaspora concept is used for self-portrayal and political mobilization by many Somali groups. She furthermore argues that the identity category of ‘the Somali diaspora’ is comprised in a continuum between suffering, marginalization, and the image of a transnationally committed community that is dedicated to the development of the homeland.

In this thesis the aim is not to determine if Somalis in Norway fulfil certain conditions for being called a diaspora, therefore the term is mainly used in a descriptive manner. For the purposes of this paper, ‘diaspora’ refers to a dispersed population that has settled in multiple locations, and that maintain a collective idea of an existing or imaginary homeland. This definition is agreed upon by many scholars, (Kleist 2008b:1129, Pikkalainen & Abdile 2008:8, Wahlbeck 2002:229, Demmers 2007:9), and draw on the insights from Cohen (1997) and Safran (1991) without using their typologies as conditions.

### **2.1.1 Development**

Development is often related to a long-term change and progress in a society. Although there are disagreements in terms of using ‘progress’ as a synonym for ‘development’, it is commonly agreed upon that it implies increased living standards, improved health and well-being for all in the long-term. There are several theories and ideologies underpinning the development industry today, with the neoliberal school and modernization theory on one side, and the structuralist school and dependency



theories on the other (Thomas 2000:26-27). For the purposes of this paper, it makes sense to focus on interventionism, which sees the need for intentional development. In a way one can say that everyone with a degree of power within development agencies today are interventionists, although they can be divided into those whose aim is market regulations and effectiveness and those whose intention is to achieve social and humanitarian goals. However, whose development are we speaking about? The notion of trusteeships implies that one agency is entrusted to act on behalf of someone else, in other words to develop a society that has not asked for development. This implies a donor with power and a powerless recipient (ibid:41). Along the same lines, much development aid comes with strings attached or so-called conditionality. In relation to this, Stokke & Erdal (2009:425) point out that the actors who are supporting development processes, including diasporas, have interests as well as resource and strategies of power.

In this thesis a mainstream approach to development is most fruitful, basically referring to how development is understood in the development industry today. A mainstream understanding of development implies a belief in interventionism, and a broader transformation of society in terms of promoting economic growth, empowering women, democracy, promoting human rights etc. Mainstream development used to be in stark contrast to approaches of alternative or people-centred development, which blossomed in the 1970s. The essence of this approach was a growing critique of top-down policies for development, and increased focus on the need for self-reliance and internal forces of change through ideas of empowerment and co-operation (Potter et al. 2004:114). Amartya Sen's (1999) definition of 'development as freedom' and his capability approach has become a symbol for the people-centred development thinking. Today, however, mainstream development includes many important elements from alternative development, and Sen's ideas form the basis of the UNDP's human development report and the millennium development goals (Nederveen Pieterse 2010:107). Nevertheless, although many development agencies today define development in a more restricted way where small

improvements associated to the MDGs are in focus, the vision of development in the long run usually implies a liberal and democratic society on Western premises.

The focus on the link between diasporas and development challenges many of the geographical and historical preconceptions about development. The processes that relate to development have generally been linked to specific notions of territory, boundaries and spaces, like state-directed development or local and participatory development. Mohan (2002:78) argues that these processes do not capture contemporary development since not all people who experience economic or political hardship are 'fixed' in their home communities. The dynamic networks of migrants thus make it necessary to rethink the idea that territories of states are the 'containers' of development (Mohan 2006:868).

Since Somaliland is still coping with challenges from the civil war, it is relevant to mention the link between development and peace. According to Stokke and Erdal (2009:425) there has been a change in the development discourse regarding conflicts and peace-building. Whereas development and conflict used to be two separate issues, the strong relationship between the two is being increasingly realized. From 'working in conflict' there has been a change toward 'working on conflict'. Development is today seen as an integral part of peace-building, and necessary rebuild society on different levels and assure sustainable and lasting peace.

## **2.2 A transnational framework**

### **2.2.1 Transnationalism and globalization**

Transnational engagement and flows are related to globalization, which makes it necessary to explain this connection. Although the two concepts of transnationalism and globalization overlap, one possible distinction is: "whereas global processes are often decentred from specific national territories, transnational processes are anchored in but also transcend one or more nation-states" (Al-Ali & Koser 2002:2). As

mentioned in the introduction, globalization has both provoked and facilitated international migration. As globalization has given rise to accessible global communication and transportation technologies, the physical and psychological barriers between migrants' 'home' and 'host' country have been reduced. These new opportunities can foster a transnational, diasporic identity, where a sense of homeland belonging and responsibility is central (Brinkerhoff 2008:91). Globalization thus provides a context for transnational engagement.

Schech & Haggis (in Potter et al. 2004:126) define globalization as the intensification of global interconnectedness, and see the process as closely associated with the spread of capitalism as a production and market system. The interconnectedness includes economic, cultural, social and political processes. However, there are opposite views regarding the significance and scale of globalization. Whereas some, often called the 'globalists', see it as a real and transformative process which has led to massive changes in socioeconomic organization, the 'skeptics' argue that globalization is not a new phenomenon (Held & McGrew 2002:2). There are also opposing views regarding the importance of territory in the age of globalization, and some people argue that the importance of space and territory is declining. Within this view, one can argue that diasporas can "break the supposed fixed relationship between place and identity" (Carter 2005:54). However, territory does matter, and transnationalist practices do not take place in a vacuum. According to Carter (*ibid*), much of the diaspora literature has failed to acknowledge that diasporas can also reproduce the fixed and essentialized notions of place and identity that they are supposed to overcome. He therefore argues that "there is simultaneously de- and re-territorialization".

### **2.2.2 A transnationalist 'turn'<sup>4</sup>**

Although transnational dynamics do not matter to all immigrants at all times, there is a consensus among migration scholars today that migration can no longer be understood only from a host-country perspective (Levitt & Jaworski 2007:143). Contrary to

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<sup>4</sup> An expression that was first used by Levitt & Sørensen (2004)

notions like integration and assimilation, transnationalism calls to mind the alternative image of a continual back-and-forth movement which enables migrants to sustain a presence in two societies and cultures (Portes & DeWind 2007:9). Consequently, the literature on transnationalism has become increasingly diverse in approach and scope, and there are different definitions and disciplinary perspectives. One of the first attempts to establish and define transnationalism was presented in a book by Basch, Glick-Schiller and Blanc-Szanton (1994:7), and they defined it as

*“the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social, economic and political relations that link together their societies or origin and settlement”.*

These early writings on transnationalism gave the impression that “everyone was going transnational” (Portes 2001:182). Although many scholars (c.f. Hansen 2006) label transnational migrants as transmigrants, other scholars see this labelling as an exaggeration. Portes (2001:182) believes that the exaggeration can be explained by the enthusiasm for the novelty of the term and how it challenges models of immigrant assimilation. In an attempt to develop and delimit the concept, Portes et al. (1999:219) argued that transnationalism should only be applied to activities and ties that required “sustained social contacts over time across national borders”. In the end of 1990s there was considerable enthusiasm for the term “transnationalism from below”, which captured migrant transnationalism at a grassroots level and contrasted it with more institutionalized “transnationalism from above” (Guarnizo & Smith 1998, Al-Ali et al. 2001a:578, Carling 2007:16). Drawing on all of these insights, a lot of recent work on transnationalism understands transnational migration as taking place within fluid transnational social spaces in which the migrants may or may not be embedded. This implies that aspects of life ‘here’ and ‘there’ are perceived as complementary aspects of a single space of experience (Levitt and Jaworski 2007:32, Vertovec 2004:975).

Despite these various understandings of transnationalism, some of the advantages are commonly agreed upon. According to Al-Ali & Koser (2002:2-4) it is necessary to apply a transnational perspective to move beyond the old focus on either the process of

migration (geographical movement across borders) or the product of migration (migrants' impact in society they settle), and instead see international migrants as representatives of a globalized world. A transnational perspective can explain how migrants are able to sustain relationships across country-boarders, and return to their homeland on both long and short-term basis. Moreover, it allows the researcher to move beyond the essentialist tendency to view transnational migrants as either refugees or migrants. It is commonly agreed upon today that few countries produce only migrants or only asylum seekers, implying that it is difficult to separate between wholly voluntary or involuntary migrants. What once was a refugee movement may turn into migration for economic improvements (Nyberg Sørensen 2004:5, Van Hear 1998:42). Transnationalism is also receptive to how migrants act as agents of change in transferring capital, ideas, identities and behavior to their homeland (Levitt 1998, Al-Ali & Koser 2002:2).

However, many scholars have questioned the “newness” of transnationalism, as many of the practices labeled today as transnational can also be found among earlier immigrant groups. Glick Shiller (in Portes & DeWind 2007:10) defends the utility of transnationalism by seeing it as a new analytical perspective, not a novel phenomenon. It is commonly agreed upon that the developments in transportation and communication technologies have transformed the character of immigrant transnationalism. Moreover, transnationalism has been criticized for being vague and “an empty vessel” (Guarnizo & Smith 1998:3). Kivisto (2001:550) argues that it “suffers from ambiguity as a result of competing definitions that fail to specify the temporal and spatial parameters of the term”. In line with this, Portes (2001:182) argues that “if transnationalism encompasses all that immigrant groups do, it defines nothing in particular and mostly ends up re-labeling what was already known under other terms”. As a response to much of the criticism, Vertovec (2004:971) asserts that there has been a conceptual change concerning the modes, levels, extent and impact of transnationalism. He argues that much recent work has addressed the relationship between specific practices and the social formations they reproduce.

Responding to the criticism concerning vague conceptualization, much recent scholarship makes distinctions between the phenomenon of transnationalism, transnational social fields (the social morphology), and transnational activities and practices. Carling (2007:15) claims that although there are many alternative terms, it is vital to separate between activities and morphology. For the purposes of this thesis, I will draw on the definition by Portes et al. (1999:219) and the insights by Levitt & Jaworski (2007:32). However, I find the operationalization by Al-Ali et al. (2001a:581) particularly useful. They separate between *transnational activities* and *transnational capabilities*, where activities are seen as something that can be observed and measured, like political lobbying, remittances, and investments. Capabilities, on the other hand, encompass the “willingness and ability of migrant groups to engage in activities that transcend national borders”. This definition includes structural factors influencing the engagement, as well as migrants’ identification with the social, economic and political processes in their homeland. Whereas the dimension of activities will be outlined below, the dimension of capabilities will be discussed at the end of the chapter.

### **2.2.3 Transnational activities**

There are many different ways to categorize transnational activities. Following their operationalization of transnationalism, Al-Ali et al. (2001b:619) have developed a scheme of transnational activities where they separate between activities with a ‘home’ and ‘host’ country focus, based on extensive research among Eritrean and Bosnian refugees in Europe. What makes this categorization especially relevant for this thesis is their focus on activities that might be seen as contributing to reconstruction and development of the home country. Also, the table combines activities that take place at the individual, family and community levels.

**Table 2.1**

Categorization of individual and community activities by type and geographical focus

	<b>Economic</b>	<b>Political</b>	<b>Social</b>	<b>Cultural</b>
<b>'Home' focus</b>	-Financial remittances -Other remittances (medicine, clothes) -Investments -Charitable donations -Taxes -Purchase of government bonds	-Participation in elections -Membership of political parties	-Visits to friends and family -Social contacts -Social remittances -Contributions to newspapers	-Cultural events
<b>'Host' focus</b>	-Charitable donations -Donations to community organizations	-Political rallies -Political demonstrations -Mobilization of political contacts	-Membership of social clubs -Attendance at social events -Links with other organizations -Contributions to newspapers -Participation in discussion groups	-Events to promote culture -Education

Source: Al-Ali et al (2001b)

Mohan (2002:104) criticizes this categorization for overlooking linkages between multiple 'host' locations, and therefore proposes a threefold classification; *Development in the diaspora* is concerned with how members of diasporas use diasporic security and connections to secure economic and social wellbeing. As an example he mentions ethnic businesses in host countries. *Development through the diaspora* concerns how members of diasporas use global and transnational connections to facilitate economic and social well-being, and include for example trade that span countries. *Development by the diaspora* is about "how diasporic flows and continued connections 'back home' facilitate the development – and sometimes the creation – of these homelands" (ibid). This includes the flows, ideas and money to migrants' home country. This third domain is of most relevance to this thesis, but they are all interconnected. Both of these classifications are useful for this thesis.

In terms of political transnational activities, Al-Ali et al.'s scheme calls for some supplementations. Østergaard-Nielsen (2006:4) separates between direct and indirect contributions. Direct support can be economic contributions or political support

directed at families, warring parties or political actors in home country. Indirect support involves lobbying for political support and creating awareness in the host country. Adamson (2002:156) provides a conceptual framework for understanding how transnational communities aim to transform 'home'. She focuses on three ways that members of transnational communities can mobilize politically in order to create political change. The first is to use the political space of the transnational community as a site for mobilization of identities, discourses and narratives that either challenge or strengthen the political regime of the home country. The second option is to work for political change by networking with both state and non-state actors in order to raise international awareness. The third is to mobilize and transfer resources directly to actors in the home country.

It is important to note that all of these different transnational activities can take place in combination with each other, and are often strongly interrelated. Vertovec (2006:6) asserts that "it is overly simplistic to think of diasporas as a monolithic type of social formation, to see transnational ties as of one kind, and to believe that diasporic identifications imprint specific values and kinds of behavior". In line with Anthias' criticism (1998:558) above, members of a diaspora do not feel and act as one.

## **2.3 Diasporas and development**

According to Al-Ali and Koser (2002:7-10), one of the defining characteristics of diasporas is that they have social, economic and political power with a potential impact of their 'home', which is a premise for seeing diasporas as 'agents of development'. The link between migration and development has been approached from several angles. In classical push/pull theories of migration, the mainstream view was that emigration from LDCs could be reversed by diminishing poverty. In line with this, many nation states regarded the loss of nationals as a loss of its resources, also termed brain-drain (Nyberg Sørensen et al. 2002:10).



Today, however, the relationship is often portrayed as operating in a circle where migration generates remittances and increases in human capital that flow back to the country of origin through various transnational ties and return migration, resulting in brain-gain and brain-circulation (Kleist 2008c:99, Bakewell 2008:1342, Castles & Delgado 2008:7). A common assumption behind this line of thought is that migrants are seen as positive ‘agents of change and development’. Following this assumption, a wide variety of international actors like for example the World Bank, IOM, and UNDP are now engaged in exploring the link between diasporas and development. Migrants are now seen as a ‘new’ channel for development initiatives, and offer a direct link between African communities and NGO donors in the West. The rationale behind this is that members of diasporas have a better understanding of the culture in their country of origin than people working in the development business in the West (Bakewell 2009:1). The various ‘diaspora for development’ programs that have been launched lately are concrete examples of how this new interest has influenced the development business. In Somalia the first program (QUESTS) started in 2004, and has had approximately 150 participants. In 2009 the QUESTS-MIDA program (qualified expatriate Somali technical support – migration for development in Africa), a product of a partnership between UNDP and IOM, was introduced. Their objective is to “offer qualified Somali expatriates the opportunity to play a role in the development of their homeland through short-term capacity-building missions”<sup>5</sup>.

Despite the enthusiasm for the win-win-win circle, however, Portes (2009:11) warns against seeing transnationalism as a panacea that neutralizes the negative effects of emigration from LDCs. Bakewell (2008:1342) argues that the underlying assumption of development amongst development agencies is about enabling people to stay at ‘home’. This is in clear contrast to Sen’s (1999) development as freedom’ idea, as migration may represent improved quality of life and new opportunities for many poor people. In another skeptical vein, Kapur (2004:7) argues that ‘the new development mantra’ is not only the result of research findings, but also reflects changing ideologies and the failure of other development approaches. Another line of criticism towards the

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<sup>5</sup> For more information, see <http://www.quests-mida.org/index.php/about-quests-mida> (last accessed 14.02.2010)

current interest in transnational engagement is that little is being done in practice. Few development organizations actively incorporate diasporas in their work. Two exceptions in Norway are Norwegian Refugee Council and Utviklingsfondet. One can thus question the motives of the donors as well (Horst 2008b:1).

### **2.3.1 The many sides of remittances**

As mentioned in the introduction, economic remittances have outpaced the official development assistance. According to estimates from the World Bank, the amount of officially recorded remittance flows that reached developing countries was 339 billion USD in 2008<sup>6</sup>. Yet, the total amount including remittance flows sent through unofficial systems, like for example the Hawala system that many Somalis use, is thought to be much higher. Economic remittances constitute a lifeline for many people in poor countries, especially during conflicts and in post-conflict contexts, due to the lack of economic opportunities and structures (Brinkerhoff 2008:20, Van Hear 2002:202). Diasporas can also invest in their homeland by setting up small businesses and send foreign direct investments (Brinkerhoff 2008:8).

However, there are some challenges and negative impacts with these large sums of remittances as well. First, not everyone has access to remittances. Several studies (Van Hear 2002, Koser & Van Hear 2003:9) have shown that the poorest households cannot afford to send family members to a Western country, and are therefore less likely to receive remittances than better-off families. Remittances may therefore enhance social and economic inequality. Second, remittances may lead to a passive and dangerous dependency. According to De Haas (2005:1274) there are several studies that oppose this argument, and that show how remittances also lead to increased economic activities and wealth. Arguably, however, economic remittances do not automatically contribute to national development. Migrants' wages in host countries are often low, and consequently the resources that they can commit to development projects are

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<sup>6</sup> World Bank, URL: <http://econ.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTDEC/EXTDECPROSPECTS/0,,contentMDK:21121930~menuPK:3145470~pagePK:64165401~piPK:64165026~theSitePK:476883,00.html> (last accessed 28.04.2010)

modest and the effects at the regional and national levels remain limited (Portes 2009:11). Furthermore, as more and more people in sending-countries emigrate through family reunification etc, there are less kin to send remittances to and less economic infrastructure to build on (Portes 2009:20).

Yet, these are not the only problems connected to remittances. For some years now, there has been a lot of focus on diasporas' role as fundraisers that prolong a conflict and their tendency to destabilize peace-building efforts (Demmers 2007:10, Østergaard-Nielsen 2006:6). Collier and Hoeffler (2006:15) claim that in civil conflicts with a large diaspora, conflicts are likely to be prolonged because of the diaspora's financial and material contributions to warring parties. In line with this, Anderson (in Adamson 2002:165) argues that transnational diasporas are increasingly marked by politics of "long-distance nationalism", where transnational migrants are unaccountable because they do not pay the price for the politics they support. Living a comfortable life in the west, they can send money or guns and be national heroes, without having to worry about being punished.

### **2.3.1 Beyond remittances**

Besides remittances, skills and knowledge can flow through diasporas. Brinkerhoff (2008:19-21) argues that transnational contributions to post-conflict societies can be significant, in particular in terms of human capital which may take the form of repatriation or shorter-term philanthropic support. Diasporas can also be used to staff or restaff governments in order for change, as has been the case in Iraq. However, the repatriation of diaspora members may lead to the emergence of a new political elite, which may give rise to political tensions since the diaspora have the chance to run away if the conflict is renewed. Skills transfer, cultural and civic awareness, also termed 'social remittances' (Levitt 1998:926), are also seen as potential resource gains for the country of origin. New ideas regarding technology, business contacts etc. can arise through the professional networks that migrants engage in abroad.

Diasporas can also take a pro-peace role. Instead of long-distance nationalism, diasporas can use the removal of the immediate security threats in the host-country to create space for dialogue, reconciliation and creative conflict resolutions between the groups that were enemies during war. According to Koser (in Østergaard-Nielsen 2006:1) diasporas have great potential to contribute to non-violent conflict resolution, due to their experiences from democratic institutions in the Western world. A lot of the literature on diasporas' role in peace and conflict is one-sided. An important point made by Østergaard-Nielsen (2006:2) is that "Irresponsible long distant nationalists for some are freedom fighters for others."

## **2.4 'Home', identity and explaining engagement**

Explaining homeland engagement from an actor point of view is complex, due to the different factors encompassing identity, understanding of home, kinship relations etc. Moreover, transnational practices do not take place in an imaginary "third space". Guarnizo & Smith (1998:11) therefore argue that transnationalism is bounded and that space matters, implying that the local and national contexts in host and home country shape the likelihood as well as the nature of transnational ties. Following the definition of transnationalism in this thesis, Al-Ali et al.'s (2001b:626) term *transnational capabilities* is useful when explaining engagement. They argue that a person's capability to contribute to development in the homeland can be divided into *capacity* and *desire*. They mention a wide variety of factors spanning social, political and economic dimensions, concerning employment, legal status, governments in host and home countries' attitudes towards diasporas, gender equality, banking systems etc. Whereas some of these factors are very useful, others do not have any explanatory value in my study. One limitation in their typology is the lack of focus on factors concerning the relationship between migrants and their families who stayed behind. I will therefore supplement Al-Ali et al.'s (ibid) research with a short literature review of this in order to best capture the factors that can explain engagement among Somalis. However, first I will discuss diasporas' relationship with 'home'.

### **2.4.1 Identity and meanings of 'home'**

Members of diasporas are immigrants who maintain a connection with and a collective memory about their homeland (Mohan 2002:98-99, Cohen 1997:26). Being in a diaspora can therefore contribute to mobilizing or maintaining a common identity, which again can be reinforced through homeland-related activities (Brinkerhoff 2009:3). A common identity influences the degree of group cohesion and ability to trust co-members, as well as the level of support for what is happening in the homeland. Following the tension between postmodern and political economy approaches within the literature on diasporas and transnationalism, identity is a complex field. Processes of identity formation for diaspora members are dynamic and fluid, which according to some produces hybrid identities. Identity formation in diasporas are moreover shaped and re-shaped by both local and global influences. Guarnizo & Smith (1998:21-23) argue that identity formation in transnational spaces is contextual but not discontinuous. Identities forged 'from below' are therefore a process of constant struggle where discursive communities produce narratives of belonging, resistance or escape.

According to Al-Ali & Koser (2002:8) one of the defining characteristics of transnational migrants is that they have multiple loyalties to places, being connected both 'here' and 'there'. An implication of this is that the meaning of 'home' is constantly changing. 'Home' is not a static conception; rather it involves the imagining, creating, unmaking, changing, losing and moving 'homes'. There are two different perspectives concerning the ways in which identity is shaped and re-shaped and about the significance of place in these processes. One perspective sees people as essentially 'rooted', whereas place is of little significance in the other in terms of identity formation. Most people have a special relation to where they were born and grew up, and where their parents come from. However, this does not mean that people who move experience this as an up-rooting, nor will it necessarily make people re-root in a new place (Malkki 1992:38, Bivand Erdal & Stokke 2009:422).

An important point for the purposes of this thesis is that ‘home’ can represent different things, which influences the engagement and contributions. Is ‘home’ a country, the government, a village, a region, family, or kin? For exile diasporas, like the Kurdish and Armenian, Antounian (in Mertz et al 2007:3) asserts that “their motivation for giving is not the result of family needs, nor is it root in the geographical identification with a village or a region but stems from a broad desire to build a collective home and nation”. Along the same lines, Adamson (2002:155) argues that diasporas’ relationship to their ‘home’ are likely to be defined by a desire for transformation of ‘home’, especially diasporas produced by economic dislocation, political repression or conflict. Mohan (2002a:87) furthermore argues that to understand the developmental potential of diasporas, one must look in to the motivations for leaving home and being in a diaspora. Related to the two perspectives on identity and ‘home’ above, some people see the ‘homeland’ in a utopian light. In line with this, Cohen (1997:26) argues that idealization of ‘home’ creates the desire to return ‘home’ or work to transform ‘home’, which leads us to the next section.

### **2.4.2 Return ‘home’**

Without opposing the importance of ‘home, there are disagreements concerning the importance of return for diasporas. Mohan & Zack-Williams (2002:219) argue that we must avoid generalizing about the importance and place of return for diasporas since different individuals have different desires and meanings about this. According to Brah (in Mohan & Zack-Williams 2002:219) “homing” is a lingering desire that may or may not be realized in reality. Moreover, Brinkerhoff (2008:22) argues that permanent return may not be necessary or possible in order to contribute to development.

Return is especially debated in the refugee literature due to the assumption that refugees would return home when the conflict ended. As examples from around the world have shown, however, this is not necessarily the case. The UNHCR defines three durable solutions for refugees: integration in the country of settlement, resettlement in a third country or return to the homeland. Since the 1990s repatriation

and return have been seen as the preferred alternative, leading to what Black and Koser (1999:7) have termed the institutionalization and idealization of voluntary return. They argue that the rapid speed and optimism about repatriation during this decade has legitimized a discourse of repatriation that is now dominating refugee policy. Their main argument is that return and repatriation is not necessarily the natural “end” product of the migration cycle. Drawing on these criticisms, Van Hear (2006:12) argues that transnationalism may be seen as an ‘enduring’, if not durable solution to displacement. He criticizes the UNHCR for the lack of attention paid to transnational relations and activities, and further asserts that transnationalism is preferred by the displaced themselves.

Nevertheless, some people do return, which is one of the most commonly cited benefits of migration for the sending country due to human capital, given the right conditions. Ideally, migrants are expected to have saved capital and acquired skills abroad that can be productively invested in the sending country (Nyberg Sørensen 2004:13). Ghosh (2000:185-187) argues that the developmental effects of return migration is largely influenced by initial motivations of migration as well as the duration of the stay abroad. A relatively short period abroad is not likely to lead to development in the homeland. However, the potential for impact is increasing after a moderate stay abroad where the migrant has accumulated skills and money. The probability of an effect on development is higher if the workers return with more knowledge or skills than what they left with, if those skills are relevant for the home country, and if the returnees are willing and able to use the skills.

### **2.4.3 Social obligations and social status**

As mentioned above, a short examination of migrants’ relationship with their families who stayed behind is useful in order to analyze Somalis in Norway. Diasporas’ mobilization and activities are likely to be driven by both interests and obligations (Brinkerhoff 2009:3). This is exemplified by Al-Ali et al. (2001a:529) who found that social obligations and social status are important factors when explaining engagement

among Eritreans. In order to understand social obligations, some scholars use social capital (Portes et al. 1999:229). There is a lot of literature on social capital, but the literature is wide and too complex to discuss here. In short, the concept refers to “the ability of actors to secure benefits by virtue of membership in social networks or other social structures” (Portes 1998:6). Social capital is useful for showing how trust, reciprocity and belonging within ethnic groups encourage mutual exchange of resources, and thereby contribute to explaining how migrants depend on networks and social capital to sustain their transnational ties. The importance of reciprocity in transnational kinship groups is elaborated upon by several scholars (Faist 2000:195, Brinkerhoff 2008:3).

Brinkerhoff (ibid) asserts that guilt for escaping makes it important for migrants to support those who stayed behind. Carling (2008:1458), however, argues that repaying the gift of communality is more important than the feeling of guilt. By drawing on Ghassan Hage, Carling (2008:1457) argues that migration can be “a guilt-inducing process within a moral community of social belonging”. Migrants fear being labeled ‘ungrateful’, and therefore adhere to a ‘moral economy of social belonging’ where the culture of repaying the ‘gift of communality’ by accumulating social capital in the host country, or marrying into the right kinship network is important. Yet, it is not only a question about reciprocity, as many migrants have economic debts to their relatives in the home country. However, some migrants experience these various forms of obligations as something negative at times. Al-Ali (2002:115) argues that forced migration can lead to forced transnationalism. In other words, the obligations toward family at ‘home’ become a burden. She argues that the element of social pressure is not only related to individual remittances, but also in relation to collective donations due to pressure about loyalty and compassion for the home country.

Social capital may also serve diaspora members who are interested in ‘doing something for the community’. A diaspora represents a unique context where migrants can enhance their social status and perhaps alter power relations by for example contributing to development projects (Goldring 1998:185). Along the same lines,



Portes (1998:7) argues that a person's donation to a community may result in respect, honor and approval. In relation to this, Mohan (2006:880) argues that obligations are specific to a given sociopolitical community, and an important part of defining a person's status in terms of what a 'good citizen' of that community should do.

#### **2.4.4 Circumstances in host country as driving forces?**

Nyberg Sørensen et al. (2002:18) argue that diaspora activity, whether targeted at home or host country, "take place within a framework of interests and obligations that result from migrants' simultaneous engagement in countries of origin and destination". In the influential book on transnationalism, Basch et al. (1994:18) explained transnational lives with reference to social exclusion, economic insecurity and racism in many Western countries. The feelings of alienation and lack of acceptance among diaspora members were also emphasized by Cohen (1997:26) as one of his defining elements of diasporas. Along the same lines, Levitt and Jaworski (2007:139) argue that the different racial hierarchy migrants may encounter in their country of settlement may limit how 'American' or 'Norwegian' they can be, and thereby also limit their possibilities of obtaining certain positions.

There is a debate among migration scholars concerning how integration influences radicalization and transnational contributions to terrorism and warring parties<sup>7</sup>. In 2007 three Norwegian-Somalis were accused of financing terror by supporting the Somali organization Al-Shabaab. These people were later released, but the media coverage contributed to increased suspicion towards hawala-systems and concern about national loyalties (Horst 2008a:318). Vertovec (2006:4) claims that Europeans are not only skeptic to migrants' remittances due to security concerns. There are people who blame the 'failure of integration'<sup>8</sup> in Europe directly on multicultural policies and ethnic minorities' homeland orientations and practices. According to Portes (2009:9), however, the literature has established that immigrants with a solid

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<sup>7</sup> See for example Demmers 2007 and Kapur 2007 (in Mertz et al. 2007).

<sup>8</sup> Some minorities (for example Somalis in Norway) are characterized by low educational attainment, high levels of unemployment, residential segregation, leading critics to claim that integration has failed.

economic position within society are more likely to take part in transnational activities than the recent arrivals. Corresponding to this, De Haas (2005:1275) labels the view that migrants' transnational orientation is a result of lack of social and economic integration a myth. He asserts that there is no direct correlation between level of integration and degree and kinds of transnational activities. Due to the limited sample in this thesis, it makes no sense to 'prove' this.

## **2.5 Summing up, moving on**

In this chapter the theoretical approach has been outlined, which has consisted of introducing important concepts and reviewing important literature. *Diaspora* is in this thesis used in a descriptive manner, referring to a displaced population that maintains a collective idea of a homeland. *Development* is understood along the lines of the main development organizations (UNDP, World Bank etc.), and refers to a broader transformation of society emphasizing human development. Despite the conceptual and methodological limitations to transnationalism, it has been argued that this perspective is essential in the current context of globalization, in order to capture current flows and relationships between migrants and their 'homes'. In an attempt to take into account the conceptual criticisms, I follow Al-Ali et al.'s (2001a:581) separation between transnational *activities* and *capabilities* in order to specify the levels and modes of transnational engagement. Whereas the dimension of transnational activities is very useful for capturing the scope of migrants' engagement, the dimension of transnational capabilities was supplemented with an outline of social capital and kinship relations in order to assess the factors that can explain the engagement. Moreover, a literature review of the link between migration and development was presented, in order to provide a context for the analysis that follows.

After an overview of the methodology and a background chapter, these theoretical insights will be applied in chapters 5 and 6 in order to analyze the transnational engagement directed at development by the members of the Somaliland diaspora in Norway.

# 3 Methodology

In this chapter the methodological choices will be outlined and accounted for. The emphasis will be on the interviews conducted and the challenges I encountered during the data-gathering and data-analyzing processes.

## 3.1 Methodological choices and challenges

As mentioned in the theoretical chapter, the study of diasporas and transnational engagement is a multidisciplinary field that is dominated by the postmodern school and political economy approaches. This has some implications for the methodological choices in this thesis, since I will draw on both of these approaches. Within the postmodern thought there is not one single reality to have knowledge about, and consequently qualitative interviews are a construction of knowledge. The political economy approach, on the other hand, adheres to the line of thought believing that a reality exists about which we can know things (Kvale 1996:41). Although realizing that research can never be objective, this way of understanding the world is constructive in terms on assessing the scope of the transnational activities. On the other hand, the insights of the postmodern approach are useful in terms of explaining engagements due to the cultural complexity and subjectivity.

Regardless of epistemology, most studies of diaspora engagement and activities are qualitative in nature, and often take the form of historical or empirical analysis where empirical data is collected through interviews. Due to the heterogeneous nature of diasporas, many researchers focus on specific transnational communities (Pikkalainen & Abdile 2008:6). Qualitative research is “means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (Creswell 2009:4). For this reason it is seen as the appropriate means to answer the research questions in this thesis. Qualitative research emphasizes words and inductive approaches to theory generation, which separates it from quantitative research, where the focus is on quantification and deductive theory testing (Bryman 2008:22).

Inductive, exploratory approaches, which are used in this thesis, are seen as most fit to study cultural complexities. The aim in this thesis is not to generate a new theory about diasporas' engagement, but rather to understand more about the actor-dimension of a particular phenomenon. It is quite common among qualitative researchers to use multiple sources of data instead of relying on one single data source, by for example combining participatory observation, interviews and analyzes of texts and documents. This is also called triangulation of sources (Creswell 2009:175), and was used in this thesis in order to increase the validity of the research.

Ideally a multi-sited fieldwork should be conducted when studying transnational engagement to capture these relations from both 'ends'. No matter which definition of transnationalism is used, the perspective implies practices and relations between at least two national localities. However, since transnational engagement may take place in multiple sites, which sites to include? Since the context influences transnational engagement, including too many sites may be challenging in analytical terms, and not be feasible due to practicalities (Kleist 2007:65). Besides, fieldwork will always be partial. In this thesis a multi-sited fieldwork was not conducted for several reasons. By focusing on Norway I was able to get in-depth knowledge about the Somali community here, and prioritize in-depth interviews in a place where I knew the context and language. Moreover, a fieldwork in Somaliland was not seen as imperative due to the focus on the scope of engagement and not effects. I also interviewed Somalis who had returned to Somaliland for longer periods of time (12 and 17 years), and in this way I captured reflections from the other 'end' as well.

## **3.2 Research design**

The research process followed Kvale's (1996:88) seven stages of interview investigation. Off course, some of the stages overlapped, as I conducted interviews over a period of time. Between January 2010 and April 2010, a total of 13 interviews were conducted. All of these interviews took place around Oslo, and lasted between 45 minutes and 2, 5 hours each. The interviews were conducted in Norwegian, but with

some English. I have chosen to use quotes in the original language, Norwegian for the majority, with English translations as an appendix. This was done in order to preserve the interviewees' own words. Anonymity is important in this thesis. The names used in the thesis are therefore not the real names of the interviewees. Moreover, all the interviewees were informed about the aim of the study, and gave their informed consent.

### **3.2.1 Sampling**

The population of interest in this thesis is Norwegian-Somalis originating from Somaliland that engage in transnational activities of various kinds. For this reason, the method of purposive sampling has been used. Purposive sampling is a non-probability form of sampling where the aim of the researcher is to find informants that are relevant for the research question. However, since informants are selected from key characteristics and not by random characteristics, the researcher cannot generalize from sample to population (Bryman 2008:415). One example of purposive research is snowballing, which implies that the researcher builds up layers of contacts. In practice people of interest to the study are contacted and asked for help in order to get in contact with other people of interest (ibid). In the beginning of the research, I was in contact with some people that knew the Somali community well. Through these persons I got in touch with some key people in the community, who helped me locating people of interest for my study. After each interview, I also asked the respondent if he or she knew anyone else that would be of interest to my study. However, there are some challenges to the snowballing method in terms of diversity, as one risks locating people who share interests and have similar ideas and feelings about the topic of interest. I tried to avoid this by using several different entry points into the population. Nevertheless, I did experience that many of my respondents kept referring me back to the same 2-3 people that I had already talked to.

The sample consisted of 2 women and 11 men. The respondents differed between the age of 24 and 65. Four were between 24 and 30, three above 50 and the rest in between. In terms of education, 12 had some form of higher education from Norway or

Somalia or were presently students. Five had full time jobs, four worked part-time, and four interviewees were presently unemployed for various reasons. I may have an over-representation of well-educated and resourceful people in my study, but this is difficult to avoid since they are often the ones who are willing to be interviewed. Moreover, there are few women in this study, as most of the people I got in touch with were men. This might have something to do with how men and women are engaged in different types of activities. One female informant explained to me that many women are more engaged in activities related to integration and children in Norway, whereas many men tend to be more engaged in what happens in Somaliland. This gender division seems to be the case in several studies of Somalis in Norway (see Assal 2004, Heidar 2009). Although there is no specific gender focus in this study, this skewed gender division may be a limitation.

### **3.2.2 Semi-structured interviews**

Collecting data was mainly done through semi-structured interviews, since my aim interest was to let the interviewees describe and explain their lives in their own way. To be able to control the line of questions and focus on the areas of interest to the thesis, semi-structured interviews were seen as more purposeful than unstructured interviews. Importantly, an interview makes changes and follow-up questions possible, as well as questions from the interviewees. One limitation of using interviews is that they provide indirect information through the perceptions of the interviewees. Furthermore, the researcher's presence may in some cases bias responses. Another limitation is that some people do not articulate very well, which may relate to language difficulties (Creswell 2009:179, Bryman 2008:438). In order to make an interview-guide, I followed Bryman's (2008:442) suggestion and asked myself the question "what do I need to know in order to answer each of the research questions I am interested in?". Furthermore, I had Kvale's (1996:133) nine types of questions when formulating the interview-guide. This implies that I used different types of questions, like follow-up questions, direct/indirect questions, specifying questions etc. The three first interviews were a mixture between semi-structured and un-structured interviews, and were helpful in terms of organizing the topic guide better.

The context and location of the interview may affect the interview setting. Ideally, one should find a place where the interviewee feels comfortable and without too much noise, so that the conversation can be more relaxed. Most of the interviews were conducted at public places, usually a café. This could at times be noisy, and more than one time the interviewee greeted a Somali friend. We tried to avoid typical ‘Somali’ cafés, but it could be that some of the interviewees held back information because of being in a public place.

### **3.2.3 Analyzing data**

Interpreting and analyzing qualitative data may be challenging and time-consuming. It simply means making sense out of raw text, and moving deeper into understanding the data. According to Creswell (2009:184-189) it is an on-going process that involves continual reflection about the data. In this thesis the interviews were collected over a period of time, and memos and thoughts were written down after each interview.

In order to analyze the data, Creswell (ibid) proposes 6 steps, where the first step is to organize the data by transcribing the interviews. 9 out of 13 interviews were recorded and thereafter transcribed. The 4 interviews that were not recorded for various reasons, were transcribed based on notes taken during the interview. Transcription was done in order to preserve the interviewees’ own words. Moreover, the researcher is able to pay more attention during the interview. However, transcribing is highly time-consuming, and there is a fear that the interviewees did not answer the questions in a natural way due to the recorder (Bryman 2008:452). The second step is to read through all the data in order to obtain a general sense. Each interview was read through immediately after having been conducted. After all the interviews were collected and transcribed, I read through them once more. The third step is to organize the material into different categories. This step is often called ‘coding’ since it involves segmenting sentences or paragraphs and finding labels for each category. However, does it make sense to extract a paragraph or a sentence from an interview? One might risk losing the whole picture with this process of extracting pieces from its original context (Thagaard

1998:149). Since the respondents' meanings and feelings about Somaliland's development are of great importance in this thesis, no table with different codes was made. Instead, the process was undertaken with color coding and notes with labels and categories. The fourth step involves using the coding process to generate a description of the setting or people, in other words finding the main themes. This was done based on the previous step, and resulted in the division between 'push' and 'pull' factors in chapter 6. The fifth step concerns how to present the description and themes in the analysis. The final step, then, is interpreting the data by for example asking: what were the lessons learned?

### **3.2.4 Researcher as the key instrument**

In qualitative research it is the researcher who collects the data, meaning that he or she is the key instrument. This introduces both ethical and personal issues into the research process (Creswell 2009:175-177). It is thus important for the researcher to recognize his or hers positionality and being reflexive. Reflexivity implies a self-critical and self-conscious analytical scrutiny. It is also important for the researcher to be aware of the different power relationships that exist between the him or her and the informants. Sharing the same background and identity may have a positive effect, as the conversation will be based on common understanding and empathy. It may also facilitate access to the research site. On the other hand, if the topic is sensitive, the respondent may prefer to talk to someone clearly outside the community (Flowerdew & Martin 2005:113).

I am a young Norwegian woman from a middle class family. I do not speak Somali, nor did I know many Somalis beforehand. I chose this topic because of a genuine interest for the link between migrants and development. Most of the people I interviewed were well-educated and engaged in Somaliland's development. Some were also students like me, which made the communication flow easily due to a common platform. However, the fact that I am an ethnic Norwegian and my informants ethnic Somalis may have influenced the relationship. When conducting fieldwork among Somalis in Denmark, Kleist (2007:75) was sometimes seen as a



representative for the Danish society. Due to the negative image of Somalis in Denmark, this does not foster mutual understanding and trust, and she experienced that some informants were not interested in sharing their feelings. Most of my respondents were open and friendly, but I did experience that some people were not interested in being interviewed for these reasons. In Norway as well, there has been a negative image of Somalis in the media. This might explain why many of the informants I interviewed felt the need to take a stand against those Somalis who are unemployed, chewing khat etc. Many told me that they had always worked and that they were tired of having to defend themselves to the media. This is in line with Engebrigtsen's (2006:118) and Fangen's (2007b:79) observations as well. There is therefore a fear that the feeling of stigmatization<sup>9</sup> among Somalis may have led some to over-explain their engagement in order to take a stance against 'the other' Somalis. One positive experience with being an 'outsider' was that several of my informants gave me detailed explanations of the Somali community in Norway and how development aid and organizations in Somaliland function. By choosing to focus on development, I avoided sensitive questions regarding remittances to support warring parties in Somalia. Most of the respondents also found my topic interesting and relevant, which made the conversations flow naturally.

### **3.3 Generalization, validity and reliability**

The aim of an interview in qualitative research is not necessarily to be representative, but to understand how people experience and make sense of their lives. The individual nature of interviews as well as specific context setting makes it very difficult to replicate interviews. Other researchers can corroborate by using similar studies or complimentary techniques, but never replicate in the same way as in statistical research. This is one of the reasons why positivists<sup>10</sup> often criticize in-depth interviews. They argue that the interviewers bias the respondents' answers, and therefore cannot be objective or detached. However, a counter argument from those

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<sup>9</sup> For more about stigmatization among Somalis in Norway, see Engebrigtsen (2006), Fangen (2007).

<sup>10</sup> There are several philosophical worldview assumptions underlying social science research. Positivists believe that scientific knowledge can only be justified if open to empirical testing and verification (Flowerdew & Martin 2005:12, Creswell 2009:5).

who take a humanist or post-structuralist approach to research is that there is no such thing as objectivity in social science research. Social science research will always be, explicitly or implicitly, affected by the experiences, aims and interpretations of the researcher (Valentine 2005:111-112).

There are also some disagreements about the importance of validity and reliability in qualitative research. In short, a valid research closely reflects the world being described, whereas reliability refers to the possibility for replication. According to Cresswell (2009:190) “validity does not carry the same connotation in qualitative research as it does quantitative research, nor is it a companion of reliability”. In line with this, Willis et al. (2007:219) assert that these concepts are based on the assumption that the researcher is looking for universal laws. Along the same lines, Kvale (1996:238) argues that the question of what valid knowledge is involves the question of what truth is. Within a postmodern tradition, then, knowledge and therefore validity are social constructs. For this reason, validity and reliability from quantitative research do not fit with the main aims of interpretative research. Adcock & Collier (2001:529) disagree with this, and claim that measurement validity is relevant in both qualitative and quantitative research. They therefore attempt to design a common framework for assessing measurement validation that is applicable for both of these traditions. Arguably, the emphasis put on the evaluation of measurement validity depends on the type of qualitative research that is conducted. Since generalization is not the aim in this thesis, I will follow the procedures of Willis et al. (2007) and Cresswell (2009).

To assess reliability in qualitative research, Gibbs (in Cresswell 2009:190) suggests that the researcher must check the transcript for mistakes made during transcription, and make sure that the codes and labels do not change meaning throughout the coding process. In this thesis, I always listened to the interview once more after having transcribed it, in order to ensure that I had not forgotten anything of importance. However, one limitation that affects the reliability was language problems. With a few

of my informants there were some challenges in terms of understanding each other. This may also have affected my translations to English.

In order to assess validity the researcher must determine whether the findings are accurate from the standpoints of the researcher, the respondent and the intended audience. This is done by looking at the trustworthiness, authenticity and credibility, and is related to the sample. A sample of 13 respondents seems quite small. However, the respondents varied in terms of age composition, gender, religiosity, education, and had different experiences in terms of transnational engagement and living transnational lives. Two of the interviewees had returned to live in Somaliland for many years, two others had positions within organizations that required them to travel forth and back between Norway and Somaliland often, and some had only returned once on holiday. Considering the amount of data gathered from each interviewee, then, a sample of 13 people can provide an indication of transnational engagement among Somalis in Norway. Cresswell (2009:191) proposes several strategies to check the accuracy of the findings, the most important being the use of multiple sources of information. In this thesis the main sources of information have been interviews with Norwegian-Somalis, informal conversations with other Somalis than my informants and people who know the community well, following the news and debates on Somali websites, and using other studies of the Somali diaspora. Another strategy is to bring the final report or the coded material back to the respondents, to let them determine if it is accurate. Due to time constraints, I did not send the transcribed material back to the informants before I started to analyze the material. Clarifying the bias the researcher brings to the study is also mentioned as a strategy, which was done through the self-critical scrutiny above.

# 4 Somali culture and Somaliland

Transnational engagement cannot be understood disconnected from the context. This chapter will therefore provide an introduction to the history of Somaliland and Somali migration culture. Furthermore, a short introduction to Somalis in Norway will be provided as this is an important element of the context.

## 4.1 Clan and kinship

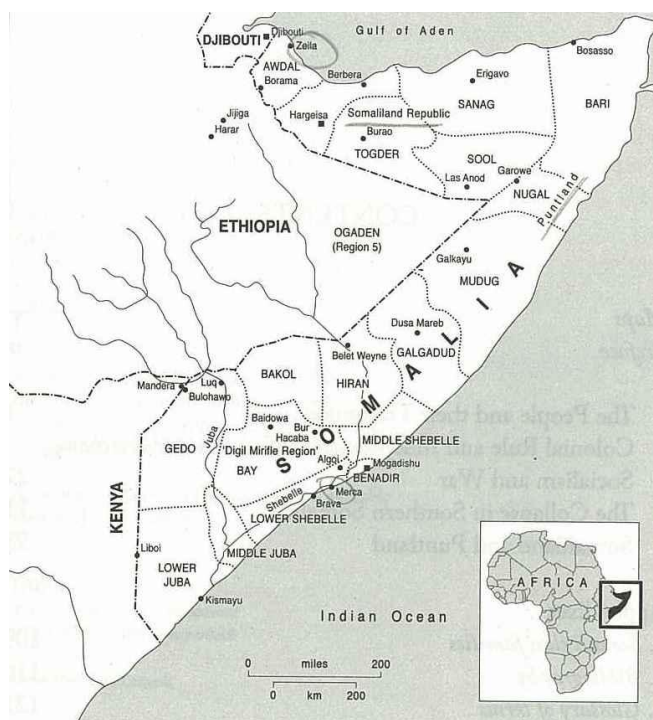
The majority of Somalis belong to a pastoral nomadic culture. Before colonization in the 1880s, the Somali population was politically organized by clan (patrilineal lines) and kinship groups (called reer). This kind of socio-political organization is based on segmentary logic, and must be seen in relation with the difficulties of having a central authority for nomads. Although different political systems have been introduced, clan membership has prevailed as one organizing principle for identity and political agency. The clan is the largest social unit, and there are six main clans. Somaliland is dominated by the Isaq clan. However, for most Somalis the sub-clan, which is based on agnatic descent, plays a more direct role in their daily lives as the clan is too large. These male-based sub-clans have fought or allied with other sub-clans according to interest, and the system implies that close relatives ally against more distant relatives in a conflict situation. The sub-clan can be seen as a social, economic, and political safety net for people, and a tool for politicians. It defines the social hierarchy and the cultural identity, as well as belonging. An important implication of this segmentary logic is that bonds of loyalties are dynamic (Engebrigtsen & Farstad 2004:10, Lewis 2008:49).

## 4.2 Becoming Somaliland

The Somali people traditionally occupy large parts of territory in the Horn of Africa, stretching from the Tana river in northern Kenya in the south to the Awash valley in the North. Upon colonization, the North-Western part became a British Protectorate, South Somalia and the North-East were colonized by the Italians, the French colonized

the area that today is Djibouti, and Ogaden became annexed by Ethiopia. Following independence from the colonial powers in 1960 the former British protectorate, Somaliland, entered a union with its Southern neighbor, the Italian Somalia. The original idea was to create one state with only ethnic Somalis, but instead they remained scattered in the neighboring countries. Despite some ethnic minorities, Somalia thus consisted of a relatively homogenous people, sharing the same ethnicity, religion and language (Lewis 2008:1, Engebrigtsen & Farstad 2004:11).

**Map 4.1 - Somalia and Somaliland (North-West)**



Source: Lewis 2008

### 4.2.1 Conflict and declaration of independence

The period following the reunification of Somaliland and Somalia was characterized by corruption, chaotic electoral politics, and disputes between clans as each group tried to maximize its gains. Several actors therefore welcomed the coup by Siad Barre in 1969. However, this positivism did not last for long as clan tensions continued to increase. The Isaq clan in Somaliland became increasingly marginalized, and was the target of political, social, cultural and political oppression. This led to increasing riots

and political unrest in the North, which resulted in the formation of the Somali National Movement (SNM) by émigrés in London in 1981. In 1988 they launched an all-out offensive against government forces in the North and took control over the major towns in Somaliland. The government responded by destroying Hargeisa and killing more than 50.000 people, and the civil war was a fact. The civil war ended with the fall of Siad Barre in 1991. The same year the SNM proclaimed that their region would resume its independence from the south, and took the colonial name 'Somaliland republic'. At the same time the Haarti group (subset of Daroud clan) declared Puntland to be an autonomous region in the Northeast. The fall of Siad Barre left southern Somalia in the hands of militias and warlords, and is today seen by many as the very definition of a failed state (Kaplan 2009:146-157, Lewis 2008:71-73).

The first years following Somaliland's independence were difficult. In 1994, the bicameral system with a non-elected upper house of elders and an elected lower-house of representatives was introduced. There were several internal armed clashes between 1992 and 1996, mostly between sub-clans over revenues and resources. In a way, then, Somaliland was in a post-war setting twice over. Although there were not as many casualties and refugees during the internal conflicts, there was damage in towns like Hargeisa and Burao (Menkhaus 2005:333). During these years, the diaspora did not play a positive role in Somaliland as Somalis around the world raised funds for 'their' militias. However, since 1997 Somaliland has been relatively stable and peaceful. It is important to note that Somaliland has managed to rebuild the territory with very little external help from the UN or other organizations (Lewis 2008:94-95).

#### **4.2.2 Challenges**

According to a WSP International report (2005:18) Somaliland's most remarkable accomplishment is the commitment to peace and security. All over Somaliland, clans and individuals describe the maintenance of peace as their most important achievement and their priority. The Somaliland diaspora also contributed to reconciliation and peace-building in Somaliland, by for example establishing forums

such as the Somaliland Peace Committee (Pikkalainen & Abdile 2008:41). Furthermore, the Somaliland diaspora has played a large role in reaching political stability and security. However, one challenge to the political reconstruction and threat to peace is the existence of grave conflicts of political, regional and communal interest, and the deliberate mobilization of grievances based on perceived inequities between clans. Yet another real challenge is to improve the level and quality of women's political representation. The fact that only two women were elected to district council seats in 2002 serves as an example.

During the Siad Barre regime Somaliland's economy was hindered by repressive economic restrictions and military control, but after the overthrow the private economy blossomed. Private investors, many from the diaspora, invested in the construction sector, telecommunication sector etc. Thanks to refugees' money transfers, new remittance systems were set up. According to Lewis (2008:99) "despite the difficulties Somaliland faced through its lack of international recognition, it was remarkably successful (...) in the informal economy". Yet, some claim that post-war economic trends are not all for the public good. The absence of effective regulations has led to practices of charcoal trading, overfishing, and uncontrolled pharmaceutical traffic. Another concern is the dependence of livestock trade, with Saudi Arabia as the single export market. Domestic regulation in diverse sectors is therefore needed, together with diversification and coordinated planning. Yet another problem is the lack of human resources. There are few professionals, except for returnees from the diaspora and old people, since there are few specialized colleges or universities (WSP report 2005:21-22).

Several other challenges are facing Somaliland's development. A legacy of the war was the dramatic increase in the use of khat, a stimulant growing in Ethiopia, Kenya and Yemen. Chewing khat is now a daily ritual for as many as 90% of the adult male population in Somaliland. There is hardly any stigma related to the use of khat, but some Somalilanders claim that khat is the primary cause of low productivity and professional negligence. There were few basic social services available to

Somalilanders after the war. Whereas much progress has been made in the education sector, the health and sanitation sector is still struggling (ibid). However, the biggest challenge is perhaps the widespread poverty among the people, and weaknesses and poverty of the central government.

### **4.3 Emigration from Somaliland**

Migration is often said to be at the heart of Somali culture due to the nomadic culture. One effect of colonialism was that mobile livelihoods and nomadism of Somali pastoralists became characterized as international migration when national borders were established (Kleist 2004:4). The nomadic tradition and culture is deeply embedded in Somalis' livelihood strategies which traditionally are based on mobility and dispersal in order to survive in a rough climate. Cindy Horst (in Sheikh & Healy 2009:11) used the concept of 'transnational nomads' to illustrate how Somali refugees were able to adapt their nomadic heritage to life in refugee camps in Kenya. Another example of the centrality of mobility is current moving patterns. A quantitative NOVA study showed that Somalis is the immigrant group in Norway that moves the most. 25 % moved 3 times between 2001 and 2004 (Danielsen & Gulbrandsen 2008:65).

There have been several waves of migration from Somalia. The first wave mainly consisted of seamen who emigrated to the Arab countries and the West. The second wave started when Somalis migrated to the Gulf states as labor migrants. The third wave was caused by the civil war and started in the 1980s when many Somalis in the North left the country due to political unrest. The majority fled across the borders to neighboring states like Kenya and Ethiopia, and some applied for political asylum in Western countries. Following the defeat of the Somali government and the declaration of independence in Somaliland in 1991, many of the refugees from neighboring countries returned to Somaliland. At the same time, the war broke out in large scale in the South, creating massive refugee flows that continue today (Hansen 2004:5-6, Kleist 2004:7). The categories of economic and political migrants are fluid as the



different historical periods have provoked different forms of movements. There also seems to be a class diversification in that the better off, the longer traveled (Nyberg Sørensen 2004:9).

Today, it has become very difficult for asylum seekers from Somaliland and other safe areas to be granted asylum in the West. Most of the Somalis that came from Somaliland during the civil war, have obtained citizenship, which makes mobility easier. Interestingly, there is an on-going movement of Somali-Europeans to Britain, especially from Denmark, Sweden, Norway and the Netherlands. This process is often explained by Somalis' 'nomadic spirit' and the wish to keep on looking for new opportunities (Kleist 2004:10-11, Engebriksen & Fuglerud 2006:1128).

## **4.4 Somalis in Norway**

The connection between migration and development has been gaining increased attention in Norway since the mid-1990s. Several official government papers acknowledge and embrace the important link between migration and development, and aim to include immigrants in Norway in development (Regjeringen 2006, St. meld. nr. 15). A report by the ministry of foreign affairs (MFA, 2006) proposes increased dialogue with the ministry, more information about how to apply for funding, and more advertisement for programs like QUESTS-MIDA. In the White paper Nr. 15 (2008:67) there is an acknowledgement that remittances exceeds the official development aid, and that diasporas have an important role to play in development. Moreover, the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad 2009:3) has outlined six principles for support to civil society in the South, where one of the principles is to "increase diaspora participation in Norwegian development cooperation". However, Horst (2008b:1) argues that Norway is still at an early stage of including diasporas in development. In the Netherlands, for example, funding opportunities are much greater.

Somalis are today the fourth largest immigrant group in Norway. Most Somalis from Somaliland came either as seamen in the 1970s, or as refugees who wanted to escape the political unrest in the North during the 1980s, and later the civil war. The majority of Somalis who came after the breakdown of the Barre regime were from the south. The majority of the 22.000 Somalis in Norway came as refugees, and was granted asylum based on humanitarian grounds (Regjeringen 2009:8). Over half of the population has lived in Norway less than five years. The majority of Somalis that applied for asylum before 1991 belonged to the Isaq clan. When it comes to labor and integration, Somalis are the migrant group with the highest unemployment rates and lowest income levels. Due to a negative image in the media following debates about female circumcision, use of hijab in schools and khat use, many Norwegians have a negative view of Somalis (Engebrigtsen & Farstad 2004:16, Engebrigtsen 2006:118, Fangen 2007). However, according to Fangen (2007b:80) there is a difference between Somalis who arrived in the late 1980s and those who arrived after the mid 1990s. Those who came first are better integrated, and have education and employment.

Engebrigtsen & Farstad (2004:27) point to the importance of networks and transnational bonds among Somalis in Norway. Most Somalis have a large network of family and relatives that expands several borders. If a problematic situation occurs, many rely on their network rather than public services. Interestingly, Norwegian-Somalis are both tied together and fragmented due to clan loyalties. There are approximately 27<sup>11</sup> registered Somali organizations in Oslo, which serve as an example of the fragmentation. Yet, Somalis in Norway managed to get the last person on the list of the Labor party elected into the Oslo city council in 2003 due to accumulation (Engebrigtsen & Farstad 2004:46-47).

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<sup>11</sup> Based on a list by Oslo Kommune of all the migrant organizations in Oslo that applied for funding in 2008.  
Web:  
<http://www.bydelgrunerlokka.oslo.kommune.no/getfile.php/bydel%20gr%C3%BCnerl%C3%B8kka%20%28BGA%29/Internett%20%28BGA%29/EMI/Aktive%20organisasjoner%20per%2020051009.xls> (last accessed 05.03.10)

# 5 Transnational contributions to development

In the previous chapters I have explained the theoretical framework, methodology and background, and I will now discuss the first sub-question. This chapter is thus concerned with the dimension of transnational activities in Al-Ali et al.'s (2001a:581) operational definition of transnationalism. The Somaliland diaspora in Norway are involved in various activities, both with a Norway-focus and a focus on Somaliland. As will be shown, their activities fit well into the schemes developed by Al-Ali et al. (2001b:619) and Mohan (2002:104) described in page 17. It is important to note that many activities with a Norway-focus are not necessarily transnational in character, but can be difficult to separate from those with a potential impact on development. However, it would go beyond the scope of this thesis to examine these activities in detail. The aim of this chapter is to show the scope of the transnational contributions to development. The different transnational activities that are believed to contribute to development will therefore be discussed, and I will attempt to show that 'contributions to development' are not straightforward. Although development in this thesis is understood along the lines of mainstream development, it is important to investigate what the members of the diaspora understand by development, as this might influence what transnational activities they choose to engage in. This will be done in the end of the chapter.

## 5.1 Financial contributions

Somalis use the hawala-system to transfer money to actors in Somalis. The main reason for this is the absence of legal systems to transfer money, but many immigrants also prefer these informal services because they are faster, easier and more convenient (Carling et al. 2007:9). The Hawala system is used both for private remittances and collective remittances, as well as by development organizations in order to transfer

money to partner organizations and projects in countries like Somalia. The image of hawala systems in the media is relatively negative, much due to the focus on how these systems can be used for financing terror.

### **5.1.1 Private remittances**

Remittances have become essential components of Somaliland's economy, and a study from 2000 showed that about US\$ 500 was remitted annually (Ahmed 2000:382). According to Farah (2009:20) up to 60% of Somaliland's income is based on remittances from diaspora members abroad, which illustrate how Somaliland is dependent on remittances. Moreover, a household survey by Lindley (2006:5-7) found that remittances constituted up to 25% of household income in Hargeisa. A large-scale study by Statistic Norway (Blom and Henriksen 2008:35) revealed that 74 % of Somalis sent remittances. Compared to other immigrant groups in Norway, only Sri Lankans with 79 %, sent more remittances than the Somalis. Half of the Somalis who sent remittances did so on a monthly basis.

Remittances are used in various ways, and several estimates have shown that two-thirds of the total amount of remittances goes directly to households (Hansen 2004:7). All of the respondents sent remittances to friends and family members in Somaliland. Hersi, an active Somali in his 50s, explained that he supported between 2-300 family and extended family-members, whereas others remitted to one family member. There were variations in terms of how often they remitted money as well. While Amina, an active and engaged women in her 30s, asserted that remittances "is what we Somalis call monthly contributions", others remitted money when the family needed it. From the interviews it was clear that remittances were understood as a lifeline for family members in Somaliland, which is in line with Van Hear (2002:202). However, Lindley's (2006:13) qualitative data from Somaliland indicated that remittances may diminish efforts to generate other sources of income. When asked about the role of remittances for the people of Somaliland, several interviewees realised the problem of

passivity, and were at times annoyed with relatives who did nothing all they. Yet, they saw it as a necessity.

*Poenget er ikke om det er bra eller ikke bra, det er nødvendig. Alle vil gi noe til sine søsken, sin onkel, sin gamle tante. Det er en prinsipp sak rett og slett. (...) Det er ikke noe sosialhjelp eller velferd som drives av myndighetene. Så du vil dø av sult hvis du ikke får de 100 dollarene i måneden. (...) Tenk på 2. Verdenskrig da mange nordmenn reiste til USA. De sendte penger hjem. Det er samme prinsipp. (...) Hvis det hadde vært organisert på en bedre måte så kunne vi kanskje heller investert i virksomheter eller fabrikker som kunne skapt arbeidsplasser for disse menneskene så de kunne jobbe for det de lever av. Men i dag er det ikke mulig<sup>i</sup>. (Amina)*

By arguing that remittances are a matter of life and death and that there are no alternatives, Amina makes it clear that the diaspora should support their families despite leading to increased passivity. The mentioning of Norwegians in the United States who remitted money back can be seen as an attempt to legitimize remittances, and might be a result of the negative image of the Hawala system and remittances in the media. Yusuf, a young man who is active in an organization, also argues that remittances are necessary, but his explanation highlights another important aspect, namely pride and nationalism.

*Det er veldig lite penger til Somaliland på grunn av anerkjennelsen og alt det der. Så vi har ofret veldig mye penger for å ikke være en del av Somalia. (...) Nettopp fordi man har den nasjonalistiske holdningen så er det liksom..., man vil heller dø enn å være en del av gamle Somalia ikke sant<sup>ii</sup>.*

This quote shows how choosing independence has had its costs for Somaliland. Many people in the diaspora are very proud of what Somaliland has accomplished, and see remittances as a necessity in order to maintain independence.

However, as discussed in the theoretical part, private remittances might lead to social inequality and increased differences between those who receive and those who do not receive remittances from abroad. This seems to be the case in Somaliland as well, and several studies have shown that remittances enhance social inequality (Lindley

2006:13, Gundel 2002:272, Hansen 2004:8). This is related to emigration, as it is costly to send family members abroad. Moreover, most financial remittances flow to the cities and to better-off households (Ahmed 2000:386). In line with this, Yusuf explains that there is a connection between how much money you remit and the size of your family's house in Somaliland.

*Det er som å bo på vestkanten. Som oftest har de bygget hus for de pengene. Det er en sammenheng mellom hvor mye man bidrar og hva slags hus familien din har. Ofte så har de med familie i utlandet høyere status enn de som ikke har noen. (...) Men de som ikke har noen står veldig svakt<sup>iii</sup>.*

Interestingly, the majority of the interviewees did not see inequality as a problem due to the Somali 'culture of sharing' and different way of family organization. A person or family that receives remittances from abroad will normally share with more distant family, and neighbors will help each other in rough times. These findings are in line with Lindley (2006:17), who argues that one cannot generalize about remittances in Somaliland as they can flow from urban to rural areas and from better-off households to poorer ones, due to the culture of sharing and kinship obligations. This is naturally related to networks and clan, and is highlighted by Khalid, an adult active member of the diaspora who is running an organization. He argues that a person will never starve in Somaliland since clan obligates people to help each other. Furthermore, the money that one individual receives will flow into the system, and is in this way beneficial for many people. Nevertheless, despite the culture of sharing, there are ethnic minority groups in Somalia that have not been in a position to travel outside Africa. In Hargeisa there are many returnees from IDP camps in Ethiopia that are in an extremely vulnerable situation (Gundel 2002:272).

These findings based on interviews and studies from Somaliland are mostly in line with the overall literature on private remittances, both in terms of the positive and negative aspects. However, the majority of the interviewees disagreed with the overall literature concerning social and economic inequality, and did not see remittances as a source of problems. Private remittances were seen by Al-Ali et al. (2001b:620) and the

interviewees as contributing to development because they sustain the society and are in this way important in shaping Somaliland's future.

### **5.1.2 Collective remittances**

Collective remittances are quite negligible compared to the volume of family remittances in Somaliland. A study from 2003 showed that around one-third of all remittances are thought to be channelled towards investments of various kinds (Hansen 2004:7). Previous research on both Somalia and other countries has shown that private remittances are mostly used for consumption (Gundel 2002:271). Collective remittances, on the other hand, present an opportunity for linking international development agendas and priorities with local realities and thereby the vision of diasporas as agents of change (Van Hear et al. 2004:24). Ahmed (2000:381) argues that investments in the private sector are slowly becoming more common in Somaliland. However, there is a fear that collective remittances can replace private remittances, which again may be negative for the many families depending on remittances for survival. Asha, a young woman who is a board member of a recently started humanitarian organization, argued that this would not become a problem because family will always come first. Still, in line with Amina above, she would have preferred to invest in a shop where her family members could work. However, due to the limited amount of remittances she is able to send each month, there are no other alternatives. Along the same lines, Nyberg Sørensen (2004:20) rightly points out that family obligations may hinder more productive investments as accumulating capital is challenging when your family awaits their monthly contribution.

Collective remittances can take several forms. In the Somali context it often takes the form of support to health or educational facilities. The diaspora became particularly active with reconstructing hospitals, universities, roads and bridges in the late 1990s after Somaliland had become relatively peaceful and stable (WSP 2005:21). Most of these projects are clan-based and area-based (Fangen 2007a:148). Usually the clan leaders in Somaliland will decide how much each country with many Somalis from

that particular clan is expected to contribute with. This was, according to Abdi, a young interviewee, the case in a recent project where a school was constructed in Hargeisa. From the interviews it was clear that supporting these kinds of projects was quite common in the diaspora, and one informant asserted that around 60% sent collective remittances regularly. Among my interviewees everyone sent collective remittances now and then, usually in order to contribute to reconstructing or building something. The frequency varied, and some interviewees had only sent collective remittances once or twice, whereas others did it several times per year. Those who were members of organizations or involved in running a project usually sent collective remittances monthly.

Sometimes diaspora organizations are established in order to support various development initiatives in Somaliland. Allaybaday is an example of an organization where members from different countries contribute to building and running schools in the Allaybaday region. In other words this is a clan-based organization. Each month the Norway-branch contributes with 550 USD<sup>12</sup>, which is collected from members in Norway. This is an example of a truly transnational organization. Hassan, who is a member in Allaybaday, argues that the organization has a structural effect on development:

*Uten kunnskap, ingen utvikling. Dersom man gir penger til en person kan han kjøpe seg litt mat. Men dersom man gir penger til å bygge skoler så endrer man livet til mange barn<sup>iv</sup>.*

There are also examples of organizations that support projects where all Somalis contribute, like an on-going project of reconstructing a football stadium in Hargeisa. This project is organized through a newly established sports organization, which is a non-clan based organization that focuses on how to activate youth in Somaliland and Norway. A discussion of clan-based collections and projects will be discussed below.

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.allaybaday.com/> (last accessed 15.03.10). Permission to use the real name of the organization.



The way that money is collected for these projects varies. Muhammed, a man in his 60s who returned to work in Somaliland for a long period of time, explained that money was often collected on Friday's in the mosque. He argued that a large amount of money can be collected in the mosque if the imam is competent and manages to raise the feeling and goodwill of people. However, Amina, disagreed with this and asserted that "these are integrated people you know, we do not have collections in the mosque". She explained that some collections are organized through forums like facebook, or simply by using the jungle telegraph. Khalid explained how collection of money for his development project was easy because of the elders. "We have elders and some people that Somalilanders respect". Respect for elders is very important in Somali culture.

### **5.1.3 Clan-based engagement?**

As mentioned above, most contributions to development projects flow through the clan network. There seemed to be mixed feelings about how clan is used in this way, and what clan-based projects meant for development. Abdi explained that clan can be very positive for development due to the competition between clans. The different sub-clans want to show off in Somaliland, and if one clan builds a new medical clinic, the other clans want to show that they can do the same. Two other interviewees pointed out that clan-based engagement make development in local areas possible. Many of the projects where all Somalilanders contribute are situated in Hargeisa or in the other large cities, but with clan-based projects schools are also built in rural areas and smaller cities. When asked a follow-up question concerning the difference between clan and national-based projects, Khalid argued that clan-based is good if you need money fast. Collecting money for national projects takes more time. This is in line with Heidar's (2009:80) findings in her study of Somali diaspora organizations. Many of her respondents seemed to believe that clan was the only realistic option for collecting money, since many people will only give money to the areas that they originate from. In other words using the clan-system for funding made the work of the

organization easier. Yusuf points out that clans are important in terms of trust, which several scholars also have agreed upon as well (Fangen 2007:179).

However, some of Heidar's (2009:80) respondents saw it as a dilemma to use the clan system, since using it would maintain it. This argument is in line with Ahmed in this study, who is a resourceful man in his 40s with higher education:

*Barn som har gått på denne typen skoler får en forsterking av lokal/klan tilhørighet. Jeg skulle ønske at vår hjelp ikke bare var geografisk basert, men også basert på hvor man kan hjelpe mest'.*

It seems logic that having the local school, medical clinic and roads financed and built by members of diasporas from the same clan, can result in a reinforcement of clan loyalty. This will be more discussed, in the section about 'whose development'.

As mentioned in chapter 4, the Somali diaspora is both fragmented and united. According to Kleist (2008b:1137) 'the diaspora' was addressed in several projects in order to include people from diverse clans and organizations. In line with this, Abdi asserts that different Somali sub-clans in Norway usually manage to cooperate on large and important development and reconstruction projects in Somaliland. From this it can be argued that clan-based engagement is complex, and has both positive and negative sides in terms of development.

#### **5.1.4 "The children know that I send money, but they are not interested"**

This quote from Hassan illustrates a concern among many first generation immigrants. Due to the high level of remittances from Somalis in Norway, that are important contributions to development, this is highly relevant to look into in terms of the future of remittances. Portes (2009:11) criticizes the all-encompassing positive vision of transnationalism exactly for this reason, and argues that transnational engagement often stops with the first generation. Along the same lines, Gundel (2002:175) and Hansen (2004:7) argue that it remains to be seen if the second generation Somalis will

continue to send remittances and be engaged in development projects. It is quite obvious that second generation Norwegian-Somalis who have few close relatives in Somaliland and may never have visited, do not have as close ties to the country as their parents. Al-Ali et al.'s (2001b:631) research on Eritreans in the UK showed that many elders worried that young people lacked what they called 'national consciousness' and were too occupied with their life in the UK. This is in line with my findings as well as Pirkkalainen's (2005:76) findings among Somalis in Finland. One respondent, Khalid, uses his son who is born in Norway as an example of someone that does not understand the importance of remittances. However, he asserts that there is a difference between those who are born here and those who came as youth.

However, there seemed to be a difference between the fears of the elder generation and how young Somalis perceived the situation. Findings from the 'Ung i Oslo'<sup>13</sup> survey from 2006 (in Engebriksen & Fuglerud 2007:32) showed that many young Somalis in Norway have a high level of homeland engagement. Although no Somalis that were born in Norway participated in this study, several of the younger respondents illustrate these findings. Yusuf and Khadar arrived in Norway as children, and were very involved in development projects in Somaliland. Both of them had experienced a renewed interest in Somaliland and wanted to be more engaged at the age of 18-19. Yusuf explained this by the role of the parents in making the children aware of the obligations and responsibility towards Somaliland. He also argues that family bonds are not easily wiped out, especially among Somalis.

*Men det tar veldig mye lengre til for somaliere spesielt. (...) Så selv om barna blir norske og integrert så tror jeg at de er veldig bevisste på at man skal ta vare på sin familie. (...) Vi har jo vokst opp med det der med Somaliland, ikke sant, vi er jo de som arver det foreldrene våre kriga for. Så nå føler jeg at jeg må bidra med i hvert fall å få det på kartet, at det er mitt ansvar<sup>vi</sup>.*

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<sup>13</sup> A survey by NOVA based on a sample of around 11 500 youth between 14 and 18 years old. 166 Somalis participated. Tables of interest in this thesis concerning Somalis were extracted from the study for the use of Engebriksen & Fuglerud (2007).

Yusuf's father and grandfather both fought to liberate Somaliland, which can explain why he is feels obliged to support Somaliland's nation-building. Arguably, then, Portes' argument above is rather bombastic and does not seem to be correct in the Somaliland case and the findings in this thesis.

Some of the respondents that worried seemed to believe that Somaliland would change before this would become a problem. By change they pointed to better governance, better economy and recognition.

*Vi håper jo at det skjer noe til neste generasjon vokser opp, at Somaliland endrer seg. Hvis valget blir vellykket og problemfritt så håper vi at verden anerkjenner Somaliland. Dahabshiil, største hawalasystem, åpner snart i Djibouti. (...) De åpner også for aksjeinvesteringer, så kanskje de neste generasjonene som ikke forstår den u-hjelpen vi driver med kan investere penger i stedet. Dahabshiil har sagt at for hver krone som tjenes på aksjene så vil 50 øre gå til velferdssystem<sup>vii</sup>. (Amina)*

This quote illustrates hope that alternative ways of contributing to development may make the second generation want to contribute although they do not have the same link to their parents' home country. However, as the surveys and examples of Yusuf and Khadar have shown, one cannot generalize about the future of remittances and other contributions. Despite the pessimistic view in the literature, my findings indicate that this is complex, and it may be that a strong Somali identity will last for more than one generation. Moreover, the reasons for why migrants contribute to development are not only related to supporting close relatives, as will be shown in the next chapter.

## **5.2 Business investments**

As mentioned in the theoretical chapter, setting up small-scale businesses is an important contribution to economic development (Brinkerhoff 2008:8). It is easy to open a business in Somaliland due to minimal commercial regulations, and since relatively little capital is needed. Many diaspora returnees have therefore opened small scale businesses like restaurants, beauty salons etc. (Hansen 2006:142, Nyberg

Sørensen 2004:13). Evidently, setting up a business in Somaliland is difficult to do from the diaspora as one needs to be in contact with the local realities within Somaliland. Most often, then, return is required. Two of the interviewees who returned to work in Somaliland for several years, had experience with setting up a business. They were both working as consultants within their domains; one was running a medical clinic and worked as a consultant for the Government, and the other as an advisor within the construction sector. The general idea among the interviewees was that this was very good for development, since the diaspora create demand for labor and hence contribute to economic development.

One interesting example of a business initiative is Asante oil, a company set up by Kjell Inge Røkke and 4 others<sup>14</sup>. In 2008 they signed an agreement with the ministry of water and minerals in Somaliland, allowing them to drill for oil. According to Rystad, the head of delegation, the project was in line with the Norwegian MFA and the principles guiding the Oil for Development project. Moreover, he asserted that the project was initiated because Somaliland needs this type of development. Yet, due to financial difficulties the company was shut down in 2009. This is an example of cooperation between the diaspora and well-established business people. From the interviews, it was clear that this project had a lot of support from the Somaliland diaspora in Norway, and two diaspora members went with the company delegation to visit Somaliland last year. Moreover, many talked about oil as gold that would change Somaliland and push the development in the right direction. It is proven that there is oil in Somalia, and the largest reserve is situated within the boundaries of Somaliland (Hansen 2006:184). However, how would the finding of oil affect the stability in Somaliland? Ahmed argues:

*Man kan ikke bygge opp en nasjon og invitere Kjell Inge Røkke. Asante betyr takk, men jeg vet ikke hva man skal takke for hvis man finner olje. Man må ha gode institusjoner med god fordeling før man finner olje<sup>viii</sup>.*

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<sup>14</sup> <http://arkiv.na24.no/Nyheter/351663/R%C3%B8kkes+ukjente+Afrika-konflikt.html> (last accessed 15.03.10)

This also relates to the challenge of clan fractions which was emphasized by the WSP report (2005:18). If the institutions are not strong, there is a fear that different sub-clans will begin disputing. Furthermore, Al-Shabab might try to intervene if oil is found in Somaliland. It is thus a threat both to peace and to stability. I asked one of the members in the delegation that went to Somaliland with Asante Oil last year about this, but he disagreed and asserted that Somaliland is strong enough to resist threats like Al-Shabab. Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to examine this question in more detail, it is a good example to illustrate that what at first glance seems as beneficial for development may also threaten Somaliland's stability.

### **5.3 Social remittances and temporary visits**

According to Al-Ali et al (2001b:624) "it is not only people who travel between countries, but also ideas, values and cultural artefacts", also termed social remittances (Levitt 1998). According to Kleist (2008c:99) many of the recent reports and documents on migration and development have also taken into consideration the ideas of social remittances and brain-gain. Obviously, it is difficult to measure the transfer of social remittances as there are few formal channels for transfer. One example of a channel is the Somaliland forum, which claims to be "an independent think-thank that brings together Somalilanders, mainly from the diaspora". It started as a discussion group on the Internet, but has evolved into an organization whose central aim is a peaceful, united and democratic Somaliland, and to encourage and support the implementation of sustainable development projects in Somaliland (Hansen 2004:10). Some of the interviewees were or had previously been members of the Forum. Another example is Somscan, a Scandinavian organization whose aim is collective return to Somaliland and reconstruction and development of Burao. Kleist (2008c:110) sees this project as an example of social remittances because the members are introducing new "ways of doing things differently in terms of collective and democratic organization, inspired by their experiences with well-functioning democracies in Scandinavia".

Since social remittances are best transferred face-to-face, the transfer is most likely to occur through diaspora members that are on holiday or have returned to Somaliland, or Somalis visiting Norway. According to Weiss (2007:172) circular migration is one of the most prominent features of Somali migration, and often takes the form of shuttling between Somalis and the West for the duration of holidays. Many members of the diaspora visit Somaliland during summertime, and the majority of the interviewees had been back several times. It was clear from the interviews that the members of the diaspora believed that the flow of ideas, attitudes and values were valuable for Somaliland's development, in particular within the political sphere. Rashid, a previous board member of Somali Welfare organization (SWO) argues:

*Diasporaen kommer fra et utviklet land, de skjønner mer. De kommer fra et system som fungerer, der det ikke er korrupsjon og sånn. Diasporaen er derfor viktig for å overføre et mer moderne og demokratisk system til Somalia<sup>ix</sup>.*

The interviewees also seemed to believe that social remittances were relevant in terms of issues like human rights and women's rights. Bivand Erdal (2006:72) made the same observation about the Tamil diaspora in Norway. A more concrete example of social remittances from Norway is an organization with a focus on women's rights and gender equality. This organization had capacity building and the exchange of information as one of its aims, and had several times invited Somali women to Norway in order to teach them and train them about women's rights when it comes to education, and how to run women's organizations. Furthermore, Khalid explained that the President in Somaliland has attended several seminars and conferences in Western countries in order to learn from the diaspora. Importantly, as these two examples have shown, social remittances can be transferred in several ways.

Arguably, the value of social remittances depends on how successful the Somali communities are in establishing themselves overseas and building their own skills and capabilities. If successful, it can be expected that the nature of economic remittances will change from gifts for personal consumption to community and development-minded assistance (Sheikh & Healy 2009:31). Based on this study, the Somaliland

diaspora in Norway has managed to build skills and capabilities. However, although some individuals are highly skilled, it will take time before they are organized in a way implied by Sheikh & Healy (ibid). It is also unlikely that remittances will change completely, as people have obligation towards their families and kin, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

## **5.4 Permanent return and brain-circulation**

Following the previous section, it is essential to examine how the members of the diaspora relate to return. Research from Somaliland has shown that returnees from the West are few in numbers, which is in line with the overall literature (see Black & Koser 1999:7, Brinkerhoff 2008:22 above). However, they play an important role within the economy, in politics, and in developing the country. They have the economy, social and cultural resources to return and survive in Somaliland, and for an educated male elite there is work to be found in NGOs and UN-organizations in Hargeisa (Fink-Nielsen et al. 2004:34). Yet, several studies have shown that few Somalis settle in Somaliland for good. Many become ‘revolving returnees’, who despite intentions of permanent return end up returning to the Western country for example when the contract with the NGO runs out (Hansen 2006:32, Nyberg Sørensen 2004:15). According to several of the interviewees there are currently between 200 and 300 returnees from Norway in Somaliland.

Muhammed and Asad were examples of ‘revolving returnees’, who after 12 and 17 years had returned to Norway due to better prospects for education for children and sickness. As mentioned above, this is often explained by the Somali nomadic spirit. Muhammed illustrates well how one returnee from the West play an important role in reconstructing the country. Although he had decided to return to Somaliland upon arrival in Norway, he waited until he had enough resources to survive there. He returned several times before his intended permanent return in 1997. Muhammed worked as an engineer, and was engaged in construction work. A lot of the time he



worked as a volunteer, yet he made enough money to get by. He helped rebuilding the country by re-constructing bridges, roads and houses all over Somaliland. However, returning was not easy as his wife and children decided to return to Norway after only one and a half year in Somaliland, due to lack of educational and health facilities. Muhammed returned to Norway last year due to illness, but considers going back to Somaliland.

However, although both Asad and Muhammed have contributed greatly to Somaliland's reconstruction and development, one cannot assume that a returnee from the West is contributing to development just because he or she has lived in a Western country. As was argued in the theoretical chapter (see Ghost 2000), there are several conditions that influence a returnee's prospects to contribute to development. Moreover, many diaspora returnees take up important positions in international NGOs and within politics. The majority of the interviewees found this positive as the diaspora has more cultural knowledge than other NGO employees. However, Rashid criticizes that diaspora returnees take up all well-paid jobs in Somaliland due to the high unemployment rate (90%). Some of the interviewees also worried that tensions would arise since diaspora members who return to work in Somaliland always have the possibility to leave, which is in line with the argumentation by Sheikh & Healy (2009) in the theoretical chapter.

From the interviews it was clear that members of the Somaliland diaspora have a strong homeland-orientation and that many have thought about return. However, in line with the literature presented in chapter 2, many did not see it as a realistic option due to practicalities. The responses from the interviewees can be categorized into three main reasons. The majority expressed a strong wish to return in order to contribute to development and reconstruction, but pointed to the practical challenges. The main challenges mentioned were the different living standards between Norway and Somaliland, possibilities of education for children, and employment. A second group expressed a wish to return for a short period of time to work for QUESTS-MIDA or similar programs, or at time of retirement. The third group saw permanent return as

impossible due to the challenges and did not have a strong wish. Hersi's explanation differs, as he sees his role in the diaspora as too important to consider return.

*Jeg har familie og barn her. Og så mener jeg at diaspora trengs for Somaliland's rolle. Jeg vil være viktig både for Somaliland og Norge, en ambassadør for begge land<sup>x</sup>.*

Most of the interviewees saw the QUESTS-MIDA program as a good opportunity for Somalis to contribute to the development in Somaliland with human capital. Many expressed a wish to contribute in a program like this, if the right position was announced. Some were skeptical due to the education needed in order to participate, and the payment provided by the UN. Asad was the most skeptical, and the most knowledgeable due to his experience with return. He did not believe that Norwegian-Somalis who have lived in Norway for 10 or 15 years can do any good in Somaliland. First, he did not believe that they actually wanted to return, and secondly that the living conditions were too tough for someone used to Western comfort. Thirdly, he argued that those who go there only stay in Hargeisa and live a luxury life. Asad further argued that sending one skilled person from the diaspora is very costly, but has little impact. Instead the diaspora can contribute with better educational facilities, so that Somaliland is able to educate more skilled people. Ahmed had a similar idea, and believed that capacity building through seminars is a better option with a long-lasting effect. One of the critiques towards these sorts of programs is that they are very resource-demanding. Also, although there are individual success stories, one cannot expect the re-integration and return of professionals to take place in large scale (Bivand Erdal 2006:59).

These findings seem to be in line with Van Hear's (2006:12) argument in the theoretical chapter that transnationalism is an enduring solution that is preferred by the migrants themselves. Permanent return is unlikely for the majority of Somalis in Norway, but travelling forth and back, and possibly return at retirement, seemed to be the most likely option. This is in line with Kleist (2007:224) as well, who found that return is highly unlikely unless a western citizenship is obtained in order to secure

continued mobility between the West and Somaliland. Interestingly, the wish to return did not seem to be related to education or employment in the Norwegian society. These examples show that one cannot generalize about the meaning and practice of return among members of a diaspora, as was argued by Mohan and Williams (2002:219).

## **5.5 Contributing to political development?**

Contributions to political development, democracy and stability are seen as an important part of the overall development of a nation, and are needed in Somaliland. As mentioned in the introduction, the Somaliland diaspora has been especially active in the political realm in terms of taking up minister posts and being involved in political parties, which must be seen in relation with Somaliland's special situation of trying to obtain international recognition.

### **5.5.1 Involvement with political parties**

Members of the Somaliland diaspora in Norway are involved in diverse activities related to strengthening the political system in Somaliland. The minister of agriculture is a returnee from Norway, and many diaspora members are engaged in one of the three political parties. Some of these people may become ministers depending on who wins the up-coming election. The majority of the interviewees saw this as contributions to development since they bring with them skills and knowledge from the Western world. However, as mentioned in the previous section, one can question if people from the diaspora are automatically positive for Somaliland's development. Ahmed questions if politicians from the West are able to represent nomads after 15-20 years abroad, since their priorities do not necessarily reflect the interests and needs of the local population.

One of the parties is promoted as a 'diaspora-party' that stands for justice and welfare. From the interviews it was clear that the majority of those who wanted to see change

in Somaliland's political sphere supported this party. Amina, one of the members in Norway explains:

*Vi har laget et eget diaspora parti – UCID – det står for justice and welfare – og grunnen til det er at de fleste som er medlem av dette partiet har bodd mange år i andre land og tatt utdanning derfra, og vi ønsker å vise at det går an å drive politikken på en skikkelig måte som er fri for korrupsjon, demokratisk basert, og teknologisk basert<sup>xi</sup>.*

In a study of African diasporas in the Netherlands, Mahamoud (2005:27-32) found that the diaspora supported positive political forces by transmitting new ideas and practices that help the promotion of democracy. Supporting the UCID party which represents a new and more democratic direction may serve as an example of that, and is in this way a positive contribution to development. He also found that diasporas promote and demand well-functioning public institutions that are transparent, adhere to the principle of freedom of expression, and that are accountable to the people. How the diaspora has certain demands regarding transparency and corruption can be illustrated through the current project of reconstructing a football stadium in Hargeisa. Before they want to start building, they have strict demands to the authorities in Somaliland.

*Det er en som nylig reiste til Hargeisa for å snakke med de som driver med sport og fortelle om hvilke krav vi stiller. Og da måtte vi stille skikkelige krav, om at det skal være en nasjonal arena og ikke sånn klan eller en spesiell gruppe, eller en side av byen. Det er vi skikkelig opptatt av, at det skal være for alle. Det er et av kriteriene vi kommer til å stille. Vi har ikke tenkt å bygge en bane før vi har noe juridisk som vi er enige i. (...) og dette med korrupsjon. Vi har tenkt til å være veldig nøye på det<sup>xii</sup>. (Yusuf)*

### **5.5.2 Struggling for recognition**

According to Hansen (2006:135) it can be difficult for members of the diaspora to find work within politics in Somaliland as it is localized and non-lucrative. Some individuals succeed, but this requires a lot of effort and may depend on connection and network in Somaliland. However, it is easy for the diaspora to be engaged in the struggle for recognition due to the transnational character. Several scholars point to the

link between recognition and development. Kaplan (2008:152) argues that Somaliland needs recognition in order to obtain loans from other states or multilateral organizations like the IMF. Without recognition no banks or security companies will set up branches, and few want to invest in the country due to the lack of security and insurance. This is pointed out by Amina as well, and she believes that Somaliland would be much more advanced if recognized. She uses Asante oil as an example of investment projects that had to shut down due to insurance concerns.

In Norway there is one organization whose aim is to work for recognition. The leader of this organization is the official representative of Somaliland in Norway. Adamson's (2002:160-165) three strategies of political mobilization that were explained in the theoretical chapter, can shed a light on how this organization works. They use the political space for mobilization of identities that strengthens the regime in the home country by organizing cultural events like the day of independence (18<sup>th</sup> of May). They also network with both state and non-state actors in order to raise awareness about recognition. As an example they attend meetings with the MFA in order to lobby for support. One representative from the MFA attended a meeting in November held by the Norwegian NGO Utviklingsfondet concerning the up-coming election, a sign that the Norwegian government is interested in dialog with Somalis from Somaliland. The effect of lobbying depends on many factors, like gaining access to the political system in the host country. The Kurds provide an example of a transnational community that has been successful in producing and sustaining an 'imagined community' through the systematic use of satellite television and social construction of national symbols and practices. One obstacle for the Somaliland diaspora in Norway is that the Norwegian government is also involved with South-Somalia. Furthermore, the organization mobilize and transfer resources directly to actors in Somaliland by collective and private remittances as discussed, and by travelling around in Norway in order to collect money for specific projects in Somaliland.

An interesting finding in this study was that many of the interviewees talked about recognition in the same way, as if someone has 'preached' about the benefits that will

automatically follow. The argument centre around that recognition of Somaliland will be the solution for the problems in Somalia, due to a strong Somaliland state governed by several sub-clans. It was difficult to grasp why this would be the ultimate solution for Somalia. Some pointed to that Somaliland could intervene and support a peace process, others that south-Somalia would look to Somaliland as an ideal, whereas others again did not have any substantial explanations. It can thus be argued that this way of arguing is an element in a nationalistic discourse, which is also argued by Ahmed and Ali. They were more skeptical and did not adhere to the discourse. Ali asserts that Somaliland authorities have tried to construct a new identity based on the differences between the two colonial powers (British and Italian), and that it is difficult for the nation to advance because of this. Along the same lines, Ahmed argues:

*Internasjonal anerkjennelse kommer ikke dalende fra himmelen. Det er flere ledd man må gjennom. (...) Økonomi er veldig viktig for å få stabilitet. Folk har nå ventet i 20 år på at man skal bli eget land, og folk har blitt sjåvinistiske. Når dette ikke fører noe videre og arbeidsledigheten er stor... De som har tatt utdannelse kommer til å emigrere, og da er det sannsynlig at andre blir frustrerte. Og da kan det bli opptøyer og islamister kan spille sitt kort...<sup>xiii</sup>*

Ahmed thus argues that chauvinism has hindered development, and that recognition might have fatal consequences for Somaliland's stability. He uses the example of Taiwan to show why Somaliland should focus on development and substantial democracy instead of wasting time on recognition. Moreover, he believes that internal recognition must come before international recognition, and that a nation must be built from within. This example both show that one cannot generalize about the interests of *the diaspora*, and that political support in terms of working for recognition is not seen as beneficial for development by everyone.

## **5.6 Understandings of development**

Now that the different transnational activities that the Somaliland diaspora in Norway engage in have been outlined and discussed, it is relevant to look into how the 'agents'

themselves understand development. This is important since bottom-up approaches are an integral part of mainstream development today. Moreover, it has an effect on the activities they engage in, and perhaps more important, on what they see as contributions to development. According to Bakewell (2008:1341) the lack of analysis of development in the literature of the link between migration and development is a critical flaw.

### **5.6.1 How is development understood among informants?**

In line with the understanding in this thesis, the interviewees seemed to adhere to a mainstream understanding of development, although in a more narrow sense. The majority of the interviewees seemed to understand development as progress in various sectors. Some compared the level of development in Somaliland with Norway, and saw Norway as an ideal. The majority pointed to the necessity of schools and education facilities, clean water, infrastructure, improved health system, and food security, in other words basic needs. One can thus argue that they understood development in a rather technocratic way, with an emphasis on reconstruction and modernization. Their understanding is in line with mainstream development thinking due to the belief in progress and interventions. However, since few emphasized broader transformations of society, it was somewhat narrow. Around half of the interviewees pointed to the need for democracy, though they had various understandings of what democracy was. Muhammed claims that a democratic and strong government is necessary to plan and coordinate development, which is in line with the challenges discussed in chapter 4. Some of the interviewees with higher education within the social sciences were more knowledgeable about development theories and thinking and had a broader understanding of development in terms of institution-building. As an example, Ahmed points to strong institutions and capacity-building due to the inequalities that exist. He argues that only the elite understands the institutions that exist today, which is problematic as the state shall serve all its citizens. One can argue that Ahmed has a holistic approach to development, which might explain why he has a somewhat more narrow perception of what activities that may

contribute to development. His focus on strong institutions, for example, can explain why he fears that the finding of oil will not be a contribution to development. The majority of the interviewees, on the other hand, understood development in a more technocratic and practical way by focusing on material needs. This can explain why they saw the possibilities of income as an automatic contribution to development.

An interesting question in relation to how they understand development is why they have that particular understanding. In terms of the technocratic understanding of development, I argue that it can be explained by the interviewees' association of development with reconstruction due to the civil war. There is clearly need for interventions in a country that is in ruin after a war and with a relatively weak government. This understanding of development is therefore based on the needs in Somaliland that they can see with their own eyes, and not necessarily informed by broader development theory.

Interestingly, several of the interviewees have attended meetings with the MFA or NGOs, who have one particular understanding and strategy of how to achieve development. In relation to this, Horst (2008b:3) rightly asks if western governments and NGOs simply want migrants to 'do development' in their understanding, or if they are open for other understandings, perceptions and practices of development and how it should be achieved? The example of Khalid can illustrate this. He had attended several meetings with the MFA concerning development.

*Utvikling.. Jeg har vært to ganger i UD på seminar der de forklarer oss utvikling, u-land, og hvordan vi skal hjelpe. Og hvordan de skal hjelpe oss<sup>xiv</sup>.*

For Khalid it seems that development equals Norwegian foreign development policy considering how he was 'taught' what development was by the MFA. It would therefore be interesting to study the relationship between the Norwegian MFA and diasporas, considering the positive official policy towards diasporas (see chapter 4). Is there a match between theory and practice? Answering this question is beyond the scope of this paper, but is nevertheless highly relevant. Following Horst's (ibid)



argument, Castles and Delgado (2008:8) argue that adopting perspectives from the South into the current debate means questioning the dominant understanding of development from a Western point of view. For example, many Southern countries prefer more business ventures over traditional development aid. As an illustration of this, Ahmed explained that he wanted to open a coffee shop in Somaliland, since that this would create demand for labour. However, it is very difficult to get support from NORAD or other agencies for these kinds of ideas.

### **5.6.2 Whose development?**

An interesting question in relation to the Somaliland diaspora is whose development they are speaking of, which is of direct relevance for the scope of their engagement. This is clearly related to the discussion concerning clan-based engagement above. Are they developing clans, families or the nation? When asked about how they understood 'home', all of the interviewees saw Somaliland as a country with separate borders. Some also specified that Somaliland was a geographically distinct area that was inhabited by various clans. This is relevant as the understanding of 'home' has an influence on the prospects for development. Emphasizing that they understood Somaliland as a nation and not area or clan-based is interesting, and may show that they see themselves involved in a nation-building process. However, the many clan-based development projects may lead us to believe that they are developing clans or kin. Loyalty thus seems to lie at the local areas where one is from, which is well-formulated in a quote by Ahmed:

*Sender man penger fordi det er en somalier i Somaliland som trenger hjelp, eller er det fordi han tilhører ens egen gruppe? Lojaliteten ligger i lokale områder. Men dette er ikke lett. (...) Greit nok at vi skal hjelpe, men ikke via klanstrukturer. Men heller hvor vi kan få mest mulig ut av de pengene vi betaler<sup>xv</sup>.*

Ahmed feels that Somaliland cannot advance to a more developed nation as long as clan-based logic is so dominant, which can explain why he is so critical of the clan system. Yusuf, who is a part of a national project of building a football stadium in

Hargeisa, chose to be in a project where he could help the most people possible. He explained that he would prefer to build a stadium in the local area he originates from, but chose Hargeisa as he was able to help more people there. In other words his main loyalty lies in the local area where he originates from, but he chooses to be involved in a project where he can get full value for the money he donates. However, developing local areas is clearly related to the capacity for implementing development projects. The fact that local contacts are crucial and that funding is easier in clan-based projects must be taken into consideration.

Importantly, these various forms of engagement are interrelated, and not necessarily mutually exclusive. Khadar points out that there is a difference between supporting your family and contributing to development projects. Supporting relatives in Somaliland is a necessity, and has nothing to do with contributing to development projects in general. In his words, “it is something personal”. Along the same lines, Asha states that the organization she is involved with in Norway does nothing in particular for her family. She therefore has to send remittances to them unrelated to contributions to development. Moreover, the interviewees who are heavily engaged in politics in order to ‘develop the nation’ also send private and collective remittances. Based on these arguments, one can argue that it is possible to direct one’s engagement at different areas and people simultaneously. Moreover, to what extent is loyalty to local areas something particular? Regardless of sender-country, the majority of private remittances flow to family and kin, hence to a local area. The loyalty therefore lies with local areas in countries that are not organized by clan as well. Yet, since clan is the cause of conflict in Somalia, this naturally creates ambivalent feelings. Importantly, Somalis contribute to development regardless of how they understand ‘home’.

## **5.7 Summary**

The table by Al-Ali et al. (2001b) outlined in the theoretical framework is useful for summarizing the transnational activities among Somalis in Norway.

**Table 5.1**

	Economic	Political	Social	Cultural
Somaliland Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Private remittances</li> <li>- Collective remittances</li> <li>- Other material remittances like clothes, medicines etc.</li> <li>- Investments in small-scale businesses</li> <li>- Investments in houses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Membership in political parties</li> <li>- take up political posts in Somaliland</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- visit family and friends</li> <li>- social remittances</li> </ul>	
Norway Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- donations to Somali community organizations focused on integration etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- lobbying for and mobilization of political contacts</li> <li>- Lobbying for recognition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- membership in Somali organizations</li> <li>- Attendance at social events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-18th of May celebration</li> <li>- other cultural or religious events</li> </ul>

Based on interviews, Engebriksen & Farstad (2004), Fangen (2007), websites to diverse Somalis organizations.

From this it can be concluded that the Somaliland diaspora are engaged in a wide variety of transnational activities that span economic, political, social and cultural categories. Based on literature on transnational activities (see Al-Ali et al. 2001b, Van Hear et al. 2004) and opinions of the interviewees, all of these activities can be seen as contributions to development. Remittances in terms of sustaining the society and thereby important in shaping Somaliland’s future, social remittances due to the prospects for transfers of skills and ideas, return in terms of human capital, and political development due to human capital and social remittances. However, some of these transnational activities can both contribute to development and be negative for development, depending on the eye that sees. What according to some people seems to be a contribution to development, like international recognition, can be seen as a hinder for development by others. Although discussing impacts is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is important to realize that

‘contributions to development’ are not always straightforward, and subject to personal opinions and understandings of development.

One dimension missing from Al-Ali et al.’s scheme is return and volunteer work. In line with the literature on return, few respondents found it practically possible to return. This implies that although there are individual success stories, return is unlikely to have a big impact on development in Somaliland. Members of the Somaliland diaspora seem to favor living transnational lives where they can remain connected both ‘here and there’, and possibly return upon retirement or to work for shorter periods of time. Remittances seem to be the transnational activity that almost everyone in the diaspora engages in, and is the transnational activity that is most common to discuss in terms of diasporas’ contributions to development.

In this chapter I have also shown that members of the diaspora adhere to a mainstream understanding of development due to the belief for intervention. However, the majority associated development with reconstruction, and thus had a rather technical understanding. Interestingly, as the example of Ahmed showed, the understanding of development might influence what is perceived as a contribution to development. Furthermore, it was interesting to find that they directed their development efforts towards clans, families and the nation, at times simultaneously. An important finding in terms of opinions about the various transnational activities and level of engagement, is that the diaspora is heterogeneous, which is in line with the literature. In order to get a better understanding of the transnational contributions, it is necessary to look into what factors that can explain the transnational engagement.

## 6 Explaining homeland engagements

In the previous chapter I discussed and analyzed the scope of the contributions to development by employing Al-Ali et al.'s (2001b) categorization of transnational activities. In this chapter the aim is to explain the engagements and discuss some of the factors that can shed a light on why members of the Somaliland diaspora in Norway wish to contribute to development. Al-Ali et al.'s (2001b:626) dimension of transnational capabilities is therefore useful and relevant in this chapter. However, as was discussed in page 22, not all of the factors they mention have any explanatory value in this thesis. For this reason, I will not follow their categorization of factors to the same extent as was done when discussing transnational activities. Moreover, I find this difficult as factors influencing capacity and desire may at times overlap. Although acknowledging that transnational practices do not take place in a vacuum and that structural factors matter, the emphasis will be on the interviewees' desire and conditions to contribute. However, this is a very complex question as there can be a myriad of factors intertwined, and one person can 'fit' with all the explanations given. I therefore found it purposeful to separate between 'push' and 'pull' factors. In this thesis 'push' factors are negative factors in Norway that make people want to be more engaged in development in Somaliland. 'Pull' factors, on the other hand, refer to the factors concerning Somaliland that drive them towards more engagement with/in Somaliland. This divide is not clear-cut, but made in an attempt to clarify reasons for engagement. Importantly, this division is not related to physical migration and moving.

What complicates this area further is that everyone referred to the same reasons, like poverty and insecurity in Somaliland. According to Fink-Nielsen et al. (2004:36) most Somalis share the same goal of rebuilding the nation, but choose different strategies. This is in line with Adamson's (2002, see page 24) argument that conflict-driven diasporas often work to transform 'home'. My findings suggest that identifying reasons for engagement is complex, implying that there is a need to move beyond the stated interests of the interviewees and analyze driving forces that are not explicitly stated in the interviews. Development donors, including diasporas, usually have an

agenda behind their aid, as we shall see in this chapter. Within the development industry today one can hardly speak of a mutual exchange relationship based on reciprocity. In the case of remittances, then, can one talk of a donor with power and a receiver without? The relationship between the donor and the receiver of remittances for example, may lead to a change in the balance of power. Or do the receivers have power in terms of guilt-inducement for leaving family members behind? Some of these questions are difficult to answer since the empirical data consist of interviews with Somalis in Norway only. What is important to remember is that the connections between people at 'home' and those abroad are what constitute transnationalism. Transnational contributions are therefore not one-way transfers based on pure altruism, but rather two-way exchanges (Van Hear 2002:221).

## **6.1 Structural factors influencing capacity**

There are several structural factors that influence an individual's capacity to contribute to development. Al-Ali et al. (2001b:627) mention the attitudes of both 'host' and 'home' countries. The Norwegian government's positive stance towards including diasporas is a factor that enables the involvement of diasporas. However, there is still a way to go in terms of practice concerning funding for development projects, constructive dialogue, and cooperation between diasporas and the MFA and NGOs. The government in Somaliland is also very positive towards the diaspora, and encourages remittances and human capital transfers. Moreover, Al-Ali et al. (ibid) point to the importance of access to banking facilities as an important factor that influences the capacity. For transfers to countries without accountable and non-functioning banking systems, hawala services may be the only available option for sending remittances (Koser & Van Hear 2003:9). In Norway there are several hawala operators, the largest being Dahabshiil. However, since 9/11 the scrutiny of these systems and demands of formalization are challenging. In a way, the clan-system can also be seen as something that enables transnational contributions. This is because network and contacts in Somaliland are important in order to implement development

projects. From the interviews it seemed as if those with important positions within the Somali community in Norway or in Somaliland, were part of an elite that had important contacts before emigration. Furthermore, the possibility to live transnational lives depends on a secure legal status in the host-country, as well as access to pensions etc (Al-Ali et al. 2001b:628). My informants had Norwegian citizenship, but access to pensions is more complicated as it depends on employment.

According to Al-Ali et al. (ibid:627) employment is the most important factor influencing the capacity of a person to contributing. In terms of remittances this is true, but most Somali seem to find a way to send some remittances regardless of income. Based on a Statistics Norway report (Blom and Henriksen 2008:77), 61% of Somalis in Norway did not have employment in 2005/2006. However, in the previous chapter we saw that 74% sent remittances (ibid:35). Arguably, unemployment disable the possibilities to make larger investments in Somaliland, and perhaps also for initiating development projects. Based on my data, however, it is difficult to see any pattern about the importance of the structural factors, since everyone had citizenship and the majority had employment.

## **6.2 'Push' factors**

### **6.2.1 Marginalization in Norway**

There are scholars who point out that the formation of diasporic identities is related to racial and cultural exclusion and marginalization in Western countries, which was accounted for in the theoretical chapter. Several of the interviewees argued that they were constantly reminded that they are foreigners in Norway due to the way they look.

*When I am here everyone sees me as a black man from Somalia. I have to accept that. I have the same rights, and that is no problem. I have to accept that I will not be the same as a Norwegian. But I have the same rights and nobody will discriminate me. I can find work. Many rights that I can not find in Somalia. Sometimes you get annoyed, but reality is reality. (Muhammed)*

This was also found in Hansen's (2006:149) research, who argues that experiences of racism and exclusion are important reasons for why many Somalis in the diaspora choose to return to Somaliland, where they can fulfill their identity. Another example among my respondents is Asha, who feels discriminated and judged because of the way she dresses (fully covered with only the face visible). This is also pointed out by Fink-Nielsen et al. (2004:33) who argue that construction of exile and homeland often revolves around exclusion from the national identity in the country of residence, in particular in terms of religion and skin color. Along the same lines, Engebrigtsen & Fuglerud (2006:1128) found that many Somalis in Norway wish to move to England due to the opportunity to live a 'true' Muslim life. Both Khadar and Asha are examples of the latter, except that they want to move to Somaliland.

*På 90 tallet så var det ikke så mye press mot muslimene. Media hadde ikke sin agenda om islam daglig, og det var ikke terrorisme og lignende. Men jo lengre jeg har vært her jo mer negativt bilde av islam har media og folk generelt fått. Og da tenker jeg hvordan kan det være i fremtida. Masse ekstreme holdninger blant grupper. Ikke bare i Norge, men i England, Nederland, Sveits...<sup>xvi</sup> (Khadar)*

*Det er vanskelig å være muslim i Norge. Det er vanskelig å be 5 ganger om dagen. På jobb får jeg ikke lov til å ta pauser for å be, selv om mange andre tar røykepauser. De sier at det ikke fins noe sted for å be.. Hvis jeg hadde vært i Somaliland hadde det ikke vært sånn, der kunne jeg vært meg selv<sup>xvii</sup>. (Amina)*

Both Amina and Khadar are young (under 30 years old), came to Norway as children, and hold Bachelor degrees. In other words they are resourceful Somalis. However, as mentioned in the theoretical chapter, the relationship between integration and homeland engagement is complex. Although it is interesting to note that two resourceful and seemingly well-integrated Somalis want to move due to marginalization, I cannot conclude anything about the importance of marginalization for transnational engagement based on these findings.



## 6.2.2 Lack of opportunities

Another push-factor related to marginalization is the lack of opportunities in Norway. Many Somalis experience loss of pride in Norway due to having to start their education all over upon arrival. The example of Asad may illustrate this. He came to Norway as an educated doctor, but his education was not formally recognized in Norway. He tried to study at the University in order to formalize his degree, but had to work as a translator at the same time in order to get an income. After a while, he stopped his studies and returned to Somaliland where he was able to work as a doctor. This loss of status taken together with having to rely on public welfare may result in a decline in social esteem and life opportunities (see Engebriksen 2004, 2006 and Fangen 2006, 2007). Ahmed argues that this can explain why so many Somalis rely on welfare services. He argues that Somalis are good entrepreneurs due to the nomad lifestyle of always having to depend on the rain season to come. It is also part of their life style to be risk-takers. In Norway it is 'constantly raining' due to the easy access to welfare, which means that people are able to live just fine without taking any risks. This makes people passive, and might lead to a negative spiral of leaning on welfare support.

Both Hansen (2006:68, 88) and Kleist (2007:226) found that some of the most active diaspora members rarely experienced marginalization. Hansen labels this group 'professionals', who are people with solid education. Instead, this group experienced constraints in a different way, through what some of Hansen's respondents called 'glass ceiling'. The Somalis in his research used the expression to refer to the lack of opportunities for upward mobility and 'being somebody' they had in the West due to skin colour and religion. Levitt & Jaworski's (2007:139) argument in the theoretical chapter about how a different racial hierarchy may hinder access to certain positions, fall along the same lines and can also illustrate Muhammed's statement above. This kind of thinking was present among several interviewees, in particular among the younger ones, although they did not use the term 'glass ceiling' explicitly. This is linked to opportunities and idealization of Somaliland which will be discussed below.

### 6.2.3 'Home' is Somaliland!

Seeing Somaliland as the homeland is difficult to categorize as a 'push' or 'pull' factor, as it can be both. Here it is seen as a 'push' factor since circumstances in Norway and development donors push migrants toward engagement. In Somaliland's constitution a citizen is defined as "any person who is a patrial of Somaliland being a descendant of a person residing in Somaliland on 26<sup>th</sup> June 1960 or earlier shall be recognised as a citizen of Somaliland"<sup>15</sup>. This implies that identifying with Somaliland as a homeland is unchallenged, since membership is defined by blood/clan. However, although members of the diaspora are allowed to call themselves Somalilanders, the interesting question is how they understand Somaliland. In the words of Yusuf, 'nothing is like your home country where you were born'. Many of the informants labelled Somaliland as their 'homeland', but also asserted that they had two 'homes'. Both Muhammed and Khalid give the impression that although Norway is 'home' due to family, Somaliland is the 'real homeland'.

*Jeg er to personer. Kroppen min er her, men hjerne og blodet er der. Hjernen min tenker om mitt hjemland, om folket og jeg må hjelpe. Men kroppen min er her for å se barna<sup>xviii</sup>.(Khalid)*

Asha, on the other hand, relates homeland to marginalization. Her 'real homeland' is Somaliland due to challenges in Norway. She asserts that "Norway would have been my homeland if it was not for the discrimination". Besides Asha's explanation, one can ask why the interviewees see Somaliland as their 'real home'. According to Hansen (2006:140) this has to do with today's 'diaspora as agents of development' discourse. Due to this discourse Somalis are constantly reminded that their 'real' homeland lies elsewhere. Along the same lines, Bakewell (2008:1354) argues that "the current interest in migrants' engagement in development is overlaid with an expectation that migrants should want to maintain their links with the country of origin and, moreover, want to contribute to its development". This implies that the current discourse is operating with an essentialized notion of 'belonging' to a particular place.

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<sup>15</sup> <http://www.somalilandgov.com/> - Somaliland constitution online. (last accessed 31.03.10)

Although it is a proven fact that many migrants maintain strong ties with their families in the homeland, Bakewell's aim is to question the moralistic overtones of the assumption that migrants should develop their 'nations'. Ali, who works for a Norwegian NGO in Somaliland, was transferred from his job in Syria to Somalia due to the NGO's policy of involving more people from the diaspora. However, Ali asserts that he does not care if he works in Somalia or somewhere else, he is 'not burning' for Somalia in particular. One can thus argue that seeing Somaliland as 'the real home' not only relates to a strong homeland orientation, but is also related to development donors.

In this section we have seen that there are certain conditions in Norway that 'push' Somalis towards greater engagement with their home country. As discussed in the theoretical chapter, several scholars see marginalization as one of the main driving forces behind transnational engagement, yet this is complex. However, my findings do indicate that loss of status and lack of opportunities in Norway are important factors.

## **6.3 'Pull' factors**

### **6.3.1 Solidarity based on a common identity**

The importance of a common identity and belonging for diasporas' homeland engagement was accounted for in the theoretical chapter (see Brinkerhoff 2009:3), and can be seen as factors that forge solidarity for Somalis in the homeland. Identification with the diaspora was also mentioned by Al-Ali et al. (2001b:630) as a factor that influences the desire. Many of my informants argued along the lines of Ahmed:

*Det er jo et land der jeg ble født og har mye tilknytning til, via familie og etnisk tilhørighet. For meg er det ingenting bedre enn at det blir et fredig sted. Jeg kunne gitt alt for at disse menneskene som bor der får fred og økonomisk vekst som gjør at folk ikke vandrer ut lengre<sup>xix</sup>.*

For this reason it is important to look at how the interviewees define their Somali identity. Previous research on Somalis in Norway points to various findings. The “Ung i Oslo” survey showed that 8 out of 10 young Somalis claim to have a strong sense of belonging to the Somali culture. In a qualitative follow-up study, Engebriksen & Fuglerud (2007:80) found that some of the youth argued that the label Norwegian-Somali was meaningless since one’s nationality does not depend on one’s present location. However, in a qualitative study by Fangen (2007a:102) the findings pointed in more diverse directions. She found that Somalis in Norway articulate their identity and adjustment to Norway in three different ways; becoming as Norwegian as possible, mixing the best of two cultures, and being mostly Somali. From the interviews collected for this thesis it was clear that belonging to Somaliland and maintaining a Somali identity was important, in line with Engebriksen & Fuglerud. However, in contrast to their research several of the interviewees in this thesis used the label Norwegian-Somali to identify themselves and argued that they felt both Norwegian and Somali. Still, one must be aware that there is no linear relationship between ‘being’ Somali and transnational contributions. In line with the theoretical discussion in page 23, identity formation for diaspora members is fluid, and several informants explained that they had multiple identities. Fangen (2007a:115) found that some Somalis who defined themselves as merely Somali were not active or participated. At the same time, some of the most active defined themselves as both Somali and Norwegian, which fits well with my informants.

Although the Somali community in Norway is both fragmented and united, we have now established that the Somali identity is strong. This relates to the strong homeland orientation, and enhances the prospects for development. Positive attitudes towards home country are one of the factors Al-Ali et al. (2001b:627) mention as influencing desire. The identification and belonging to Somaliland was especially strong in the beginning of Somali immigration to Norway, and led to creation of the Somali Welfare Organization in 1987 (Assal 2004:110). Many of the elder interviewees had been a part of the SWO since the creation. According to Yusuf the strong commitment to Somaliland is the result of identifying with the civil war and Somaliland’s fight for

justice and freedom. Another example of a strong homeland orientation is the contact with 'home'. All of the interviewees followed the news from Somalia and Somaliland closely. For some it was a daily routine to check out the news both in the morning and evening. Many also had daily contact with relatives or friends via telephone. This shows how newer and cheaper technology as a result of globalization has influenced migrants' relationship with 'home'. It is also well-known that Somalis, in particular men, tend to gather together at cafés in the evenings to discuss news and events in Somalia, and listen to BBC Somali service. Al-Ali & Koser (2002:7) argue that 'home' not only refers to social and cultural belonging, but also to a sense of self and one's identity. In line with this, Muhammed explained how Somalis are missing something due to the absence of a functioning country at 'home'.

### **6.3.2 Obligations and responsibility**

Obligations are difficult to categorize as either 'push' or 'pull', since there are complex reasons behind obligations. However, it is nevertheless a factor that drives people towards engagement. Literature on Somali migrants has shown that many remit money out of obligation (Hansen 2007:162, Horst 2007:93, Hammond 2007:1). Horst (2007:93) shows that family obligations can cause great pressures on Somalis in Minneapolis. Some choose not to get married to be able to support the family, due to the difficulty of having to support two different families in Somalia. This is in line with Hammond's (2007:1-2) research of Somalis in Lewiston, Maine, where she found that many Somalis felt pressured to send money and that relatives in Somalia did not understand how difficult life in the West is. There is also a great deal pressure on migrants who visit or have returned to Somaliland. According to Hansen (2007:165) the Somali term "habhab hearts" (water melon hearts) is often used to describe diaspora Somalilanders who are too soft to refuse requests for help.

The majority of the interviewees expressed that supporting family and friends in Somaliland was their responsibility and an obligation due to the lack of social services and possibilities to get a job there. Amina asserts that remittances are necessary for the survival of small children in Somaliland and therefore a 'matter of principle', as her

quote in the previous chapter showed. In line with this, Muhammed argues that Somalis have feelings because of the civil war, and claims that “if you have feelings, you are obliged to help”. Several of the interviewees expressed feelings of guilt for those who stayed behind, and articulated their engagement around this. Amina explains that she sees herself as very lucky to be in Norway:

*Når jeg reiser dit og ser disse menneskenes, spesielt barns skjebne så blir jeg veldig rørt. (...) Jeg ser selv at jeg er heldig, ikke sant, som har kommet til Norge og bor i Norge og klarer meg fint. Men så tenker jeg at hvorfor har Gud valgt meg og latt dem være i den skjebnen der<sup>xx</sup>.*

Amina’s quote can be seen as an example of Brinkerhoff’s (2008:8) argument from the theoretical chapter that migration can be a guilt-inducing process.

Supporting Somaliland’s quest for international recognition may also be an obligation. Hansen (2006:137) argues that the diaspora’s relationship with Somaliland is guided by a patriotic and moral discourse obliging them to contribute to recognition and development, since they are better physically and politically connected to where the decisions regarding Somaliland’s future are being made. Although citizenship is defined by blood, several of Hansen’s (ibid) informants argued that ‘a real Somalilander’ had to do something for his country. Hersi presents the same line of thought when asked about the role of the diaspora for Somaliland’s development. He asserts that the diaspora in all countries is a major support in the ‘struggle for Somaliland’s freedom’ (his words). Yusuf’s statement in chapter 5, where he explained that he was obliged to help since his father had fought for Somaliland’s freedom, serve as an illustration of this line of thinking as well. One of Hansen’s (ibid:85) informants argued along the lines of John F. Kennedy that “you should not ask what Somaliland can do for you, but what you can do for Somaliland”. This is clearly related to Mohan’s (2006:880) argument in the theoretical chapter about being a ‘good citizen’. Several of the interviewees articulated their engagement along the same lines, by emphasizing in what areas they could contribute to development. Or in

other words, within what transnational field they could make the most positive difference. For Hassan this is education, and for Khalid sports.

Nevertheless, as pointed out in the theoretical chapter, obligations can at times feel ‘forced’, both in terms of support to family and collective remittances. Al-Ali’s (2002:115) term ‘forced transnationalism’ is useful for explaining how Somalis in Norway are pulled towards greater involvement with their home country than they wish for due to family responsibilities and obligations. In line with Hansen’s (2006:172) findings, Abdi explains how he has had to flee to a hotel at the end of the holiday in Somaliland because he is running out of money.

*Jeg returnerer på ferie annethvert år. Da bor jeg litt hos bestemor og litt på hotell. Jeg må ofte flykte til et hotell på slutten fordi pengene tar slutt. Hehe. Det er mange i familien som ønsker penger og som kommer på besøk...<sup>xxi</sup>*

Although he finishes his sentence with a ‘haha’, he admits that it can be frustrating. Another example is Yusuf, who gets annoyed with ungrateful and demanding relatives at times.

*Men de har blitt veldig bortskjemte, de har det. Hvert år så økes det man sender, men de er like utakknemmelige. De har mer behov, ikke sant, forbruket øker og sånne ting<sup>xxii</sup>.*

Obligation can also arise through family and clan in Norway. Khadar experienced obligations from the elders in his clan. He became engaged in volunteer work in 2006, because some elders convinced him and some other young Norwegian-Somalis into doing something for their homeland.

*De fortalte oss hvordan ting var og viste oss video, og fortalte at disse folkene ikke har andre enn dere. Dere er nødt til å bidra, det er ikke mye som kreves, kanskje 100 kr månedlig. Og få til en organisasjon, og så kan vi få til noe. **(Hvem er de?)** Det var de eldre som hadde jobbet med dette her på forhånd i flere år<sup>xxiii</sup>.*

As the example with Khadar shows, clan is a source of obligation for many Somalis. Several of the interviewees seemed to agree that obligations to contribute were

enhanced in clan-based projects. It seemed to be quite common to be asked for money donations from members of one's clan for various projects. Ahmed explains how unknown clan members have approached him at cafés for example, and asked for donations to projects in the area where his father is from.

Importantly, pressure can also come from within the diaspora community. When asked about how many that send remittances, Muhammed asserted that “some people forget their country” while shaking his head. Amina's quote about how remittances are a “matter of principle” fall along the same lines. An important point in this respect is that both Amina and Muhammed are well-educated people with good salaries. Even though they do not see these obligations as ‘forced transnationalism’, other Somalis in the diaspora without employment or employment with low salary may feel the obligations differently. In fact, Muhammed and Amina may create pressure and obligations by claiming that Somalis with feelings contribute. This is pointed out by Hammond (2007:12) as well. She argues that people who are not able to fulfill their obligations as members of a diaspora community or clan may feel ashamed. Along the lines of Mohan's (2006:880), then, Muhammed's statements imply that people who are not able to send remittances are not good citizens of the Somali community. Moreover, people who are not able to send remittances fail to repay the ‘gift of communality’, that was discussed in the theoretical chapter, in his view (Carling 2008:1458).

My findings indicate that obligations are an important factor for why members of the Somaliland diaspora in Norway contribute to development, which is in line with literature on remittances from Somalia. As has been shown, the discussion in the theoretical chapter concerning reciprocity, ‘a moral community of social belonging’, and being a ‘good citizen’, can shed a light on the experiences of Somalis in Norway.

### **6.3.3 Securing livelihood**

Seeing remittances as an exchange is particularly the case in countries where emigration has been an important part of the household livelihood strategy. This



implies that emigration can be seen as a way of spreading risk by investment in human capital (Mohan 2006:871). Since most Somalis emigrated due to conflict, it is unlikely that emigration was part of a well-calculated strategy for most Somali households. However, it can nevertheless be seen as a way of risk spreading, which is an important element of Somali livelihood due to the nomadic lifestyle. This can explain why so many Somalis feel obliged to assist their families, and must be understood in relation to the socio-political segmentary organization among Somalis. Bjork (2007:102) has studied the importance of clan among Somalis in Finland, and found that it was highly sensitive and politicized. Although many argued that clan was less important now than upon arrival and maintained that they would not teach their children about clans, it seemed to play an important role in terms of maintaining kin networks that could come to use in times of crisis (Bjork 2007:108).

Maintaining a strong sense of belonging despite geographical distance seemed to be important for the interviewees, and many invested great amounts of money in their families in Somaliland. Several of the interviewees had invested in houses for their families, that they could live in when visiting Somaliland, and possibly return to one day if desired. Yusuf gives an example of how investment in kin has resulted in that his family in Somaliland has been able to change their lifestyle.

*Familien min har gått fra å være nomader til å være urbane folk der alle går på skole, har telefoner, de har internett hjemme, tv og bor i et stort hus. Det er helt snudd opp ned nettopp fordi vi gjennom 10 år har investert i ting til dem<sup>xxiv</sup>.*

Yusuf's example shows how upward social mobility is made possible by family members abroad, and how this changes the traditional social relations, especially between nomads and people in the cities.

According to Bjork (2007:108) the sub-clan reflects ancestral clan territories and is important in the diaspora due to the prospects for return to one's ancestral land where one is guaranteed protection. Maintaining transnational family ties therefore also relates to prospects for return. As was discussed in the previous chapter, many of the

respondents expressed a strong wish to return someday. Yet, it is difficult to return to Somaliland without network. It is difficult to establish a link between the level of transnational ties and prospects for return, since the majority shared a strong desire without any concrete or realistic plans. One interviewee with a concrete plan to return is Khadar, who articulates his engagement in a development organization around his possible return. Recall from above that he wants to return due to the opportunities that exist in Somaliland and marginalization in Norway. He also has close family in Somaliland, with who he was in contact with daily. Furthermore, the aim of the organization he is involved in is to develop a region in Somaliland by building schools and child care centre, something that Khadar can profit of upon return due to a better developed region and the status that comes along.

The concept of social capital which was brought up in the theoretical chapter can shed a light on these investments. Both Yusuf and Khadar use their economic capital in Norway to invest in social capital and network relations in Somaliland. How the different forms of capital can be converted into social capital and vice versa is extensively covered by Bourdieu (1986:53-54). The logic of converting capital has to do with its value in Norway and in Somaliland. By converting economic capital from Norway into social capital in Somaliland, livelihood and one's status within the Somaliland community and in the family is secured.

#### **6.3.4 Opportunities**

As already mentioned, an important part of the nomadic culture is to always look for better opportunities and greener pasture. In relation to this, Somaliland is by many Somalis in the diaspora seen as a 'country of opportunities'. The focus on oil as a savior discussed in the previous chapter serves as an illustration of idealizing Somaliland, since it is often used to show the bright future that lies ahead for Somaliland. In terms of entrepreneurship, Khadar wants to return to Somaliland to open a business because 'everything is possible there'. He argues that one can open any kind of business and monopolize the market. This is an example of what Hansen

(2006:142) calls ‘the sky is the limit’ thinking among many Somalis, and is clearly related to the lack of opportunities in Norway.

In the theoretical chapter it was argued that ‘home’ is by some migrants seen as a utopian ideal, and Khadar’s image of Somaliland may serve as an example of this. Several other interviewees portrayed Somaliland as a peaceful haven where there was a system and a kind of democracy, compared to the south. Although the interviewees were well aware of the challenges and difficulties in Somaliland, many idealized it to a certain degree in terms of possibilities, peace and the culture. Interestingly, some of the younger interviewees seemed to have a more ideal image of Somaliland than the older generation, which was a finding in Fangen’s (2007a:125) research as well.

### **6.3.5 Making a difference due to being different?**

Another pull-factor is the desire to make a difference, which off course is strongly related to the previous section and the lack of opportunities in Norway. This desire to make a difference was especially present among many elder interviewees, who had been a part of the SNM and fled Somaliland in the 1980s as political opponents of Siad Barre’s tyranny. These men explained their engagement in the language of patriotism and the order of nations, a finding in Fink-Nielsen et al. (2004:27) research as well. Some of these men have returned to Somaliland to contribute to reconstruction, whereas others have important positions within the Norwegian and Somaliland community today.

Asad and Muhammed, who returned to work in Somaliland, are in particular emphasizing how they can contribute because they have a resource that is needed in Somaliland. Asad, a doctor, describes:

*Jeg tenkte: hva kan jeg gjøre. Du må gjøre noe for verden, du kan ikke bare spise og sove. Du må gjøre noen forandringer. Jeg bestemte meg for at i Norge jeg kan gjøre liten nytte for meg. Her fins det mange leger og utdannede folk. Hvis jeg hadde jobbet i Norge jeg hadde jobbet bare for meg selv. Det er ingen som dør hvis jeg ikke jobber. Men der nede i Somalia jeg kunne hjelpe masse*

*folk, folk som ikke hadde leger. Jeg opprettet for eksempel nytt system i Burao. (...) I dag de hjelper kanskje 2000 hver måned. Så det hjelper masse folk. Jeg tror at jeg kan gjøre masse der nede. Jeg tenker ikke på penger og på å leve godt. Da hadde jeg blitt her. Jeg tenker heller på hvordan jeg kan hjelpe noen der, hvordan jeg kan bruke min ressurs. Det er det som drev meg ut<sup>xxv</sup>.*

From this quote we can see that Asad articulated his engagement around wanting to ‘make a difference’, being a resource, and altruism. He emphasizes how he is needed in Somaliland due to the lack of doctors and educated people. Along the same lines as Asad, Muhammed stresses how he has helped rebuilding a country that was in ruin when he first came, and he proudly repeats several times the amount of bridges he has helped to reconstruct. This corresponds to what Hansen (2006:143) has labelled the ‘image of virginity’. Due to the massive destructions of large cities in Somaliland, members of the diaspora see themselves as persons who will play an important role in the future of Somaliland.

Asad explains how he used his resource and being from the diaspora to construct a new health system in Burao. Hassan argues along the same lines, but his accomplishments have taken place in Norway. He explains that his organization functions well due to Western organizational structure and is therefore able to help more people in Somaliland. These are clearly examples of social remittances which were discussed in the previous chapter, yet they are also important factors for explaining engagement.

This way of framing one’s engagement fits well with what Kleist (2007:227) has labelled ‘the diaspora discourse’ and Hansen (2006:88) ‘the discourse of difference making’. The essence is that the diaspora is articulated as an agent of modernity and development. Kleist found that the majority of the Somscan (collective return organization mentioned above) members emphasized their moral responsibility for sharing the skills, competences and economic sources they had gained from a life in the West. Along the same lines, Hansen (2006:88) found that those who identify with this discourse distance themselves from clan logic within politics, illiteracy, and other

‘traditional’ elements in Somaliland. They therefore position themselves in a transnational field as being insiders and outsiders simultaneously, claiming national belonging and governance vis-à-vis Somaliland, while at the same time being outsiders who went to the West and accumulated important human resources while the locals went through the war. This way of thinking and framing one’s engagement was a finding in this study as well. Several of the better educated interviewees distanced themselves from khat and clan and argued along the lines of being a resource and understanding the needs in Somaliland better. Moreover, Asad, Muhammed, and Hassan illustrate how the diaspora is articulated as an agent of change and modernity.

In this respect it is important to note that this discourse is not only articulated by diaspora members themselves, but also by authorities in Somaliland. The attitude of the home country can therefore both influence a person’s capacity and desire to contribute. Both Hansen (2006:111) and Kleist (2008c:101) give various examples of how the authorities are positive towards the diaspora as long as they do not return empty-handed. Asad gives an example of the government’s positive attitude towards the diaspora. Last year they welcomed some doctors from Finland with a big party in Hargeisa where the minister of health was present and held a speech about how proud he was that the members from the diaspora had returned to their homeland.

### **6.3.6 “It’s about obtaining a status they can’t get in the West!”**

We are discussing members in the diaspora who are heavily engaged in politics in Somaliland when Ahmed exclaims that the diaspora often returns due to possibilities for upward social mobility and status. He believes that it is naïve to think that all top politicians with power have a desire to change the system and make the lives of people better. Often it turns out to be a question of opportunities, power and money. He uses the example of a Norwegian-Somali who is very active within the political domain and has climbed the ladder in Somaliland by playing the right cards and making friends with the right people. Although this person claims to be motivated by altruism, Ahmed asserts that it really has to do with status. However, this way of mixing with various

people can also be seen as a way of securing several areas, in other words in line with the nomadic culture. Corresponding to this, Asad uses the example with the Finish doctors from the diaspora mentioned above to show how many returnees are motivated by self-interest.

*Det er en jeg kjenner som kom fra byen min, som jeg kjente fra jeg var liten. Jeg spurte om han ville dra til Burao. Nei, sa han, jeg vil være i Hargeisa. Alle vil bare være i Hargeisa, for å ha et luksusliv der med masse penger og bra hus og sånn. I Somaliland har vi omtrent 110 leger nå. Omtrent 95% er i Hargeisa. Kanskje 10 er i Burao eller Boroma. Ingen i de andre småbyene. Så folk vil bare være i hovedstaden for der er det litt bedre liv. Alle som reiser herfra vil til Hargeisa. (...) Folk tenker om seg selv, ikke om folka der nede<sup>xxvi</sup>.*

Among my respondents, Khalid is the only respondent who explicitly argues that the possibilities for upward social mobility and status are important reasons for why he is heavily engaged in an organization working with youth in Somaliland and in Norway.

*Jeg var populær, jeg var kjendis i mitt hjemland. Så jeg tenkte at jeg kommer fra Somaliland, og jeg så at ingen andre jobbet med idrett for barn, så jeg tenkte at jeg må hjelpe. Jeg begynte å reise ned for å se. Jeg opplevde at hvis jeg gir en ball til 12 barn, så får jeg 12 venner. Jeg har nå nesten hele byen som mine venner. Alle kjenner meg, snakker med meg, gleder meg, spør meg om fotball. Det er utrolig. Derfor jeg må jobbe hardt for å gi mer<sup>xxvii</sup>.*

Khalid enjoyed a high status in Somaliland due to sports engagement, which was lost in Norway where he is presently unemployed. However, he has obtained a high status within the Somali community in Norway due to his work for youth and children. Respondents in an INCOR-report (2005) argued along the same lines. One of the respondents argued that whereas he was an old man who could not find employment in Norway, he was elected into the city council in Hargeisa.

Kleist (2007:226) found that ‘making a difference’ reasoning and the possibilities for upward social mobility and respect were very much connected. The recognition of contributions and achievements and social esteem make social upward mobility possible. This is related to how Somalis experience life in a Western country, which was discussed in the section about marginalization in Norway. As mentioned in the

theoretical chapter, diaspora members can increase their social capital by ‘doing something for the community’, and being a ‘good citizen’ (Mohan 2006:880). The way that capital can be converted that was discussed in the section about securing livelihood, is also relevant here. Whereas it can be difficult for Somalis to convert economic capital into social capital in Norway due to lack of kin network, it is possible and very useful in Somaliland. Through investing economic capital in a sports organization in Somaliland, Khalid has been able to increase his social capital. As argued in chapter 2, the possibilities of status and respect within the Somali community may be a motivational factor for many, and they therefore invest in status by contributing to development in Somaliland (Goldring 1998:185).

## 6.4 Summary

In this chapter I have discussed factors that can explain transnational engagement directed at development. This was done in order to get a better understanding of transnational engagement. There are many factors influencing the capabilities of Somalis in Norway to be engaged in the development of Somaliland. Structural factors influencing the capacity are for example the Hawala system, employment, the positive attitudes of the governments of Norway and Somaliland etc. Their desires are more complex, which is why I found it useful to separate between ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors. Experiences of marginalization and loss of status in Norway may be seen as ‘push’-factors. The ‘pull’-factors, on the other hand, are mainly concerned with interests and obligations, like opportunities of certain positions and influence, wanting to make use of one’s resource, and various forms of obligations towards Somaliland as a nation and towards clan and family.

What seems clear is that one cannot generalize about why *the* diaspora is engaged in development. I have shown that many different factors may constitute one person’s engagement, and that these factors often overlap. The example of Asad illustrates this well, as he fits very well into what Kleist (2007:227) has labelled ‘the diaspora

discourse' since he frames his engagement around being a resource for Somaliland and wanting to contribute to rebuilding the country. However, one can also explain his engagement with the fact that his education in Norway was not formalized and approved, resulting in that he had to work as a translator. For many of the interviewees, their engagement can be explained along the same lines. Importantly, there is an agenda behind development aid, and for diaspora members it seems to be a mixture between interests, obligations and altruism. However, this is only an overview of the factors I found may be significant to why Somalis contribute. It does not mean that these factors influence everyone in the diaspora. Nor do I imply that this is an exhaustive list.



# 7 Conclusion

This thesis has sought to contribute to increased understanding about the development-directed engagement by diaspora members through posing the question: What is the scope of, and what can explain, transnational contributions to development by the Somaliland diaspora in Norway? Although members of the Somaliland diaspora in Norway have been in focus in this thesis, it can be argued that many of these insights are valuable when studying other diasporas as well. In order to discuss these questions, a transnational framework was outlined in chapter 2, supplemented with a literature review of the link between diasporas and development, and some factors that can explain engagement. Despite the methodological and conceptual challenges, a transnational framework was seen as suitable in this thesis. Transnationalism was understood as regular ties and activities that link people across national borders, and include both the dimension of *transnational activities* that can be observed and measured, and *transnational capabilities* that refer to the willingness and ability of migrants to sustain ties across borders (Portes 1999:219, Al-Ali et al. 2001a:581). Following this understanding, it can be argued that the majority of the activities of the Somaliland diaspora in Norway are transnational in nature.

Based on the findings in chapter 5, it can be concluded that the members in the Somaliland diaspora in Norway are engaged in a wide variety of transnational activities that spans economic, political, cultural and social borders, which is in line with literature on other diasporas and from Somalia. These activities, except for return, were summarized in table 5.1, which was based on Al-Ali et al.'s (2001b:619) dimension of transnational activities that might be seen as contributing to development. With support from Statistics Norway, my findings indicate that the majority of Somalis in Norway contribute to development by sending remittances. However, whereas practically everyone sends private remittances, sending collective remittances depends on involvement in an organization, support of a specific project, or if the individual's sub-clan is active in building hospitals etc. In terms of contributing to political development, the findings indicate that some individuals are

highly active due to political interest, whereas the majority supports Somaliland's struggle for international recognition without engaging in specific activities. Importantly, there are some very active and resourceful individuals within the diaspora who are engaged in all sorts of activities, whereas others 'only' send remittances to family. Whereas some individuals have returned to help rebuilding the country through human capital, the majority seemed to favor living transnational lives over permanent return. In terms of which activities that are seen to contribute to development, the findings indicate that this is complex. All the transnational activities included in chapter 5 are thought to contribute to development to some extent. However, some of the activities were seen by some interviewees to contribute to development and by others as a hindrance. For example can the finding of oil lead to economic development, but also to instability. Interestingly, these various understandings of what constituted development can be seen in relation with the understanding of development, although the data material in this thesis is too small to draw any conclusions. The majority of the interviewees associated development with reconstruction of society at different levels, which must be seen in relation with Somaliland's history and current condition. Those who emphasized broader and deeper transformations seemed to be more skeptical in terms of what constituted contributions to development.

Acknowledging the diversity of engagements shown in chapter 5, one can obviously not find one reason that explains the engagements of everyone. In terms of Al-Ali et al.'s (2001b:626) dimension of transnational capabilities, which was divided into capacity and desire, the findings indicate that capacity is determined by factors like employment, available network, the Hawala system, Somaliland's positive stance towards diaspora investments etc. Their desires are more complex, which is why I found it purposeful to separate between push and pull factors since the 'desire' of the majority revolve around wanting to help family and friends. The findings indicate that important 'push' factors are marginalization and lack of opportunities in Norway, whereas there is a wide range of 'pull' factors like solidarity for fellow Somalis, family and kin obligations, opportunities, and the possibility to become 'somebody', to

mention some. One conclusion is that one cannot generalize about why migrants uphold transnational ties and contribute to development. For an individual, factors like how much family that is left in Somaliland, prospects for return one day, job in Norway, and religiosity to mention some, strongly influence a person's desire and capacity to contribute. Furthermore, this understanding needs to be contextualized. Although one ought to be careful with putting too much emphasis on the segmentary logic and clan system, it makes the Somaliland case special in terms of mobility and securing several livelihoods. An important note with respect to chapter 6 is that there is an agenda behind all development aid. Just because one is in a diaspora, does not mean that one is motivated by pure altruism.

## **7.1 Policy implications and suggestions for future research**

There are several policy implications that can be drawn from the findings in this thesis. First, it is important to remember that it is individuals within a diaspora who contribute to development, not 'the diaspora' as such. Various individuals are engaged in different kinds of activities, for various reasons, and have different understandings of development. This is crucial to keep in mind when forming policies for engaging 'the diaspora' in development of their homeland. My findings indicate that 'the diaspora' that cooperate with NGOs and government officials usually consists of some highly active individuals who do not necessarily represent the view of everyone else. Second, context and culture matter, as was shown in chapter 6, and different diasporas varies in terms of activities and capabilities. It may therefore be that policies that are useful for one diaspora are not so useful for another. For this reason, more comparative research would be useful, both between Somali diasporas in different host countries, and between different diasporas in Norway. Third, the findings in chapters 6 indicate that more cohesion is needed between migration, integration and development policies, since these three domains are intractably connected. There also seems to be a need for more specific policies following the White papers and reports from the government.

There seems to be a positive development in Norway in terms of acknowledging the potential role of diasporas, but from the interviews there seemed to be a lack of specific policies that the majority of Somalis knew of.

In terms of suggestions for future research, I argue that understanding individuals' desire to be engaged is crucial in order to form policies about how to engage diasporas in development. Although I cannot conclude anything, my findings indicate that family obligations are the most important factor for contributing. This implies that forming new policies to redirect private remittances towards collective remittances, for example, might end up being ineffective. There is also need for more research on the effectiveness of programs like the QUESTS-MIDA due to Somaliland's need for skilled people within various domains. My findings indicate that Somalis in Norway are interested in these types of projects, yet there is a lack of knowledge surrounding them. Previous studies have shown that these programs are quite costly, and with limited effects. Based on the interviewees' beliefs in the potential of social remittances, maybe capacity-building missions in the form of seminars would be more beneficial? Furthermore, I argue that there is a need to conduct more research on the role of diasporas as agents of change in Somaliland. Both the government of Somaliland and the interviewees adhered to the current win-win-win perspective. However, if development is understood as a broader transformation of society, one can question the role of collective remittances. There is much money that flows through the clan-network and at the same time a poor central government. A relevant question is therefore whether the diaspora, through remittances, may undermine state power and instead strengthen the clan system.

Despite these critical questions being posed, members of diasporas have the potential to play very important roles in the development of their home countries. There are many resourceful and engaged individuals whose cultural knowledge and engagement are potential resources for Norway, and for actors in the homeland. However, being a relatively new field, more knowledge is needed in order to realize their full potential.

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# Appendix 1 – interview guide

## 1. Personal history

- a. Age, time of arrival in Norway, why migration (refugee/migrant). Citizenship?
- b. Education Norway/Somalia? Job Norway/Somalia.

## 2. Engagement in Norway/diaspora

- a. Engagement in the Somali community in Norway? Member of organizations? Transnational engagement?

## 3. Engagement in Somaliland's development

- a. Understanding of development? What are the main needs in Somaliland?
- b. Role of Norwegian-Somalis in Somaliland's development? Politics, economy, volunteer work? Both from Norway and in Somaliland.
- c. Your engagement? Now and previously. Reasons and motivations for engagement?
- d. Importance of the diaspora in Somaliland's development? Why?

## 4. Remittances

- a. Importance of remittances for Somaliland? Dependence, necessity?
- b. Do you send remittances? To family, investments in projects..?
- c. Second generation?
- d. Social inequality?

## 5. Human capital, brain-gain

- a. Meanings about 'brain-gain' and programs like QUESTS-MIDA? Would you participate? Good for development?
- b. Meaning about many diaspora members in international NGOs?

## 6. Political support

- a. Can the diaspora contribute to Somaliland's political development/nation-building? How?
- b. Meanings about diaspora members who work within politics in Somaliland?
- c. Can democracy be transferred to Somaliland?
- d. Opinion about international recognition?

## 7. Identity and understanding of 'home'

- a. What is 'home'? Homeland Norway or Somaliland? What does Somaliland represent to you?
- b. How often do you visit? Permanent return possible or desirable?

## Appendix 2 - translation of quotes

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<sup>i</sup> The point is not whether or not it is good, it is necessary. Everyone wants to give food to their sisters, their uncle or old aunt. It is basically a matter of principles. (...) There is no welfare system or social aid that is run by the government. So you will die of hunger unless you receive the 100 USD per month. (...) Think about the Second World War when Norwegians migrated to the United States. They sent money home. It is the same principle. (...) If the system was better organized we could have invested in companies or fabrics instead in order to create employment for these people so that they could work for what they live off. But today this is not possible.

<sup>ii</sup> There is little money in Somaliland because of the recognition and all that. So, we have sacrificed a lot of money not to be a part of Somalia. (...) Due to this nationalistic attitude it is like..., one would rather die than to be a part of old Somalia, right.

<sup>iii</sup> It is like living on the west side. It is normal to build houses for the money. There is a connection between how much you contribute and what kind of house your family has. Often those with families abroad have higher status than those who have none. (...) But those who have none are very vulnerable.

<sup>iv</sup> No development without knowledge. If you give money to one person he can buy some food. But if one gives money to build schools, one can change the lives of many children.

<sup>v</sup> Children who go to these clan-financed schools will get a reinforcement of clan belonging. I wish that our help was not only locally based, but also based on where one can help the most people.

<sup>vi</sup> And we have been raised with knowledge about Somaliland, you know, it is us who inherit what our parents have fought for. So now I feel that that I have to contribute with getting it on the map at least, that it is my responsibility.

<sup>vii</sup> We do hope that something will happen before the next generation grows up, and that Somaliland will change. If the upcoming election is successful we hope that the world will recognize Somaliland. Dahabshiil will soon open in Djubouti (...) They will open for investments in stocks, so maybe the next generations that do not understand the development aid we are doing, can invest money instead. Dahabshiil has said that for every NOK they make on the stocks they will give 50 øre to a welfare system.

<sup>viii</sup> You can't build a nation and invite Kjell Inge Røkke. Asante means thank you, but I do not know what there is to thank for if oil is found. You need good institutions with good distribution before oil is found.

<sup>ix</sup> The diaspora come from a developed country, they understand more. They come from a system that works, and where there is no corruption. The diaspora is therefore very important to transfer a more modern and democratic system to Somaliland.

<sup>x</sup> I have family and children here. And I believe that the diaspora is needed for Somaliland's role. I can be important both for Somaliland and Norway, an ambassador for both countries.

<sup>xi</sup> We have made a diaspora party that stands for justice and welfare, and the reason for that is because most of the members of this party have lived abroad for many years and have education from abroad. We want to show that it is possible to do politics in a good manner that is free for corruption, based on democracy and technology.

<sup>xii</sup> Someone recently travelled to Hargeisa to talk to somebody working with sports, and tell them about our demands. And we had to be clear about our demands, that it is a national arena and not clan-based or only for one particular group, or on one side of the city. It is very important for us that the arena is for everyone. It is one of our criteria. We will not build anything before we have something judicial that we agree upon. (...) and concerning corruption. We plan to be very strict about that.

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<sup>xiii</sup> International recognition will not fall from the sky. There are several steps one has to follow. (...) Economy is very important for stability. People have now waited for 20 years for recognition, and they have become chauvinist. When nothing happens and unemployment is rising... Those who are educated will emigrate, and then it is likely that those who stay become frustrated. And that can lead to riots and islamists can enter the game...

<sup>xiv</sup> Development. I have attended seminars with the ministry of foreign affairs twice, where they explain us development, developing countries, and how we can help. And how they can help us.

<sup>xv</sup> Does one send money because one Somali person in Somaliland is in need of help, or because that person belongs to one's own clan? The loyalty is based on local areas. But this is not easy.(...) I agree that we shall help, but not by clan structures, but rather where we can get the most out of the money we pay.

<sup>xvi</sup> During the 90s there was hardly any pressure against Muslims. The media didn't have its agenda on Islam daily, and there was no terrorism etc. But the longer I have been here, the more negative image of Islam is portrayed in the media and among people in general. And then I think about what it will be like in the future. Lots of extreme attitudes among groups. Not just in Norway, but in England, the Netherlands, Switzerland...

<sup>xvii</sup> It is challenging to be a Muslim in Norway. It is difficult to pray 5 times a day. At work I am not allowed to take breaks to pray even though many people take breaks to smoke. They say that there are no places to pray ... If I had been in Somaliland it would not be like this, and I could have been myself.

<sup>xviii</sup> I am two persons. My body is here, but my brain and my blood is there. My brain is thinking of my homeland and about the people I must help. But my body is here to see the children.

<sup>xix</sup> It is a country where I was born and feel attached to, via family and ethnic belonging. Nothing is better for me than that Somaliland becomes a peaceful place. I would do anything so that the people who live there can have peace and economic growth and thus stop emigrating.

<sup>xx</sup> When I go there and see the destiny of these people, especially the children's, I become very touched. (...) I can see that I am lucky, right, for being in Norway and living in Norway and doing well. But then I think about why God chose me and let them stay there with that destiny.

<sup>xxi</sup> I return on holiday every second year. I usually stay with my grandmother for some time, and a bit at a hotel. I often have to flee to a hotel at the end because the money runs out. Many family members want money and come to visit...

<sup>xxii</sup> But they have become quite spoiled, they really have. Each year the amount of remittances is increased, but they remain ungrateful. They have more needs, right, their consumption increases etc.

<sup>xxiii</sup> They explained to us how things were and showed us a video, and then they told us that these people did not have anyone but us. You have to contribute, and it does not take much, maybe 100 NOK per month. And establish an organization, so that we can do something. **(Who are they?)** It was the elders who had been working with this for several years.

<sup>xxiv</sup> My family has gone from being nomads to be urban people where everyone goes to school, and have phones. They have internet at home, and live in a big house. Everything is turned upside down because we have invested in things for them for 10 years.

<sup>xxv</sup> I thought: What can I do. You need to do something for the world, you can't just eat and sleep. You need to make changes. I decided that in Norway there was little use for me. There are many educated doctors and people here. If I had worked in Norway I would only work for my own part. No one would die if I didn't work. But in Somalia I could help many people, people who had no doctors. I established a new system in Burao. (...) Today they help maybe 2000 per month. So it helps many people. I believe that I can do many things down there. I do not care about money and living a comfortable life. Instead I think about how I can help someone there, how I can use my resource. That is what drove me to return.

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<sup>xxvi</sup> One of them was from my city, and I know him from when I was little. I asked him if he wanted to go to Burao. No, he said, I want to be in Hargeisa. Everyone wants to be in Hargeisa and have a luxury life with lots of money, a big house etc. We have about 110 doctors in Somaliland now. Around 95% are in Hargeisa. Maybe 10 in Burao or Boromo. Nobody in the other small cities. People only want to stay in the capital to have a good life. Everyone who returns from here wants to go to Hargeisa. (...) People are selfish, and do not think about the peoples' needs there.

<sup>xxvii</sup> I was popular, I was a celebrity in my homeland. Therefore I thought to myself that I come from Somaliland, and since I saw that nobody else were working with sports for children, I had to help. I started to travel there to see. I experienced that if you give one ball to 12 children, you get 12 friends. I now have the whole city as my friends. Everyone knows me, speaks to me, pleases me, ask me about football. It is amazing. That is why I have to work hard in order to give them more.