CHAPTER 18

Diaspora as a Multilevel Political Space for Young Somalis

Päivi Armila, Marko Kananen and Tiina Sotkasiira

Introduction

Since the outbreak of the civil war in 1991, Somalis have become one of the largest diaspora populations globally. According to United Nations estimates, the number of people born in Somalia but living outside the country is reaching two million (UN 2015). Due to the prolonged instability in Somalia, diaspora mobilization among Somalis has evolved worldwide and comprises multiple forms of action, both on a collective and individual level (Pirkkalainen 2013, 9). This has produced a number of studies analysing the participation of Somali diaspora communities in social and political projects relating to the future of their former and current home countries (Allen 2014; Sheikh and Healy 2009; Orozco and Yansura 2013; Leitner 2004). Regardless of its scholarly recognition, however, the societal and political participation of the Somali diaspora has been overlooked in the public discussions of their settlement societies (Pirkkalainen et al. 2016). When conducting research on the Somali diaspora in Finland and the United States, we have noticed that this disregard raises concern among its active members; in fact, we have encountered a group of young Somalis who vigorously contest the image of Somalis as incompetent and uninterested bystanders in the affairs of their new home countries.

By focusing on the group of young people which, following Laine (2012, 16–18) and Beck and Beck-Gernsheim’s (2009) definition, could be considered representatives of the active segment of today’s global generation, we wish to take part in the debate concerning migrant transnationalism, belonging and diaspora politics. There are two main arguments presented in the chapter. Firstly, we highlight the importance of ‘diasporic micropolitics’, that is, the ways in which Somali youth draw on specific diaspora practices and discourses in order to establish themselves as active, capable agents in their new places of residence and as the builders of future Somalia (cf. Laine 2012, 9). Secondly, our aim is to emphasize the role of what Bernal (2014) calls ‘infopolitics’, consisting of the struggles over identity and positioning which take place online and in digital media. Evidently, today’s information technology formulates diaspora...
experiences, as well as widening arenas for active participation, especially for youth (Laine 2012).

We find it important to review the emergent forms of diaspora politics from the perspective of young people because the majority of the people who migrate across national borders are young adults (International Labour Organization 2013). Youth are also defined as those creating and living the future of their societies, which offers them a specific role in diaspora politics and postulates an understanding of the younger generation as future decision-makers who should learn to be active participants in societal discussions, as well as citizens who should have political and ideological space for such participation. This said, we are also acutely aware that diaspora citizens often remain in doubly marginalized social positions. They easily lose their interest in, or are left without space to engage with, societal issues, even when these issues concern either their former or current home country (Portes and Zhou 1993; Abdi 2011).

Our analysis is a part of a research project, Contexts of Diaspora Citizenship (2012–2016), which has studied the social participation, transnational practices and networks, and forms of social, ethnic, national and transnational identification of Somalis living in the diaspora in Finland and the United States. We are aware that contextual opportunity structures, and their impact, differ considerably in these two territories but no systematic comparison is possible within the space limits of this single analysis. For this chapter, we have analysed interviews of politically active young Somalis in Finland and the United States, as well as blog entries written by young Finnish and American Somalis. Although blogs differ epistemologically from interviews, we have included them in this scrutiny to acknowledge the significance of the Internet as a political arena.

We begin with a brief description of the political contexts and cultures of Finland and the United States, and the status of Somalis as diaspora citizens. After setting out our methodological orientation we present the different political scopes within which our young informants position their political acts and aspirations. This analysis is followed by a glance into the transnational world of blog politics and concluding notions.

**Finland and the United States as Contexts for Diaspora Politics**

Traditionally, Finland is portrayed as a ‘calm’ Nordic welfare society without visible political conflicts between divergent population groups. In recent years, however, the dividing lines have deepened and a heated public debate about immigration and integration policies has sprung up in the country. State and municipal authorities have responded to the emerging divisions by developing
programs and projects with the goals of immigrant integration and social participation guarded and guided by legislation (Integration Act 2010).

In terms of the political activity of Finnish Somalis, the picture that emerges from previous research is somewhat contradictory. Even though some 40 per cent of Finnish Somalis are Finnish citizens and Finnish legislation provides non-citizens with a position similar to native Finns, Somalis are not visible in formal politics. There have been no Somalis in the national parliament thus far, and only a few Finnish Somalis have been elected to municipal councils. However, research by Pirkkalainen et al. (2016) has demonstrated that, in comparison to other migrant groups such as those born in Russia or Estonia, Somalis are active voters, particularly at the municipal level where the majority of them have the right to vote. They have also set up several civic organizations. Still, Somali immigrants in Finland face many challenges to integration. The electoral participation and voter turnout of immigrants in Finland is very low, and in the case of Somalis the situation is worsened by their poor socioeconomic position, which tends to correlate with low political participation (Pirkkalainen et al. 2016). The situation of second generation Finnish Somalis seems to be slightly better, but still far from good (Matikka et al. 2013; Harinen and Sabour 2013).

In the United States the integration of immigrants is carried out by local communities, rather than by state or federal authorities. This laissez-faire approach to integration relies on a strong labour market that offers entry-level openings for newcomers (Fix 2007); Somali immigrants have managed to access it rather better in the United States than in Finland or elsewhere in Europe (Carlson et al. 2012; United States Census Bureau 2011a). Young Somalis are also fairly well represented in higher education (United States Census Bureau 2011b), and they have proven to be a significant political force, especially in the state of Minnesota (Yusuf 2012). But the story of the American Somali diaspora also has a flipside, as poverty, discrimination and alienation are pushing many young Somalis to the margins of society (Abdi 2011; Brown 2011; Mulligan 2009).

However, the formal system of political parties and representative democracy is not the only possible way for young immigrants to participate politically. Finland, for example, offers space and possibilities for people to organize themselves into registered associations to defend their rights, which might concern fields such as environmental issues, children’s welfare, mothers’ everyday life and various minority rights. The Finnish government supports associations in many ways and encourages people to establish them. As an example, financial support is given to Somali associations to carry out development work in Somalia. In the United States, NGOs and various community-based organizations also provide an important platform for diasporic citizens’
participation. As the role of the state is limited with regards many issues relevant to immigrant integration, such as language and civic education, as well as employment training and social services, diaspora communities have been involved with, and have founded, organizations to provide these services. Many of these organizations also have a role as platforms through which diaspora communities have a voice to negotiate and cooperate with the state and local officials. For example, Somali organizations have cooperated successfully with state agencies in refugee resettlement. Finally, these organizations also channel the concerns of the community and facilitate quick responses to emerging problems (Kananen 2016; Haverinen and Kananen 2016).

Despite these alternatives for societal participation, Finnish and North American public discourses still contain the implicit principles that political socialization is the same as acquiring the action logic of formal and slow representative decision making. While the interviewees chosen for this chapter are mainly young Somalis who have been candidates in municipal or national political elections and are thus members of established national political parties, their experiences also reveal some ‘diaspora perspectives’ of politics as a means to change the current state of affairs more widely than just at the national level, as well as mixtures of formal and non-formal ways to conduct transnational politics. Furthermore, the discussion revolving around the concept of ‘mediatized migrant’ is relevant to our case (Hepp et al. 2012).

The concept of ‘micropolitics’ is used to analyse the participation of individuals and groups in civil society, as well as to examine the connections between affective registers of experience and collective identities. For example, Bennett and Shapiro (2002) outline how a focus on micropolitics offers an insight into ways in which reforming, refining or disciplining one’s emotions, urges and moods enter into one’s political programs, party affiliations, ideological commitments and policy preferences. The notion of micropolitics is central to our interpretative analysis as the expressions of political aspirations by our young informants were coloured by their unique – and often also traumatic – life histories and the feelings that they carry with them. Secondly, as Pirkkalainen (2013) notes, civic and political participation can provide individual Somalis with a positive identity and recognition, which they otherwise may lack. Furthermore, it is important to connect this discussion with debates on the mediatization of lives, and transnational lives in particular. Diasporas are nowadays “mediatized”, which means that the articulation of their political claims is deeply interwoven with, and moulded by, different forms of media (Hepp et al. 2012). Following in the footsteps of Bernal (2014), we use blogs as one example of the ways in which active Somali youth today deploy the Internet to support and make their micropolitical claims.
The Methodological Orientation for the Analysis

The data for this analysis consist of interviews and blog entries. In Finland six young Somalis (two women, four men) born in Somalia, arriving in Finland in their early years and participating in political life were interviewed. Now they have settled in the country, learned the language, educated themselves and taken up active social positions in formal politics and / or as civic activists. In the United States, interviews were also conducted with six young Somalis (five men, one woman) who define themselves as politically active. Four of them have been candidates in local or national elections. They were born in Somalia, but migrated to the United States either as children or adolescents. They all live in the state of Minnesota, and they all have a college degree. The interviews focused on, among other issues, their life histories and current feelings, experiences of decision making, and political aspirations and dreams. Our interviewees represent a specific group among young diasporic Somalis: they have consciously decided to get involved with politics. The analysis therefore does not include the voices of those young Somalis who are not socially and politically active and who, in a traditional sense, are excluded from mainstream political citizenship (see Marshall 1950). We, however, argue for a need to bring to the fore the views and opinions of active young Somalis, who tend to be overshadowed by the problematic media representations of Somalis and Somalia (Fellin 2015).

Because the Internet offers an effective arena for transnational sub-politics (Laine 2012), we have examined 18 blogs by Somali American authors and six blogs by Finnish Somali authors for this chapter. Some of the bloggers are active young politicians or civic activists, while others claim to write from the perspective of ‘ordinary’ young people. We have included blogs in order to acknowledge the significance of the Internet as a political arena for the diaspora, while acknowledging the methodological concerns related to the use of Internet materials (representation and authenticity). The blog entries selected for analysis are those in which the authors specify themselves as Somalis taking a stand on issues related to Somalia or Somali diaspora. The entries cannot, therefore, be considered as representative of the views of young Somalis but rather comprise political statements about the political orientations and positioning of Somalis in their respective countries and internationally.

Interview and blog data were analysed by a method referred to as “dialogical thematization” by Koski (2011), a phenomenological process of data deconstruction and reconstruction. We have read all data sets with the goal of identifying expressions that can be interpreted as encapsulating political
ideas and experiences. During the deconstructive stage we followed the phenomenological rules of interpretation when seeking ‘the biggest common denominators’ for different expressions in order to give names to wider themes recognized in the data. These young people make political claims in different arenas: the transnational sphere is very important to them, but equally so are national and local agendas. The next section presents analysis of the political passion and mission of our informants.

Diaspora Youth as Agents for Glocal Micropolitics

In our interview data, the life histories of young Somalis are accorded different interpretations and meanings. First, they serve as a source of special strength and wisdom. Experiences of war fronts, refugee camps or racist attacks have provided these young people with an understanding of what societies really need in order to build a better future – which is usually seen as the main aim of any political process. The informants of this analysis, for example, claim that since they have the experience of collecting “dead bodies there, on the fronts”, they also have a particular kind of understanding that could offer a lot to societal discussion in societies where people lack such experiences and insights.

Secondly, these young people are also acutely aware that their life histories as immigrants and members of diaspora can put them at risk of becoming eternal outsiders. As the experiences of the past are hard to shake off, it can be that they cannot find their place anywhere but, as one interviewee put it, “their bodies just move around here but their heads are not with them”. However, the argumentation strategy that positions past difficulties as a resource that people can utilize if given an equal opportunity is common among the interviewees. It also goes against the common perception of the experiences of war and fleeing being a hindrance that people must overcome in order to succeed in their later lives. The informants, generally speaking, wish to draw on these experiences to negotiate their way through the multilevel political environment they are interested in influencing – to be presented in the following sections.

Here, There and Everywhere?

The nation-level political aspirations of our informants reach from issues of their immediate neighbourhoods to two national contexts: the state of current residence, and Somalia as an indelible target for a mission of future development. In municipal and state-level politics these young people would
like to create their dominant political identities, and to be treated, as representatives of ‘ordinary’ inhabitants and not as representatives of immigrants – as the case often seems to be:

I’m not an immigrant but I’m [informant’s name] and a candidate for [city’s name] municipal court. And I have competence for that. So that they don’t see me ... I, actually, have warned them ... if they ... again begin to give me that stigma and say I’m an immigrant.

That this big party, a party with power, feels that I, a tiny person from Africa, [who has] just received education here, feels [what I say is] so important that it’s published in a nation-wide political manifest. I’m allowed to [have] effect in politics, and after being here for a year they suggested me as a director for [city’s] youth association. No one considered me as a black man, as a Somali, as a Muslim; in this company I’m a member of the party.

As most of our interviewees are members of a political party in their current states of residence, and have run for office in parliamentary or municipal elections, it is hardly surprising that they describe their political activities within the national framework of state politics. However, many of them also actively participate in transnational activities and projects. Common diaspora activities include, for example, forming voluntary associations, arranging ad hoc funding raising and implementing development project through NGOs and INgos (see also Pirkkalainen 2013, 9). As individuals, people also participate in transnational activities by sending remittances to their relatives and by engaging in politics and businesses and thus transferring their skills and knowhow to their country of origin. Their loyalty as activists, however, is not exhausted in the dual roles in the country of origin and the country of residence: participation in politics and civic actions provides them a platform to act as political advocates on a transnational and even global level. This readiness for manifold advocacy can lead a young future-builder into energetic international participation:

I’m a member of an organization, the Finnish Somali Diaspora Association, acting world-wide; we discuss and develop and seek means to [have] effect, use the knowhow received in diaspora in our own home country, Somalia. I’m in this forum. And now, during the summer I will travel to Canada where there is a big discussion and I’ll go there to represent the Finnish Somali diaspora.
Somalia – in Terms of Her Future

Laine (2012) has paid attention to the transnational dimensions of making politics that touch on the concrete and ‘small’ issues of ordinary people wherever they might live – cosmopolitan micropolitics, as she calls them. The young people who were interviewed for this analysis, especially the Finnish Somalis, can be interpreted as cosmopolitan micropoliticians who are concerned for human inequalities and suffering, as well as the bellicosity of the world. In this context, the notion of being a Somali with a special understanding of war, violence, oppression and their effects is, again, emphasized. While acknowledging the scope of young Somalis’ political activity, which may stretch from local to national and even cosmopolitan politics, we will next focus on their relationship with their ‘diasporic home’: Somalia.

In many political addresses, the task of rebuilding Somalia, a country damaged by war, is loaded onto the shoulders of the younger generations. Young people are expected to unite the intellectual, political and educational power they have developed in the diaspora and deliver it through transnational Somali networks. Our interviewees left Somalia at an early age, and they have their homes in the diasporic destination, but there is considerable evidence of their continuing tight connections to Somalia. For many young Somali politicians Somalia is the target of their diasporic-issue politics, connecting them into an active imagined community (Anderson 1991), and constructing campaigns, attitudes and emotions towards it. Many diasporic Somalis have ambitious plans regarding the political future of Somalia. As an example, Fadumo Dayib, who moved to Finland in the 1990s, has decided to run as a candidate in the Somali presidential election in 2016 (Finnish Broadcasting Company 2014). On an individual level, however, the question of one’s relationship with the country of origin becomes concrete when the possible return to Somalia is discussed. Somalia has recently reached a level of some stability, and many Somalis have started to visit Somalia and even to repatriate (Hautaniemi et al. 2013). The interviewees of this study still have ambivalent thoughts about returning to Somalia, however. Even though none of them is considering a certain and permanent repatriation, many of them express a wish to just visit Somalia and use the skills and resources that they have acquired in diaspora to help in the rebuilding process.

I may try to go back this summer, but I’m not 100% sure. It all depends. I think Mogadishu, to me, is a lost case. ... but I think small towns with 5,000 to 6,000 people, I can go there, go to their local school, train their teachers, take some books, give there.
Unlike in the United States, where the young Somali informants generally envision returning to Somalia as private individuals and contributing to the rebuilding process through their personal skills and relationships, our Finnish informants often consider going back to Somalia through an NGO or INGO engaged in the rebuilding process. These active young people do not want to go back to Somalia just to visit family and friends but express a wish to achieve something societally meaningful, to make a difference:

[1]n diaspora ... well, we have developmental cooperation, we have almost 25 member organizations doing developmental cooperation into Somalia from different parts of the world; I’m the chair in this, it’s interesting and challenging. I’ve been there from the very beginning, I’m the only woman there, and though it’s developmental cooperation the organizations have learned a lot from each other [about] how cooperation could be done in Somalia. The organizations act in different areas but they are connected by developmental work and Somalia, so that’s why it’s so positive.

Now when there is peace in Mogadishu, I visited it, getting to know a bit more and planning; next summer I’ll go there and we’ll organize a big seminar and I definitely want a political perspective to it, activating women, so that women cooperate and learn to support young women’s participation.

Virtual Border Crossings
Although young Somalis often feel politically responsible for doing their share to rebuild Somalia, their relationship to the homeland is complex. A young Somali blogger, DrinkingTeainMogadishu, from Minnesota, moved to Somalia for a year to work for a NGO, and her posts around that time provide an overview of the challenges that diaspora youth might be up against in the homeland. The dream of going back started with the frustration of being a Muslim in Minnesota. But once this politically active blogger got to Somalia, she realized that the return to homeland was not as easy as she had hoped it would be (cf. also Hautaniemi et al. 2013).

Before I went to Somalia, I always defined myself as being ‘Somali’. I was very proud to be Somali and that for sure gave me something to hold onto as an identity in the United States. When I was going to Somalia, I was so excited to be going there, and to be embraced by my ‘people’. To be in the land of my ancestors, in my ‘homeland’ ... I was in for a major shock after staying there for a couple of months. I didn’t understand the people
there, it’s like everything I grew up considering ‘normal’ in America, was strange to my fellow Somali ‘brethren’ in Somalia. There were times I felt I related more to a white American than the Somalis there. … You can say when I went to Somalia, I turned very North American.

In addition to cultural differences, this blogger also experienced a tense, exclusive relationship between the local Somalis and diaspora Somalis. Diaspora itself also seems to have the power to break down the imagined community (Anderson 1991) when it comes to a concrete share of soil and commons:

One word that I picked up since being in Somalia is the term ‘diaspora’. This word is used by the locals here to describe Somalis from places outside of Somalia, in most cases Europe, Canada or the United States. When I first heard this word used on me, I never thought much of it because it’s obviously true that I’m from the US. However, the more I continue to hear this word, I came to think negatively about it. I feel like it’s a word that divides people. Many people here in Somalia don’t want Somalis to come back from abroad. They feel threatened because they believe those people will take their jobs, or in the case of men from abroad end up marrying local women. [...] This just shows they view Somalis from overseas as a different form of entity, and it’s really sad because a lot of Somalis simply come back to Somalia to help out with the situation in Somalia.

This finding has also been noted in other studies (Allen 2014; Galipo 2011). Although the first expatriate generation is commonly welcomed by the local population, members of the second generation can be perceived as foreigners and blamed for not integrating into the community and not knowing its traditions and history. In Somalia political capabilities embraced in the diaspora might not always receive a positive welcome, or get an opportunity to become active political forces. It also seems that even though the second generation is doing a little better in their settlement countries, they may not manage well in Somalia. In a way, this phenomenon can be defined as the fatal paradox of diaspora exclusion.

Still, even if young people cannot participate in the politics or rebuilding of Somalia in a traditional sense, they may have a strong virtual connection with the Somali diaspora. They exchange experiences, memories, ideas and images about Somalia online, to conduct ‘virtual rebuilding’ of Somalia (cf. Anderson 1991). Some of the discussants have never been in Somalia and some moved away at a young age, so they do not necessarily have concrete ideas of
the country. This, however, does not stop them from cooperatively constructing the ideal Somalia online with other debaters.

A common phenomenon in blogs is the presentation of Somalia in a new light through pictures, videos and stories that stand in stark contrast to images prevailing in traditional media: war, famine and poverty. Discursively constructed images of the new Somalia depict beautiful landscapes, green forests and unspoiled nature. Mogadishu beach, which was recently opened to the public, is one of the symbols of this new Somalia. Further, young bloggers also share videos and stories that emphasize development and the ‘normality’ of everyday life. For example, one posts videos that introduce new small businesses in Somalia. Another (Vintage Somalia 2013) posts pictures of pre-war era Somalia and summarizes his motivation for blogging and the connection between political aims and emotions such as optimism:

It is important more now than ever to participate and take part in the rebuilding of Somalia. We must have unwavering hope. Somalia will become a developed nation. The spark has already been lit. It is up to us and the young Somalis living in Somalia and across the world now to also take part and help in the rebuilding of our homeland even better than it was before.

The Internet provides young people with an opportunity to cross the borders that they face in their everyday lives. It functions as an arena for identity politics and for transgressing the national to connect their personal choices with political and ideological commitments. By posting entries on their struggles to express themselves as Finns, Americans or Somalis, or alternatively by making claims about the need to escape attempts to define their identities, bloggers take part in the on-going discussion of what it means to be a young member of an ethnic minority in diaspora. They also use the Internet to fight racism and other inequalities that they face in their diasporic everyday life and recognize world-wide.

An example of an attempt to connect personal with political is a long discussion chain on the online forum of a Finnish youth magazine Demi in which a 17-year-old Somali girl has made it her task to answer any question the readers raise. The topics range from hair tips and favourite school subjects to questions concerning religion, racism and the positioning of Somalis in Finland. By placing herself and her opinions under scrutiny, she takes up the collective position of a Somali who mediates between people of ‘her kind’ and other Internet-users. Although the discussion takes place in Finnish, it is possible for any Internet-user to participate. This is just one example: there are numerous
other sites where people discuss and define the particularities of Somali identity and diaspora, for example, in Somali, English or French.

The Internet also provides young Somalis a space to express their transnational belongings and take part in international debates concerning controversial issues, such as female circumcision or the treatments of Muslims in Western media. Interestingly, young Somalis often use art and poetry to present, construct and modify their connection to Somalia, and to make their voices heard on political issues. Somalia is known as the ‘nation of poets’ and young Somalis have picked up this tradition as there are several blogs devoted solely to Somali poetry. Minnesota-based Poet Nation has taken a youthful, urban approach to poetry, and the site hosts performances on various topics. Although Poet Nation focuses on the lives of diaspora youth, they have also visited a refugee camp in Kenya and recorded many Somalis reciting their poetry. These kinds of online activities provide an interesting example of the vitality and revitalization of a national tradition in the diaspora. However, the common denominator for all the different types of blogs is the passion of the outspoken young people to make their voices heard.

Concluding Remarks

My political career, my dream is that I could [have] effect on issues also elsewhere than in Finland, also in my expatriate country Somalia, Africa, especially women's position, women's and girls' participation in politics, especially immigrants' participation and ... yeah, equality and female participation, that equality could be seen in immigrant women's lives.

Young people as political actors have recently been under scrutiny, as a concern for their political passivity and ignorance has been expressed in public discourses. Youth research has aimed at challenging this general image by showing changes in ideas and conceptualizations of the phenomenon of making politics (Edmunds and Turner 2005; Bang 2009; Laine 2012). The young Somalis interviewed for this analysis are convinced that they could act as a new political force both in Somalia and in their new countries of residence. Their newness (Bhabha 1994) is brought about by their specific experiences as refugees and as people in diaspora, and they thus represent themselves as being liberated from the traditional nation-state frames, references and action scopes. Their experiences confirm Beck's and Beck-Gernsheim's (2009) analysis: global processes and communication technology, as well as the current waves and ways of migration, create spaces for transnational belongings and ideologies,
diasporic life experiences and life histories, as well as people's cosmopolitan identifications. Diaspora politicians turn their ideological aspirations in directions that are often categorized as 'glocal' as they seem to be interested in political participation where issues of, for example, human rights are defended in locally executed but transnationally organized happenings (cf. Laine 2012).

The scope of political interest among these societally active Somalis is wide and multileveled. They can change their perspective from immediate environments and their problems via state level politics to global grievances. They also show a willingness to act, and to call for changes. They look at gender inequality and women's positions in the global framework, strive for peace in Somalia and feel concern for human rights issues in Africa. As political advocates they do not connect themselves only to their country of residence but also to Somalia which, over the years, has provided them with specific experiences and emotions. Somalia is described by them as a promising society in need of many political improvements: starting from the state system and stretching to people's relationships and interaction in terms of gender and generations.

The Internet does not make it possible to escape local realities, but it provides an access to new kinds of information and a chance to connect with people who are not part of one's immediate social surroundings. Young bloggers use the Internet, for example, to raise money for families in Somalia and to take part in international debates about female circumcision and counter racist sentiments, as well as to discuss tendencies in their new home countries. The Internet also functions as an important platform for identity politics (Bang 2009). Young people use blogs and on-line discussion forums to express their multiple belongings as well as to share their experiences of what it means to be a young member of an ethnic minority living in diaspora. Lastly, the Internet is an arena that brings global diaspora youth together as an active imagined community, constructing and reconstructing campaigns, attitudes and emotions towards the homeland.

The social and socio-economic position of diaspora Somalis in the two national contexts of our informants is still in many ways problematic. They are aware of this and seek recognition as serious participants in multi-levelled politics. They perceive themselves as candidates representing 'ordinary, local people' and not 'immigrants' – but also claim recognition for their special understanding as people who have seen more than 'ordinary people'. If this wisdom connected with their specific life-histories is recognized, it can have extended political value: diasporic life helps people to understand oppression, suffering, multiculturalism and the needs of very different inhabitants.
in society. Young people who have experienced the life of a refugee could offer new, unique insights into local, national and global political processes.

In the material analysed for this chapter, diaspora youth come across as actors with political passion and willpower. Instead of complaining about their political passivity, this engagement could be taken seriously and room could be given to them to express themselves as political actors. If the message of young activists is not taken seriously, it is likely that they will either withdraw themselves from societal action or find a way to express themselves elsewhere.

I, as an immigrant, have tried and tried to take responsibility, and rights too, but sometimes it feels that you are stigmatized; those immigration critics irritate me so much. I [wonder] why they give us a possibility to come here if it’s so negative, if immigrants make people so anxious. It’s contradictory, it’s good that people discuss but this never seems to end.

References

Abdi, Cawo. 2011. “The Newest African-Americans? Somali Struggles for Belonging.” Bildhaan: An International Journal of Somali Studies vol. 11, article 12.

Allen, Ryan. 2014. The Somali Diaspora’s Role in Somalia: Implications of Return. Paper presented at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota. 2 April 2014.

Anderson, Benedict. 1991. Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism. London: Verso.

Bang, Henrik P., 2009. “Yes we can: identity politics and project politics for a late-modern world.” Urban Research & Practice 2 (2): 117–137.

Beck, Ulrich, and Elizabeth Beck-Gernsheim. 2009. “Global generations and the trap of methodological nationalism for a cosmopolitan turn in the sociology of youth and generation.” European Sociological review 25 (1): 25–36.

Bennett, Jane, and Michael J. Shapiro. 2002. The Politics of Moralizing. London: Routledge.

Bernal, Victoria. 2014. Nation as Network. Diaspora, Cyberspace, and Citizenship. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Berns McGown, Rima. 1999. Muslims in the diaspora: The Somali communities of London and Toronto. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Bhabha, Homi K. 1994. “How Newness enters the world: Postmodern space, postcolonial times and the trials of cultural translations”. In The Location of Culture, 303–337. New York: Routledge.
Brown, Christopher. 2011. “Gangs and terrorist. Dangerous classmates in Minnesota’s Somali community.” *Journal of Terrorism Research* 2 (1).

Carlson, Benny, Karin Magnusson, and Sofia Rönqvist. 2012. Somalier på arbetsmarknaden – har Sverige något att lära? [Somalis in the labour market – does Sweden have something to learn?] Underlagsrapport 2 till Framtidskommissionen. http://www.regeringen.se/content/1/c6/21/90/93/3bb29614.pdf (accessed 29 September 2014).

Edmunds, June, and Bryan Turner. 2005. “Global generations: social change in the twentieth century.” *The British Journal of Sociology* 56 (4): 559–577.

Fellin, Melissa (2015) “The impact of media representations on Somali youth’s experiences in educational spaces.” *Landscapes of Violence* 3 (3): Article 5.

Finnish Broadcasting Company YLE. 2014. Finn aims to be first female president of Somalia. 4.9.2014. http://yle.fi/uutiset/finn_aims_to_be_first_female_president_of_somalia/7451139 (accessed 17 March 2015).

Fix, Michael. 2007. *Securing the future: US immigrant integration policy: a reader.* Migration Policy Institute, Washington.

Galipo, Adele. 2011. “Diaspora and Peacebuilding in Post-Conflict Settings: Insights from Somaliland.” Paper presented at the 4th European Conference on African Studies Uppsala, Sweden, 15–18 June 2011.

Harinen, Päivi, and M’hammed Sabour. 2013. “Finland.” In *The Palgrave Handbook of Race and Ethnic Inequalities in Education*, edited by Peter Stevens and Gary Dworkin, 308–327. New York: Palgrave McMillan.

Hautaniemi, Petri, Marko Juntunen, and Mariko Sato. 2013. Return Migration and Vulnerability: Case Studies from Somaliland and Iraqi Kurdistan. Helsinki: University of Helsinki, Department of Political and Economic Studies.

Haverinen, Ville-Samuli, and Marko Kananen. 2016. “Somalialaiset Suomessa ja Minnesota” [Somalis in Finland and Minnesota]. In *Iska Warran – mitä kuuluu? Somalidiaspora meillä ja muualla*, edited by Päivi Armila, Tiina Sotkasiira, and Ville-Samuli Haverinen, 80–89. Joensuu: University of Eastern Finland.

Hepp, Andreas, Cigdem Bozdag, and Laura Suna. 2012. “Mediatized migrants: Media cultures and communicative networking in the diaspora.” In *Migrations, Diaspora, and Information Technology in Global Societies*, edited by Leopoldina Fortunati, Raul Perttierra, and Jane Vincent, 172–188. London: Routledge.

International Labour Organization. 2013. *Why Young People Immigrate?* http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-il0/newsroom/comment-analysis/WCMS_219045/lang--en/index.htm (accessed 4 December 2014).

Kananen, Marko. 2016. “Amerikan opit” [Lessons from America]. In *Iska Warran – mitä kuuluu? Somalidiaspora meillä ja muualla*, edited by Päivi Armila, Tiina Sotkasiira, and Ville-Samuli Haverinen, 90–98. Joensuu: University of Eastern Finland.
Koski, Leena. 2011. “Teksteistä teemoiksi – dialoginen tematisointi.” [From texts to themes – a dialogical thematization.] In Menetelmäviidakon raivaajat. Perusteita laadullisen tutkimuslähetystymistä valintaan, edited by Anu Puusa and Pauli Juuti, 129–149. Helsinki: Johtamistaidon opisto, JTO.

Kotouttamislaki [Finnish Integration Act] (1386/2010) Laki maahanmuuttajien kotouttamisesta ja turvapaikankohdistamisesta.

Laine, Sofia. 2012. Young Actors in Transnational Agoras. Multi-Sited Ethnography of Cosmopolitan Micropolitical Orientation. Helsinki: The Finnish Youth Research Network.

Leitner, Helga. 2004. “Local Lives, Transnational Ties, and the Meaning of Citizenship: Somali Histories and Herstories from Small Town America.” Bildhaan: An International Journal of Somali Studies vol. 4, article 7.

Marshall, Theodore. 1950. Citizenship and Social Class and Other Essays. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Matikka, Anni, Pauliina Luopa, and Hanne Kivimäki. 2013. Maahanmuuttajataustaan kuuluvia 8. ja 9.-luokkalaisia ja heidän hyvinvoinnin tapahtumia. [Wellbeing of 8th and 9th graders with immigration background]. Kouluturveyskysely 2013. Helsinki: Terveyden ja hyvinvoinnin laitos.

Mulligan, Scott. 2009. Radicalization within the Somali-American Diaspora: Countering the Homegrown Terrorist Threat. Monterey: Naval Postgraduate School.

Orozco, Manuel, and Julia Yansura. 2013. Keeping the lifeline open remittances and markets in Somalia. Oxfam America: Boston.

Pirkkalainen, Päivi. 2013. “Transnational Responsibilities and Multi-sited Strategies. Voluntary Associations of Somali Diaspora in Finland.” Jyväskylä Studies in Education, Psychology and Social Research 489. PhD diss., University of Jyväskylä, Jyväskylä.

Pirkkalainen, Päivi, Hanna Wass, and Marjukka Weide. 2016. “Suomen somalit osallistuvina kansalaisina.” [Finnish Somalis as active citizens.] Yhteiskuntapolitiikka 1, 69–77.

Portes, Alejandro, and Zhou Min. 1993. “The New Second Generation: Segmented Assimilation and Its Variants.” Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences 530: 74–96.

Sheikh, Hassan, and Sally Healy. 2009. Somalia's Missing Million: The Somali Diaspora and Its Role in Development. Somalis in Maine Archive. Paper 54.

United Nations. 2015. International migrant stock 2015. http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/estimates2/estimates15.shtml (accessed 12 October 2016).

United States Census Bureau. 2011a. Sex by college or graduate school enrolment by type of school by age for the population 15 years and over. 2006–2010 American Community Survey. U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey Office.
United States Census Bureau. 2011b. *Selected economic characteristics. 2006 — 2010 American Community Survey*. U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey Office.

Vintage Somalia. 2013. “93 Notes”. *Vintage Somalia*. 28 September 2013. http://vintagesomalia.com/post/62528634831/mogadishu-somalia-1980s-health-workers-in-all (accessed 1 December 2014).

Yusuf, Ahmed. 2012. *Somalis in Minnesota (People in Minnesota)*. Minneapolis: Minnesota Historical Society Press.