

A MEDITERRANEAN PERSPECTIVE ON MIGRANTS' FLOWS IN THE EU



UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI NAPOLI
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MIGRATION IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AREA AND THE CHALLENGES FOR "HOSTING" EUROPEAN SOCIETY

Edited by
GIUSEPPE CATALDI - ANNA LIGUORI - MARIANNA PACE

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EUROPEAN SOCIETY

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**BECOMING DIASPORA. HOW THE HOST AND
ORIGIN COUNTRIES INFLUENCE MIGRANTS’
ACTIVISM IN AID AND DEVELOPMENT: A
COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE**

Valeria Saggiomo*

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1. Introduction

The title of this article “becoming diaspora” is evocative of a process that, in the view of the author, does not receive enough attention by policy makers. This process describes the trajectory of civic engagement of migrants in aid and development of their origin countries. The recent emphasis on supporting diaspora engagement in aid and development that arises from the efforts of some policy makers and UN organizations active in the migration field risks to homogenize the category of migrants and assimilate them to the notion of diaspora. By definition, the world diaspora refers to migrant communities that nurture a dual sense of belonging to both home and host country. Diasporas maintain strong ties with their origin countries that they aspire to through a commitment to contribute to their restoration, development and maintenance. Diasporas often nurture thoughts of an eventual return, in what can be conceived as a dual citizenship, the one of the heart and the one of the mind. Understandably, not all migrants feel the moral duty to engage in solidarity towards their

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fellow nationals, their origin country and their beloved land. Not all migrants have the capacity to do so, even if they are willing to. Not all migrants engage successfully in aid and development, even if their intention is positive and passionate. The one many migrants experience at a certain stage of their migration history is a process of ideal return to their homeland that may be exercised through engaging in aid and development activities, in a collective form.

The article aims to address the question of when migrants become diasporas? What trigger their activism towards social work of transnational solidarity?

This article supports the idea that there are factors that stimulate the transition from the status of migrants to the one of diaspora. These factors are responsible for triggering a process that, time after time, leads migrants to become diasporas and engage in the origin countries to bring change through aid and development projects. What are these factors? This article suggests to consider the convergence of two distinct dimensions that positively affect the transition from migrants to diasporas. These are: the attitudes of host countries vis-à-vis the migration phenomenon, including the recognition of migrants as potential development actors, institutional structures and opportunities to support diaspora activism (contextual factors); secondly, the sudden eruption of a crises that, in the origin country, solicit diaspora engagement in helping fellow nationals (situational factors).

Using a comparative analysis, this article argues that the convergence of contextual factors in the host societies and situational factors in the migrants' origin countries at a certain time in history deeply influence the attitude to activism in aid and development by migrants as individuals and as groups. The article brings narratives from three cases: the Malian diaspora in France, where both factors occur, generating a high level of constant

diaspora engagement in Mali; the Lybian diaspora in the UK, where the support of institutional structures to Libyans exists, though at a slower pace, and the fall of the Geddafi's regime in 2011 prompted the reaction of Libyan diaspora, apparently limited to the initial phase of the humanitarian crises; the Afghan diaspora in Europe whose engagement in aid and development is hindered by the absence of a specific institutional support in the host countries and by the lack of a specific triggering situational factor in Afghanistan.¹

The three cases from Mali, Libya and Afghanistan present different characteristics for the historical roots of the diaspora, for the profile of people migrating to Europe, for the different hosting societies that are considered in this article. Despite differences, the three groups share a common feature that make them suitable for the proposed analysis, that is a good propensity to remit money back home, calculated comparing data on annual remittances flowing in the country, the total number of nationals living outside the country and the national GDP. The article assumes that this propensity is indicative of the willingness of migrants to maintain ties with the origin country, and of the sensitiveness towards engaging further in aid and development, if external conditions are conducive.

¹ Initial research on these three diaspora groups was conducted with Giulia Spagna in the framework of a scoping study commissioned by the Danish Refugee Council to me as leading consultant. The scoping study was aimed at identifying potentials to promote diaspora related programming in DRC countries of operation, within the overall Diaspora Program promoted by its leader Mingo Heiduk in Copenhagen. The scoping study was conducted between December 2015 and January 2016 and explored potentials from a total of 22 origin countries, namely Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey in the Middle East and North Africa region (MENA); Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Uganda, Yemen, Djibouti in the Horn of Africa and Yemen region (HoAY); Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Mali, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Guinea in the West Africa region (WA), Afghanistan, and stand-alone countries in Africa such as Sudan, South Sudan, DR Congo and the Central Africa Republic.

2. The Political Opportunity, still a useful theoretical framework

Since the early 1990s, many comparative migration studies have adopted a political opportunity structure (POS) approach to explain variations in forms of migrants' grassroots organising, mobilisation, participation and engagement.

The approach of the political opportunity structure developed within the theoretical framework of social movement theory (Tilly 1978; Tarrow 1994; Kriesi et al. 1995). Tarrow (1994, 85) defines the political opportunity structure notion as 'consistent dimensions of the political environment -not necessarily formal or permanent- that provide incentives for people to undertake collective action by affecting their expectations for success or failure'. The political opportunity framework explains motives for people to act for reaching a certain objective and ascribe personal or collective motives to external contextual opportunities that favour processes and indirectly solicit people's activism.

Taking this perspective means recognizing that people, including migrants, tend to form organizations and act collectively to reach an objective when there are favourable external conditions that raise migrants' positive expectations towards what they can achieve through collective actions. In other words, when a given political context is favourable in a given historical timeframe, for instance through a new legislation or through incentives to certain categories, people take the opportunity to organize themselves and achieve an objective.

During the 1990s, the notion of political opportunity structure was further specified by authors like Kriesi, Koopmans, Duyvendak and Giugni (Kriesi et al 1995). In a famous book discussing the notion of POS in the context of the Social

Movement Theory these authors added various components that, complementing the political opportunity structure, affect diaspora engagement in the social sphere, such as national cleavage structures, institutional structures, prevailing strategies and alliance structures. All these aspects, according to the authors, frame what they call the “interaction context” that links macrostructural level of the political opportunity structures to the collective actions of movement actors. The major contribution of these authors has been to look for a connection between external opportunities and migrants’ agency that is exactly the perspective that this article works on.

Scholars’ attention to migrants’ agency in the POS framework emerged towards the 2000, when the notion evidenced some shortfalls in supporting the analysis of ethnic and migration research (Bousetta 2000, 232) particularly concerning the lack of mechanisms of the POS approach to add insight to its general framework.

In particular, the critique of Bousetta (Bousetta, 2000, 235) pointed towards an overemphasis of the POS approach to institutional factors that seemed to be the primary triggering factor in migrants’ activism. In other words, dedicated institutions such as Ministries of Diasporas in migrants’ origin countries, or offices in charge of diaspora involvement in home politics would act as catalyst of diaspora engagement in aid and development, as the case of some western African countries demonstrates. This focus on the institutional framework of the origin countries however, Bousetta noticed, seem to undermine the agency and strategies used by migrants in engaging with their origin countries. The POS framework, according to Bousetta, seems to forget immigrant organisations’ internal and identity construction processes, thus misinterpreting immigrants role and portraying them as passive agents whose actions are determined by institutional structures alone.

The critique of Koopmans (Koopmans et al. 2005, 19-20) suggests that in addition to the general institutional structures of the state, specific dimensions of the opportunity structures, such as integration policy, should be taken into account when analysing the factors that trigger migrants' activism. This critique highlights the importance of hosting societies in shaping and modelling the role of migrants in the host country. Koopmans suggests that explicit integration measures promoted by host governments enhance the ability of migrants to engage in the socio-political sphere.

Caponio and Garbaye (Garbaye 2005; Caponio 2005) seem to build on this critique when they point towards the importance to encompass the local besides the national level in the analysis of migrants' activism in the host countries. In studying migrants' organizations in three different local contexts in Italy, namely Milan, Naples and Bologna, Caponio evidenced how different local opportunities given by the different local/municipal governments influence levels of immigrant organization, suggesting the importance to look at the local context for understanding patterns of migrants' activism.

In the same vein, stressing the importance of local contexts to diaspora engagement in aid and development, this article looks at "opportunities" arising from migrants' origin countries. The article conceives local contexts in terms of institutional structures, recognizing the importance of a political will in migrants' origin countries to deal with the global diaspora and seek for its contribution to the country's growth. More importantly however, local contexts are here framed as *situational factors*, meaning those calamities that occur in a given local political contexts and that spur diaspora activism and solidarity. Both institutional structure and situational factors fall under the category of external conditions (external to migrants' agency) that are determinants

for triggering migrants' activism in line with the political opportunity approach.

At the same time, the article embraces the perspective that Boussetta suggested in early 2000s that is to look at migrants' agency in determining their future and their role in host societies. As such, migrants are conceived as potential agents of development in the host and origin societies, in line with the Migration and Development approach. In such a perspective, the article recognizes the importance of migrants' relations in supporting their activism at both national and transnational level, to response to the critique that has been posed to the POS theory as being too rigid and static in offering explanations to mobilisation patterns, ignoring for example aspects related to networks and social capital. As argued by Koopmans et al. (2005, 21) 'collective actors never mobilise in a vacuum. They are always confronted with established actors who already occupy certain positions in the playing field with whom they enter into relations of competition, alliance or opposition'.

In doing so, this work agrees with Marco Giugni (Giugni 2011) interpretation of the political opportunity approach in its post-critique period, maintaining that the POS still represents a useful concept to understand current features of diaspora engagement. At the same time, the article builds a conceptual framework that draws from the most recent evolutions in the approach and applies them to the analysis of diaspora activism in aid and development to explain how situational factors in the origin countries, coupled with political opportunities in host countries influences migrants' activism in aid and development.

3. Malian Diaspora in France

The case of Malian diaspora shows how institutional structures in the host societies are determinant to enhance diaspora

engagement in aid and development. Historical legacy and the level of bilateral cooperation between France and Mali on diaspora engagement in development, make the case of Malian diaspora in France extremely interesting for this study².

The relationship between France and Malian immigrants is old and solid. French colonisation prompted Malian belonging to the Soninke ethnic group to migrate into France already at the beginning of the 20th Century. During the 1960s and 1980s, droughts in Mali and labour needs in France attracted several Malians to migrate there. Most of them (an estimated 80%) originated from the Senegal River Valley that includes the region of Kayes where the majority of Malians in the diaspora belong to.

Starting from the 1960s, Malians in France have been setting up associations to assist their fellow migrants in integration into the French society, and to pool funds to help their communities in Mali. In the 1970s, Malian diaspora's Home Town Associations became a popular way to do so; The first development projects were supported by the Group de Recherche pour le Development Rurale (GRDR), which focussed on communal development projects entirely funded by the diaspora and implemented through a network of migrants in France and villages in Mali.

During the 1980s, and after France officially recognised Diaspora associations in its territory, the number of diaspora associations in France started growing exponentially, totalling about 400. Their recognition boosted the activism of migrants far beyond remittances and rural development; Diaspora's engagements encompassed infrastructural development projects, including the creation of wells, water tanks, schools, health centres and supporting the economic sector through the establishment of cooperatives, cereal stocks and enterprises.

² Today, 125.300 Malian are part of the national diaspora, representing about 0,8% of the country's total population (15,3 million). About half of global Malian diaspora reside in France.

During the 1990s, projects oriented towards education activities, professional training and teachers' training (Galatowitsch 2009). Between 2000 and 2004, it is estimated that more than 5.5 million Euros have been channelled to Mali by Malian diaspora residing in France (FSP 2005).

Nowadays, Malian Diaspora communities in France are still organised through Home Town Associations, which promote projects such as the building of schools, mosques, hospitals and act as mediators for exchange experiences between different towns in Mali and in France. Typically, Home Town Associations channel funds in the area of origin of the diaspora, through an established network of local counterparts. Among their recent activities, worth to mention are the provision of soft loan facilities to people in need of aid or support for business start-ups. This system, called tontine, is traditionally used in areas where the access to official credit is difficult.

The relationships between Malian Diaspora and the population left home has always been very strong. Traditional leaders and griots in Mali ensured that a good reputation was maintained as the gifts of the migrants benefitted the entire community (Azam and Gubert 2004). Migrants maintain a high status in Mali, and Malian youth are encouraged to migrate in search of wealth, prestige and as an income diversification strategy for the family (Traoré 2009).

At the same time, since the early 2000s France invested into diaspora strengthening as development actors. In 2002, France launched the Fond de Solidarité Prioritaire - Codevelopment Mali with a budget of 2.6 Million Euros over three years (first phase). The FSP is a branch of the French Ministry of immigration aimed at boosting socio-economic development in Mali through dedicated diaspora projects. The FSP co-funded diaspora organisations' and local counterparts' projects aiming at promoting local development, provided technical assistance to

diaspora organisations, and coached them through an office in France and an office in Mali (Gauvrit 2004). The second phase of the FSP (2006-2009) was implemented in collaboration with the Agence National de l'Accueil des Etrangers et des Migrations (ANAEM) and funded over 180 projects of diaspora organisations.³

In 2013, France integrated diaspora support into its international cooperation policy. In fact, harnessing Mali's diaspora for Development is one of the four pillars in France's strategy for reconstruction and development of the country, alongside the external action of local governments (French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013). In 2013, France and Mali launched the Mobility and Migration for Development Programme. The program aims at enhancing the economic impact of Malian diaspora by promoting job-creating entrepreneurship initiatives and supporting local governance. It addresses three areas: a) Building the capacities to effectively include migration in Malian public policies, for example by funding local capacity building operations through the qualified diaspora; b) Co-financing and supporting local development projects; c) Supporting productive investments and migrant entrepreneurship.

On the Malian side, Mali has established and pursued strategies to attract the involvement of their diaspora in the homeland's development projects (ADPC, 2011 p. 5). To this end, in 2000 the Ministry for Malian Nationals Abroad and African Integration has been created and devoted to enhancing the role of Malian Diaspora for peace and development in Mali.

In addition, the Haut Conseil des Maliens de l'exterieur (HCME) was created in 1991 to manage the relationship between Malian diaspora and the population in country. In 2003, the

³ <http://www.panapress.com/Plus-de-180-projets-finances-par-le-FSP-et-l-OMi-au-Mali--13-662274-18-lang1-index.html> (accessed on 23 February 2016).

HCME was re-structured as a non-political and non-profit organisation, with offices in 62 countries and the head quarter in Bamako. The aim of the HCME is to support Malians residing abroad, to channel migrants' remittances towards investments in Mali, to promote cultural events and sport competitions, and to sustain decentralised cooperation. The HCME represents the an established Malian non-governmental institution, both for development purposes and during emergency situations, such as the case of the 2002 political crises in Ivory Coast, when in few days the HCME was able to mobilise diaspora to remit sufficient funds to repatriate Malians living in the Ivory Coast. (IOM 2009).

4. Lybian diaspora in the UK

The case of Libyan diaspora shows how situational factors in the origin country, such as the eruption of the civil was after the fall of Gaddafi's regime in 2011, contribute to solicit diaspora engagement in aid and development. The case of Libyans in the United Kingdom also shows how institutional support from the host government, in the form of available funds to Libyan diaspora organizations, also triggers engagement of diaspora organizations. In line with the critique of Koopmans to the POS approach, this section on Libya looks at the hosting societies as a pivotal parameter to understanding Libyan migrants' attitude to engage in humanitarian aid and development activities in Libya.

Libyan diaspora originated between 1995 and 1998 when many young Libyans, mostly university graduates, students or working professionals, escaped Libya to avoid arrest, after clandestine Islamic organisations belonging to the Muslim Brotherhood and 'Islamic Grouping' were discovered by the Libyan authorities. A great part of them sought political asylum status in Italy, UK, Switzerland, Germany and other EU countries (Gamaty, 2012). Looking at the United Kingdom as one of the

preferred destinations of the Libyan diaspora, relations between the United Kingdom and Libya were tense from the mid-1980s, following the shooting of a British police officer in Central London apparently from a diplomatic office of the Libyan government. The subsequent Lockerbie case, when a bomb placed by two Libyan terrorists on a flight crossing Scotland caused the death of more than two hundred fifty persons, disrupted diplomatic contacts completely and led the UN Security Council to impose sanctions on Gaddafi's government who refused to collaborate and hand over the suspects. Sanctions lay heavily on Libya for almost a decade and were suspended in 1998 after Gaddafi recognized his responsibilities and promised to pay compensation to British families. That admission of fault reopened diplomatic relations between Libya and the United Kingdom from 2001. UN sanctions were lifted soon after and Libya started close cooperation with the UK in the war against terrorism and in the oil business. According to Blitz, Libya geo-strategic importance to the UK has become evident in 2004, when Libya accepted to dismantle its nuclear weapon programme, opening commercial opportunities and collaboration in the war on terror (Blitz, 2008). Accordingly, since 2004, the UK government has enhanced cooperation on asylum and migration management with Libya, and the number of Libyan asylum seekers in the UK has increased. The number of Libyan charities registered in the UK expanded rapidly, taking advantage of the British Department for International Development (DfID) dedicated funding initiatives for development and humanitarian aid programmes led by diaspora organizations, particularly those open to Libyan diaspora organisations such as the Disability Rights Fund; Girls'

education Challenge; Collaborative Challenge Fund; Global Innovation Fund; Common Ground initiative.⁴

Who are Libyans in the UK? What is their potential in aid and development? The answer is anchored to the opportunity structure offered to refugees and migrants in the UK that seems to shape diaspora engagement in collective actions. Data from OECD show that 58% of Libyan nationals who reside in the UK are in possess of a University degree. This data is reinforced by qualitative studies on the profiles of Libyan Diaspora in the UK that report that students and business people represent the vast majority of Libyans in the UK (Blitz 2008, p 115). Higher education level and a relatively well-off status, probably constituted a fertile ground on which Libyan nationals in the UK were ready to build on, as soon as an external opportunity in their origin country arose. In fact, during the 2011 crises that determined the fall of long-term leader Muammar Gaddafi, a vivid activism of Libyan organizations became visible in the UK and in the USA.

Within this activism, the organization Volunteer Libya⁵ was set up by eight diaspora individuals in 2011 and started as fundraising association in the USA and increasingly focussed on youth empowerment and social cohesion programmes in Libya. Moved by the lack of opportunities in Libya that pushes more and more youngsters to join armed militia, the association organised trainings, volunteering and renovations projects, donations of school materials, scholarships for Libyan and Tunisian youth and distribution of non-food items in camps in Libya. The

⁴ For more information on the British Government support to Libyan organizations see <https://www.gov.uk/world/organisations/dfid-middle-east-and-north-africa> (accessed 21/11/2017).

⁵ Interview to Volunteer Libya by Giulia Spagna and Valeria Saggiomo, within the framework of a Scoping Study on Diaspora Engagement commissioned by the Danish Refugee Council from December 2015 to January 2016.

humanitarian crisis that followed the fall of Gaddafi's regime pushed around 2.4 million Libyan nationals in need of urgent assistance and prompted the activism of Libyan diaspora in the UK. Interviews with Libyan diaspora reported by media⁶ described the way Libyans mobilised their resources and activated networks of Libyans in Europe and in the United States to collect funds and address humanitarian needs in their home country. Libyan diaspora's activism involved the creation of charities and organisations to gather resources and organise a response in a structured way. For example, the "World Medical Camp for Libya" (WMCL), was set up in London in a few days immediately after the fall of Gaddafi's regime in 2011. Through appeals aired by Facebook, the organisation quickly activated a network of supporters able to raise 100.000 euros in two weeks to arrange a convoy with medical supplies by road, via Egypt. The convoy successfully reached the hospitals in Benghazi, as well as to other Eastern towns including Derna, Bayda and Tobruk.⁷ Despite the successes achieved, the organisation permanently closed in May 2013.

The narrative on the World Medical Camp for Libya is evocative of the ways many Libyan Diaspora organisations in the UK seem to work. An overview of the annual budget of Libyan Diaspora organisations in the UK suggests that their activism is often strictly linked to a quick-response to a particular aspect of the humanitarian crises in Libya. This is also probably due to the lack of sustained core funding, as their budgets - considerable at the onset of the 2011 crises - sharply diminished in the following two or three years.

⁶ New America Now "Libyan Diaspora Helps the Homeland" Interview to Sarah Ibrahim, press officer of the World Medical Camp for Libya. <http://newamericamedia.org/2011/03/libyan-expats-pitch-in-to-help-give-aid.php> accessed on January 2016.

⁷ <http://www.tnpp.org/2011/02/world-medical-camp-for-libya-charity-to.html> (accessed on 23 February 2016).

According to a UK Governmental source,⁸ in 2015 six active Libyan Diaspora organizations were officially registered in the country. These are: Lawyers for Justice in Libya that operates in Libya, Egypt and Tunisia, promoting human rights, justice and the rule of law, with an annual budget of about 230.000 pounds; Libya Aid Relief Efforts that operates in Libya and Tunisia, targeting civilians and conflict-affected population with health projects, with an annual budget below 10.000 pounds; Libya Human Aid that operates in Libya and Syria, delivering humanitarian aid, with an annual budget of 424.000 pounds in 2012, and 52.000 in 2013; Libyan Medical Relief LTD that operates in Libya only, providing medical and humanitarian relief, with an annual budget of 80.000 pounds in 2013, and below 10.000 pounds in 2014; The Society for Libyan Studies, an established cultural association active in England and Wales to promote the study of Libyan history, culture, languages, literature, art and customs. It organises cultural missions to Libya, exhibitions, meetings and lectures pertaining to the Libyan cultural sphere. It has a constant annual budget of about 90.000 pounds; World for Libya that operates in Libya and Tunisia, providing medical support, training to Libyan doctors, education projects and financial assistance to refugees and displaced Libyans. The charity managed a budget of 765.000 pounds in 2012, 53.000 in 2013, less than 2.000 in 2014.

Data presented above demonstrates a vivid activism of charities immediately after the fall of the Gaddafi's regime in 2011, with a massive amount of money spent on humanitarian interventions that sharply declined in the subsequent years, until closure or minimal operations in 2014 and 2015. This indicates that Libyan diaspora activism in aid was clearly triggered by the 2011 historical event and faded away soon after in the following

⁸ www.charitycommission.gov.uk (accessed on 23 February 2016).

years. Worth to note that because of the severe political fragmentation prevailing in Libya, neither a government body nor a national engagement strategy or policy dedicated wholly or partly to diaspora engagement in Libya exists. Ministries such as those of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Justice, Defence and Interior may all have roles relevant for a diaspora's engagement in the country, but none appears to have an active strategy relating to this at the present time, according to research (Taylor, 2014).

5. *Afghan Diaspora in Europe*

The case of the Afghan diaspora describes how the lack of an institutional structure that recognizes its role in the host society, and the lack of specific situational factors in Afghanistan are detrimental to the Afghan diaspora engagement in aid and development, despite the good propensity of Afghans to remit money back home.

Looking at historical milestones that generated Afghan diaspora, three distinct waves of migrations fluxes from Afghanistan can be identified. The first followed the Coup d'Etat in 1978 that established a Marxist regime; political opponents, officials from the former government, university professors and members of the elites fled the country to escape persecution. In 1992, a second wave saw the massive exodus of the Marxist regime authorities and their supporters, who left power to a radical Islamist group, the Mujaheddeen. The third wave began in 1996, when the Taliban took over Kabul, defeating the NATO force and its allies (Danstrom, Kleist, Soresen 2015).

The preferred destinations were the United States and Europe (OECD 2015). Germany and the United Kingdom host the vast majority of the Afghan diaspora residing in Europe (respectively 23,6% and 13,6%) but there are also considerable communities in

the Netherlands, in Denmark and in Norway. Recent research (Danstroem, Kleist, Soeresen 2015) confirm that the narrative on Afghan diaspora's involvement in development and humanitarian aid in their origin country is scarce. Available data account for high remittances levels, estimated at 30% of the GDP, totalling more than five hundred million USD in 2013. While Afghan diaspora involvement in numerous investments in the sectors like telecommunications, banking, civil aviation, real estate, is known and documented, little research on diaspora organisations commitment to humanitarian activities or development projects exists.

In the UK, Afghan Diaspora organisations are formally registered at the Charity Commission website, managed by governmental offices. The website accounts for 62 registered Afghan diaspora organisations in the UK, working in various domains such as relief, development, cultural activities, religious activities and human rights. Worth to mention is the existence of an umbrella organization, the Federation of Afghan Refugee Organisations in Europe (FAROE), that at the European level brings together 53 organisations of Afghan Diaspora in different European countries. As stated in its website, FAROE is the biggest and the most important coordinating body Afghans have ever had in Europe.⁹ The organization was founded in 1999, when Afghanistan suffered the theocratic dictatorship of the Taliban. Among others, FAROE's aim is to stimulate Afghan organisations' involvement in the promotion of human rights, good governance, democratisation and peace-building in Afghanistan. In addition, FAROE acts as advocacy forum to solicit the attention of Europe and European countries in contributing to the political stabilization of the country.

⁹ http://www.afghandiaspora.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=197&Itemid=93 (accessed on 21/11/2017).

Looking at the local institutional setting, Diaspora's engagement does not appear to be under the remit of a single institution, nor does it appear to be coordinated by a leading body in Afghanistan. According to research (Taylor et al. 2014, p.192) multiple agencies are involved in aspects of diaspora engagement, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Borders and Tribal Affairs, and the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation. While there is no government ministry in the lead for diaspora-related issues, the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) includes the Afghan diaspora in its National Consultation Process, which aims to oversee the strategic direction of the ANDS by high-level stakeholders. The government ministries who oversee these broad thematic areas of the ANDS, which would ostensibly involve the Afghan diaspora, are the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Justice, and the Ministry of the Economy (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2008).

The majority of Afghan diaspora organizations in Europe under the FAROE umbrella do not promote aid nor development projects in Afghanistan, despite the estimated above 8 million people who are in need of humanitarian assistance, after decades of civil war. According to human rights organizations' reports, civilians in Afghanistan are recurrently exposed to targeted killings and forced recruitment by armed groups, while victims of mines have reached a world's record. Stability and development are hampered by a high level of poverty, which remains entrenched especially in urban contexts and IDP camps, leading to increased food insecurity and low level of resilience. All these situational factors, however, are not sufficient to catalyse significant contribution of Afghan diaspora for aid and development, especially in the absence of a local dedicated institutional support system for channelling the Diaspora engagement in the country. Afghan diaspora engagement in aid

and development is low and tend to focus on advocacy at the European level to intervene in the country and bring political change.

6. Conclusions

This article concludes that migrants who become diaspora undergo a long process of integration into the host societies and of re-working of their identities so to be able to contribute to the development of both the host and the origin country. In this long and sometimes painful process, hosting societies play a key role in either supporting or hindering migrants' transition from passive beneficiaries of social welfare in the host countries to active actors of development in the origin countries. As the Malian diaspora case demonstrates, the presence in host societies of institutional structures that facilitate diaspora engagement in aid and development, a positive attitude of institutions towards the recognition of migrants as development actors, and a constructive relationship between migrants' host and origin countries act as catalysts of diaspora activism. In such a context, his activism is strengthened, empowered and channelled into strategic development paths that potentially generate positive change in both the origin and the host countries.

Conversely, as the case of the UK with Libyan migrants during the Lockerbie case seems to suggest, where a conducive framework is feeble, where host governments are less prone to enact social policies explicitly targeting migrants as potential aid and development actors, the engagement of migrants in the home affairs of the origin countries is much slower, less prominent and short-term. Equally, the lack of bilateral agreements and operational programs between the host and origin countries on how to maximise the contribution of diaspora groups or organizations in aid and development seems to affect diaspora

engagement negatively. Situational factors, instead, trigger diaspora activism in humanitarian aid, as the 2011 surge of Libyan diaspora organizations in the UK demonstrates. This trend however seems to follow emotional rather than intentional motives, as diaspora engagement gradually fades away after the onset of the crises.

Finally, the case of Afghan diaspora organizations supports the argument that institutional structures conducive to diaspora engagement in hosting societies are pivotal in facilitating the transition from “migrants to diasporas”. In fact, the low number of Afghan diaspora organizations in Europe and the low profile they keep with regard to aid and development activities in Afghanistan sadly correspond to a vague cooperation framework between Afghan authorities and host governments on diaspora matters, despite the high level of remittances that flow in Afghanistan annually.

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