Homeland is Homeland

Transnational activities and participation among individuals within the Afghan diaspora in Sweden

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The inclusion of migration in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has spurred the discussion on migrants' positive contributions to growth and sustainable development.[1] Diasporas[2] can play an important role in their countries of origin through transnational networks and engagement, for instance by sending financial remittances[3] to family and relatives, invest money, transfer ideas, engage politically and in development projects.[4] Financial remittances of 400 billion dollars were estimated to flow to developing countries in 2015 – three times the total amount of international

[1] International Organization of Migration (IOM), Migration in the 2030 Agenda, 2017, iii foreword.

[2] The term diaspora can have different meanings. See next paragraph for the definition in this study.

[3] Money that migrants, refugees, asylum-seekers or diasporas send from country of residence to country of origin.(International Organization of Migration), Bilaga till Afghanistan Migration profile, 2014, 21.)

[4] Delegationen för migrationsstudier (Delmi), Diaspora: kunskapsöversikt, 2016.

aid the same year.[5] Nevertheless, multiple organizations request a greater knowledge base on diasporas' remittances and transnational engagement.[6] This article aims at establishing a foundation of knowledge on the Afghan diaspora in Sweden and its transnational activities. The Afghan diaspora in Sweden has grown to a more extensive size in recent years[7] and as to this point there is very little research conducted on their transnational activities and involvement. By the end of 2017, 43 991 people who were born in Afghanistan had either temporary residence permits, permanent residence permits in Sweden or Swedish citizenship.[8]

In this article I will show how seven individuals within the Afghan diaspora engage in Afghanistan, what types of transnational activities they direct towards *the household and extended family sphere, the 'known community' sphere,* and *the 'imagined community' sphere*, as well as the capabilities and personal motivations that contribute to their commitments. In this inquiry, the Afghan diaspora is defined as *individuals living in Sweden but born or raised in Afghanistan, and who in one way or another maintain cross-border ties/links or activities towards the country of origin.*

Research design and the informants

The theoretical framework is based on a transnational perspective, namely, cross-border activities and processes.[9] A transnational perspective in this study

[5] World Bank Group, (2016) Migration and Remittances Factbook 2016, xii.

[6] Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development (KNOMAD), Policy Brief 8, October 2017, International Organization of Migration Afghanistan Migration Profile, 25, 2014.

[7] Svenska Afghanistankommittén, [Swedish committee for Afghanistan] "Afghaner på flykt i Sverige."

[8] Statistiska Centralbyrån, [Statistics Sweden] befolkningsstatistik.

[9] Levitt, P, & Jaworsky, B, "Transnational Migration Studies: Past Developments and Future Trends", *Annual Review of Sociology*, 33, 129-156, Business Source Complete, EBSCO*host,* 2007, 130-31.

implies examining various bands and activities that link individuals with Afghan origin in Sweden with people and institutions in Afghanistan. The word "diaspora" originates from the Greek language and stems from the notion of being dispersed. It was initially associated with traumatic spreading of humans, for example, the spreading of the Jewish population before the creation of the state of Israel.[10]

Even though the concept is now used in an increasingly wider sense, the central idea is the spreading of groups, away from their country of origin or supposed "homeland", to one or more countries that maintain relations with parts of the separated population.[11] The term "Afghan diaspora" is used in this study only as a term to include the group I am investigating. In line with Ceri Oeppen, I mean that it is important to emphasize that the Afghan diaspora is not a homogeneous group with identical goals and activities.[12] However, the study points to what types of transnational involvement can occur within the Afghan diaspora and discusses this in relation to previous research.

In the analysis, it is examined whether economic, social and political remittances are directed towards Afghanistan, and to which social spheres, according to Nicholas Van Hears' framework.[13] Financial remittances are defined as money transfers between the destination country and the country of origin. These remittances can be transferred via formal channels, i.e., banking systems, informal channels through e.g. the Hawala system (an

[10] Oeppen, Ceri, "The Afghan diaspora and its involment in the reconstruction of Afghanistan", in *Beyond the 'Wild Tribes': Understanding Modern Afghanistan and its Diaspora*. Eds. Ceri Oeppen and Angela Schlenkhoof, 141–156. London: Hurst & Company, 2010, 142.

[11] Van Hear, Nicholas. "Refugees, Diasporas, and Transnationalism", in *The Oxford Handbook of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies*. Eds. Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, Gil Loescher, Katy Long, and Nando Sigona, Oxford University Press, 2014, 2.

[12] Oeppen, 2010, 142.

[13] Van Hear, 2014.

informal baking system), or by visiting or sending money with someone else.[14] Social remittances are the ideas, behaviors and social capital flowing from the destination country to the country of origin[15] while political remittances include the flow of political ideas and opinions. Devesh Kapur claims that flows of ideas and opinions can have an even greater impact on politics in the country than economic remittances sent to political parties.[16]

Van Hear's three social spheres are (1) *the household and the larger family sphere,* (2) *the 'known community' sphere* which involves engagement with areas where the individual has lived and have come to know people, and (3) *the 'imagined community' sphere* focusing on either the nation (in this case Afghanistan) as a community, or other major communities such as religious, social or ethnic groups or political movements.[17] Different types of diaspora involvement can help individuals, families, and communities to survive, manage their life situation, and to develop during conflict or post-conflict situations.[18] This type of division between different social spheres and remittances helps to categorize the engagement towards the country of origin and also inform about the informants' ideas regarding change and development.[19]

I make a distinction between the *capacity* and the *desire* to engage in Afghanistan. The *capacity* to engage is about external conditions, which can

[14] International Organization of Migration (IOM), Annex to *Afghanistan Migration profile* 2014, 21.

[15] Levitt, Peggy, Social Remittances: Migration Driven Local-Level Forms of Cultural Diffusion, *International Migration Review*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (Winter, 1998), pp. 926-948, 1998, 926.

[16] Kapur, Devesh, Political Effects of International Migration, *Annu. Rev. Polit. Sci.* 2014. 17:479–502, 485.

[17] Van Hear, 2014, 7-8.

[18] Van Hear, 2014, 8-9.

[19] Van Hear, Nicholas & Cohen, Robin, Diasporas and conflict: distance, contiguity and spheres of engagement, *Oxford Development Studies*, 2017, 45:2, 171-184, 174.

include the security situation in the country of origin, income level or level of freedom to expression. The term "portfolio of obligations" is also used here and refers to different moral requirements and obligations experienced by individuals in the diaspora. It might be a matter of prioritizing, for example, to support family members in the country of origin and to support themselves and their family in Sweden because of limited financial resources. Van Hear and Robin Cohen also argue that differences in wealth, social capital and class can have significance for a diaspora's *capacity* to engage.[20] The *desire* to engage is instead based on personal motivation. It may be about wanting to protect their family, relatives or friends, a broader humanitarian or political commitment to society, specific groups or the nation.[21]

The material is collected through seven semi-structured interviews that were conducted in March and April 2018. The interviews were subsequently transcribed and processed in line with an inductive method, as the material was coded mainly on the basis of common themes in the interviews.[22] I have focused on women and men who are born or raised in Afghanistan, that is, have Afghan origin, are over 18 years and have temporary or permanent residence permits or Swedish citizenship. This group has, with greater probability than those in asylum processes, managed to build up a new kind of relationship with their country of origin and can send larger amounts of money.

To examine and pose private questions that relate to flight, traumatizing events, family relations, and private economy require ethical and methodological considerations. The informants have given orally and written informed consent to the interviews. Moreover has the ethical requirement for confidentiality meant that measures have been taken to disable recognition of

[20] Ibid., 171.

[21] Ibid., 174.

[22] Kvale Steinar & Brinkmann, Svend, *Den kvalitativa forskningsintervjun*, [The qualitative research interview] 3. [rev.] uppl., Studentlitteratur, Lund, 2014, 238–39.

the informants to protect their privacy. This means that the individuals are unidentified by changing names to pseudonyms and that the place of residence, ethnicity and exact age are not announced. Below is a brief presentation of the seven informants.

Sayed: came to Sweden in mid-90s after living in Iran as a refugee; fled from ethnic discrimination; family is now in Sweden and larger family in Afghanistan; self-employed and in his 50s.

Nawid: came to Sweden in the early 2010s as a young adult; fled to Sweden with his mother and siblings after his father was kidnapped and murdered in Afghanistan; works full time.

Faraz: fled to Sweden in the early 2010s because the Taliban threatened him and his family; he worked with the US Embassy and the Afghan Army in Afghanistan; his family is now in Sweden; working full time and has his own business; in his 30s.

Abdul: came to Sweden in the early 2000s to be able to educate and create a safer future; his family lives in Afghanistan but wife and children have applied to come to Sweden through family reunification; in his 30s and works full time at an organization.

Bahar: lived most of her life in Iran as a refugee; came to Sweden with her husband and two children in the early 2000s; in her 40s.

Amina: moved to Sweden in the early 2010s to study in a safe environment and hence at a university; parents and sisters live in Afghanistan.

Faridah: lived most of her childhood as an undocumented migrant in Iran with her parents and eight siblings; came to Sweden as a teenager, lived in Sweden for about five years; has relatives in Afghanistan and Iran.

The household and extended family sphere

From the interviews economic, social and political activities are identified which, to varying degrees, are directed towards the three social spheres. Financial remittances are mainly directed at *the household and the larger family*

sphere. Five of seven informants have either previously sent or are still sending money from Sweden to family in Afghanistan. The informants, of which in one case the informant's parents, send money monthly to cover rent, food, or university education, or periodically, in case of particularly urgent needs such as hospital costs. The sums vary between approximately SEK 1000–5000 per month.

Amina says that her family had difficulties supporting themselves and that the 2000–2500 SEK she sent every other month helped the family to pay the rent, buy food and to continue with their lives. For Amina, then, the purpose of the economic remittances was that her family could survive everyday life.[23] Moreover, it is her financial conditions that ultimately determine whether she sends money or not:

> Yes, of course, I sent money when I had a job because I had the possibility and the money. I sent about every other month during two and a half years. But now there is no possibility because I study, I need the money myself. You don't get much. (my translation)[24]

Sayed and Abdul sent money even when they had lower incomes. Sayed sent one-third of his monthly social benefits/supplementary benefit and tried to send money when he started his own business, "even though it was though." Abdul sent a small amount of money while he was studying and send a larger sum to his family every month since he started to work:

> When I was studying I only sent small money, but since I started working I send about SEK 5000 a month. […] It depends on the needs in the homeland. I must have an income, when I have that I calculate

[23] Van Hear, 2014, 8-9.

[24] All the quotes from the interviews are in this article translated by me from Swedish to English.

> how much I can save and how much I can send. But I send money every month. It is an obligation to do so.

These stories illustrate a "portfolio of obligations" where the individuals feel an obligation to send money to family and relatives even though they need to support themselves. Abdul's formulation that "it is an obligation" to take care of his family who is left in Afghanistan is a repeating theme in several of the interviews, alongside that it is a feature of Afghan culture. Faridah, whose family sends money to the grandparents in emergency situations, states: "It is in our tradition that the children, especially the son, will support or help their parents. Afghans are happy to help their parents. It is not that you grow up and take care of yourself." In Carolin Fischer's study of Afghans in California and London, obligation and tradition are also two strong motives behind sending remittances.[25]

The two informants who do not send money to this social sphere either prioritize the family in Sweden or as in Nawid's case, that the family in Afghanistan is in no need of financial support.

Lasting ties with the 'known community' sphere

Solely economic remittances, with elements of social remittances, are directed towards the *'known community' sphere*. Five of the informants have sent money to people or institutions that they have met during visits to their home areas in Afghanistan or were familiar with before. The two informants who do not send money to their own families or relatives, Nawid and Bahar, send money to families in need whom they either met randomly during visits to Afghanistan or through their networks. Just as in Oeppen's research in California, the absence of financial remittances to family members in Afghanistan does not mean that individuals do not sponsor other families in

[25] Fischer, Carolin. "Reframing transnational engagement: a relational analysis of Afghan diasporic groups". *Global Networks*, 2018, 9.

need of support.[26] Nawid and Bahar send money monthly to help the families to afford food and other daily needs; a similar remittance pattern that the other informants direct towards *the household and extended family sphere*. However is the sum they send less than the majority of those directed at the private sphere, which is usually the case according to Van Hear and Cohen.[27] Bahar sends money to a poor family she met at her first return visit to Afghanistan:

> I went to Afghanistan in 2014. Before that, I had no contact with Afghanistan. There I met a very poor family. […] During 2014, I did not have that much money so I sent time to time. But since 2015 I send 1000 SEK per month […] I don't know them, I just met them once.

The informants describe that they contribute with money to these families because they have the opportunity to help. In contrast to Oeppen's study, neither Nawid nor Bahar mentions that it is a feeling of guilt for having abandoned the country of origin that motivates them,[28] rather, it seems to be based on a general obligation to help families if they have the financial conditions to do so.

Sayed started an association in Sweden to support two high schools in his home area during the Taliban regime, one of which he himself had studied at. He tells that the Taliban surrounded the area so that nothing could come in. During the blockade, Sayed donated a large amount of money to the schools so they were not forced to close. Sayed sent the money through the non-registered banking system Hawala to a hawalador (banker):

> During the hardest blockade, in 1999, I received a letter that still remains in my archive. It was stated that the teachers had to shut down

[26] Oeppen, 2010.
[27] Van Hear & Cohen, 2017, 173.
[28] Oeppen, 2010.

> the two schools because they could not make it go around. Then, I sent $ 2,000, about $ 20,000, from my own pocket. With pride, I can say that this money saved these two schools, that they were allowed to continue even when the Taliban invaded central Afghanistan.

Sayed says that the sponsorship made it possible for the students to continue at the university: "When the bombing had ended and the universities opened in Mazar-e Sharif in 2001, 40% of all participants were from these two schools." According to Van Hear and Cohen, financial remittances to *the 'known community' sphere* in a conflict-affected country can have other functions than just economic, such as strengthening the social structure.[29] This can be applied on Sayed's story since the money contributed to children being able to go to school and thus even to pursue secondary education.

In 2017, Sayed also started a company in his home town: "I got a half container from the home village with dried berries, employed 12 women who worked, packed and got some salary. The little help I can do I want to do. […] Hope to be able to give the women in the neighborhood pride, job, and some livelihood." Sayed's commitment seems to be based on a *desire* to improve the situation and conditions for the people in the area as swell as on a strong emotional bond to the area: "I hope that some of the berries are from the trees I planted when I lived there.[…] I had a dream of being able to enjoy the trees I have planted."

The economic remittances directed to this sphere seem to be purposed to help in both more acute situations, for example helping poor families with money for food and preventing schools from closing down, and also to contribute to more long-term effects such as Sayed's commitment to schools and imports of dried fruits.

[29] Van Hear & Cohen, 2017, 173.

Feeling of belonging — The 'imagined community' sphere

The 'imagined community' sphere appears firsthand to connate a feeling of affinity with people in Afghanistan who the informants do not know personally. The informants express wishes to improve women's situation in Afghanistan, change the structural discrimination, unite ethnic groups and contribute to development in the country through transnational activities. These social and political activities take place both from Sweden and during visits to Afghanistan.

Social remittances

Willingness to improve the situation for women in Afghanistan is reflected in norm and knowledge-disseminating activities. Faraz describes that his most important goal when he came to Sweden was to build a bridge between Sweden and Afghanistan. He initiated a project in Afghanistan with a Swedish organization that was already working on gender issues in an African country. The project is a collaboration with a gender equality organization that started 26 years ago at a university in Kabul. He took the initiative to start a project in Afghanistan with a Swedish organization that was already working on gender issues in an African country. The project is a collaboration with a gender equality organization that started 26 years ago at a university in Kabul.

Faraz has continuous contact with the organization: "They write every week, every month, reports on how they do and where they have met. So I can see it. I send my tips to them. Once a month we have a type of conference call where we discuss new strategies." The frequent contact with the student group would, according to Peggy Levitt's research, mean that the transferred ideas have a greater chance of being accepted and passed on than if they had been transferred more sporadically. The fact that the student group has already worked with gender equality for a long time can also mean that the discrepancy between the norms and ideas that are transferred and those that

were already within the group is smaller. Levitt's research suggests that this, in turn, can contribute to the ideas being accepted.[30]

Amina trained as an equality ambassador within the aforementioned project and went to the University of Kabul for a month to educate men and women in the equality organization in a listening and conversation method. She expresses that: "[…] And with equality, I thought it was not just about women but also helping men. I care a lot, it's still my homeland. The homeland must be developed and I want to help in any possible ways." In Amina's narrative, it becomes clear that she believes that increased gender equality contributes to development for both men and women in the "homeland.

Culture is another way to try to affect the *'imagined community'*. Bahar has filmed a documentary about women's situation in Afghanistan while Nawid has written three books about Afghanistan while in Sweden, one of them dealing with women's situation. However, this one he chose not to publish:

> The idea is that it will be published and sold in Afghanistan. It is about the situation of women and it is important that people read in Persian. […] It is quite critical of the cultures and traditions we have and I got recommended that it is better that I do not publish because it can affect my aunts, different people, the family can become threatened, etc. […] Either the country is getting more secure or that my family disappears elsewhere, then I can definitely publish it. Because then it is only me who takes the risk.

Nawid chose to protect his family from potential threats instead of fulfilling his wish to raise awareness about women's situation, which illustrates a priority among various obligations.[31]

[30] Levitt, 1998, 937–40.
[31] Van Hear & Cohen, 2017, 171.

Political remittances

Structural ethnic discrimination within the *'imagined community'* is another reason for engagement. Political activities such as lobbying and demonstrations in the international arena are based on feelings of injustice and that discrimination is hampering development in the country for the entire population. Faraz is involved in a student group in which he has been a part of since he studied at the university in Kabul. The student group has 160 members from different ethnic groups and is involved in political issues. Faraz says that: "We try to show a picture of Afghanistan, even to Afghans, that different ethnic groups and religions can cooperate. […] Because there is a lot of propaganda between different ethnic groups. They talk badly about each other." Through the transfer of social and political ideas to the student group on how labor unions and associations work in Sweden, Faraz tries to help start a new labor union in Afghanistan:

> I send new material. I just got strategies from ABF and unions, translated into Persian via an Iranian imam in Gothenburg. Then I sent via e-mail and they spread via e-mail so they can learn how associations and unions work in European countries. [...] There are not so good unions in Afghanistan. I am grateful that I have come to Sweden and learn the logic that exists in Sweden. A country with long peace. I want to learn that magic and send it to Afghanistan.

Further, Faraz wants this to lead to the formation of the first social democratic party in Afghanistan, but stresses that this can be difficult as it is far from the current political situation:

> For an Islamic country like Afghanistan and a social democratic party is a little difficult. That is why I would like to start by helping to launch various unions in Afghanistan. And then through those unions maybe building how people think, maybe they think we can start a social democratic party.

Thus, the difference between the norms in the country of origin and the remittances transmitted is, according to Faraz, important for how well they are accepted and practiced, something that Levitt's research indicates.[32] Another political activity is Sayed's engagement in an Afghan global movement against discrimination and his participation in demonstrations around Sweden and Europe. Sayed says that peaceful advocacy abroad has been the strategy for the movement since a suicide bomber killed 86 people and injured over 500 people during a large and peaceful demonstration in Kabul in 2015:

> […] Because of that, we are trying to create opinion abroad. Pay attention to the discriminatory system in Afghanistan that slows development. […] After that, we have had 8-9 demonstrations abroad against the discrimination. […] This that we make opinions abroad, if we make a demonstration in Stockholm, in one minute they see it in Kabul, everywhere […] Peaceful opinion formation. I think that's the best.

According to Sayed, peaceful advocacy in other countries can influence how people in Afghanistan, especially in areas of Taliban sympathizers, express their will and use peaceful methods instead of weapons: "Recently, they have learned from us that one can do their will by demonstrating , manifest, be peaceful. […] The first time this happens and I think they have learned from the peaceful advocacy that we have done." This notion is also in line with Kapur's research showing that flows of political ideas can have a greater impact on the country's policies than on example, financial remittances to parties.[33]

The social and political activities aimed at the *'imagined community'* appear to be based on a long-standing commitment to specific issues in Afghanistan

[32] Levitt, 1998, 937–40.
[33] Kapur, 2014, 485.

and require greater resources and mobilization of people, compared to activities towards the other two spheres. The visions and hopes of the future that seem to contribute to engagement thus show that the *'imagined community'* is not only a social sphere, but also that the sense of belonging to the *'imagined community'* is a reason to engage in itself. This is in line with Oeppen's research results.[34]

Capacities, desires and hopes for the future

The *capacity*, i.e., the external conditions, for engaging in Afghanistan seem to primarily concern the financial and time resources of the informants. In some cases, the informants have the financial conditions to both take care of themselves in Sweden and to send money, while others have sent money even though they hardly afford to support themselves.

Funding for projects in Afghanistan also appears to some informants to be a prerequisite for carrying out transnational activities towards the *'imagined community'*. Faraz mentioned that it is difficult to get funding for projects in Afghanistan: "We have an economic problem right now. All the movement does come from their pocket money. […] The problem is that I have talked to many authorities in Sweden, but unfortunately they have no budget to do anything in Afghanistan." Abdul has also considered the possibilities for financing for projects in Afghanistan. He talks about his thoughts on starting a financing program for the Afghan diaspora in Sweden:

> […] But what I have thought of, the diaspora project Forum Syd has for example for Somalis, I have thought of the same thing for Afghans. Perhaps starting some kind of program/project for other Afghans. There are Afghans who want to help. […] Because Afghans are

[34] Oeppen, 2018.

> increasing in Sweden. We have more now than 4–5 years ago. Many who are established and have jobs here.

Similarly, Nawid believes that people with Afghan origin are well-suited to work with development projects in Afghanistan, but that the possibilities are limited: "[…] But had I been able to decide in Sweden, I had chosen the young ambitious Afghans who both have knowledge from Sweden and can change the country [Afghanistan]." Similar perceptions occur among Afghans who are involved in development projects through diaspora associations in Denmark. They also believe that their knowledge of local conditions and the possibility of traveling to Afghanistan are unique qualities when working with development in the country of origin.[35]

The personal motivation, or *desire*, to engage differs depending on what sphere the activities are directed at. A feeling of obligation and tradition are motivating the informants to direct economic remittances towards *the household and extended family sphere*. From what I can understand, a recurring motive for engaging in the two more public spheres is that Afghanistan is the "homeland", namely, where the person is born and to which they retain a special bond which they do not have to Sweden. A majority of the informants refers to this understanding of the "homeland" as a reason why they are involved in activities towards Afghanistan. For example, as Amina expresses: "I care a lot about it, it's still my homeland. The homeland must be developed and I want to help in any possible ways." As a result, many of the informants want to help "their people" or "their Afghans". When Faraz talks about his political commitment, he says: "I want my Afghans in Afghanistan to live in a free country like Sweden." This indicates a feeling of connection and belonging with people in Afghanistan whom the informants do not know personally.

[35] Danish Institute for International Studies (D IIS), Somali and Afghan Diaspora Associations in Development and Relief Cooperation, 2015.

According to Alejandro Portes, plans to return to the country of origin can serve as a motivation for a commitment to the country of origin,[36] which in this study would involve activities aimed at the 'imagined community'. This is further reinforced, according to Gellner, if the individual experiences discrimination and do not identity with the country of residence.37 Two of the informants express a desire to move back when circumstances allow, which is partly reflected in Nawid's relatively broad transnational engagement. The others' transitional engagement seems to derive from a strong relationship with Afghanistan, however, without having the dream to move back. Sayed says: "Therefore, I cannot cut my ties to Afghanistan, because I was born there and had my youth there. Maybe I feel a little more Swedish but also a little more Afghan, maybe." Abdul also believes that engagement can be strengthened if you have grown up in Afghanistan and have strong memories from there:

> Homeland is homeland. I think those who are born here or come here as small do not remember much. But if you come as a little older, you remember and have very good and clearly longing back. And hope that it will be more peaceful and that you can be able to help in their country. Build it in some way.

The transnational involvement of the individuals has no strong connection to a desire or plan to return. This is similar to the findings in Oeppen's study of Afghans in California and London.[38] This analysis shows that the majority of

[36] Portes A. Globalization from below: the rise of transnational communities. In *The Ends Of Globalization: Bringing Society Back In*, ed. D Kalb, M van der Land, R Staring, pp. 253–72. Boulder, CO: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999.
[37] Gellner. E. *Nations and Nationalism*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 1983.
[38] Oeppen, 2010, 55–56.

the informants maintain ties and activities towards Afghanistan while they are a part of and plan to stay in Sweden.[39]

Conclusion

The result shows that individuals within the Afghan diaspora in Sweden engage in Afghanistan in several different ways. The analysis identifies economic, social and political activities targeting the three social spheres to varying degrees and thus match Van Hear's categorization. These results support previous research on Afghan diasporas in other countries.[40] The main *capacities* that enable or impede the transnational activities are the informants' economic conditions and the security situation in Afghanistan. The *desire* to engage primarily deals with a sense of obligation and tradition to help the family in Afghanistan, or other people in need. Afghanistan is the "homeland" that they have a desire to help developing through social and political activities directed towards *the 'imagined community' sphere.* The transnational perspective highlights that the seven individuals within the Afghan diaspora maintain ties and direct various activities towards Afghanistan, while at the same feeling as a part of Sweden and seeing a future in Sweden. I have found, among other things, that economic conditions and the relationship with the country of origin are important for the transnational engagement. However, the study does not indicate that age, gender or length of stay in Sweden are crucial factors. The question of which factors play a vital role in transnational engagement could be investigated by conducting a more comprehensive survey with more informants and questionnaires.

[39] Faist, T. "Diaspora and transnationalism: What kind of dance partners?" In: R. Bauböck and T. Faist, eds., *Diaspora and Transnationalism. Concepts, Theories and Methods*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press: 9-34, 2010, 11.

[40] Oeppen, 2010 and Fischer, 2018.

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