



Affective Conflict Transportation? Everyday Presence of Conflict among People of Somali Origin in Finland

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ABSTRACT

This article explores conflict transportation among people with a Somali background in Finland by focusing on how it is felt every day. By focusing on affect, the article highlights the contradictory and differentiated dynamics at play in conflict transportation and how it is located and navigated in everyday practices. The findings show how conflict transportation is simultaneously reinforced and resisted as well as how it is a non-static, fluid phenomenon that is experienced day-to-day life as well as tied deeply to belonging. The article argues that an affective approach to conflict transportation helps undo essentialising notions of diasporic spaces and calls for research on diasporas and conflict that is also located outside of politically mobilised diasporic spaces.

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'I grew up [in Europe] while there was civil war over there.' Abdi looks at me intently and continues, 'I grew up knowing that, and I grew up in Europe knowing only the negative aspects of Somalia.' I am sitting in Abdi's kitchen with his wife Salma in their apartment in Greater Helsinki, and we are discussing the impact of the conflict in Somalia on their lives in Finland. Abdi explains how a trip to Somalia he took as a teenager, changed his view of the country, and made him realise the picture he had grown up with was simplified. 'It was really like an enlightening experience', he says, explaining how it had a positive effect on his relationship with his roots, origins, and faith. Abdi talks about his experiences in a light, humorous way, leaning back on his chair with a smile on his face, even when he tells me about the more difficult aspects of visiting Somalia: 'When I first landed in Mogadishu, there was gunfire everywhere, every day', he laughs and continues, 'but after a while, I was integrated, I didn't even hear the gunfire anymore. [...] I've seen many things. Other people would say I am traumatised but for me it's like, it's so normal.' As we discuss his relationship with Somalia and the imprint the visit left on him, Abdi moves between different and sometimes contradictory emotions about his country of origin. I am curious about how conflict in Somalia can influence life in Finland among the people of Somali origin who have, like Salma and Abdi, spent most of their lives outside of Somalia. Today, there are a little over 24,000 people of Somali origin in Finland, among them Salma and Abdi.¹ Both born in Somalia, they have lived most of their lives in the United Kingdom and Finland. In the previous story of his visit to Somalia, Abdi touches upon the emotional and affective ramifications of a conflict that still plays a role in the everyday lives of diasporic individuals. In the context of Somalia, where conflict is not only a memory but is still ongoing, such emotional and affective dimensions are of great importance for understanding the lived experiences of the Somali diasporic populations. The continued influence of conflict in the country of origin on diasporic communities has been the focus of existing research, but the emotional and affective dimensions of this have not received much attention.

Focusing on people of Somali origin living in Finland, I shed light on the shifting and complex ways in which conflict can manifest and influence the everyday life of diasporic populations and propose focusing on affective conflict transportation to capture this complexity. I draw on the theoretical concepts of affect, emotion and conflict transportation. I use Sara Ahmed's understanding of affect and emotions, viewing them as inextricably linked; emotions involve bodily processes of affecting and being affected (Ahmed 2014:208). In this conceptualisation, affect is investigating actions that emotions perform, including their effects (Guschke, Christensen & Burø 2022). This refers to Ahmed's idea that we should ask what emotions 'do'—the ways they affect behaviour and ways of being in the world. Conflict transportation (Féron 2017) is concerned with how conflict dynamics can re-emerge in diasporic settings when conflict is ongoing in the country of origin, for instance through social divisions or conflict discourses. I propose looking at affective conflict transportation to explore the everyday presence of conflict among diasporic populations. Focusing on affect, I argue, opens new avenues for understanding the everyday experiences of conflict transportation. Drawing on ethnographic data collection methods, the

1 Statistics Finland. 2022. *11rv—Origin and background country by sex, by municipality, 1990–2022*. Available at https://pxdata.stat.fi/PxWeb/pxweb/en/StatFin/StatFin__vaerak/statfin_vaerak_pxt_11rv.px/table/tableViewLayout1/.

article shows how conflict transportation needs to be envisioned as an emotional or affective phenomenon, tied deeply to belonging(s). Throughout my analysis, I develop vignettes to highlight different experiences of conflict transportation by paying particular attention to the ‘felt’ realm.

Within migration and diaspora studies, the exploration of affective dimensions has increased over the last few years (Boccagni & Baldassar 2015; Brankamp 2022; Mahmud 2021; Skrbis 2008; Svasek 2010). Following Glaveanu and Womersley’s (2021) statement that emotions and affect are intrinsic to research on mobility and migration, I highlight the usefulness of these concepts for understanding the complex processes at play in conflict transportation in diasporic spaces. While the relationship between conflict, affect or emotion and diasporic spaces has been touched upon in recent literature (Askland 2014; Ibrahim, Rajapillai & Scott 2022; Müller-Suleymanova 2021; Sakti 2017), the relationship between conflict transportation, affect and emotion is much less researched, especially in diasporic populations originating from areas where conflict is ongoing, but who have spent most of their lives outside of the conflict area. In addition, focusing on the ‘felt’ dimension of conflict transportation is novel because it sheds light on *everyday* processes as affect is located in and locates things in the everyday (Ugolotti 2022). Further, theories on affect and emotion deal with the bodily as well as cognitive emotional responses to and within human interactions and as such foster an embodied understanding of conflict transportation processes, which have so far been left at the margins of academic research. Emotions and affect (because of their dependency on space and time and their fluctuating nature) help unveil more complex understandings of diasporic populations, peace, and conflict. Indeed, when we start considering emotions, ‘it becomes imperative to complicate, confound and generally confuse’ (Boccagni & Baldassar 2015: 75) the straight lines in migration and diaspora research.

The following section contextualises Somalis in Finland and the conflict in Somalia. It is important to note that the conflict in Somalia constitutes a wide range of complex, often contested and interlinked issues and that it is beyond the scope of this article to cover or analyse these. I am interested in the ways conflict is narrated to me, and the way it is understood and expressed by my participants, rather than in comparing specific conflict developments and genealogies. In the following section, however, I briefly touch upon the elements of conflict that were brought up by my interlocutors. I then introduce the theoretical approaches informing my analysis before detailing my methods. Subsequently, I present my findings through vignettes touching upon social dimensions, spaces and belonging in the context of affective conflict transportation. Rather than being separate categories, the vignettes inform and build on one another. Finally, I reflect on the findings before presenting some concluding remarks.

SOMALIS IN FINLAND

Finland saw a large influx of Somali asylum-seekers in the 1990s during escalating conflict prior to, and following, the fall of the military regime led by Siyaad Barre in 1991. As such, a large part of Somalis in Finland have either experienced conflict or are children of refugees who have experienced conflict.

As the first large group of refugees in Finnish society, the influx of Somali asylum-seekers in the 1990s was referred to in public media as the ‘Somali Shock’ (Tiilikainen & Mohamed 2013), signalling the lack of experience with immigrants and the negative connotations

associated with foreigners in Finnish society. Perhaps unsurprisingly then, the Somali-background population in Finland has been the subject of much political and public debate. The people of Somali origin are the largest group of African descent in Finland, and the vast majority are Muslims. Because national identity in Finland is constructed around the narratives of cultural and racial homogeneity (see Keskinen, Skaptadóttir & Toivanen 2019), Somalis in Finland have suffered from marginalisation and have faced several challenges related to othering and racialisation, identity and belonging as well as employment and discrimination (FRA 2018; OSF 2013; Rastas 2005).

Academic research on Somalis in Finland is well-developed and has covered their diverse and heterogeneous diasporic experiences for instance related to clan and everyday life (Björk 2017), (trans)national family life (Al-Sharmani & Ismail 2016; Tiilikainen, Al-Sharmani & Mustasaari 2019), everyday insecurity (Ismail 2023), diaspora citizenship and diasporic belonging (Armila, Kananen & Kontkanen 2018; Marucco 2020; Tiilikainen 2003) as well as transnational diasporic mobilisation (Laakso & Hautaniemi 2014; Pirkkalainen 2015; Tiilikainen & Mohammed 2013). Little, however, has so far been written on how conflict in Somalia can continue to influence diasporic settings.

As already mentioned, the history of conflict in Somalia forms a complex web of interrelated issues of colonial history, economic grievances and inequalities, climate change, political and cultural diversity, and international, regional and transnational actors (see for instance Elmi 2010; Ingiriis 2018). After a history of colonialism in which Greater Somalia was occupied and divided between different colonial powers, it gained independence in 1960 (ICG 2019). In 1969, a military coup led by Siyaad Barre overthrew the democratically elected but politically unstable government, which initiated a long period under a military regime. After years of rising tensions, civil war erupted in the late 1980s, culminating in the fall of Siyaad Barre in 1991. This also led to several areas of the country—such as Somaliland—declaring independence. While functioning as a de facto independent state, Somaliland is not internationally recognised and continues to be a source of conflict. The frictions between Somaliland and Somalia were also frequently brought up in my conversations with people of Somali origin living in Finland.

In the context of Somalia, clan has had contested connotations and conceptualisations, especially when it comes to the role it is perceived to play in conflict dynamics in the country (Osman 2017: 18). The years of civil war following the fall of Siyaad Barre in 1991 reinforced clan identities through and with violence and pitted clan-based groupings against each other (Osman 2017: 17ff). Historically, however, cultural practices of clan based on kinship and lineage have played an important role in structuring society (Björk 2017: 14). When discussing the meaning of clan in (Finnish) diasporic spaces, I find the concept of ‘clan as practice’ forwarded by Björk (2017) useful. Rather than seeing clan as a fixed category of identity, Björk conceptualises it as practices that are dynamic and non-static and applied in certain situations and for certain purposes. It is the operationalisation of clan as an issue in the conflict in Somalia that has driven ideas of ‘clan as conflict’ rather than the meanings and cultural practices historically attached to clan in Somalia (see also Elmi 2010; Tiilikainen & Mohamed 2013). As such, the very question of whether clan can be seen as a part of conflict transportation is an ambiguous one. When I mention clan here, it is because it was brought up in my conversations when we discussed Somalia and conflict, signalling the discursive ties between conflict in Somalia and clan made by my interlocutors.

CONFLICT TRANSPORTATION, DIASPORIC SPACE AND AFFECT

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This article draws on theoretical considerations on conflict transportation, diasporic space, as well as affect and emotion. Diaspora has been conceptualised in many different and often contentious ways, having at its centre the notion of dispersal or displacement (see [Grossmann 2019](#)). Rather than understanding diasporas as a fixed identity category, political mobilisation processes or a distinct community, I use Brah's (1996: 177) notion of 'diaspora space': an intersection of locations—physical, symbolic and discursive—to capture the intricacies of diasporic experiences. Brah notes that 'all diasporas are differentiated, heterogenous, contested spaces, even as they are implicated in a common "we"' (Brah 1996: 444). It is important, she highlights, to pay attention to how social divisions are negotiated in this common 'we', the power dynamics at play in these contested spaces. Brah's conceptualisation of diasporas leaves room for contestation, for the concept to be in constant opposition to itself and to embrace the fluid and contradictory nature of diaspora space.

Diasporic spaces are dynamic and non-static rather than a firmly rooted marker of identity, community or belonging. Brah is concerned with 'situatedness' in order to understand 'diaspora'—it involves not only the dispersed individuals, but also those located in and sharing the diaspora space. 'Diaspora' as such comes to be about not just dispersion, but how groups are relationally positioned in different contexts, and that diasporic-imagined communities are not fixed or pre-given but constituted within the materiality of everyday life (Brah 1996: 444). These theoretical insights are useful when attempting to nuance research on diasporas and conflict, precisely because they leave room for fluid categories of identity. Importantly, they pay attention to how categories and identities are constructed, assigned and experienced, and are therefore also about belonging (Christensen & Jensen 2011: 148).

The concept of conflict transportation refers to the transportation or relocation of conflict dynamics in diasporic settings either physically, socially and/or discursively (Féron 2017). This, for instance, involves direct violence between opposing groups, social divisions and 'homeland' discourses similar to those in the conflict area (Baser 2016). Highlighting the often-complex mechanisms at play in conflict transportation, research has stressed the context of the country of residence, namely how the 'new' context in which conflict dynamics play out can dramatically change and alter the narratives, group divisions and issues related to the conflict, as well as generate new divisions and solidarities (see Baser 2016; Féron 2017; Voytiv 2021). This can involve the presence and participation of outside actors and highly flexible processes that can both affect, and be affected by, conflict dynamics (Féron & Voytiv 2022). In addition, research has looked at how diaspora entrepreneurs facilitate conflict transportation (Adamson 2020) and has often focused on diasporic organisations (Demmers 2002; Orjuela 2018). Research on diasporas and the transportation and relocation of conflict dynamics, however, tends to highlight conflict dynamics in the country of residence, reinforcing a view of diasporic communities as more or less conflict-prone. In lieu of this, theorisation of these processes needs to better embrace the complex and contradictory dynamics at play in diasporic spaces. Indeed, combined with the notion of diaspora as space, conflict transportation can be envisioned as processes co-constructed

with, and always taking place in, diasporic spaces that are not limited to diasporic associations or dispersed individuals alone.

This article adds to the existing literature on conflict transportation, especially concerning where it is located and how it is investigated. Literature on conflict transportation often focuses on politically mobilised diasporic populations, such as active members of associations or politically mobilised spaces, the so-called ‘diaspora entrepreneurs’ (Adamson 2020). While the insights into diasporic associations are necessary and vital, this ‘ethnic association fetish’ (Glick-Schiller 2013: 29) inadvertently runs the risk of adding to essentialising notions of diasporas by focusing on the most active and, arguably, visible parts of diasporic communities and individuals. In addition, it leaves conflict transportation processes happening outside of these spaces of mobilisation relatively overlooked.

To expand on the notion of conflict transportation, I bring in theoretical considerations on affect and emotion to investigate its ‘felt’ and everyday dimension in diasporic spaces. Sara Ahmed talks of the sociality and materiality of emotions, and notes that ‘it is through emotions, or how we respond to objects and others, that surfaces or boundaries are made’ (Ahmed 2014: 10). Conflict transportation considers precisely how group boundaries and social divisions manifest in diasporic spaces, highlighting not only the relevance, but also the necessity of investigating emotions and conflict transportation in combination with each other. In addition, as conflict transportation pays attention to discourses, symbols and the meanings assigned to them (Féron 2017), it relates to Ahmed’s notion that objects can be imbued with emotion—for instance, how the use of (or restriction against) certain flags, signs and colours can be the source of contention and elicit emotional responses in diasporic spaces affected by conflict transportation. Rather than asking what emotions are, we should ask what they do, because emotions can shape actions (Ahmed 2014: 4). Ahmed writes that ‘affect connects us to, or separates us from, others, and thus is linked to the politics of space, mobility, action, power, and the formation of identity’ (Ahmed, quoted in Morrison 2020: 147). In this sense, emotions are tied to cultural and social practices and therefore relevant for conflict transportation dynamics as well as identity and belonging in diasporic spaces. Importantly, because emotions are primarily shaped by everyday interactions and interpersonal ties (Boccagni & Baldassar 2015: 78), focusing on the emotional and affective dimensions of conflict transportation unveils how the phenomenon is experienced in everyday practices.

Affect and emotion refer both to preconscious as well as cognitive processes. Following Ahmed (2014), I understand emotion and affect as intertwined. I conceptualise emotions as a dimension of affect that I access through the language people use to make sense of their emotions as well as through their bodily responses. The article, however, pays specific attention to affect that ‘can be expressed more directly through articulations of meaning’ (Knudsen & Stage 2015: 8). I explore how emotions such as (but not limited to) anxiety, anger, shame, frustration, joy, happiness and longing intersect with conflict transportation.

METHODS

This study draws on ethnographic data collection methods, namely field notes from participant observations, as well as in-depth interviews and informal conversations

with people of Somali origin residing in the Greater Helsinki area. Data was collected during the spring and autumn of 2022. Importantly, the methodology draws on ‘patchwork ethnography’ (Fratini, Hemer & Shur-Hansen 2022; Günel, Varma & Watanabe 2020), and involves a series of short-term and interrupted ethnographic visits and thus ‘using fragmentary yet rigorous data, and other innovations that resist the fixity, holism, and certainty’ often attributed to more conventional ethnographic methods (Günel, Varma & Watanabe 2020). My position as a non-Finnish (and non-Finnish speaking), white researcher in Helsinki often complicated access and long-term embedded data collection in Somali communities. Instead, I have combined interviews and field notes from participant observations, I have spent time cultivating and deepening the relationships I developed with my participants and reflected on the spaces we shared. This ‘patchwork’ represents a sort of disrupted ethnographic approach that focuses on long-term commitments and contextual, slow thinking while still being adaptable to ‘how changing living and working conditions are profoundly and irrevocably changing knowledge production’ (ibid.). The data thus sheds light on personal and localised experiences, which are valuable as they contribute to understanding the differentiated, heterogenous, and everyday lives of Somali background individuals in Finland.

Concretely, I draw on in-depth interviews and informal conversations with 15 individuals between 20 and 40 years old, some of whom I met and visited on several occasions, and 6 of whom I directly cite in this article. In addition, I draw on the field notes I made during my visits with participants and after spending time at social gatherings and through ‘walking ethnography’ (Moretti 2017) in areas designated to me as important for and by participants.

Ethnographic data collection allows for insights into both the personal narratives presented by the people I met as well as the everyday dimensions of conflict transportation processes. In my reading of interviews and field notes, I pay attention to the emotional manifestations present both in how people make sense of their experiences, those ‘articulations of meaning’ arising in our interactions, as well as the emotive responses I registered during my data collection (see Juvonen 2022: 124). In addition, I chose to focus on those aspects of conflict transportation that seemed to elicit emotional and affective responses both in the way they were discussed with me and in the way people (re)acted in the different spaces we shared during the data collection process. As such, I have paid attention to the emotional descriptions made by the people I have talked to, as well as to what is ‘communicated through bodily knowing’ (Blackman & Venn 2010: 18).

In my analysis, I develop vignettes that highlight and examine how people feel and experience conflict transportation in their everyday lives. A vignette is ‘a vivid portrayal of the conduct of an event of everyday life’ (Erickson 1986: 140), serving to illustrate or highlight analytical insights (Schöneich 2021). The focus is on the individual experiences, illustrating their lives’ complexity, rather than on providing a generalised understanding of Somali diasporic spaces. All interviews, meetings and conversations I refer to in the article were conducted in English. I use pseudonyms throughout the analysis, and I have made the sharing of personal details as limited as possible to ensure the confidentiality of all participants.²

² Throughout the research I have strictly adhered to the ethical guidelines provided by the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity (TENK); see <https://tenk.fi/en/ethical-review>.

LOCATING AFFECT AND CONFLICT TRANSPORTATION IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS

CLAN AND EMOTION IN THE EVERYDAY

‘It shouldn’t be like that’, an annoyed Salma says, stirring her tea. ‘When people ask me about my background, it comes with certain prejudices, certain characteristics attached to my personality.’ Abdi interjects, ‘I know why they ask; I was in that culture for a year, there’s a certain security connected to it.’ At lunch, we are discussing the meanings attached to clan while we talk about conflict in Somalia. Abdi goes on to say, ‘They want to know who you are and it’s an aspect of trust.’ Salma interjects, ‘But when they know what tribe³ you are from, they will act based on your tribe—I don’t like it [...]. Like why do I have to give them that information? I don’t have to’. Abdi pauses for a second to consider her comment and then says, ‘It’s a network’.

As I have mentioned, the relationship between clan and conflict is a complex and contested issue, yet it often came up in my conversations although I did not ask about it specifically. These connections between clan and conflict made by my interlocutors show how clan has been, at least discursively, tied to conflict. In addition, the discussion between Abdi and Salma shows the multifaceted meanings attached to the notion of clan and, in Salma’s case, the emotional effects these meanings can have. For Salma, clan can be seen as a part of conflict transportation—conflict transportation that is felt and experienced in the everyday mundane practice of, for instance, meeting someone on the street or the bus and being asked about clan. It makes her feel uncomfortable and she explains how she tries to avoid or change the subject when it comes up, even refusing to disclose it sometimes.

Amran, who is in her mid-20s and has lived in Finland since middle school, and before that in North Africa and Western Europe, tells me a story of how she was confronted with clan in Finland:

About this clan, for example, I had a teacher and he was from a certain clan that was frowned upon by these people [in the mosque] and they knew that I was the student of that teacher and all that so they started slowly out-casting us because they were just like ‘those people are students of that person’ which was something I had never ever like experienced before, being discriminated against because of a clan—and not only your clan but your teacher’s clan.

In these two examples, clan influences everyday life through Amran’s experience of feeling excluded in her mosque, and Salma’s discomfort when confronted with the notion of clan. In the way that it can create boundaries then, clan can be interpreted as a conflict transportation process in the everyday. Social boundaries can arise through, for instance, the exclusion from a certain space (the mosque) as well as the emotional responses such boundaries elicit, for instance in the feelings described by Salma, that results in her avoiding or resisting clan practices.

Conversely, clan is also referred to as the exact opposite, for instance when Abdi describes it as related to social networks and developing trust. To Abdi, clan is also a way of building community and networks. This highlights the very different ways

3 Abdi and Salma used ‘tribe’ and ‘clan’ interchangeably in our conversations.

in which people try to navigate these issues and the problem of designating clan as merely a conflict transportation mechanism.

Importantly, the constructions of clan as associated with conflict dynamics in my conversations must also be interpreted in the context of Finnish society, my positionality as a white, non-Somali researcher, as well as experiences of marginalisation and negative connotations related to clan. The ways in which people expressed distance from clan practices might be influenced by these elements and seen as a process of resisting the dominating and essentialising narratives regarding Somalis in Finland. It shows how positionalities and social dynamics outside of Somali communities structure and influence discourses and practices of seeing clan as conflict transportation. I will return to the context of Finnish society in the last part of my findings.

‘TEA TIME’: AFFECTIVE SPACES AND ENCOUNTERS

‘How do you even know this stuff’, Salma laughs and continues, ‘like, what are your sources, where do you get your information?’ Abdi is talking about the recent elections in Somalia and the newly elected president. He looks at her and smiles, saying secretively, ‘Tea-time. If you want to know the juicy stuff, find out where they [Somalis] sit. The cafés’. Salma and I laugh, and I ask, ‘what about here in Finland, do you have “tea-time” here as well?’ They answer at the same time, their voices overlapping as they laugh, ‘Oooooooh yes!’ Abdi says, ‘conversation is therapy. And these guys, they do therapy, they solve their issues through conversation’. Salma interrupts him, ‘I thought they were just gossiping!’ She looks at me and smiles at her jab at Abdi, while Abdi continues, ‘No, it has got multiple layers—people are at the same time doing business, solving family issues. For me it was like, “this is incredible”. This is where I picked up—I didn’t know about tribe. I started picking up about tribe there.’

I found this conversation interesting because this idea of ‘tea-time’ to use Abdi’s words, as a space for political discussions and arguments came up several times in my interviews as well. A woman I talked to in the spring of 2022, Faduma, told me over coffee that she had quit her job because she didn’t like the atmosphere in the place where she worked. It was a clothing store with adjacent Somali-run shops as well as a café where people of Somali origin often met and hung out. She explained how she would hear people discuss and argue over political developments in Somalia, and when I asked her if politics (in Somalia) were dividing the communities, she said that it also depended on what was going on in Somalia. ‘In the everyday, people get along fine, but when there are elections [in Somalia], everyone goes to their corner, it’s like a boxing ring.’ She told me how after the elections in 2017, people had come into her shop with flags representing the winner because they knew she had supported another contestant. ‘I was in the shop and people come to me all the time, but the day after the other guy had won, they [people who supported the winner] came to me with flags and they go “our guy won our guy won”.’ Faduma said she did not mind this in general but said that she also ended up leaving the place because of its politicised dynamics.

Tea-time as a politicised space came up in my conversations, although often through a discourse of distancing from such practices. As a space for political discussions and contention, tea-time seemed imbued with emotion and held the potential to influence movement and practices in both divisive and unifying ways. In the previous example,

these spaces emerge as emotional; they can elicit responses that make people avoid them like Faduma did when she quit her job because she felt uncomfortable. But the space she worked in simultaneously comes out, both in her story about her experiences and when she took me there for a tour, as an important communal space of conversation and sociability for Somali-background people in Greater Helsinki. Abdi also noted that in his view ‘tea-time’ was a problem-solving and ‘therapeutic’ practice, underlining the multifaceted meanings attached to it. In addition, Faduma’s story shows how conflictual practices are not ever-present but can arise during times of specific political developments in Somalia, such as the election in this example.

Such politicised encounters can also be more unexpected, happening at times and in spaces otherwise viewed as apolitical. In late spring in 2022, I spoke to Bilan who was born in Somalia but has lived most of her life in Finland. She told me of her emotional and physical response when encountering a symbol related to Somaliland in her work:

I work at the hospital. And sometimes when a patient comes, they have a [badge] it says Somaliland and I get so angry at that, and it irritates me. Also, because sometimes people don’t speak Finnish and they want you to translate. And I take it so personally because they are like ‘we are not Somalis’. But [they] won’t use my language at the same time, and [they] want to benefit from me knowing the other language and want to have my services at the same time. [They say] ‘ah, you’re not good enough. I want to be on my own’ and it’s so contradicting and irritating and upsetting.

Bilan is confronted with a conflict dimension related to the division of Somaliland and Somalia and has a strong emotional reaction to it. Bilan’s story shows precisely the materiality of emotions—the badge, in this context, triggers an emotional response. Ahmed notes that naming emotions involves an orientation towards the objects they construct (Ahmed 2014: 14), which is clearly visible in this context. Bilan names her emotional responses as anger, frustration, upset, even rejection, when she says, ‘they say ah you are not good enough’. The badge is emotional, not just with emotions affecting Bilan herself, but also with projected emotions towards the person wearing the badge.

In her description of this incident at work, Bilan shows how affective conflict transportation can play out and locates it in a mundane, everyday encounter at work. But it also exemplifies how it is navigated, how conflict transportation is mitigated and responded to on an everyday level. When I asked Bilan what she did in the situation, she told me she left the room, went outside, and took a ‘few deep breaths’ and then went back in and translated for the patient. In doing so, Bilan exemplifies how the everyday is political, and how affect and emotions are or can be politically charged, how they contain (or can contain) acts of resistance (Bakko & Merz 2015: 12). Importantly, Bilan’s response can be viewed as a practice of coexistence in a politicised encounter. The decision to go back and translate, even while having a strong emotional response, is an example of both the political nature of the everyday as well as the small acts of coexistence embedded in everyday human interactions (Mac Ginty 2021).

BELONGING AND CONFLICT TRANSPORTATION

Before I met Abdi, I had met Salma at a library in downtown Helsinki to talk about her life, Somalia and Somali communities in Finland. In our first conversation, Salma

said, ‘me and my husband, we could not be more different when it comes to Somalia. He wants to go back and live there at some point—I could never do that.’ She went on to explain how her view of Somalia was quite negative and that Abdi was always an optimist. ‘They are fighting for the power ... and it’s just going on all the time, so I’m thinking like what is the point of me going there?’ But Salma’s emotions about ‘going back’ to Somalia are also ambivalent. ‘I do want to go back there’, she said later, looking at me gravely, ‘but it is kind of difficult at the moment’.

In my conversations with Salma, it is evident that affective conflict transportation also expresses itself through how it influences belonging in multiple different ways. Salma notes that she cannot picture herself living in Somalia, but at the same time, she feels connected to it and says, ‘I see it as my home.’ In the same vein, Amran, whom I met in the spring of 2022, told me:

I would never call myself Finnish even though I am born and raised now in this country because when Finnish people see me, they don’t see a Finnish person. They see a woman who is wearing hijab, probably a Muslim woman, and she’s Black as well. ...I think that’s why it [conflict in Somalia] hits home because it’s not like something that you can just cut out of your identity. It’s very hard to do that, especially with the way the culture is. It’s very—you’re nothing without people.

These quotes by Salma and Amran also show how perceptions of a ‘one-dimensional self’ (Jackson 2019) do not come only from within socially divided communities but are enforced in the larger societal context in which you live. Remembering Brah’s (1996) notion of ‘situatedness’ as important for understanding diasporic spaces, these experiences of, and emotions involved in, conflict transportation are affected by (and affect) the country of residence. Amran speaks of her experiences of racialisation in Finland, and she relates them to how she feels about the conflict in Somalia through notions of identity and belonging. Lems (2020: 117) notes that bordering or exclusion in everyday life gives way to ‘inner, affectively charged terrains of belonging’. Similarly, Jackson (2019: 19) notes that identity-thinking is often tied to a sense of being marginal. In the same way, the experience of marginalisation in Finland brought about questions related to belonging and identity among the Somali-background people with whom I talked. As Amran articulated previously, these questions also intersect with conflict transportation. In fact, Amran’s words show that it is not the experience of divisive practices within Somali communities that creates a process of conflict transportation for her, it is brought about by the racialisation and marginalisation she has experienced in Finland. As such, conflict transportation in this case is triggered by feelings of othering in a Finnish context.

This also emerged in a conversation I had in the fall of 2022 with Amira, who told me about her wish to move back to Somalia because she did not like being in a minority in Finland. The fact that the unrest in Somalia made this harder to envision made her feel anger and sorrow whenever someone brought up the topic of Somalia. Interestingly, it also influenced how she felt about divisions within the Somali communities in Finland:

You would think that now when you are here and you’re a minority here, and you’re not like in your own country, you would keep a strong connection. You are fellow countrymen. But even at that point, if you are able to separate just for that I mean, I think, it’s even worse than when you are surrounded by your people.

The feeling of being part of a minority affects Amira's future imaginaries, presencing the conflict in Somalia. Additionally, it influences (and is perhaps also influenced by) her relationship with and emotions towards Somali communities in Finland. What the combined notions of belonging, conflict transportation and affect then show, are the moving and dynamic, inherently affective, negotiations of belonging connected to conflict transportation. Precisely because 'belonging can only fully be understood through an appreciation of the *felt realm*' (Waite & Cook 2011: 233, emphasis in original), emotion, belonging and conflict transportation are intimately linked.

It also shows how belonging cannot be envisioned as a straight line between the country of origin and the country of residence as is often emphasised in migration research (Boccagni & Baldassar 2015: 75)—rather, it is dynamic, involving several 'belongings-to' and depending on a multitude of factors such as affective conflict transportation. Belonging and affective conflict transportation can influence and even co-construct each other; they are part of interrelated phenomena. The emotional responses, practices of avoidance and discursive distancing from conflict transportation processes described in some of my conversations must, therefore, also be considered in relation to belonging in the context of Finland, a way to reject both essentialisation through being associated with conflict and being racialised or 'othered' in different ways.

(EVERYDAY) AFFECTIVE CONFLICT TRANSPORTATION?

The previous findings highlight how conflict transportation must be envisioned as an affective phenomenon, located in everyday practices. Moving beyond essentialising understandings of the links between diasporas, peace and conflict necessitates an engagement with the complex and ambivalent practices that show up when focusing on the *felt realm* of conflict transportation. Affective conflict transportation emerges less as a distinct version of the phenomenon and more as an approach to studying conflict transportation that puts the stress on the everyday dynamics that are necessary for understanding its complexity. As I mentioned at the beginning of this article, affect and emotion help us locate conflict transportation in the everyday practices, encounters and moments that tend to get overlooked in research focusing on those parts of diasporic spaces that are politically mobilised and active in associations.

Importantly, affective conflict transportation cannot be understood as separated from everyday political practices of coexistence, as exemplified by, for instance, Bilan's story. Bilan's story of the badge and her reaction to it show a kind of overlapping and simultaneous existence of conflict transportation and coexistence. In this sense, affective conflict transportation emerges as a deeply contradictory and ambiguous phenomenon that is part of and navigated in everyday human interactions.

Affective conflict transportation can also unveil how we create, resist and maintain social boundaries in the everyday—for instance, when Faduma avoids a certain space because she feels it is politicised, or when Amran explains how conflict in Somalia is intertwined with her sense of belonging in Finnish society. The phenomenon is embodied and felt, and it influences movement in space, everyday acts of resistance, identity constructions, as well as practices of coexistence in politicised spaces. It calls for investigation into the more invisible dynamics of conflict transportation that reside in emotions and whose visible manifestations are merely culminations or triggers of

emotional responses that have (or can have) a much more continuous presence in the everyday lives of people.

CONCLUSION

This article has explored the everyday processes of conflict transportation among Somali-background people in Finland by looking at its affective dimensions. Affective conflict transportation represents an embodied understanding of the phenomenon that illustrates how it is riddled with tension and involves the concurrent practices of resistance and acceptance. Rather than (merely) focusing on the physical representations of conflict transportation, we need to look at how it is felt and experienced on an everyday basis. As the article shows, such a focus unveils complex processes of conflict and peace that are deeply intertwined and co-existing. Focusing on affect further locates conflict transportation in everyday diasporic spaces, involving not just dispersed or diasporic individuals, and shows that it can be brought about by processes of othering and marginalisation, tying it to belonging in different ways. Further, the transportation of conflict is intertwined with practices of coexistence as people navigate divisions and community in their everyday life.

The insights shared here show only a limited understanding of how people of Somali origin relate to and experience conflict transportation and can in no way be generalised. The emotional dimensions of conflict transportation, however, redirect the attention away from securitising notions of diasporic spaces, and instead centre it on the commonalities of the human experience, as they relate to navigating everyday experiences of belonging.

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