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Acts of belonging: The choice of citizenship in the former border enclaves of Bangladesh and India

Md Azmeary Ferdoush[a,b,c,*]

[a] University of Hawaii at Manoa, 2424 Maile Way, Honolulu, HI, 96822, USA
[b] University of Dhaka, Ramna, 1000, Dhaka, Bangladesh
[c] East-West Center, Honolulu, HI, 96848, USA

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ABSTRACT

After almost seventy years of protracted negotiations, Bangladesh and India exchanged all their border enclaves in the summer of 2015. Nearly 55,000 enclave residents living in these small pieces of lands, both in Bangladesh and India, were given the option to choose their state of citizenship. An overwhelming majority chose to stay where they were and opted for a change in their citizenship. Drawing on the choice of the former Indian enclave residents in Bangladesh, this article explains why they overwhelmingly chose a citizenship of the host state, as opposed to a state that they 'belonged' to. The article offers the concept of *acts of belonging* to explain their choice of citizenship. It analyzes how the disconnection of almost seventy years from their home state and dependence on the host state for daily survival influenced their acts of belonging and eventually their decisions for a choice of citizenship. In so doing, the article offers a framework that demonstrates how acts of belonging work both as a means and an outcome of spatial socialization, a process that is mediated by social memory and regional identity. In conclusion, it argues that acts of belonging can be fruitfully applied not only to understand the choice of citizenship but also in broader political geography.

1. Introduction

On a late July afternoon in 2015, Joeeta a young female in her early 20s, was visited by a group of local government surveyors in her house.[1] She was asked to choose where she wanted to live, as the Indian enclave of Dasiar Chhara was to be merged with Bangladesh later that month as a result of the enclave exchange. Without a second thought, Joeeta answered, 'I want to stay in Bangladesh and become a Bangladeshi citizen.' Technically though, Joeeta was an Indian enclave resident living in the former enclave of Dasiar Chhara, one of the 111 Indian enclaves hosted by Bangladesh. Nevertheless, she identified as a Bangladeshi and decided to choose Bangladeshi citizenship over Indian citizenship.

The same choice was offered to nearly the 55,000 enclave residents of Bangladesh and India when these two states finally exchanged their border enclaves and merged those with the surrounding territories on 31 July of 2015. These enclaves, which were small pieces of land, ended up within the border of the neighboring state after the partition of British India during 1947. This resulted in enclaves that were situated inside Bangladesh but belonged to India and vice versa. Bangladesh and India hosted 111 and 51 such enclaves, respectively. On paper, the enclave residents were officially Indians living inside Bangladesh and vice versa; in actuality, they lived totally isolated from their home country and were dependent exclusively on the host land (Jones, 2010; Shewly, 2013b, 2015). Consequently, when the time came, almost 98% of the enclave residents decided to stay where they were and opted for a change in their citizenship (Ferdoush & Jones, 2018).

Drawing on the interviews with former Indian enclave residents in Bangladesh, I offer an explanation as to why they overwhelmingly chose the citizenship of the host country, as opposed to a country that they 'belonged' to. I analyze how the disconnection of almost 70 years from their home state, and dependency upon the host land for daily survival, influenced their decisions on the choice of citizenship. In so doing, I offer the concept of *acts of belonging* to understand their choice of citizenship.[2] I use the term as a departure point to refer to the actions that the former enclave residents performed not only to claim their

* University of Hawaii at Manoa, 2424 Maile Way, Honolulu, HI, 96822, USA.
E-mail addresses: ferdoush@hawaii.edu, tourzodu.05@gmail.com.

[1] Pseudonyms are used throughout this article to protect the identities of interviewees.

[2] Ilgin Yorukoglu uses the term 'acts of belonging' in her study of the queer women of Turkish descent in Berlin but from a social-psychological perspective to examine intimacy and belonging (Yorukoglu, 2014). Unlike her, I use the term to socio-politically understand the acts that lead people to choose their citizenship.

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membership to a certain state but also to similar mundane acts of daily lives that people living along the borderland perform (in most cases, their neighbors who were the citizens of the host state) on a daily basis. I use the term both as a single concept consisting of the totality of acts and as individual actions of belonging. Acts of belonging are the mediators between the former enclave residents' daily lives and the numerous state and regional institutions that they had to negotiate with for survival. Although I am inspired by the concept of 'acts of citizenship' by Isin and Neilsen, the idea of acts of belonging is fundamentally different. Drawing on Robert Ware, while theorizing acts of citizenship, Isin makes a clear distinction between 'acts' and 'action' (Isin, 2009; Ware, 1974). He views both acts and actions being a 'doing' while actions also involve a motion or change in an object or a body. Thus, for Isin and Neilsen acts of citizenship refers to actions that make a difference or disrupt the socio-historical pattern (Isin & Neilsen, 2008). In this sense, the concept of acts of belonging is different than the acts of citizenship in two fundamental ways. First, I do not distinguish acts from actions, rather acts include practices, actions, and habits of the actor. Second, they are not necessarily actions by citizens to 'disrupt' the socio-historical patterns, rather they are actions by (non)citizens to demonstrate their connection to a place or a group. Thus, I argue that acts of belonging explain the actions, habits, and practices that stem from the sense of belonging and eventually led the former enclave residents to choose the membership of one state over another.

Jason Cons contends that in sensitive spaces like enclaves, the question of belonging is more than a simple narrative of the past. Belonging transgresses every aspect of daily lives in the struggle of fitting oneself within the idea of a 'nation' and a 'state'. Belonging becomes the basis for identity, hierarchy, inclusion, exclusion, and above all survival. Thus, who belong where and who have the right to belong remained prime questions in the former enclaves (Cons, 2012; van Schendel, 2005). As an answer to such questions, former enclave residents performed numerous actions ranging from buying properties and owning small business to 'managing' an address outside the enclave. These are instances of what I call acts of belonging. However, acts of belonging alone cannot simply explain the extremely complicated choice of citizenship in the former enclaves of Bangladesh and India. Thus, I claim that acts of belonging influence and are influenced by 'spatial socialization', a process through which former enclave residents were spatially socialized to develop a connection to and identify with a specific place (Paasi, 1991, 1996). Spatial socialization, I further argue, is influenced by the 'social memory' and 'regional identity' of the former enclave residents which eventually played the determining role in their choice of citizenship (Berger, 2010; Carsten, 2007; Olick & Robbins, 1998; Paasi, 2009a, 2009b, 2011, 2013; Till, 1999, 2003).

Data was collected in two phases for this article. The first phase involved two months of ethnographic data collection during June and July of 2015, when preparations were being made to exchange and merge the enclaves. I visited four Indian enclaves within the Panchagar district in Bangladesh and conducted 13 in-depth interviews with the enclave residents. The second phase involved twelve months of ethnographic data collection in eight former enclaves under the districts of Panchagar, Kurigram, and Lalmonirhat in Bangladesh. During this time, I conducted 57 in-depth interviews and six Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with the former enclave residents who decided to stay in Bangladesh and chose Bangladeshi citizenship. I also conducted 22 interviews with government officials at different levels of the administration, ranging from the Statistical Inspector to the Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO- the highest ranked administrative officer in charge of a sub-district). All the interviews were conducted in Bengali and most of them were recorded with permission. I translated and transcribed them with the help of my research assistant.

This article is divided into four sections. In the first section, I briefly discuss the history of the former Bangladesh-India enclaves and lives in these enclaves before the exchange in 2015. In the second section, I discuss the ideas of spatial socialization, social memory, and regional identity to contextualize how acts of belonging are related and relevant. Drawing on the interviews and experiences of the former enclave residents, in the third section, I demonstrate how acts of belonging played a crucial role in their daily lives and eventually in the decision to choose a state of citizenship. Finally, I present a conceptual framework to demonstrate how acts of belonging can be productively used to explain their choice of citizenship by combining the concepts of spatial socialization, social memory, and regional identity.[3]

1.1. Origin and existence of the former Bangladesh-India enclaves

The origins of the former enclaves of Bangladesh and India are traced back to the pre-colonial era in 1713 when a treaty between the Mughal empire and the Kingdom of Cooch Behar was signed to retain control over lands that they had already gained inside each other's territory (van Schendel, 2002; Whyte, 2002). It was the British administrators who, for the first time, undertook a proper demarcation of the enclaves in 1938 for administrative and tax purposes. Thus, enclaves remained a local administrative issue handled by the regional administrators of Rangpur and Cooch Behar before the partition of India in 1947 (Ferdoush & Jones, 2018). However, they were not a local issue anymore after the partition as the enclaves ended up being on the other side of the international border of India and Pakistan. Since they were already clearly demarcated by the colonial rulers, they were tagged as territories of India inside Pakistan and vice versa that could not be merged during the partition (Jones, 2010; van Schendel, 2002). Several treaties were signed between the host countries (between India and Pakistan in 1958 and Bangladesh and India in 1974) to exchange the enclaves, but due to numerous political and legal issues, it took sixty-eight years for the exchange to be executed in 2015.

Lives in the former enclaves kept getting harder as years passed by. It was in 1952 when, for the first time, the former enclave residents faced a legal barrier in crossing into their 'home states' as India and Pakistan introduced passport and visa to regulate cross-border movements (Whyte, 2002). However, the border was open and porous with virtually no state authority to regulate cross-border movements (Samaddar, 1999). Thus, the former enclave residents were not yet contained in their small land archipelagoes. Enclaves soon became central in the nationalistic debates of India and Pakistan when they signed a treaty in 1958 to exchange these pieces of lands. The political oppositions both in India and Pakistan severely criticized the treaty and several court cases were filed challenging the legality of the exchange. By the time all legal barriers were resolved, East Pakistan gained its independence in 1971 and became Bangladesh (van Schendel, 2002).

India played an active role in the independence of Bangladesh and both these two states signed another treaty in 1974, that came to be known as Land Boundary Agreement, to resolve all the border disputes and exchange the enclaves. However, with changing political scenarios both in Bangladesh and India after 1975 the exchange got overshadowed and enclaves gained an amplified status surpassing their real values (Cons, 2016). Enclaves and enclave people became the pawn of a broader discourse where both Bangladesh and India used them as symbols of territorial and nationalistic markers without really caring about the people living in those enclaves (Ferdoush & Jones, 2018). As border control got harder, enclave residents ended up being completely disconnected from their 'home state' and found themselves surrounded by a state that did not recognize them as citizens. This situation effectively turned the enclaves into 'stateless spaces' with a 'permanent state of exception' (Jones, 2009b; 2009a). They became the 'abandoned spaces' that contained 'bare lives' (Shewly, 2013a). Survival in such abandoned spaces became a challenge of daily life. Being abandoned by

[3] I must also mention that, my objective in this paper is not to complicate the idea of 'citizenship' itself. For the purpose of the paper, I understand citizenship as a 'sense of identity and belonging' (Jayal, 2013, p. 2).

the home state, enclave residents found their own ways to navigate through and around different state authorities in the host state (Ferdoush, 2014; Shewly, 2016). With India's strict border control from the early 1990s and border fence guarded by heavily militarized border forces, daily lives became completely dependent on the host state.

Consequently, disconnection from the home state for years, dependence on and intimate connections with the host state for daily survival developed a sense of belonging to the host state among the former enclave residents instead of the home state. At the same time, the daily activities became acts of belonging to demonstrate their affinities to the host state. Thus, when the moment arrived for them to choose a state of citizenship, the choice was not fraught with ambiguity anymore for most of them. Rather, it was a moment when their belonging was officially recognized by the state.

2. Contextualizing acts of belonging: social memory, regional identity, and spatial socialization

I discuss three distinct but closely connected ideas — social memory, regional identity, and spatial socialization— in this section to contextualize the acts of belonging of the former enclave residents. I argue that, to understand why the former enclave residents overwhelmingly developed a sense of belonging to their host state, we must take their social memories, regional identities, and spatial socialization into consideration. I contend that the former enclave residents of Bangladesh, although Indian citizens on paper, were spatially socialized as Bangladeshis, a process which both influenced and was influenced by their acts of belonging. This happened due to the fact that the former enclaves were regionally identical with their surrounding territories and the social memories of the enclave residents were consistent with the social memories of their neighbors within the host country i.e.; Bangladesh. As a result, when it came to the question of belonging, an overwhelming majority of them developed a sense of belonging to the host state. I do not suggest that acts of belonging are results of 'true' and 'authentic' sense of belonging which were naturally born among the former enclave residents, rather they are the distinctions that were constructed by the nation-state of Bangladesh and India being separate political entities with distinct political ends.

Interests in social memory can be traced back to the early twentieth century when Hugo von Hofmannsthal first used the term 'collective memory' in 1902 (Olick & Robbins, 1998). After that, scholars in different fields used numerous terms to express more or less the same idea, for instance, 'cultural memory' (Sturkin, 1997), 'social memory' (Fentress & Wickham, 1992), 'national memory' (Nora, 1989), and 'images of the past' (Olick & Levy, 1997). The contemporary use of the idea of social memory is credited to Maurice Halbwachs (Jeffrey K Olick & Robbins, 1998). He was the first to oppose the pure psychological use of the term 'memory' and viewed it from a sociological point of view. He argues that it is impossible for an individual to remember anything consistently and coherently outside their social groups. Social memories are the reflections of the past that mediate between a group or an individual and their connections with the society at present (Till, 1999). These are the myths, in an anthropological sense, that connect a social group with the broader society. At the same time, social memory becomes the bearer of traditions, identity, culture, and language. Thus, it integrates the individual to the society and eventually creates a sense of belonging to a place or a region. Different types of memories integrate individuals to their societies in different ways. In this regard, Assmann's typologies of memory become crucial. He distinguishes among four types. First, is the transmission of knowledge which he calls mimetic memory. The second category is termed as material memory, objects that contain history. The third is the communicative memory, the memory that individual gathers through their language and communication. And finally, the transformation of meanings and consciousness from the past-cultural memory (Olick & Robbins, 1998).

The most relevant figure for the discussion of social memory is the French scholar Pierre Nora and his work on 'national memory' (Nora, 1989). In understanding national memory, Nora claims that memories of the past have been replaced by artificial memories, and memory sites are intentionally created by the powerful of a society. Such memories are artificially celebrated and remembered because they no longer occur naturally. As a result, national sites of memory and memorials become the active sites of manipulation of history. This manipulation is done through different means that are known as 'agents of memory' (Aguilar, 1999). These agents create, transform, and mediate the social memory between individuals and their surrounding regions. The three most influential agents of memory, that I propose played a significant role in the lives of the former enclave residents are: discourses and myths of the powerful (Foucault, 1977; Hobsbawm, 1983; Levi-Strauss, 1979; Noiriel, 1996; Smith, 1986), generations (Lambert, 1972; Mannheim, 1952; Paasi, 1991; Schuman & Scott, 1989; Williams, 1979), memory and sites of memory (Alderman, 2000; Berger, 2010; Cerulo, 1995; Olick, 1997; Spillman, 1997; Till, 1999, 2003).

The second idea that is directly connected to acts of belonging is regional identity. Regional identity, as a key concept, has attracted considerable attentions from geographers for a long time, nonetheless remains, a tough question to answer what exactly this identity consists of and how to best approach it (Keating, 2001; Paasi, 2003). The concept originated in geography as 'regional consciousness' in the writings of Morgan (1939) that later gained renewed interests in German geography during the 1980s (Paasi, 2003). Among the contemporary geographers, Anssi Paasi has engaged with the concept most widely. While understanding regional identity, the crucial question for Paasi remains, ' … not how the individual and the social are integrated in space, but how can the sociospatial be conceptualized in the "production" of the individual/collective and vice versa' (Paasi, 2003, p. 476). A regional identity arises only when a region is institutionalized. Drawing on Giddens's theory of structuration (1984), Paasi argues that institutionalization of regions is a dual process that transforms a region based on its constant interaction with the world system through numerous mediating stages. The way it works, according to Paasi, is that practices are institutionalized and then influence the spatial structure. Spatial structures influence the society, which in turn influences the state, and the state influences the world system. Following the same process, the world system influences the state, the state influences the society, and the society in turn, influences spatial structures (Paasi, 1996).

Once institutionalized, a structure of expectation related to that region is born (Paasi, 1991). A structure of expectation not only provides the basis for interactions between and among the people but also determines the way its inhabitants interrelate themselves with the regional institutions, norms, culture, and values. In Paasi's words, 'Structures of expectations form a frame that is bound to a specific region. This frame is quite permanent and is represented in the form of time-space-specific, region-bounded, institutionally embedded schemes of perception, conception, and action, which can comprise real, imagined, and mythical features of the region' (Paasi, 1991, p. 249). Thus, they remain more as an expression of the history of the region, not as an immediate experience of the people living in it.

The idea of spatial socialization is the third and most influential factor related to the acts of belonging. Due to their similar social memories and regional identities, the former enclave residents developed a sense of belonging to the host state that not only spatially socialized them but also, played a significant role in mediating the scale of socialization between the local and the global through the regional and the national. Paasi utilized Shields' idea of 'social spatialization' to develop the concept of spatial socialization in his work to understand the Finnish-Russia border (Paasi, 1996; Shields, 1991). Spatial socialization is the 'process through which individual actors and collectivities are socialized as members of specific territorially bounded spatial entities and through which they more or less actively internalize collective territorial identities and shared traditions' (Paasi, 1996, p. 8). It is a

form of collective awareness accumulating in the socio-spatial consciousness of people who strive to make sense of territorially-bounded spaces and social constructs that turn those spaces into a 'place' (Creswell, 2004). This awareness generally brings together social practices occurring at international, national, and regional scales. Among these, certain ones gain hegemonic status through different agents such as media, books, history, discourses, memory, politics, and education while others are silenced (Paasi, 2009a). Both the structure and the agent play equally significant roles in spatially socializing individuals by injecting discourses and traces of memory in their practical consciousness (Ferdoush, 2018; Giddens, 1984; Paasi, 1996, 2009a). Socio-spatial consciousness has material manifestation in forms of symbolic and material landscapes, memoirs, books, maps, drawings, paintings, stories, narratives, discourses, myths, statistics, and newspapers. The idea of spatial socialization broadly leads us to the idea of 'national socialization' (Paasi, 1996). Nationalism, in this context, is viewed by Paasi as 'a social process by which certain historically contingent forms of territorial identities, symbols, and ideologies are installed into the social and individual consciousness' (Paasi, 1996, p. 55). Thus, in this sense, national socialization occurs the same way as spatial socialization, but in this case, collectivities are socialized as members of a specific nation through the same mechanisms as individuals.

3. Acts of belonging in the former enclaves of Bangladesh and India

A sense of belonging was sharp and clear among the former enclave residents before the exchange took place. As other scholars have shown and I found during my first phase of data collection, who belonged where and how they belonged were not vague for the former enclave residents (Cons, 2012; Shewly, 2016). They were aware of the treaty between and the exchange promises made by Bangladesh and India. It was the states and broader political discourses that created the ambiguity and confusion around the exchange and the identity of the population. Some of them would be considered citizens of the home state while stateless in the host state. Among them, few would be considered 'proxy citizens' and all of them would be known as 'enclave people' (van Schendel, 2002).[4] As Gulam Mustafa, the General Secretary of the India-Bangladesh Enclave Exchange Coordination Committee (IBEECC) of Bangladesh chapter put it,

> We never asked for India to take us. We have always demanded Bangladesh to recognize us, merge our enclaves with the country. We are Bangladeshis like you, like anyone else around us. We were born here, raised here, we belong here.

The story of Joeeta illustrates the sense of belonging of the people from the enclaves. Joeeta was born in a Bangladeshi enclave inside India. Her mother was an Indian enclave resident from Dasiar Chhara (within Bangladesh) who was married to a Bangladeshi enclave resident living inside India. After getting married, her mother moved with her father to the Bangladeshi enclave in India. However, when Joeeta was about three years old her grandparents, who still live in Dasiar Chhara, brought her back to Bangladesh and raised her. Though she maintains regular contact with her parents with the help of modern communication system, she had met them physically only once when she was 11. She grew up in Bangladesh, although inside an Indian enclave, she learnt to perceive herself as a Bangladeshi, not as an Indian enclave resident. She was also an active member of the IBEECC that led the enclave exchange movement. Consequently, when she was given the option to choose between India and Bangladesh, she chose Bangladesh knowing that this could permanently end the possibility to stay with her parents. In the courtyard of her grandparents' home, when asked, 'why did you decide to stay in Bangladesh?' with a sad smile and poignant eyes, she told me:

> Since I can remember, I have been here. I have never had a chance to connect with my parents except on facebook and over mobile phone. I feel a stronger connection to my grandparents here, to my relatives, to my friends, and neighbors here. This is where I belong. I see myself as a Bangladeshi, not as an Indian. … So when they [the official surveyors] came and asked where I wanted to stay [after the exchange], I had no doubt in my mind. I told them, without thinking twice, I want to stay in Bangladesh and become a Bangladeshi citizen. (Explanations added)

For Joeeta, the only place that she belonged was her grandparents' home and felt connections with were the people around. Although, her parents lived in India, she was brought up inside an enclave in Bangladesh. She went to the schools in Bangladesh, she made friends with her neighbors who were Bangladeshis, and got actively involved with the movement of enclave exchange. For her, the question of belonging was clear as demonstrated through her acts of belonging as an active member of the IBEECC.

Echoing Joeeta, a 26-year-old elementary school teacher in the former enclave of Dohola-Khagrabari within Bangladesh explained his choice to stay in Bangladesh:

> Look, I still get goosebumps when I think of 31 July [2015]. That is our day of independence. From our childhood, we came to know that this is Bangladesh, we were born here. My father, grandfather, even my great grandfather lived here and died here. I have struggled a lot to come this far. Now, when we finally got our freedom and could be a part of Bangladesh and live like a proud Bangladeshi, why would we move to India? What is there for us?

A significant part of the school teacher's statement is the distinction he made between 'us' and 'them'. He perceived India as 'them', although, on paper, it was the country that he belonged to. The host state, Bangladesh, was the country he identified as 'us', the one that he belonged to not only because he was raised there but also, because of his connections through generations and life-long struggles to present himself as one of the Bangladeshis. These struggles are the acts of belonging that included but were not limited to 'managing' an address outside the enclave to get admission into a Bangladeshi school, buying land adjacent to the enclave, and hiding the identity of an enclave dweller. Such acts of belonging were not only the mediators between his identity and daily lives but also, were the results of a socio-spatial consciousness forged throughout his life inside Bangladeshi territory and being exposed to the narratives, discourses, and memories created by the state. This consciousness is based on a distinction he makes between communities existing at different spatial scales (Paasi, 2009a).

Social memories played a major role, along with regional identity, in spatially socializing the former enclave residents that influenced their acts of belonging and eventually, their choice of citizenship. Drawing on Foucault's (Foucault, 1986; 1995) analysis of discourse, power, and knowledge, Harding and Pribram (2002) argue that memory is created by an interaction between these three elements. Sara Ahmed (2004) further demonstrates that memory mediates between an

[4] Proxy citizenship was solely based on religious identities of the former enclave residents. The Hindus of the Bangladeshi enclaves inside India would be considered proxy citizens of India and Muslims of the Indian enclaves would be considered same in Bangladesh. Although religion had a role in their decisions to either move or to stay where they were, it was not the most significant reason. I found there were a number of Hindu families who split regarding the decision to move from Bangladesh to India. As a result, few of the family members accepted Bangladeshi citizenship and others accepted Indian citizenship. Moreover, there were Muslims from Bangladesh who moved to India to become Indian citizens, and no Muslim families from India moved to Bangladesh. For a detail discussion on numerous identities and statelessness of the former enclave residents see van Schendel (2002) and to know more about the choices of those who moved from Bangladesh to India see Ferdoush and Jones (2018).

individual and the society in three different ways. First, memory mediates between an individual and social experiences, then it mediates between the physical and the social world, and finally, it mediates between 'inside' and 'outside' of the self.

Karen Till's (2003) idea of places and memories, with a focus on national commemoration, becomes relevant for the discussion here. Till focuses on three major aspects of national commemoration: place and sacralization of national imaginaries, changing political regimes, cityscape, and conflict over national places. According to Till, 'places of national imaginaries' denotes official places of memory created to establish a topography of nation, the maintenance of social stability, and the reproduction of existing power relationships. It also includes the narratives and symbols attached to these places of memory. Till identifies three places of memory: monuments, memorials, and museums. The state generally uses these places to naturalize historical narratives and representations. For example, The Central *Shahid Minar* in Bangladesh is one of the biggest and the most significant national monuments (a national monument symbolizing martyrs of the language movement in 1952). *Shaheed Minar* represents the blood and sacrifice of students and others for their mother tongue in 1952. The *Central Shaheed* Minar is located in the capital city of Dhaka, but a *Shaheed Minar* can be found in all districts, sub-districts, and at most universities and colleges within Bangladesh. People celebrate Mother Language Day by offering flowers at the *Shaheed Minar*, a holiday that the Prime Minister rings in. The *Shaheed Minar* and mother language celebrations represent the spirit of Bangladeshi nationalism and highlight the importance of Bengali language and culture. This is a national holiday widely covered in the country's media. Similarly, the National Martyr's Memorial is the national memorial to symbolize and remember the sacrifices of those who laid their lives down for the country's independence. This memorial signifies a common history of struggle and the fight against the foreign power. Each year on December 16th, Bangladesh celebrates 'Victory Day' by offering flowers on this monument. The media widely covers this public holiday. Museums are another important symbol and producer of national memories. Museums play the dual role of connecting memory with the physical object as well as the place. Museum exhibitions institutionalize the knowledge and representation of the state through cultural objects that have been collected, classified, sorted, and exhibited (Till, 2003). Both the National Museum of Bangladesh and specialized liberation war museums portray the Bangladesh Liberation War via numerous mediums. The Bangladesh Liberation War is a national event that ties the whole nation together by creating a sense of belonging.

All these places of the national imaginary represent Bangladeshi nationhood and national histories. These are inseparable parts of the production and reproduction of national discourses embedded in the spirit of the nation. Enclave residents residing in Bangladesh have always been exposed to such places of memory and nationalist discourses. They grew up with the same spatial consciousness and feeling of national identity as other citizens in Bangladesh. The same can be said of the residents living in the former Bangladeshi enclaves inside India. The place of memory was where they were born and stayed for their entire lives. As a result, their activities to express belonging to the country of residence included nationalistic acts such as singing the national anthem in the school, offering flowers in the *Shaheed Minar*, and celebrating independence.

During my summer research in 2015, when the former enclave residents faced the dilemma of whether to stay or to leave Bangladesh, I interviewed an undergraduate student from the former enclave of Garati, in Panchagar. He had managed to find a way to get to school and eventually enrolled in an undergraduate college in Bangladesh, a rarity for enclave residents. He chose to stay in Bangladesh and explained his reasons for that:

> From my childhood, I have known that this is my country. I have struggled a lot to continue my studies. I had to always find a 'second way' to make sure that I could continue my schooling. I have learned how hard we fought for our independence, how we have become an independent nation. When I used to sing our national anthem every morning in my school, often I would get tears in my eyes. And now, when finally, I can say that I am a Bangladeshi and proudly declare that Bangladesh is my country, I would go to India? (Fieldwork, 2015).

A notable feature of the student's answer is how he connects to the Bangladeshi identity. He had comparatively formal exposure to the agents of spatial socialization, nationalist narratives, and discourses, as one of the few from the enclaves to obtain schooling. Like any other child in Bangladesh, he learned Bangladeshi nationalism and identity through the educational system. Not all former enclave residents had such rigorous exposure to Bangladeshi narratives and discourses, but they have still learned to identify themselves with those narratives and discourses over those of the home state mainly because of two reasons. First, they did not have a regular connection to their home state, a state that was a distant land for most of them as opposed to the immediate host state. Second, their close association with the immediate region and their neighbors, as well as exposure to the host state's media and discourses taught them to imagine themselves as part of the host community.

The power of memory and sense of belonging are evident when one considers the words of this 67-year-old farmer, who decided to turn down lucrative offers[5] to relocate to India and instead remained in subsidized housing on a small plot of land in Bangladesh:

> If I offer you a lot of money and what not … will you leave your place of birth forever? I have been here since I was born, I saw my father, even my grandfather dying here. Even I saw the *Gondogol* [referring to the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War] …. But did we go to India? We could have gone there at that time. Lots of our neighbors had gone and never came back. We supported Bangladesh, not Pakistan. We hoped, after the *Gondogol*, Bangladesh would take us. But it took a long time to do so. Yet, we are still happy. We were born here, we breathed the air of this country, we drank the water of this land, we supported this country. I would never go to India for anything. This is my homeland; this is where I was born, and this is where I want to die. (Explanation added).

Localized struggles over naming, renaming, and changing the meanings, forms, and places of memory depend on who has the authority to do so (Till, 2003). Renaming streets, schools, theaters, and other public places are strategies to build support for particular political orders (Alderman, 2000; De Soto, 1996). Changing names of nationally significant public places, such as roads and airports, happens with regular frequency in Bangladesh, particularly as regimes of political power change. In case of the former enclave residents, (re)naming remains a strategic act of belonging after the enclaves were exchanged. Of the ten high schools permitted in the former enclaves of Debiganj Upazila, for example, a significant number are named after important historical figures or ones known locally, such as freedom fighters and social workers. Some have even proposed renaming portions of the entire enclave after nationally or regionally significant figures. This strategy of (re)naming serves a dual purpose; first to express belonging to the surrounding state, and secondly to curry favor among authorities who decide the fate of these schools or institutions. (Re)naming, as an act of belonging, not only enables them to create a place of memory with which they can identify themselves but also serves as a politics of

[5] The package included 500,000 (US$7, 500) rupees per family, dry food for two years, kitchen utensils, animal feed, temporary camp in Cooch Behar, drinking water, medicine, healthcare, education, and eventually a house or flat. However, during my fieldwork and interviews with the enclave residents in 2015, I found most of them were neither very clear about the package nor were confident on the promises (Ferdoush & Jones, 2018).

scale and local control (Alderman, 2000). I asked one of the governing body members of a high school in Kotvajni (within Bangladesh) about the school's name, which came from a historical figure with significance during the Bangladesh Liberation War. He answered:

> We are Bangladeshis. We also feel as much as any others in this country for our nation. This name signifies our attachment to the country, to its history. Also, it helped us avoid a lot of conflicts and controversies in terms of finding a suitable name that will be acceptable to everyone.

Acts of belonging are not only connected to social memories and spatial socialization, they also mediate between an individual and their regional identity. I offer a case of Hakim Ali to demonstrate how these two are connected and influence the process of spatial socialization. Hakim was born in enclave X and lived there his early life. However, he moved to India in search of better opportunities in life when he was about thirty. He was married when he went to India, but he left his wife and the daughter in Bangladesh. Hakim eventually found his way to the city of Ghaziabad in Uttar Pradesh (UP) and worked in the local brick fields. After a few years, he took his wife and the older daughter with him to India but left his younger son in Bangladesh to look after the properties he had. He lived and worked in UP until 2017, for more than thirty years from the first time he left the enclave. Every year during the rainy season, when the brick field was closed, he would return to the place he considered home, within Bangladesh. He would stay for a couple of months and then leave again.

> After hearing his story, I asked, 'Since you have lived there for a while now, did you think of getting an Indian citizenship or try to get one?' and he answered:

'I could have easily gotten Indian citizenship if I wanted to. I know so many of the workers who went after me, managed to get Indian citizenship. I had "adhaar" card for all my family members [a unique identification number provided to all the Indian residents that allow them an access to numerous government provisions]. If I had asked my *Mohajon* [owner of the brick field], he would've easily done it for me. But I never asked, I never wanted to be [an Indian citizen]. … *Amar atma to pori ase eikhane*' [my soul belongs here]. (Explanation added)

Hakim continues-

> It's hard to explain you know. They [Indians] are different, we [Bangladeshis] are different. Their food is different, their dress is different, their language is different, the way they behave is different, even the way they think is different. I could never be like them and would never want to.

For Hakim Ali, India was a land of opportunity where he went to make his fortune. He was an Indian enclave resident, living in Bangladesh, and despite spending almost half of his life in India for work, he did not identify himself as an Indian. For him, his soul belongs to the land in which he was born and raised. He developed his regional identity and spatial consciousness during his early life, a life as an enclave dweller residing inside Bangladesh. Numerous activities such as leaving the son in Bangladesh, buying properties, and coming back to the enclave during off seasons were his acts of belonging through which he demonstrated where he belongs. Although he had been exposed to alternative identity and narratives, he could not reject the identity that he developed in his early life. Another notable aspect of Hakim's story is that he ended up in UP, an Indian state which is markedly different in culture than Bangladesh and the Indian state of West Bengal, with which Bangladesh shares a lot of cultural similarities. Thus, for Hakim, it was never easy to identify himself as a UP resident which sharply contrasted with the cultural identity he developed in his early life. For him, the way of doing things in UP were different than his way of doing things, the way people interacted was not the way he was comfortable with, even the way people thought of themselves in UP was not the way Hakim would think of himself. Consequently, when Bangladesh and India recognized enclave dwellers like Hakim to be citizens, he came back and chose Bangladeshi citizenship. An identity that he developed and longed for was finally bestowed upon him. Hakim's final words encapsulates it all:

> I was born here, my father lies here [pointing towards the earth], it's time for me to go now [looking towards the sky]. I want to rest in peace here [points towards the earth]. This is my home, this is where I belong. India provided me with livelihood and food, but *bidesh hoilo bidesh ar desh hoilo desh* (abroad is abroad and home is home).

Different acts of belonging were a reoccurring subject during most of the interviews I conducted with numerous government officials. In answering my question of 'Why do you think such an overwhelming majority from the enclaves chose to stay in Bangladesh?', all of them emphasized on the sense of belonging and belongings of the former enclave residents. For example, the UNO of Patgram Upazila Nur Kutub Alam told me:

> Most of them [enclave residents] have been living here for years. The only properties that they own are here in Bangladesh. Who would want to go leaving everything [that they have] behind? Besides, most of them are settled here with friends and relatives all around [the enclave].

The Chairman of the Patgram Upazila Ruhul Amin Babul offered a detailed explanation. In sharing his experience as the Chairman of the Upazila for two consecutive terms, he shared numerous instances that clearly demonstrate the acts of belonging of the former enclave residents. In one of the examples, he shared an event of a former enclave resident from Patgram who managed to earn a master degree from one of the public universities in Bangladesh and eventually got a government job as a college teacher. Once he got the job, he eventually bought lands near the enclave in Bangladesh and built a house there. After sharing this case, he said:

> May be, all of them were not as brilliant as that boy was but they had some connections one way or the other. They would marry someone from Bangladesh or get married in Bangladesh. They would buy a small piece of land just beside the enclave or start a small business. They would often come to me for help.

Acts of belonging included both owning materialistic belongings and demonstrating connections to the host state through numerous means. In most cases, a small piece of land was the only property that the enclave resident owned which tied them to the host state. For those, who could afford to buy a land outside the enclave, the land was a marker of belonging. Similarly, other acts such as getting married outside the enclave was a significant strategy for the enclave residents to establish connections with the host land. All these are acts of belonging that tied the former enclave residents to their host state and influenced their choice of citizenship.

4. Acts of belonging and the choice of citizenship

Acts of belonging played the dual role of influencing and getting influenced by social memory, regional identity, and spatial socialization of the former enclave residents that eventually determined their choice of citizenship (see Fig. 1). The conceptual framework below demonstrates that the social memory of an individual is mainly created by the dominant discourses, knowledge, and traditions passed down from generation to generation, discourses of the powerful, and sites of memory. Regional identity is created by the regional institutions, patterns of interactions, structure of expectations, and regional ways of doing things. However, numerous acts of belonging mediate between social memory and its agents as well as regional identity and agents of regional identity. Social memory influences the acts of belonging of an individual that, in turn, would mostly determine how they connect to a

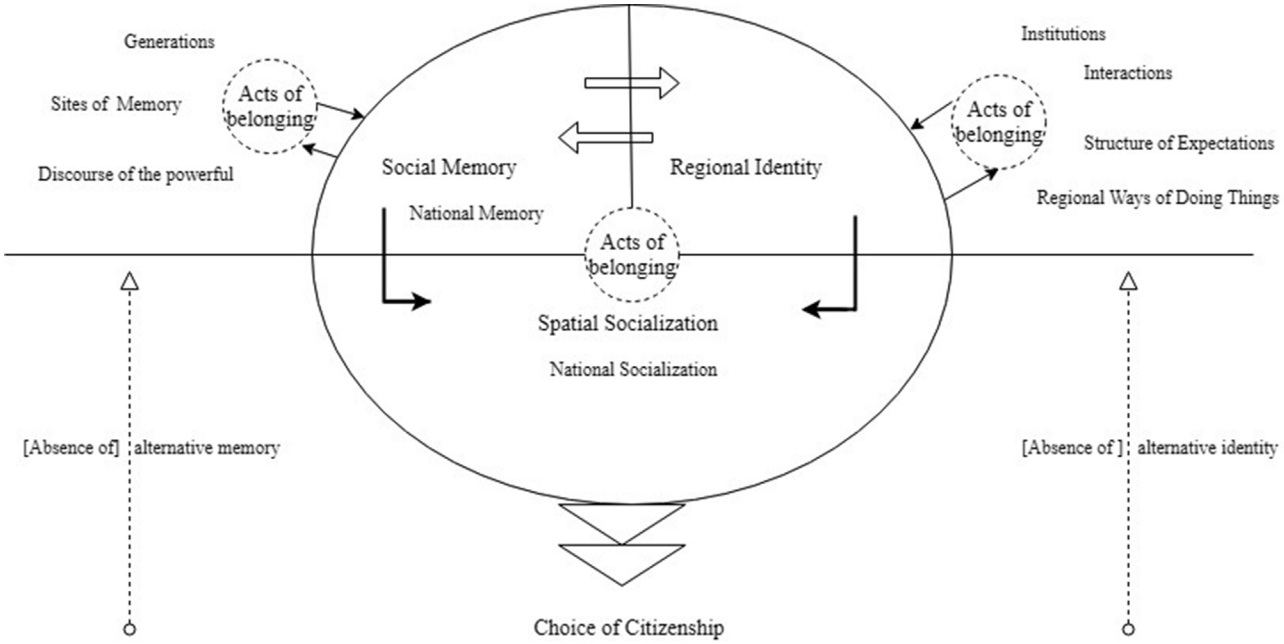

Fig. 1. Acts of belonging mediating social memory, regional identity, and spatial socialization.

certain site of memory. Sites of memory, at the same time, influence their acts of belonging which demonstrates whether an individual accepts social memories related to it or not. Through the acts of belonging, individuals demonstrate their acceptance or rejection of a certain social memory. Likewise, different acts of belonging mediate between the agents of regional identity and its agents. For instance, structures of expectations raising from a regional identity determine the nature of the acts of belonging. Acts of belonging are concurrently used by an individual to demonstrate their familiarity to the structures of expectations that connect them to a certain region. Memory and regional identity influence each other constantly, as their agents continually influence each other. Both social memory and regional identity together provide the necessary collective territorial identities and traditions that are required to spatially socialize the members of a region. As social memory and regional identity are influenced by acts of belonging, so is spatial socialization. Acts of belongings are the means that mediate between a person's local and other spatial units such as regional, national, and supra-national. At the same time, they are the tools that demonstrate a person's belonging to a certain locality. Once spatially socialized, such an individual, if given the option to choose a state of citizenship, will ultimately choose the state that they have been spatially and nationally socialized.

I have identified three major agents of social memory in this paper. Among these, discourse is the most influential. Especially, the discourse of the dominant class. The dominant class holds the power to determine which discourse is to be remembered and which one is to not. Consequently, they control which event of the past becomes social memory and which does not. As Foucault states it, 'Since memory is actually a very important factor in struggle … if one controls people's memory, one controls their dynamism' (Foucault, 1977, p. 92). Scholars have demonstrated that, among different types of social memory, the one that acquires dominance is the national memory. National memory dominates the sphere of social memory, not because people naturally remember it, but because the state and the powerful 'invent' useful traditions to cover-up their fading legitimacy and/or create the 'imagined' identity of a nation (Anderson, 1996; Hobsbawm, 1983). Therefore, the state-engineered national memory, within numerous social memories, excludes others and gains the primary allegiance. According to Olick and Robbins, 'The dominance of national memory over other memories thus not only excludes other contestants for control over the national identity but maintains the primacy of national over other kinds of identity for primary allegiance' (1998, p. 127). Sites of memory remains another agent of social memory controlled by the dominant class. The powerful decide what site to be remembered, how to be remembered, and where the site should be erected (Berger, 2010). Naming and renaming a site (Alderman, 2000), national anthems (Cerulo, 1995), museums and contents of the museums (Till, 1999, 2003), and mass media (Dayan, Katz, & Davis, 1993) signify and hold up the memory of the dominant class leaving few options for alternative sites and memories. Generations and their memories are other significant agents of social memory. Generations not only carry on the legacy of the national memory but also, they carry on alternative memories. These alternative memories can be completely opposite to the dominant social memory, they can be a territorially bound memory, a memory of the immediate community, a secret knowledge, tradition, cult, or an event. Individuals acquire these memories from their family members, their community, and the people around them. Karl Mannheim (1952), the first known scholar to sociologically approach generations and memory, argues that social and political events shape generations through the experiences that they gain during their formative years. Moreover, Schuman and Scott (1989) demonstrate that, in terms of weighing importance to historical events, generations differ significantly.

Regional identity is developed and established only when a region exists for relatively a longer period with a territorial boundary, institutions, and interaction pattern that create a structure of expectations among its inhabitants. For a region to reach such a stage, as Paasi elucidates (Paasi, 1991, 1996; 2009a), it goes through a stage of institutionalization. However, the process of institutionalization is not a one-way process that ends once it has reached its peak. This is a continuous process that occurs between the region and the inhabitants of that region. Through acts of belonging, regional identity is created, practiced, changed, sharpened, renewed, and at times rejected. Following Paasi, I have identified four agents of regional identity development. First, the interaction that occurs between individuals and the institutions of the region. This interaction is a dual process that, on the one hand, influences the structural institutions of that region, on the other hand, influences the way individuals interact with those structural institutions. Structural institutions are defined as the regional offices, administrations, bureaucracies, boundaries, and any other

entities that operate based on a defined structural form. The second is the institutions that drive the process of perpetual production and reproduction of regional interactions. Through these institutions, according to Paasi, regional consciousness takes place at various territorial levels. However, the roles and degree of regional consciousness varies based on the scale of the region. For example, the state apparatus normally possesses a much stronger and deep-rooted power relation with the inhabitants than the sub-regional institutions (Paasi, 1991). When an established pattern of interaction and institutional framework are established, a structure of expectation is born. This is a frame that is specifically bound to regions and is relatively permanent. In describing the structure of expectation, Paasi says,

> ' … can comprise real, imagined, and mythical features of the region. They are above all vehicles of sociospatial distinction, expressing collective spatial role based on knowledge or beliefs regarding the historical and cultural features of a region. These structures are gradually reproduced, not inevitably in the institutional practices originating from the region itself (for example local or regional media), but also by external, nonlocally controlled institutions (for example, the education system). Thus, compared with the structure of feeling, they are more expressions of the 'official' world view or ideology sedimented into the history of the region, not into the immediate experience of people living in it (Paasi, 1991, p. 249).

These three agents ultimately set up the fourth agent of regional identity, regional ways of doing things. Together, an established institutional framework, a defined and understood interaction pattern, and a structure of expectation create a regional way of life. A way that is typical of specific regions and is expressed through numerous acts of belonging of the inhabitants of a region.

Social memory and regional identity influence each other by the virtue of their agents. For example, the discourses of a region influence the institutional shapes and the interactions among people of that region. At the same time, structure of expectations plays a determining role in choosing the sites of memory for a region; generations can pass on the traditions and knowledge of a specific region that continues the regional ways of doing things.

Social memory and regional identity together play the role of creating, teaching, internalizing, and sharing collective territorial identities and shared traditions among individual actors and groups thus, spatially socialize them. Spatial socialization creates the feeling of 'us' and 'them' based on the territorially bounded region. People learn to distinguish between 'us' and 'them'. Discourses and narratives of a region, sites of memory, generational knowledge and traditions, patterns of interaction, institutional formation, and ways of doing things in a certain region spatially socialize its people through their acts of belonging. Once spatially socialized, they use numerous acts of belonging to (re)produce the recognized interactions and institutions. Thus, acts of belonging play the dual role of means and outcomes of spatial socialization. Such acts simultaneously connect their locality to a broader region and confirm their belonging to that region. As I demonstrated earlier, spatial socialization can be broadly applied to understand national socialization. National socialization follows more or less the same process of spatial socialization. Once people are nationally socialized they start to imagine themselves as part of a nation. Once this imagination is born, choice of citizenship ultimately follows the territorially bounded region that is known to be the home for that nation. In case of the former enclave residents of India, their choice of citizenship followed the host country, Bangladesh, that they recognized as their home instead of the nation they had officially been a part of.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, I have showed how people like Joeeta and Hakim Ali have lived a life without any formal recognition as citizens by their home and host states for decades. The years of statelessness, as we have seen from their narratives, did not create much confusion when the moment finally arrived, and they had to choose a state of citizenship. Rather, the majority of enclave residents were reasonably certain about their decisions. In such a context, I have demonstrated how acts of belonging played the most significant role in their decision making by mediating between their social memory, regional identity, and spatial socialization. In so doing, I have argued that acts of belonging include both owning material belongings and performing numerous actions to demonstrate a person's connection to a certain place and a group of people. Acts of belonging are both the means and the outcomes of spatial socialization, a process through which people learn to situate themselves within a certain locality and other spatial units through their social memories and regional identities. Social memories of the former enclave residents were mainly determined by three agents. These are discourse and narratives of the powerful in the society, generations and their shared knowledge, and different sites of memory. I contend that these agents are largely controlled by the state to create a social memory for the state to legitimize its authority. At the same time, social memory influences regional identity by influencing the way people interact, the way they expect others to act, and the way institutions are designed in a certain region. In a similar fashion, regional identity also determines the discourses and narratives, knowledge and tradition, and above all, social memory of a given population. Both social memory and regional identity, independently and together, play the important role of spatially socializing a population. Spatial socialization, in most cases, leads us towards a national socialization that determines the individual choice of citizenship.

The application of the concept of acts of belonging is not limited to the enclaves but can be fruitfully applied beyond. Acts of belonging provide the necessary link that explains how social memory, regional identity, and spatial socialization are interconnected and can be used to explain the choice of citizenship of numerous groups other than the former enclave residents. Acts of belonging demonstrate how individuals connect between micro institutions like family and larger state institutions like education by using their actions and belongings in everyday life. The concept can be productive in explaining numerous actions that stateless population residing in various camps perform on a regular basis to 'normalize' their daily lives as opposed to rupture the existing power structure (Dunn & Cons, 2014; Isin & Neilsen, 2008). By demonstrating how undocumented migrants perform numerous acts of belonging, the concept can be effectively placed within the scholarship of social movements to explain different protests and movements that migrants call for in demand of regularity and recognition by the state. Acts of belonging can productively be applied in studying diaspora and migration to understand how people on the move demonstrate connections to their homeland and create a distinction between 'us' and 'them'. Finally, acts of belonging enable us to contextualize the mundane actions of both citizens and non-citizens within the frameworks of gender, race, ethnicity, religion, and nationalism.

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