

FROM VICTIM DIASPORA TO TRANSBORDER CITIZENSHIP?

Diaspora formation and transnational relations
among Kurds in France and Sweden

Khalid Khayati



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	viii
INTRODUCTION	1
THE DISCOURSE OF VICTIM DIASPORA AMONG THE KURDS AND CHALLENGING PROSPECTS	2
1. DIASPORA, TRANSNATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS AND TRANSBORDER CITIZENSHIP: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS	11
THE NOTION OF DIASPORA: AN INTRODUCTION	12
DIASPORA AS A SITE OF CONSCIOUSNESS	15
CONSTITUTIVE ELEMENTS OF DIASPORA: A CRITICAL READING	16
<i>Dispersion: nomadic or forced?</i>	17
<i>Homeland orientation: between teleology of return and multilocality?</i>	19
<i>Boundary maintenance: vis-à-vis whom and what?</i>	22
TRANSNATIONALISM: A GENERAL VIEW	24
THE STRUCTURE OF TRANSNATIONAL CORRELATION: SOCIAL FIELDS AND SPACES	29
EMERGENCE OF TRANSMIGRANTS.....	31
CROSS-BORDERING ECONOMIC PRACTICES AMONG TRANSNATIONAL AGENCIES IN THE CAPITAL WORLD	33
DIAPORAN AND TRANSNATIONAL <i>ASSABIYYA</i>	35
DIASPORIC IDENTITY MAKING AND TRANSNATIONAL CONNECTIONS ONLINE AND ON AIR	36
THE NOTION OF TRANSBORDER CITIZENSHIP	38
LIMITS OF THE CONCEPT OF TRANSBORDER CITIZENSHIP	42
SUMMARIZING THEORETICAL OUTCOMES	44
2. COMPARATIVE METHODOLOGY, ETHNOGRAPHY AND THE DILEMMA OF INSIDERNESS: METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS	46
DIAPORAN KURDS IN TWO DIFFERENT FIELDS: A COMPARATIVE APPROACH	46
OBSERVING KURDISH DIASPORA THROUGH ETHNOGRAPHY	50
ETHNOGRAPHIC FIELDWORK AMONG DIAPORAN KURDS IN SWEDEN AND FRANCE	52
INTERVIEW AND OBSERVATION, AND EXISTING CHALLENGES	53
CYBER-ETHNOGRAPHY AMONG THE KURDS	57
TIME AND MODE OF ETHNOGRAPHY	59
DILEMMA OF INSIDERNESS AND ETHICAL ASPECTS	60
3. FORCED MIGRATION AND THE FORMATION OF THE KURDISH DIASPORA: A GENERAL VIEW	64
PERCEIVING THE KURDISH IDENTITY BEYOND THE NOTION OF “ORIGIN” AND THE KURDISH VICTIM DIASPORA DISCOURSE	65
THE RISE OF KURDISH NATIONALISM AND FORCED MIGRATION IN KURDISTAN: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND.....	67
<i>Kurds in Turkey: from total denial to folkloristic existence</i>	69
<i>Kurds in Iran: violence and folkloristic existence</i>	75
<i>Kurds in Iraq: from genocide to quasi-independence</i>	77
<i>Stateless Kurds in Syria</i>	79
CARTOGRAPHY OF THE KURDISH DIASPORA	79
THE JOURNEY OF THE KURDISH REFUGEES	83
KURDS FROM DORMANT DIASPORA TO ACTIVE DIASPORA: A GLOBAL VIEW OF THE PRACTICE OF LONG-DISTANCE NATIONALISM	85
KURDISH DIASPORA ON AIR AND ONLINE, AND ITS LIMITATIONS	91
IMPLICATIONS OF <i>ASSABIYYA</i> FOR THE KURDS	95
THE EMERGENCE OF THE DE FACTO STATE OF IRAQI KURDISTAN	99
ECONOMIC PROSPECTS IN IRAQI KURDISTAN.....	100
LIMITATIONS OF POLITICS IN IRAQI KURDISTAN.....	102
SUMMARY	105

4. THE KURDISH DIASPORA IN FRANCE	107
PART I	109
THE FRENCH REPUBLICAN MODEL OF INTEGRATION	109
INSTITUTIONS FOR THE RECEPTION AND INTEGRATION OF IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES	111
HISTORIOGRAPHY OF IMMIGRATION IN FRANCE	114
THE ERA OF “THREE DECADES OF GLORY” (TRENTE GLORIEUSES)	116
FRANCE AS A TERRE D’ASILE	119
THE OUTLINE OF ZÉRO IMMIGRATION	121
THE ERA OF THE BANLIEUES	124
THE DECAY OF THE BANLIEUES, SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND ETHNIC DISCRIMINATION	126
THE BANLIEUE UPRISING OF NOVEMBER 2005	129
ISLAMIZATION OF THE RIOT DISCOURSE	132
THE CRISIS OF FRENCH MONOCULTURALISM AND THE PLACE OF THE “OTHER” IN FRENCH SOCIETY	135
PART II	142
FORMATION OF THE KURDISH DIASPORA IN FRANCE	142
THE EPISODE OF THE EAST SEA AND THE KURDISH REFUGEES AS “BOAT PEOPLE”	144
PAINFUL MEMORIES OF SANGATTE	147
INSTITUTIONAL ACTIVITIES AND THE PRACTICES OF TRANSBORDER CITIZENSHIP AMONG DIASPORAN KURDS IN FRANCE	149
<i>SARHADI</i> KURDS IN THE REGION OF MARSEILLE	154
THE MEMORY OF HOMELAND AMONG THE SARHADI KURDS	155
SARHADI KURDS AS ETERNAL ASYLUM SEEKERS	158
<i>ASSABIYYA</i> AND SOLIDARITY NETWORKS AMONG THE SARHADI KURDS	161
SARHADI KURDS IN THE FRENCH LABOR AND HOUSING MARKETS: BETWEEN EXCLUSION AND INVISIBILITY	165
LA MAISON DU PEUPLE KURDE IN MARSEILLE AS A NORMALIZING INSTITUTION	171
SUMMARY	173
5. KURDS IN SWEDEN AS TRANSBORDER CITIZENS: A GENERAL VIEW	176
PART I	179
SWEDISH IMMIGRATION, REFUGEE AND IMMIGRANT POLICY	179
IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE FLOWS INTO SWEDEN: A HISTORIC OVERVIEW	180
CONTROL AND REGULATION OF THE INFLUX	181
SWEDISH IMMIGRANT POLICY IN THE 1960S: ASSIMILATION AS THE GUIDING CONCEPT	182
FROM ASSIMILATION TO MULTICULTURALISM	184
OUTLINES OF THE IMMIGRANT AND MINORITIES POLICY OF 1975: INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS	185
EMERGENCE OF RACIST AND DISCRIMINATORY TRENDS: FROM IMMIGRATION TO INTEGRATION	187
INSTITUTIONAL REFORMS, PARTICIPATION, CITIZENSHIP AND DIVERSITY: INTEGRATIONIST RHETORIC OR LEGITIMATE PRACTICES?	190
ETHNIC AND RACIAL BOUNDARIES IN THE SWEDISH “PEOPLE’S HOME” (FOLKHEM)	195
THE PLACE OF THE “OTHER” IN SWEDISH SOCIETY: STRUCTURAL DISCRIMINATION AND THE EMERGENCE OF SWEDEN DEMOCRATS	198
PART II	202
DIASPORAN KURDS IN SWEDEN: ARRIVAL AND SETTLEMENT	202
KURDS IN THE SUBURBS: THE EXPERIENCE OF HOUSING SEGREGATION	205
KURDISH <i>ASSABIYYA</i> IN SWEDEN	211
ETHNIC DIVISIONS IN THE SWEDISH LABOR MARKET: KURDISH TAXI DRIVERS IN THE CITY	216
THE STIGMATIZED IMAGE OF KURDS IN THE SWEDISH MEDIA: “HONOR KILLING” AS A BOUNDARY- MAKING PHENOMENON	223
BEING BOTH HERE AND THERE: SIMULTANEOUS POLITICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICES	228
KURDISH ASSOCIATIONS IN SWEDEN: PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES	230
NEW MODES OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND THE PATTERNS OF TRANSBORDER CITIZENSHIP	234
SUMMARY	237

CONCLUSION	239
COMPARING THE FORMATION OF THE KURDISH DIASPORA IN FRANCE AND SWEDEN	239
CONTEXTUALIZING THE KURDISH DIASPORA IN FRANCE AND SWEDEN: DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES	241
CONCEIVING THE DISCOURSE OF VICTIM DIASPORA AROUND THE EXPERIENCE OF FORCED MIGRATION IN KURDISTAN	243
KURDS AS THE “OTHERS”: TWO DIFFERENT EXPERIENCES IN TWO DIFFERENT CONTEXTS	244
PERSISTENCE OF VICTIM DIASPORA AMONG THE SARHADI KURDS IN FRANCE	250
<i>ASSABIYYA</i> NETWORKS AMONG DIASPORAN KURDS, SOCIAL MOBILITY IN SWEDEN AND THE STRATEGY OF SURVIVAL IN FRANCE	251
THE PRACTICE OF TRANSBORDER CITIZENSHIP AND LONG-DISTANCE NATIONALISM AMONG DIASPORAN KURDS IN FRANCE AND SWEDEN: SWEDEN AS A CENTER OF GRAVITY	252
FINAL WORDS	255
BIBLIOGRAPHY	258

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From Victim Diaspora to Transborder Citizenship?

Introduction

My initial knowledge of the Kurds in France dates back to the years 1997–98, when I traveled from Sweden to Provence, in France, in order to study political science at the *Institut d'Études Politiques* in Aix-en-Provence. During my sojourn there I realized that the majority of the Kurds in this part of France originated from a particular Kurdish rural area in Turkey, called *Sarhad*. They lived and developed their diasporic organizations in a number of cities and localities of the French Bouches-du-Rhône, including Marseille, Marignane, Vitrolles, Aubagne and Aix-en-Provence. Sarhadi Kurds, who mostly were asylum seekers, worked primarily in the building and restaurant trades, more often than not in harsh conditions. Moreover, I became gradually conscious that, like many other diasporan Kurds, Sarhadi Kurds – no matter where they are – regularly evoke the negative experiences of oppression and suffering in their societies of origin, which not only reinforced their sense of being victims but also considerably impeded the emergence of positive diaspora discourses.

At that time, I was wondering whether the victim diaspora discourse (Cohen 1995, 1996) that was much in evidence among the Kurds was an invention of diasporan Kurds themselves or, to the contrary, was strongly rooted in genuine repression of the Kurds in Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria in the course of 20th century, and enhanced by negative memories of migration and by problems of social exclusion and discrimination that the Kurds experienced in their new societies. As my general knowledge of the Sarhadi Kurds increased during my stay in the region of Marseille, I wondered whether a common sense of victimhood constituted the major motive for diasporan Kurds in Sweden and France to maintain a diasporic identity, or whether other experiences and practices not only counteracted the Kurds' victim diaspora discourse but also affected their transnational practices and the process of diaspora formation. If the latter, the question would be how these other trajectories and occurrences gave rise to various action modes that diasporan Kurds in France and Sweden adopted.

However, it was my earlier reflections on the lives of the Kurds in the Marseille region that aroused my interest in initiating a comparative study that initially would depict not only how diasporan Kurds in the Marseille and Stockholm regions conceived of their negative experiences but also how these negative experiences – mostly manifested in the sense of victimhood – gave way to other, positively conceived, experiences, exhibited more often than not in the Kurds’ institutional transnational practices and political activities. Nonetheless, several years later, when I became further engrossed in my fieldwork, I noticed that there were considerable differences between Kurds in France and those in Sweden, differences that would be barely comprehensible unless we actualized the social composition of each diasporan population and the national context in which each diasporic population was embedded. For instance, Sarhadi Kurds from a “rural” social background settling in a republican, assimilationist, universalist, secular and egalitarian French society (Schnapper 1998; Khosrokhavar 2001) could conceive of their diasporic identity very differently from the much more culturally, socially and politically diversified Kurdish diasporan population (van Bruinessen 1999) in Sweden, which is usually described as a multicultural society (see Ålund & Schierup 1991). Correspondingly, it would be plausible to expect that the conditions for transforming a negative perception of Kurdish diasporic identity into a positive one would be different among diasporan Kurds in France and Sweden.

The discourse of victim diaspora among the Kurds and challenging prospects

The Kurdish author Mehmet Üzun,¹ who lived in Sweden for more than 27 years, often used to evoke in his interviews and his public appearances the epithet *welatê xeribiyé*, the Kurdish equivalent of “exile”, which normally alludes to the narratives of those Kurds who in one way or another have been forced to leave their native land throughout the centuries. As well as the epithet *welatê xeribiyé*, which is commonly used in the northern Kurdish dialect, there are further Kurdish appellations such as *hândāran*, *tarawgā*, *awarābun*, *darbadarî*, *mānfa*, which

¹ Mehmet Uzun (1953–2007) was one of many Kurdish intellectuals who were forced to flee their native land. He lived in Sweden during his last three decades, and it was in Sweden that he became a Kurdish author. He wrote almost exclusively about the lands in which he grew up. He was a member of the board of directors of the Swedish Writers’ Union for a time, and worked at the Swedish Pen Club and International Pen Club. He was also a member of the World Journalists’ Union. He spent the last two years of his life in the major Kurdish city of Diyarbakir, where he died of cancer 11 October 2007.

correspond to the experience of uprooting and dispersion among Kurds. One can find similar vocabularies and reflections of melancholy, anger, nostalgia and trauma in numerous Kurdish epics, traditional recitations and lullabies. They commonly evoke an awareness of a specific way of being or a state of mind, and express a traumatic experience of exile along with a powerful nostalgia (Brah 1996). The experiences of trauma and homesickness (Alinia 2004), which are abundantly and expressively depicted in the narratives of the diasporan Kurds, largely correspond to the general social and political conditions that prevail in the Kurdish homeland. By regularly evoking a number of salient utterances relating to discrimination, the politics of denial, assimilation, persecution, maltreatment, massacre, destruction, *Anfal*², gas attacks³, forced displacement, and so on, the mainstream Kurdish diaspora discourse is a way not only of recalling those experiences of trauma and oppression in Kurdistan but also of legitimizing escaping from them.

The mainstream Kurdish diaspora discourse portrays the “homeland orientation” among diasporan Kurds most often in negative terms such as *azar* (trauma), *sitam* (oppression) and *qurbani* (victim). The Kurdish popular narrative of the “homeland” is deeply rooted in the belief that the Kurds, as an “oppressed nation”, have been and are systematically subjected to the politics of repression, maltreatment and uprooting (cf. Wahlbeck 1999; Berruti *et al.* 2002; Alinia 2004; Hassanpour & Mojab 2004; Emanuelsson 2005).

The overemphasis on the idea of an “oppressed nation” in the Kurdish popular narrative of diaspora can be seen also as an inherent feature of the Kurdish mainstream nationalist discourse, which according to Abbas Vali is largely primordialist and ethnicist. In the ethnicist approach, which Vali criticizes sharply, notions of Kurdish community and identity are both premised on the common national origin, defined in terms of a uniform Kurdish ethnicity (Vali 2003: 58). The reductionist discourse of the “oppressed nation” that holds sway among the majority of diasporan Kurds is highly compatible with the dominant primordialist or ethnicist approach in the Kurdish nationalist discourse, which seeks the legitimacy and the *raison d'être* of the Kurdish nation and the Kurdish diasporic identity in history and historical arguments (Vali 2003: 58). The Kurdish popular narrative of exile is largely essentialist in disposition,

² Genocidal campaigns on the part of Iraqi regime against the Kurdish people in 1987–88, which resulted in the killing of more than 180,000 people.

³ The reference is to the Kurdish locality Halabja, which was the target of a brutal gas attack, ordered by the Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein in 1988. This attack, which resulted in the deaths of more than 5,000 people, is for the Kurds an event that will for ever constitute the climax of the entire Kurdish tragedy. It is commemorated every year by thousands of Kurds both in Kurdistan and in the diaspora.

and considers the Kurds' tragic and traumatic past and present a major driving force for the diasporan Kurds and their practice of the "long-distance nationalism" (Anderson 1998) that they maintain vis-à-vis their "land of origin". "Long-distance nationalism" is practiced by those refugee and immigrant populations who, by maintaining various forms of political mobilization and institutional activity, claim allegiance to the land of origin despite their physical absence from it (Anderson 1998; Fox 2005).

By maintaining that "we are all Kurds", "we belong all to an oppressed nation no matter where we live" and "we do not belong here because here is not our country", the advocates of the popular victim diaspora discourse, who can be found in all Kurdish political organizations and socio-cultural institutions and networks in Western societies, depict diasporan Kurds as members of a homogenous community, who carry out the social, cultural and political activities for the good of the Kurdish "homeland" in order to make it ready for the "reception of its returnees". The mainstream Kurdish diaspora discourse is nourished mainly by the experience of forced migration (Castles 2003) and the memory of repression in Kurdistan (*cf.* Wahlbeck 1999; Berruti *et al.* 2002; Alinia 2004), but derives supplementary strength from advancing other negatively conceived constituent elements such as the tragic Kurdish migratory movement and refugee trajectory, the somber condition of being asylum seekers, the unfortunate state of refugeehood, the sentiments of homesickness and nostalgia (Brah 1996; Alinia 2004) and the everyday racism and social exclusion that diasporan Kurds experience in their new societies.

The dominant Kurdish victim diaspora discourse is largely comparable to earlier diasporic writings, which were strongly rooted in the notion of "homeland". In this respect, the conceptual "homeland" appears as a paradigmatic case that according to Rogers Brubaker makes use of the experiences of trauma and dispersion among the Jewish people or other "classical diasporas", such as those of Armenians and Greeks, in order to illustrate other diasporic experiences (Brubaker 2005: 2). As Robin Cohen points out, the idea of "victim diaspora" can be evoked in the case of Armenians and Africans, as there was nothing voluntary in the "patterns of out-migration, or a mix of impelled and colonizing migration" that Armenians and Africans experienced (Cohen 1995: 5). For instance, the shocking beginning of the Armenians' diasporic experience is their deportation by the Turks, resulting in their spectacular dispersal among several states such as Iran, Syria, Lebanon, Soviet Armenia, France and the United States. According to Cohen, the collective anguish that was inflicted on the Armenians implied that this

population had joined the Jews and the Africans in a trinity of “victim diasporas” (Cohen 1995: 9).

However, the mainstream Kurdish discourse of diaspora, which conceives of the experience of population movement and dispersion among the Kurds mostly if not exclusively in negative terms, presents a serious risk. In the first place, it is less inclined to recognize that the Kurdish diaspora, like any other human experience, is highly diversified. Instead, issues such as “common history”, “common origin”, “common destiny”, “common language” and “common political cause”, legitimized by Kurdish “suffering”, constitute the foundation of mainstream Kurdish victim diaspora discourse. Moreover, the “home-oriented” nationalist discourse of the diasporan Kurds that is conceived through the consciousness of nostalgia, trauma, oppression and the idea of return has difficulties in considering other diasporic trajectories and occurrences, which are indispensable for conceiving of a more inclusive and cohesive discourse of the Kurdish diasporic identity.

What are these “other diasporic trajectories and occurrences” that should be included in the study of Kurdish diaspora? Does imagining the Kurdish diaspora as a diversified human condition imply that one should go beyond the negative experiences of diaspora in order to depict other positively conceived aspects of it? Is it about noting that diasporan Kurds are also experiencing internal divergences and conflicts; that they have different social, cultural and political backgrounds; that they have been socialized in different political cultures; that in their daily lives they make use of different dialects and that they identify themselves with different political organizations? Do these diversified social, cultural and political manifestations generate different forms of transnational ties and, as Nina Glick Schiller stresses, give rise to the practices of transborder citizenship (Glick Schiller 2005)? Moreover, what does the emergence of a *de facto* Kurdish state in northern Iraq signify for diasporan Kurds in France and Sweden and their practice of transborder citizenship?

With these questions in mind, this study, based on ethnographic fieldwork carried out among Kurdish refugees and immigrants in France (Bouches-du-Rhône, Marseille region) and Sweden (Stockholm region), aims to explore comparatively an ongoing process of change from a mono-dimensional, victim-related perception of the Kurdish diasporic identity to a more modulated, dynamic and active form of it. In other words, the major purpose of this research is to depict the change from a negatively-conceived conception of homeland-oriented diaspora discourse to a positively conceived multi-dimensional approach of the Kurdish diasporic identity. In doing so, this study will go beyond the experience of pain and trauma and the sense of victimhood in order to depict a multitude of other diasporic situations and trajectories such as

institutional and transnational arrangements, *assabiyya*⁴ networks (Roy 1996), “on air” and cyberspace-online” involvements (Verhulst 1999), cultural and literary activities, and so forth, which are necessary premises for the development of the practice of transborder citizenship among diasporan Kurds in Sweden and France.

It is worth noting that emphasizing the positive experiences of the Kurdish diaspora in Sweden and France does not imply abandoning the negatively conceived aspects of this diaspora. Nor does thinking in terms of negative and positive aspects of diaspora imply two chronologically separated phases of “*before*” and “*after*”, as the negative and positives experiences of diaspora coexist even though there are signs of change. In order to illustrate the coexistence of the opposing notions of “victim diaspora” and “active diaspora”, Roben Cohen claims that, contrary to the negative tradition of victim diaspora, the experience of the Jewish diaspora was diverse and complex. In this respect, the negative interpretation was both imposed and internalized, both contexted and advanced (Cohen 1996: 508).

Depicting the process of change from victim diaspora to transborder citizenship among diasporan Kurds in France and Sweden implies that we should actualize a number of fundamental changes that Kurdish society at large has been undergoing in recent years. The most essential of these changes is the emergence of the *de facto* Kurdish state in northern Iraq, which exerts considerable influence on how Kurds sustain their ethno-national identity and how they create their diasporic structures in their societies of residence. These changes account for a set of positive experiences in the form of various practices of transborder citizenship that are progressively generating a new consciousness or a new discursive disposition among diasporan Kurds in Western societies.

Moreover, it is important to point out that not only the process of change from victim diaspora to a more positively conceived diaspora but also the transnational connections and practice of transborder citizenship are indispensable premises for the formation of diaspora for the Kurds, since the social and political contexts in which these processes take place and to the social composition of each Kurdish population vary from country to country. For instance, as Sweden and France offer distinct national integration models that provide diasporan Kurds with different integration possibilities, and as the Sarhadi Kurds in the Marseille Region and the Kurds in the Stockholm region display different social compositions, the process of diaspora formation among the Kurds

⁴ *Assabiyya* is an Ibn Khaldounian concept that refers to specific social entities (clans, tribes, extended families, religious brotherhoods) with a strong sense of group feeling and internal solidarity. In the context of diaspora, *assabiyya* transcend the boundaries of nation states. The concept will be presented in a detailed way in later chapters.

in these two countries may largely differ in terms of the shift from the mono-dimensional experience of pain and trauma towards supplementary positive diasporic and transnational trajectories, as well as the development of transborder citizenship.

This study aims to paint a picture of both the Swedish and the French integration contexts, relating not only to the countries' differing immigrant policies and refugee regimes, citizenship frameworks and labor and housing market structures that have been shaped over five decades, but also to how each country perceives its self-image and the framework of its national identity as fundamental premises for sustaining the boundaries between “natives” and “non-natives”. In doing so, the social, political and cultural performances of the diasporan Kurds in the regions of Stockholm and Marseille will be situated respectively within each national context, in order to determine how each national space in its particular way affects not only the experience of exclusion or inclusion but also the process of diaspora formation and the practice of transborder citizenship among the population under study. As each national context gives expression to a range of historical, political, cultural, economic and social particularities, it will be essential to see how the position of the Kurdish refugees and immigrants in these two societies is affected. Comparing the Swedish “multicultural” immigrant policy with the French “assimilationist” model in relation to the Kurds is a relevant endeavor that gives rise to the following questions: How do diasporan Kurds perceive their position in France and Sweden? What, if any, opportunities exist for migrant agency in these countries? Do Kurds experience social exclusion and xenophobia in both countries? If they do, what diasporic options do they create, and how do they distinguish the political, cultural and social boundaries that each national context maintains vis-à-vis its refugee and immigrant populations in general and Kurds in particular? Can *assabiyya* and other Kurdish diasporic structures be considered as adequate responses to the prevailing discriminatory and exclusionary mechanisms in both societies? In what ways do Kurds develop their diasporic institutions and networks in these two countries, and which of these two political contexts can appear as “more favorable” or alternatively as “less favorable” to such developments? And to what extent do these two national contexts differ from each other, above all in terms of accessibility to public spaces that is necessary for diasporan Kurds to generate social movements, political mobilizations and the practice of “long-distance nationalism” (*cf.* Anderson 1992; Wahlbeck 1999; Sheikmous 2000; Eccarius-Kelly 2002; Alinia 2004)?

As for the connection between the social composition of the diasporan populations and the political contexts in which they are embedded, one can make a hypothesis that more culturally, socially and

politically diversified diasporan populations, and more flexible national models of the host country, will signify better developed diasporic structures, greater distance from the experience of trauma and pain and subsequently more possibility for self-realization, better *assabiyya* mobility and more intensive practices of transborder citizenship.

The concept of transborder citizenship, which gives expression to the positive and dynamic aspects of diaspora, implies the recognition of the performance and the political participation of the refugee and immigrant populations in more than one “system of norms, values and customs within a single polity” (Glick Schiller 2005: 49). It can serve as a suitable tool for analyzing the experience of diasporic identity, diaspora formation, and transnational relations among diasporan Kurds in Sweden and France.

The intersection and the interaction between the bodies politic of the sending and receiving societies give birth to diverse transnational social fields (Glick Schiller 2005: 49), emerging as a consequence of people’s mobility and global immigration. Nevertheless, the growing disjuncture between national territories gives rise to the emergence of new places or localities, new cultural spaces and new “sites for political engagement” (Vertovec & Cohen 1999: 15). In this respect, it is relevant to see how diasporan Kurds in Sweden and France may sustain political, cultural and social orientations towards both their societies of origin and their countries of settlement, and the extent to which the Kurdish diasporic experiences can serve as a pertinent example of how transnational social spaces challenge and go far beyond the boundaries of the nation-state and its cultural and political institutions.

The experience of diaspora formation, transnational relationships and above all transborder citizenship is not limited to the Kurds. It can be observed in other cases. As for the Armenians in France, their “successful” integration and their active participation in the political processes of the country have not entailed total assimilation and rupture with Armenia. Quite the reverse: the Armenians make claims to diasporic identity and develop specific strategies, while refusing to identify themselves with the classic image of the “foreigner” in the city (Hovanessian 1995: 42). The case of the Chileans in Sweden in the post-Pinochet era shows Swedish institutions and Chilean social networks cooperating in the construction of diasporic spaces. In that case, the interaction between the institutions of the host society and the Chileans’ social networks and organizations generates new identity constellations and transnationally oriented spaces (Olsson 2000). Moreover, the experience of Haitian settlers in the United States is a further example of transborder citizenship. Through different social movements and various action modes that extend over a century of settlement, the Haitians have

developed diverse transborder networks in multiple states in order to establish global forms of identity and practices, rooted in different legal systems (Glick Schiller & Fouron 1999; Glick Schiller 2005). The Chinese diaspora, which appears as a consequence of extensive global migration during the 19th and 20th centuries, has passed through different historical phases in order to finally emerge as a gigantic human global enterprise, embracing a multitude of social, economic and cultural projects and strategies (Ang 1993; Ma Mung 1996 Ha 1998). By examining the institutional practices and associational life among diasporic Chinese in Central America, Lok Siu produces the notion of diasporic cultural citizenship, referring to a process whereby diasporan Chinese assert that they simultaneously belong to two distinctly different but overlapping and interlinked cultural–political systems. The author says that it is “through the process of claiming cultural citizenship in the nation of residence that one enters and gains belonging in the diaspora” (Siu 2001: 25).

Thus, the following questions are considered as relevant for the purpose of this study:

- Do the Kurds in France and Sweden conceive their diasporic discourse and choose different action modes in diaspora, and if so, what are the reasons for that?
- What is the impact of the political, economical and cultural structure on the Kurds in France and in Sweden respectively? What are the differences and the similarities between the two cases?
- How do developments in Kurdistan affect the Kurds? Are there differences between France and Sweden in this respect?

The first chapter of this study goes on to embrace a theoretical framework which gives a comprehensive account of the notion of diaspora and its constitutive elements, and of the concepts of transnational relationship and its historical development, transmigration, cyberspace connections, radio and television broadcasts, *assabiyya* and transborder citizenship. This is followed by a second chapter in which a methodological discussion presents a detailed account of ethnography and ethnographic fieldwork among diasporan Kurds in Sweden and France and of the problems and dilemmas connected to the field.

The third chapter gives an account of the Kurdish nationalist movement in Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria, the cartography of the Kurdish diaspora at the global level, refugee routes and migration trajectories, Kurdish online and on-air performances, the practice of long-distance nationalism and transnational relationships among the Kurds, and the implications and functions of the notion of *assabiyya* for the Kurds. This

is followed by a more or less comprehensive account of an emerging Kurdish state in northern Iraq and its limitations in the domain of politics.

The fourth chapter of the study consists of two parts. Its first part gives an account of general political and social conditions in France with regard to the country's state ideology, national identity and republican integration model. Likewise, it comprehensively discusses the issue of the *banlieues* (French suburbs) which are used as a point of reference in order to give an idea of the prevailing racial and ethnic boundaries and the experience of xenophobic discrimination and social exclusion among non-native ethnic groups in the country, not least in connection with housing and the labor market. The second part of the chapter gives an overview of the social experiences of Kurdish refugees and immigrants in France, more precisely of the Sarhadi Kurds in the region of Marseille, in relation to the process of diasporic formation, transnational practices, socio-cultural networks and institutions, *assabiyya*, ethnic mobilization, as well as the experience of social exclusion in French society.

The fifth chapter has a similar structure. The first part presents an outline of Sweden's immigration history, refugee regimes and various immigrant policies and integration projects. The chapter also contains a discussion on Swedish national ideology and identity and the emergence of different racial and ethnic boundaries in the country. The arrival of Kurds in different periods and the formation of a Kurdish diaspora, the position of the Kurds in the Swedish labor and housing markets, the experiences of stigmatization, exclusion and discrimination among the Kurds, the creation of transnational institutions and networks, the performance of *assabiyya* and the practice of transborder citizenship constitute the major elements of the second part of the same chapter. The final chapter of the study presents conclusions.

1. Diaspora, Transnational Relationships and Transborder Citizenship: Theoretical Frameworks

At the theoretical level, this study aims to contribute to the literature on recent diaspora research. In order to produce a more integrated and cohesive theoretical understanding of diaspora, the study endeavors in the first place to present a critical reading of current theories of diaspora and transborder citizenship. The objective is to outline the limitations of these theories and to develop them into more responsive and cohesive devices. To this end, we should first and foremost consider the dangers of failing to identify certain inadequacies in the existing theoretical concepts of diaspora and transborder citizenship. Is diaspora formation a product of human nomadology or forced migration? Do diasporic boundaries emerge through opposition to the politics of the countries of origin, guided also by the so-called teleology of return or by resisting racism and exclusion in the host societies, admitting diasporic multilocality? However, since Rogers Brubaker (2005: 5) suggests that the notion of diaspora is constituted by three core elements of “dispersion”, “homeland” and “boundary maintenance”, an idea that this study endorses, it is essential to initiate a critical reading and carry out an act of “completing” and “promoting” these elements with a view to avoiding the risk of simplification and overemphasizing “homeland orientation”. Likewise, the act of “completing” will be performed vis-à-vis the theory of transborder citizenship, essentially in order to render it more balanced when it comes to the issues of country of origin and country of settlement.

A further contribution of this study to current diaspora research will be the presentation of the concept of transnational relationship, from its origins before the Cold War and its development through the years to the appearance of the concept of transborder citizenship. It is quite possible that a notion of transnational relationships that involves a number of associated concepts and experiences such as transmigrancy, remittance and cyberspace activities runs a certain risk of being tautological; but as Kurds, like other diasporan populations,

maintain different transnational relationships, giving a comprehensive account of the notion seems indispensable.

Moreover, a further way to contribute to the general knowledge of diaspora is the introduction of the Ibn-Khaldounian concept of *assabiyya*, and its implications for the Kurds in the context of diaspora. It is important to ask how *assabiyya*, apprehended seemingly as a traditional concept from former times for referring to group solidarity and group feeling (Roy 1996; Spickard 2001), survives in Western societies. How is it formed, and what are its implications for the Kurdish refugees and immigrants in France and Sweden?

Thus, the empirical knowledge presented in this study serves to provide further references for supporting current theoretical approaches.

The notion of diaspora: an introduction

In recent years, the concept of diaspora has acquired a broad semantic field which encompasses a range of various groups such as political refugees, immigrants, guest workers, resident aliens, asylum seekers and ethnic and cultural populations (Brubaker 2005; see also Cohen 1996; Povrzanović Frykman 2001; Sheffer 1996, 2003; Shuval 2000). The term “diaspora”, which has its root in the Greek word *speiro* (to sow) and the preposition *dia* (over) (Anteby-Yemini & Berthomière 2005) initially referred to the Jewish population or any other population that experienced traumatic history of dispersal, myths and memories of the homeland, alienation in the host country, desire for eventual return – which can be ambivalent, eschatological or utopian – ongoing support from the homeland, and a collective identity (Safraan 1991; Shuval 2000). According to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* “diaspora” was the name given to the countries (outside Palestine) through which the Jews were dispersed, and secondarily to the Jews living in those countries. Literally, it does signify dispersion, and has always been related to a dispersed people (Prévélakis 1996; Sheffer 2002).

Today, diaspora, which represents a critical interface between nation-states and globalization, can be extended to many other ethnic groups whose diasporic existence goes beyond a unique experience of trauma as it reflects a sense of belonging to evolving transnational networks that connect not only the “land of origin” with the society of residence but cross the border of other nation-states (Glick Schiller *et al.* 1995; Vertovec & Cohen 1999). Moreover, diaspora can represent a challenge to the meaning of citizenship in nations of residence, and may cause it to change (Joppke 1999).

Since the late 1980s, the study of diaspora has grown significantly into a veritable research field. As a result, the concept has found general recognition in the sociology of international migration and has diffused throughout the social sciences. Moreover, the notion has been even more pervasive outside the academic disciplines, above all in the media (Brubaker 2005).

According to Gabriel Sheffer (1996), the spread of the concept is primarily a result of the striking recent growth of international migration, the settlement of more migrants in host countries, the possibility of cultural development and the political expansion of pluralism in certain Western societies, and also the evident persistence of veteran diasporas. Similarly, John Lie attests that in recent publications there has been a change of focus from international migration to transnational diaspora (Lie 1995). In other words, the decrease of interest in international migration has largely paved the way for a growth of interest in transnational migrant networks and diasporic communities (Wahlbeck, 1998; 1999). According to Michel Bruneau, in several Western societies the policy of assimilation that was targeted at refugee and migrant groups has failed to achieve its initial objectives (Bruneau 1995). One reason for this failure is that “pursuing a strategy of full assimilation in the host societies has become less fashionable among older and newer diasporas” (Sheffer 1996: 41). Georges Prévélakis (1996) stresses that the revitalization of the concept of diaspora depends largely on the crisis of the institutions of nation-states, globalization and the breakdown of dominant ideologies. The author states further that, as a result, a significant number of transnational migrant networks and diasporic communities have emerged. In this respect, large metropolitan areas have become the crossroads of various diasporas, which have never ceased to increase in numbers and adherents. According to Steven Vertovec and Robin Cohen, the rebirth of the concept of diaspora has stemmed from “academics using it to characterize transnational ethnic groups and from intellectuals and activists from these populations who have found in the expression a positive way of constituting ‘hybrid’ cultural and political identities” (Vertovec & Cohen 1999: 6).

The concept of diaspora has often been used to describe various well-established communities which have an experience of “displacement”, like the overseas Chinese, the Armenians in exile or the entire African diaspora (Wahlbeck 1999: 29). Hence, the notion of diaspora became an important tool for analyzing not only the traumatic destiny of the Jewish people but also those of all other populations whose dramatic diasporic experiences have been so far neglected. Today, the notion of diaspora is diffused in a wide-ranging semantic, conceptual and disciplinary space (Brubaker 2005). Its role is to illustrate the destiny of a

large number of populations who are in a sense experiencing the condition of “home away from home”, “in-betweenness”, hybridity “between two cultures”, “double binds”, and so forth (*cf.* Hall 1996; Ha 1998; Wahlbeck 1999; Vertovec & Cohen 1999). William Safran evokes a number of populations who live in diaspora. They are Cubans and Mexicans in the USA, Turks in Germany, the overseas Chinese, Poles, Palestinians and blacks in North America and the Caribbean, Indians and Armenians in various countries, Maghrebis in France, Pakistanis in Britain, and so forth (Safran 1991). To this list Omar Sheikhmous adds other populations – for instance, Ukrainians, Irish, Italians, Russians, Germans and Kurds are among those exiled populations who live in various diasporas around the world (Sheikhmous 2000).

However, the term that once was used for describing Jewish, Armenian and Greek dispersion now refers to a larger semantic field that embraces terms like “immigrant, expatriate, refugee, guest worker, exile community, overseas community, ethnic community” (Tölölyan 1991, quoted in Brubaker 2005: 3) and also “transnational community”. Brubaker criticizes such a latitudinarian approach, as it could lead the term losing its discriminatory power and its ability to make distinctions. “If everyone is diasporic, then no one is distinctively so” (Brubaker 2005: 3). The author opposes the universalization of diaspora, because such an attempt would paradoxically bring about its disappearance (Brubaker 2005: 3). Brubaker’s relevant criticism poses the question of who in that case are diasporans.

Richard Marienstras argues that today the concept of diaspora is used increasingly to describe any group or population that in one way or another has a history of migration (Marienstras 1989). In that way, the term can function as a device for describing the geographical displacement, deterritorialization and transnationalization of identities, cultures and social relations in the contemporary world. By “deterritorialized” and “transnationalized” identities Vertovec and Cohen refer to those populations and communities that originated in a land other than where they currently reside and “whose social, economic and political networks cross the frontiers of nation-states or, indeed, span the globe” (Vertovec & Cohen 1999: 6). Furthermore, the concept can help not only to bridge the often “artificial” distinction between before and after migration (Wahlbeck 1999: 31) but also to describe the salience of the pre-migration social networks, cultures and capital of any population that experiences a sentiment of displacement (see Safran 1991; Tölölyan 1991; Clifford 1994; Wahlbeck 1999). It is worth stressing that the concept of diaspora does not constitute a radically new device for analyzing transnational migrant networks as it has been an area of considerable interest within migration research since long before

(Wahlbeck 1997). Likewise, well before the terms “diaspora” and “transnational relationship” were actualized there were researchers who studied the formal and informal associations of migrant populations (see, for example, Carey-Wood *et al.* 1995; Jenkins 1988; Joly 1996; Joly & Wilpert, 1987, quoted in Wahlbeck 1999).

Moreover, the process of globalization, which since the 1980s has been at the center of the sociology of international migration, has considerably reinforced the spread of the concept of diaspora. According to Malcolm Waters, globalization can be defined as a “social process in which, the constraints of geography on the social and cultural arrangements recede and in which people become increasingly aware that they are receding” (Waters 1995, quoted in Wahlbeck 1999: 25). There is, likewise, a significant liaison between the terms *diaspora* and *assabiyya*, which in the context of immigration transcends the boundaries of the nation-states (Roy 1996). According to Cohen, these forms of social organizations “have pre-dated the nation-state, lived within it and now may, in significant respects, transcend and succeed it” (Cohen 1995, quoted in Wahlbeck 1999: 30).

The notion of diaspora is connected to various approaches and academic discourses. In the first place, diaspora is apprehended as a site of consciousness (Vertovec 1999).

Diaspora as a site of consciousness

As a site of consciousness, diaspora comprises a multiplicity of places and a multiple awareness (Werbner 2002). Paul Gilroy (1993) regards the concept of diaspora as spatial narratives of flows and discontinuities. Stuart Hall (1990; 1996) considers black hybridity as an instance of diasporic empowerment. For Homi K. Bhabha (1990) diaspora is the source of a postcolonial counter-aesthetic. According to Gayatri Spivak (1989), diaspora implies subalternity and transnationality. William Safran (1991) maintains that diaspora emphasizes the power of the narrative of return, while James Clifford (1994) stresses the double space/site of diaspora. Arjun Appadurai (1995) apprehends diasporic mobility and migration as the new condition of the nation-state. According to Kachig Tölölyan (1991), diasporas are “the exemplary communities of the transnational moment”, which interrogate the privileged homogeneity of the nation-state.

Moreover, Safran considers diasporic consciousness as an intellectualization of an existential condition (Safran 1991): an existential condition that according to Ien Ang can be understood and reconciled through the myth of a homeland from which one is removed but to which

one imagines that one actually belongs (Ang 1993). Clifford affirms that diasporic consciousness makes the best of a bad situation as systematic exploitation and blocked advancement reinforce the experiences of loss, marginality and exile among foreign populations (Clifford 1994). Moreover, awareness of decentered connections or multi-locality among diasporan individuals emphasizes the condition of being simultaneously home away from home or here and there; or, as Vertovec and Cohen outline, the individual need to be conceptually connected with others: for instance, being both “here and there” and sharing the same “routs” and “roots” (Vertovec & Cohen 1999: 8).

The awareness of multi-locality shows that diaspora may be something that comprises “ever-changing representations, which provides an imaginary coherence for a set of malleable identities” (Hall 1991, quoted in Vertovec & Cohen 1999: 8). According to Floya Anthias, these new identities emerge as hybrid social forms that are the consequences of interculturality and diasporic relations that transcend “old ethnicities” and constitute transgressive cultural formations (Anthias 2002). This perspective corresponds to a large extent to what Hall portrays as “new ethnicities” (Hall 1991).

Moreover, diasporic consciousness is considered to be the source of resistance and engagement for achieving visibility in the public sphere (Vertovec & Cohen 1999; Werbner 2002). This kind of awareness refers in the first place to the struggles of the marginalized diasporan individuals which they engage in so as to reverse the precarious situation of invisibility and inaudibility they experience in their daily lives (Werbner 2002). Political mobilization is a considerable source of resistance and organized expression used by various ethnic groups with the objective of gaining visibility in public spaces and political recognition for their identities (Vertovec & Cohen 1999).

Constitutive elements of diaspora: a critical reading

Different studies of diaspora have been conducted under various names and through a variety of discursive and theoretical strategies. The concept of diaspora, however, has many connotations. As stated above, for Brubaker, dispersion in space, orientation to a “homeland” and boundary maintenance are the three core elements that are constitutive of diaspora (Brubaker 2005). A set of discourses and theoretical frameworks provide various forms of interpretation that allow for a more analytical assessment of the concept.

Dispersion: nomadic or forced?

Dispersion, which according to Safran takes place from an “original homeland” to at least two “peripheral” places (Safran 1991) is today the main commonly accepted criterion of diaspora. Considered as forced, traumatic or voluntary, dispersion can occur more broadly as a spatial change of location of people who either cross state borders or “in the common metaphoric extensions of the term” remain within state borders (Brubaker 2005: 5). As the experience of dispersion constitutes an important feature of the diasporic narrative, which in turn affects the formation of diaspora and the constitution of diasporic structures among a given population, it is essential to delineate the experience at the theoretical level.

For instance, there is a formalist/poststructuralist discourse of diaspora that to some extent “over-generalizes the global currency of so-called nomadic, traveler, fragmented and deterritorialized subjectivity in the postmodern world” (Ang 1993: 2). Clifford (1992) has criticized such a travel-related nomadology for its tendency to de-contextualize and flatten out differences. According to Ang, such a gross universalization of the metaphor of “travel” runs the risk of “reifying, at a conveniently abstract level, the unlimited and permanent flux in subject formation” (Ang 1993: 2). Moreover, the nomadological discourse of dispersion illustrates “difference” as an internally undifferentiated, abstract and depoliticized notion (Mani 1992) which according to Ang would paradoxically lead to a “complacent *indifference* toward real differences”. In order to counteract such a generalized nomadic subjectivity, Ang emphasizes the importance of theoretical devices that consider the “particular historical conditions and the specific trajectories through which actual social subjects become both different *and* similar” (Ang 1993: 2).

The notion of trauma which is historicized in the Jewish experience cannot adequately provide an analytical appraisal of the dispersion. Forced migration and mass migration have been the cause of the emergence of radically new types of human conditions and identities. For instance, there are people who root themselves in ideas rather than in places. There are people who constitute their diasporic narratives around memories as much as material things. Moreover, there are people who have been obliged to define themselves, and people who have been defined by others. Thus, the focus should be directed, as Ang proposes, toward the contemporary global migration which takes place under a multitude of condition and circumstances, for different – economic, political and personal – reasons (Ang 1993: 2).

Refugee movement and other similar global population movements are patterned by inherent social forces, and accordingly can be apprehended as events structured by historical processes. In this regard, Aristide R. Zolberg, Astri Suhrke and Sergio Aguayo outline different significant situations that produce refugees. Essentially, their study deals with various patterns of social conflict, related to more general economic and political circumstances not only in those countries and areas where the refugee movement originated but in almost the entire world, which is the scene of dramatic immigrant and refugee movements (Zolberg *et al.* 1989). In other words, the internal factors in the sending countries, manifested for instance in political and cultural repression of dissidents, oppositional organizations, ethnic populations and economic crises, and so on, should be seen as major constituent elements of refugee and immigrant movements. According to the authors, these factors should be placed within a wider and deeper global economic and political context (Zolberg *et al.* 1989).

Moreover, there are further analytical devices that conceptualize population movements in a global context. Harto Hakovirta suggests two related categories of factors that contribute to the emergence of the refugee influx. First, *immediate explanatory factors* take into account the decision that is taken by the individual to leave her or his country of origin. These factors are often based on personal motives, related to fear of reprisals and persecutions, economic difficulties and family reunification. Second, *background factors* are related to those hostile and unfavorable contexts and conditions that produce refugee movement in the sending countries. In this respect, the authors point to a set of concrete examples such as post-colonial political instability, lack of democracy, military regimes, lack of developed structures, poverty and economic problems, natural disasters, ethnic conflicts, and so forth that bring about population movements and dispersions (Hakovirta 1991).

In the more recent literature, Stephen Castles develops a so-called sociology of forced migration in the context of global social transformation. This sees growing forced migration as a “crucial dimension of globalization and of North–South relationships in the post Cold-War era” (Castles 2003: 13).

Homeland orientation: between teleology of return and multilocality?

As Brubaker has outlined, orientation to a real or imagined “homeland” appears as “an authoritative source of value, identity and loyalty” for diasporan populations. The author stresses that the earlier writings of diaspora, strongly rooted in a conceptual “homeland”, portrayed the “homeland orientation” among diasporan populations most often in “mythologized”, “idealized”, “historicized” and “victimized” terms. Subsequently, the notion of diaspora that was presented more or less in the form of paradigmatic cases was mainly concerned with the experiences of trauma and dispersion among the Jewish people or other “classical diasporas”, such as the Armenian and the Greek, as principal instances for illustrating other diasporic experiences (Brubaker 2005: 5) . In other words, these diasporic experiences have been advanced as ideal types for the definition and categorization of other past and present examples (Kokot *et al.* 2004: 2).

Safran maintains that the notion of diaspora implies a dispersal from an original “homeland” to at least two “peripheral” places. For the author, the “original homeland” would exist among diasporans as a perpetuated myth, memory and vision or as an idealized place to which they will return when the time is right (Safran 1991). As for the Jewish dispersion which remains for the author the archetypical model, diaspora is formed around the experience of “the absence of a physical homeland for nearly two millennia” Accordingly, “being in diaspora implies a tension between being in one place physically – the place where one lives and works – and thinking regularly of another place far away” (Safran 2004: 12). Moreover, diasporic consciousness is derived from a sentiment of alienation among diasporan populations in their new societies, where they feel that they are not – and perhaps cannot be – fully accepted by the populations of their host countries (Safran 1991).

Even if since the late 1990s there have been fundamental changes in the world as well as radical shifts in perspective of the concept of diaspora and consequently its dispersion in several semantic, conceptual and disciplinary spaces (Brubaker 2005), members of certain diasporan populations continue to evoke the experiences of nostalgia and trauma as an important constituent element of their diasporic identity and “home-oriented” nationalist movements. For instance, the narrative of the diasporan Armenians is conceived in a cohesive way around the tragedy of the Armenian genocide that occurred between 1914 and 1915 in Turkey (Ter Minassian 1995; Hovanessian 1995).

Still under the influence of the Jewish model, the Palestinian diaspora as well has been presented as a “catastrophic” diaspora or “victim” diaspora: a clear reference to the tragic political fate of this population (Cohen 1997; Brubaker 2005). The “collective memory” of the Assyro-Chaldean people in the diaspora is constituted by a powerful narrative of trauma that evokes the history of a fragmented and dispersed population with the experience of “several centuries of persecutions including repeated massacres by the Sassanid Persians, Arabs, Mongols, Tatars, Kurds and Turks” (Yacoub 1996: 177).

As for the influence of the Jewish experience on the domain of academic research, Clifford suggests that researchers should recognize the strong heritage of Jewish history in the language of diaspora. The author does not want to make of that history a definitive model; but he claims that Jewish, Armenian and Greek diasporas should be used as “non-normative starting points for a discourse that is traveling or hybridizing in new global conditions” (Clifford 1994, quoted in Brubaker 2005: 2).

Perceiving the “homeland” as a victim’s tool of analysis was largely in accordance with a “culture-essentialist” discourse of ethnicity that had an important position not only among diasporan populations but also among social scientists. From this point of view, the persistence of ethnicity and ethnic diasporism constitutes the major force in the survival and the revival of diasporic identities around the world (Sheffer 2002). Accordingly, the revival of ethnic identities is perceived essentially as a result of the existing antagonism between the “majority and minority cultures”, displayed mostly in conflictual and irreconcilable ways (Sheffer 1996: 41). This approach, which conceives of diasporic identity in terms of the intrinsic characteristics of ethnic groups, emphasizes the role of “biological factors, physical markers such as skin color and facial contours, and cultural attributes such as common history, revered myths and legends, language, food, customs, and folklore in creating and perceiving the identities of ethnic groups, nations and minorities, and by implication also the identities of ethno-national diasporas” (Sheffer 2002: 18), and even the orientation to the “homeland” and the idea of returning to it.

The essentialist approach has been the subject of severe academic criticism. Take, for example, the “constructionist” model which originally set out to explain modern nationalism (Anderson 1983, 1991; Gellner 1983) and more recently ethnicity and ethno-national diasporas (Sheffer 2002). The advocates of a “constructionist” approach assume that nations are essentially modern social constructs and artefacts created by “cultural engineers” and elites who “invent” history and traditions in order to organize newly enfranchised masses into new status systems

(Hobsbawm 1990) and into “imagined communities” (Anderson 1991). Benedict Anderson attributes the formation and persistence of diaspora to the notion of “long-distance nationalism”; an allusion to the political orientations that diasporan groups maintain vis-à-vis their former “homeland(s)” (Anderson 1998).

However, “homeland” orientation, as a second constitutive element of diaspora, has been sharply criticized in academic discussions. For instance, Clifford has criticized the so-called “centered” model of Safran and other scholars for being “oriented by continuous cultural connections to a [single] source and by a teleology of ‘return’” (Clifford 1994 quoted in Brubaker 2005: 5).

Such a rigorous focus on the “homeland orientation” and “return” may lead to more invisibility and inaudibility of the diasporan groups in the host societies which are their real places of life and subsequently legitimize and naturalize racism and other discriminatory acts targeted at these groups.

In his recent writings, Safran distances himself from the “centered” model of “trauma” diaspora and “teleology or origin/return” and instead depicts, as Clifford (1994) outlines, a “decentered, lateral” connection, which gives an account of other diasporic experiences, such as those of dispersed African and South Asian populations that are not necessarily oriented toward roots in a particular place or a desire for return but seems to have an aptitude to “recreate a culture in diverse locations” (Clifford 1994). Safran’s new writings mediate the complexity of the notion of diaspora and the multitude of identities related to it. In this regard, the “homeland orientation” may appear as spiritual, emotional, psychological or rhetorical experiences that diasporan population display, habitually in a quest for self-assertiveness and identity (Safran 2004).

In recent years, certain diasporan populations, such as Jews, Germans, and Greeks, opted for “purposive voluntary” return while some others, like Egyptians from Iraq and Yemenis from Saudi Arabia, were subjected to forced repatriation. From a slightly different perspective, certain countries like Greece, Israel, India or China, wishing to redress problems of brain drain or economic stress, have tried to encourage successful members of their diasporas to return. Whatever the net result of these contradictory migratory trends, there is no massive reduction of older or newer diasporas but rather an upsurge in their members, a swelling of their ranks, a new dedication to their organization and reorganization, a growth in their various interests and intensification of their activities on the basis of new strategies (Sheffer 1996; 2002; Prévélakis 1996).

For Avtar Brah, home is a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination. In this sense, it is a place of no return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of origin. Moreover, Brah stresses that home is lived as an experience of locality. In this regard, it evokes various negative and positive sentiments and memories that are mediated by the “historically specific everyday of social relations”. Consequently, the notion of diaspora should, according to Brah, place “the discourse of ‘home’ and ‘dispersion’ in creative tension, *inscribing a homing desire while simultaneously critiquing discourses of fixed origins*” (Brah 1996: 193, emphasis in original).

Today, the connection to the “homeland” appears as well in the form of various concrete projects that diasporan groups undertake across the borders of several nation-states. Transnational connections and the practice of transborder citizenship are among those major experiences to be mentioned.

Boundary maintenance: vis-à-vis whom and what?

The third constitutive element of diaspora is boundary maintenance. This concept, which Brubaker borrows from J. Armstrong (1976), involves the preservation of a distinctive identity that is upheld by a distinctive, active solidarity as well as by relatively close social relationships that cross the borders of states and link members of a diaspora in different states to a single “transnational community”. The author says that the boundaries can be maintained by deliberate resistance to assimilation, for example through the practice of endogamy or other forms of self-segregation or as an unintended consequence of social exclusion (Brubaker 2005: 6).

Brubaker points out the ambivalences that the term ‘boundary maintenance’ conveys. The most obvious sign of ambivalence is the existence of a strong countercurrent concept that evokes the heterogeneous character of diasporic identity and accentuates hybridity, fluidity, creolization and syncretism. The countercurrent literature creates, moreover, a moment of tension between boundary maintenance and boundary erosion. Boundary maintenance is affected as well by the issues of the generation and duration of diaspora. According to Brubaker, boundary maintenance becomes relevant only when it persists over generations (Brubaker 2005: 6).

As indicated above, such a meticulous focus on “dispersion”, “homeland orientation” and “boundary maintenance” risks generating an unhappy misunderstanding that diaspora uniquely is a concern for the “land of origin” and not for the residing country. This approach runs the risk of misrepresenting the “real” life of refugee and immigrant groups.

The notion that diaspora involves a concern for somewhere else can consciously and unconsciously legitimize racism and discrimination in the host countries: a racism that is strongly rooted in the way in which the “otherness” is constructed in Western societies.

According to Ang, in a world in which modern nation-states still constitute the dominant framework for cultural identification and the construction of an “imagined community”, the question of “where you’re from” tends to dominate and marginalize the question of “where you’re at” (Ang 1993: 2). Whenever a migrant is asked the deceptively simple and innocent question, “Where are you from?”, the obligation to explain positions him or her inevitably as deviant vis-à-vis the taken-for-granted. “Whenever no singular and straightforward answer to this question can be given, the hegemony of nationality as key marker of cultural origin and belonging is both exposed and reproduced” (Ang 1993: 2).

However, there is a theoretical–academic formation of postcolonial discourse that refers the concept of diaspora to the political and cultural circumstances of Western colonialism of the 19th and 20th centuries. In this respect, diasporic moves are defined habitually as displacements from the underprivileged former colonized Third World to the metropolitan centers of the formerly colonialist West. The postcolonial discourse evokes “diasporic subjectivity” (Radharkrishnan, 1996 quoted in Ha 1998), where diaspora is, as Lavie and Swedenburg outlined, the result of mass migration of non-white subjects into the heart of Western societies (Lavie & Swedenburg, 1991). Accordingly, borders and diasporas are claimed to offer “new frames of analysis that resist and transcend national boundaries through their creative ‘Third-Worlding’” it. This view of diasporas rests on often inherently subversive and therefore liberating diasporic practices since, according to this point of view, non-white subjects present in the “Euro-center” necessarily challenge the homogeneity of whiteness and the minority strikes back from heterogeneous ethnic enclaves, resisting violent attempts of the centre to assimilate or even destroy it (Ha 1998: 1).

However, in the midst of the postmodern flux of “nomadic” subjectivities, we need to recognize the continuing and continuous operation of “fixing” performed by the categories of race and ethnicity, as well as class, gender, geography and so on, on the formation of “identity” (although it is never possible, as determinist theories would have it, to decide in advance *how* such markers of difference will inscribe their salience and efficiency in the course of concrete histories, in the context of specific social, cultural and political conjunctures). It is in this overdetermined sense that the precariousness of any identity construction should be theoretically understood (Ha 1998: 2).

If we take into account the fact that “each diaspora is unique” (Werbner 2002), it seems that no single theoretical approach will in itself suffice to disentangle the vexing riddles of the revival of modern diasporas. The most promising avenue in this respect is a combination of historical, socio-economic, political, geographical, class, gender, ethnic, religious and cultural approaches. The analytical model should be “integrative” and flexible.

Transnationalism: a general view

The traditional ways in which ethnicity, nationalism and migration have been conceptualized since the end of the Cold War constitute a challenge for processes of globalization in the contemporary world. The globalization process, which was forecast to lead to a homogenized world culture, has instead brought about a radical expansion of people movements and technological developments which in turn have given rise to the emergence of diverse transnational, global and even totally de-territorialized social relations (Wahlbeck 1999). Such transnational and global social relations refer today to various kinds of cross-border connection among non-government individuals, groups and organizations, which are not easily confined within the borders of nation-states (Wahlbeck 1999; Vertovec 2001a; 2001b).

Today, diverse bodies and networks of NGOs, multinational companies, diasporan and identity groups, religious sects, drug traders, traffickers, businessmen, immigrant and refugee movements, human rights activists, terrorist organizations, Internet and cyber communities, satellite TV stations, and so on are operating within the multiple spaces created by contemporary globalization processes. Fascinated by global financial integration and the development of communication and transport networks, Richard O’Brien maintained that a world of networks is a world without distance and as a consequence geography had come to its end (O’Brien 1992). However, cross-border and global activities among these individuals, groups and organizations indicate a relation that goes over and beyond, rather than between and in, the nation-states (Wahlbeck 1999). These varieties of cross-border social activity have during recent years been a considerable field of study for numerous social scientists mainly in anthropology, sociology and even political science, who as a result of their observation of the issues of global migration and ethnic relations have recognized that migrants and refugees maintain diverse forms of ties with people and institutions in their places of origin (Vertovec 2001). In this respect, the notion of transnationalism has increasingly been invoked.

The concept of the transnational first came into use after the Second World War in the study of international relations. For example, in the 1960s students of economic processes used the adjective “transnational” broadly to refer to “those corporate structures that had organizational bases in more than one state” (Martinelli 1982, quoted in Glick Schiller *et al.* 1995: 49). Parallel with the development of communications technology in the post-war era, transnational networks occupied a prominent place in the study of international relations and international politics. David Mitrany was the first scholar to depict (through his functionalistic research) the weakening of sovereign states, and was the inspiration for network sociology and transnational reflections (Colonomos 1995). However, it was the growth of international organizations and the relation between non-governmental entities that created the historical context for inaugurating studies of transnational relations. Awareness that the “relations between citizens of different nation-states are different from relations between governments and their representatives” resulted in the term ‘international’ being replaced by transnational. It was emphasized that the prefix “trans” was much more useful and relevant than “inter” in relation to national boundaries that are crossed by the transnational relations (Vertovec & Cohen 1999: 11).

At the beginning of 1970s, Joseph Nye and Robert Keohane presented a noteworthy study on the theme of transnationality, within which the concept of ‘network’ was given an important position. These scholars relativized the theory of realism, which for a long time perceived international politics as an exclusive consequence of the nation-states’ foreign policies and the conflicts and relations among them. Nye and Keohane’s study, which according to Vertovec represents a sort of intellectual landmark, attempts to conceive a “crosscutting approach in order to suggest possible common functions and influences surrounding different kinds of social structures” (Vertovec 2001b: 2). It was an innovative observation that paid attention to a set of fundamental changes the world was experiencing at the time. According to Nye and Keohane (1972), the emergence of various global flows, manifested for instance in the form of movements of information, NGOs, international business, revolutionary movements, population movements, scientific networks, trade unions, the Catholic Church, and so on, had forced nation-states to act differently from in previous periods both internally and externally. As a result, the state-centric views of international politics that prevailed at that time became suddenly insufficient to analyze transnational flows (Colonomos 1995; Vertovec 2001b).

Influenced by the new premises, John W. Burton has introduced the concept of the “world society”: an attempt to depict an

“unprecedented impulsion”, which has materialized under the effects of technological developments and the growth of international exchanges and transactions (Burton 1972). Further, it was an effort to stress that international politics was no longer an issue solely and exclusively of relationships between and among sovereign political entities: an inter-state connection which was visualized through the metaphor of “billiard balls”. This was replaced by the metaphor of “spider’s web”, which was a way of imagining the world as complex networks of interdependency, covering financial actors, individuals, ethnic groups, local societies, and so on that do not stop at the official boundaries of the nation-states (Burton 1972; Hettne 1996). It was apparent that the idea of “world society” was not an analytical device of global conflict, but rather a strategy of international peace. It largely paved the way for many new outlooks seeking to distance themselves from the nation-state fixation; and this through admitting that contemporary international relations constitute an immense research field encompassing all kinds of cross-border economic, political, cultural, ecological and social flows. Under the effects of these transnational flows, the political space and the institutions of nation-states have been drastically transformed since the 1980s (Badie 1997). In this respect, the notion of “global governance” has emerged, evoking political interaction between the various transnational agencies that intervene to solve problems that affect more than one state or region when there is no regulating international power to interfere (Rosenau 1999).

The first genuine attempt to theorize the concept of network in international relations was made at the beginning of the 1980s when a number of researchers tried to base their assumptions on the fact that the actions of international participants were determined by the structural regime of global organizations, where the primacy of the market and its structural effects is asserted more than ever before. In this context, the international system is equipped with a *centre*, the USA, from which many transnational networks follow the logic of diffusion; a logic that furthermore interacts and conflicts with the strategies, political decisions and economic interests of the nation-states that intend actively and effectively to maintain their position in the international system (Strange 1988).

However, by the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s the adjective “transnational” began to be invoked, together with diverse connotations, in social sciences and cultural studies. It was above all an awareness of the intensification and the restructuring of global capitalism that would be linked to the “diminished significance of national boundaries in the production of and distribution of objects, ideas and people (Glick Schiller *et al.* 1995: 49; 1999).

By now, approximately three decades later, influenced by “a growing and widespread interest in the myriad facets of globalization”, scholars have produced a massive and sophisticated volume of literature that treats various kinds of transnational collectivities (Vertovec 2001b: 2). According to Paul Kennedy and Victor Roudometof, transnational relationships have to be considered as “manifestations of broader social trends that are not confined to the experience of immigrants; rather, and under globalizing conditions, they are extending into and shaping the lives of people engaged in many other kinds of associations, clubs and informal networks as well as into cultural life at large” (Kennedy & Roudometof 2001: 2).

Certainly, it is pertinent to imagine the definition of “transnational relationship” and its basic features in a much wider and more sophisticated social and historical context, which can go beyond the sole experience of immigrants, even if the term “transnational” first came to prominence in the study of international relations in the context of the expansion of international organizations and particularly relations between non-governmental bodies (Albrow 1998, quoted in Vertovec & Cohen 1999: 17). It was undoubtedly increasing contemporary migration flows and the mass arrival of asylum seekers in Western societies that promoted interest in transnational connections among an important number of anthropologists and sociologists. Themes and the adjectives like “transnational”, “transnational culture and identity” and “transmigrant and transnational migration” that appeared abundantly in books, journals, dissertations and conferences during the 1990s indicate that anthropology is showing a renewed interest in the flows of culture and population across national borders, in a new global and theoretical context (Glick Schiller *et al.* 1999: 49). At that time it was a substantial number of contributors to this trend to have reflected on the global transformation and on the way in which time and space were experienced and represented. As a consequence of the new anthropological thinking, global migration was considered as a salient means through which borders were contested and transgressed (Gupta 1992; Kearney 1991). The emergence of “transnational social fields” that connect and position immigrants and refugees in more than one country has changed people’s relation to space (Vertovec & Cohen 1999). Similarly, the objective of ethnography was said to be to determine the nature of locality as lived experience in a globalized and deterritorialized world (Appadurai 1991, quoted in Glick Schiller *et al.* 1999: 77). In other words, the condition of transnationalism, which is characterized by a growing disjuncture between territory, subjectivity and collective social movements and by the erosion of “electronic mediation between spatial and virtual neighborhood” (Vertovec & Cohen 1999: 13), has as a result of the “New

World Disorder” (Anderson 1992) brought about a situation where many people still devoted to the nationalist project have difficulty imagining certain specific geographic and historical practices and meanings outside the boundaries of national spaces, and acknowledging the emergence of a new “structure of feeling, property of life and ideology of situated community” (Vertovec & Cohen 1999: 13) as an expression of new “translocalities” (Appadurai 1995, quoted in Vertovec & Cohen 1999: 13).

However, the noteworthy social, cultural, political and demographical changes that contemporary global immigration has brought about in the host societies have contributed not only to the growth of a huge volume of literature on transnational studies but also to the revival of the idea of “diaspora” as an effective device for depicting some of the cultural and social meanings of multi-locality (Vertovec & Cohen 1999). However, in order to avoid confusion and uncertainty in the domain of transnationalism, or, as Alejandro Portes puts it, to find “a path through the terminological jungle” (Portes 2001a, quoted in Vertovec 2001b: 2), it is vital to distinguish between various related cross-border arrangements and human categories that have caught the attention of social science since the 1970s. Transnational spaces or fields, transnational community and networks, transmigration and transmigrants, diaspora, cyberspace and cyber communities, transnational cultural production and transnational political engagement are among the significant terms that are regularly used in the literatures of transnationalism.

Vertovec & Cohen consider transnationalism as a “site for political engagement”. This is an allusion to many diasporan and ethnic groups that undertake transnational political activities as a dynamic interaction between the politics of their homelands of origin and those of their receiving countries (Vertovec & Cohen 1999). As indicated above, diasporic identity and diasporic political mobilization are the manifestation of vigorous practices of “long-distance nationalism” (Anderson 1992; 1998), and they can be realized largely through different transnational political, social, economic and cultural performances that refugee and immigrant population sustain across the boundaries of nation-states.

The structure of transnational correlation: social fields and spaces

Traditional studies on immigration were more interested in quantitative aspects of international migratory movements. The promoters of the theory of transnational migration today claim, rather, that the prerequisites, forms, and consequences of international migration are to be found in the qualitative process of radical change. According to this approach, “changes in residence across national borders, are taking place within a general context of a far-reaching economic, cultural, political and social process of globalization and the massive spread of new transportation and communication technology” (Glick Schiller *et al.* 1995: 52; 1999). In other words, there is an increasing quantity of transnational migration, in which the real living spheres of transmigrants span a number of different residences. At the theoretical level, Ludger Pries describes the actual living spheres of transmigrants as “social spaces” which span a number of residences across national borders, that is, “geographic spaces” (Pries 1999: 3). It is worth noting that the realization of such mobility across state borders, and the different levels of involvement in it, depend rather on the human and material resources that transmigrants have at their disposal. Access to such resources bears a close relation to the social position of transmigrants in the host societies.

However, within this “complex web of social relations” transmigrants create simultaneously a kind of “double-sided” form of identity that is embedded in their society of origin as well as in the host society. Living simultaneously in several societies sees to it that the actions and beliefs of transmigrants contribute to the continuing and multiple differentiation of the population (Glick Schiller *et al.* 1992). The structure of such a transnational correlation has been described in terms of transnational social fields (Glick Schiller *et al.* 1995; 1999).

Transnational social fields are derived from dual or multiple attachments and identifications that diasporan populations and transnational agencies uphold vis-à-vis those public spaces that encompass the borders of more than one state. In the era of globalization, the production of the locality by diasporan peoples, which appears as a structure of feeling or as an ideology of situated community, is confronted by the increasing difficulties that arise not only as the lines of demarcation between territory, subjectivity and collective social movement steadily become eroded but also because of the growing disjuncture between spatial and virtual neighborhoods, principally due to the force and form of electronic media. The alternative is, however, the emergence of new “translocalities” (Appadurai 1995).

In this context, transnational relations give birth to a process of the “reconstruction of place or locality” (Anthias 2002; Vertovec & Cohen 1999) or, as Kristin Espinosa and Douglas Massey (1999) put it, to the materialization of transnational social spaces. In this regard, social institutions within transnational migrant networks have significant functions for the social positioning of transmigrants and for the general structuring of unequal social structures in social spaces. Such social networks are extended across boundaries of national societies (Goldring 1999).

According to Pries, transnational migration is an important field in which the process of qualitative change toward greater dissociations of geographic and social spaces contributes to the emergence of transnational social spaces (Pries 1999: 5). They are a by-product of international migration (Faist 1999) and have to be understood as “interlacing coherence networks” at the same time that we should be aware that they are spatially diffuse or pluri-local and simultaneously “comprising a social space that is not exclusively transitory” (Pries 1999: 26). Thomas Faist sees transnational social spaces as “combinations of social and symbolic ties, positions in networks and organizations and networks of organizations that can be found in at least two geographically and internationally distinct places” (Faist 1999: 40). The author describes transnational social spaces as triadic relationships between groups and institutions in the host states, the sending state, and the minority group migrants and/or refugee groups, which denote dynamic notions of ties and positions in which cultural, political and economic processes involve the accumulation of economic, human and social capital (Faist 1999: 41). As a frame of reference for social positions, the analytical dimensions of transnational social spaces can comprise the “political and legal framework” of migration processes, the “material infrastructure”, “social institutions” and “identities and life projects” that refugee and immigrant populations are experiencing (Pries 1999).

Long before the elaboration of the notion of transnational social spaces, Nina Glick Schiller *et al.* conceived and promoted “transnational social fields” that are various political, economic, social and cultural processes, extending beyond the borders of a single state but shaped by the policies and institutional practices of a set of states, and include actors that are not states (Glick Schiller *et al.* 1995; 1999; Glick Schiller & Fouron 1999: 343, 344). The focus of transnational social fields is on human interaction and situations of personal relationship, including a set of egalitarian, unequal and exploitative relationships that often include persons born in the country of origin who never migrated and persons born in the country of settlement who have various ethnic

backgrounds. In this respect, the concept of “transnational social fields” appears as a conceptual and methodological entry point into the studies of broader social, economic and political processes, as it enables immigrant and refugee populations to get involved in more than one society (Glick Schiller *et al.* 1995; 1999; Glick Schiller & Fouron 1999: 343, 344). According to Glick Schiller & Fouron, transnational social fields should not be seen as metaphoric references to altered experiences of space. They are, rather, constituted by observable social relationships and transactions. Multiple actors with various forms of power and locations of power interact and operate across borders in order to create and sustain these kinds of relationship field (Glick Schiller & Fouron 1999).

Non-institutional actors within transnational social fields include various actors and networks with multiple forms of identity and characteristics. At the same time international activities that are initiated and sustained by nation-states are not considered as transnational (Portes 2001a, quoted in Vertovec 2001b: 2).

Emergence of transmigrants

Traditional research on immigration has largely considered immigrants as uprooted persons who experience a permanent rupture with their homelands of origin. From this perspective, which is a heritage from the 1930s Chicago School, upon their arrival in a receiving country immigrants abandon old cultural patterns and become engaged in a painful process of incorporation and assimilation into the new society’s culture and language. The phenomena of transnational networks and diasporic identity among refugee populations were largely absent from classical migration studies, which instead portrayed the migration process in a simplified way, as a one-time and unidirectional change in location. Their main efforts were directed at finding responses to the questions “why do people leave their country of origin and begin to migrate and what problems do they have to confront in the country of settlement” (Pries 1999: 24)? However, since the end of 1980s there has been a considerable shift in migration studies. As a result, migration processes across borders have been studied by many academic disciplines in the social sciences, and the main issue now is to know “what maintains migration flows and what new transnational realities are developing in and through the international migrations networks” (Pries 1999: 24).

The emergence of new studies of transnational migration, which have been proliferating since the beginning of 1990s, was a response to the speed and density of various kinds of cross-border connection between nation-states in these spatially fluid times (Yeoh *et al.* 2003). The new anthropology suggests that in both the USA and Europe a growing number of immigrants are best comprehended as transmigrants. This is an allusion to immigrant individuals whose daily lives depend on multiple and constant interconnections across international borders and whose public identities are configured in relation to more than one nation-state. Transmigrants are not sojourners or temporary settlers in their new countries. They are settled and incorporated in the economy and political institutions, localities, and patterns of the daily life of their societies of residence, while they simultaneously maintain “connections, build institutions, carry out transactions, and influence local and national events in the countries from which they are emigrated” (Glick Schiller *et al.* 1992; 1995; 1999).

The role of transmigrants, at least those who maintain an influential position within their diasporic communities, is to a certain extent compatible with an individualist analytical model that James N. Rosenau (1990; 1994) conceived for studying transnational realities at the beginning of 1900s. The author noted that individuals had a lively awareness that they could mobilize their potential within the frame of extended political, cultural and socio-economic spaces that transcend the boundaries of nation-states. According to Rosenau, international networks hold a privileged intermediary position between two sides of the national societies. In other words, it is at this crossroads of macro- and micro-sociological levels that individuals, through aggregating their wills and actions, generate political influence to be exerted on the domestic spaces of the society as well as on international relations. Meanwhile, the author affirms that the decisions and actions of individual are in point of fact conditioned by macro-sociological factors (Rosenau 1990; 1994).

However, the multi-stranded political and social relations that refugees and immigrants sustain between their homelands of origin and their country of settlement are forged by the process of transnational migration, which is an allusion to the fact that current-day immigrants construct and reconstitute their simultaneous embeddedness in more than one society (Rosenau 1990; 1994). The “Age of Transnationalism” (Glick Schiller *et al.* 1999; Faist 1999) has emerged and evolved at a time marked by the “Age of Migration”. It is a reference to the arrival of a huge number of laborers from economically less developed nations to most developed industrial countries and a similarly high level of political refugees fleeing conflicts and instability in former Communist and Third World nations (Castles & Miller 1998). This has led to the reshaping of

the ethnic mixes not only of nations with long histories of immigration such as the U.S., Canada and Australia but also of states such as those of Western Europe and even Japan that were not notable as immigrant-receiving nations in the earlier phase of industrialization (Kivisto 2001).

Cross-bordering economic practices among transnational agencies in the capital world

The primacy of the classical realistic vision, which considered power relations at the international level as a consequence of relationships between sovereign nation-states, has been constantly contested by contemporary globalization processes and transnational connections since the 1980s. In other words, there has been a decrease in the capacity of states to control directly the global and transnational influx of capital, goods, cultures, means of communication, refugees and immigrants, entrepreneurs, traffickers, drug dealer networks, diasporan and cross-border ethno-national groups, and so on in an era of globalized markets, economic interdependency and, not least, international terrorism, war and military occupation of other countries.

According to Glick Schiller there are three conjoining potent forces in the current global economy that lead immigrants to settle in countries that are centers of global capitalism while maintaining their transnational connections across national borders. In the first place, the global restructuring of capital has led to the deterioration of socio-economic conditions in sending countries. In this context, the growth and the intensification of global interconnections of economic processes, and the intensive penetration of foreign capital into the economies and political processes of post-colonial countries and regions with the subsequent massive indebtedness, economic retrenchment and widespread deterioration in the standard of living, generate a more or less constant population movement from peripheral states toward opulent countries or global cities that play central roles in capital accumulation. Accordingly, this kind of population movement is not the product of individual choice, but rather can be considered as forced migration (Glick Schiller *et al.* 1999: 77; see also Glick Schiller *et al.* 1995; Castles 2003). Second, the rise of racism in both the U.S. and Europe contributes to the economic and political insecurity of refugees and immigrants. Once in these countries, immigrants confront a deepening economic crisis that often limits their access to the economic and social sectors of the society. Even if they find a secure social position, there are still powerful societal and institutional predispositions that racialize and discriminate against them in the pursuit of their daily activities. Third, as a result of nation-

building projects, immigrants and refugees maintain political loyalties vis-à-vis both their homelands of origin and their countries of settlement (Glick Schiller *et al.* 1995: 50; 1999: 77).

Increasing numbers of migrants continue to participate in the political, social, and economic lives of their countries of origin even as they put down roots in their countries of settlement. Refugee and immigrant populations keep their feet in two worlds, and create diasporic and transnational communities that span the borders of nation-states. This happens normally in an era of increasing economic and political globalization, where living transnationally may become the rule rather than the exception (Levitt 2001).

However, taking into account the permeability of borders signaled by this form of migration, some observers continue to speak of the demise of the nation-state's ability to form and discipline its subjects (Kearney 1991, quoted in Glick Schiller *et al.* 1999: 78). However, unequal states continue to create capitalist subjects and govern populations that will work in and accept a world of vastly increased inequalities of wealth and power (Glick Schiller *et al.* 1995; 1999). In spite of its tendency to generate inequalities, the prevailing global economy continues paradoxically to create favorable conditions for the transnational economic networks and structures that span the boundaries of nation-states. In addition to the major economic actors in the global economy, however, the minor players who encompass the "bulk of transnational communities are making an ever-greater impact" (Vertovec & Cohen 1999: 13). In this respect, diasporic trading and entrepreneurial ethnic networks, and corporate arrangements for remittances and business structures are among important drivers of today's global economy. Thus, transnational economic activities pursued by transnational refugees and immigrants should not be seen as a unidirectional act of remittances transfer (*cf.* Stahl & Arnold 1986; Keely & Nga Tran 1989; Hatzipanayotou 1991; Faist 1999; Pries 1999) to the country of origin. This is rather about relatively well-developed business networks and a capital accumulation strategy that interconnects refugees and immigrants within the same diaspora or ethnic population and operates at the global level. The relatively small amounts of money which migrants transfer as remittances to their places of origin amounted to at least \$75 billion worldwide at the beginning of 1990s. The scale of remittance activities grew rapidly in the last three decades of 20th century. For example, from 1970 to 1993 the value of remittances in Algeria rose from \$178 million to \$993 million, in India from \$80 million to \$3 billion and in Egypt from \$29 million to nearly \$5 billion (Vertovec & Cohen 1999: 14).

The scope the transnational economic activities is to be extended even to the criminal business networks (drugs dealing,

trafficking, smuggling, etc.) that emerge as organized professional bodies beyond the boundaries of nation-states. More than ever conscious of the global disorder of the post-Cold War era, transnational drug trading networks function in perfect accordance with the rules of supply and demand while largely escaping the control of states and their juridical sanctions (Labrousse 1997).

Diasporic and transnational *assabiyya*

Furthermore, transnational social fields encompass various solidarity networks, based upon national, religious, linguistic, ethnic, regional or local identities or even upon the *assabiyya*. Originally framed by the prominent Arab researcher Ibn Khaldoun in 14th century, *assabiyya* is a sociological concept that, according to Olivier Roy, refers to specific social entities with a strong sense of group feeling (Spickard 2001) and internal solidarity that in the context of immigration transcends the boundaries of nation-states. Apparently traditional but modern in their performances and ambitions, the solidarity networks of *assabiyya* (tribes, clans, extended families, sects, brotherhoods, etc.), which observably originated predominantly in central Asia, Africa and the Middle East, not only are the manifestation of various social constructions but function also as a device of identity assertiveness, a sense of togetherness and internal allegiances that are embedded within diasporan populations and transnational social fields (Roy 1996).

Transnational *assabiyya* are a consequence of contemporary global migration. Those members of an *assabiyya* who first arrived and settled down in a Western society do commonly stand by other members (cousins, relatives) of the same social entity. Assistance can, for example, be offered in the shape of useful information; providing help to traffickers and smugglers, financial help and of course work opportunities once the newcomers have settled down in the new country. Meanwhile, it is important to bear in mind that the social organization of *assabiyya* is not horizontal. The internal stratification of the group reveals that there is in many cases a hierarchical relationship between its adherents. This means that those who have more social, economic and cultural resources at their disposal are in a position to recruit and exploit other affiliated group members. In this respect, newcomers offer an important source of cheap manpower and promise the rapid accumulation of the capital of those who occupy the dominant positions of the *assabiyya* (Roy 1996).

A transnational *assabiyya* endeavors to preserve its social organization in the diaspora as such, regularly through adopting various strategies. In order to safeguard its original social organization in the

receiving society, the *assabiyya* normally makes use of genealogical connections or the practice of endogamy (arranged marriages with females from the same *assabiyya*, frequently in the homeland of origin). Nonetheless, facing new social, cultural, and political realities, an *assabiyya* is like any other social group subjected to considerable transformation in the receiving society. The survival of solidarity networks for a long period depends on the general political, economic and social conditions that prevail in receiving countries as well as on the transnational networks which are created for connecting *assabiyya* to their countries of origin (Roy 1996).

Diasporic identity making and transnational connections online and on air

As new communication technologies provide diasporan and transnational populations with the means to develop their effective networks (Verhulst 1999: 29), researchers have started to initiate a number of studies of the use of such communication technologies as a part of their effort to show how various diasporan and transnational populations “colonize” Internet spaces, which occurs via the creation of virtual communities framed around national, ethnic, and religious identity/subject formation (Gajjala 1999). According to Manuel Castells, through the new information technologies the world becomes integrated through far-reaching global networks of instrumentality, as the distinctive social and political trend of the 1990s gives birth to the construction of social action and politics around primary identities, ascribed, rooted in history and geography, or newly built in an anxious search for meaning and spirituality (Castells 1996). Consequently, diasporan populations have created their own means of communication. The notion of diasporic media refers to a variety of “alternative media” that are used by exile populations who assert a collective identity that spans the boundaries of nation-states (Karim 2003; Georgiou 2005).

New media technologies, such as satellite television and the Internet, are central to diasporan populations not only for maintaining the links with their homeland of origin but also for challenging the media conglomerates and the potentially homogenizing effects of Western media (Downing *et al.* 2001). Accordingly, new technologies have largely contributed to the formation of “online” and “on air” virtual imagined communities that occupy transnational social cyber spaces in which people still meet face-to-face but under new definitions of both “meet” and “face” (Gajjala 1999: 1). In an era when computer-mediated communication begets a vast array of virtual communities (Castells

1996), “space” in cyberspace, then, is “predicated on knowledge and information, on the common beliefs and practices of a society abstracted from physical space” (Jones 1995, quoted in Gajjala 1999: 1).

However, the development of virtual social space on the Internet has contributed to the emergence of a new reflexive methodology of “cyber-ethnography” (Ward 1999) or “media anthropology” (Postill 2005). Investigating human relationships in cyberspace (Carter 2005) is a way of perceiving how participants in virtual communities become empowered to define their own reality and perimeters. As a rapidly emerging hybrid space the virtual community is, according to Katie J. Ward, neither absolutely physical nor virtual, and the participants are “depicted as having a transitory, unconditional relationship with the virtual community. That is, they will only participate for short periods when they require use of the resources that the virtual community has to offer” (Ward 1999: 95). It is important to note that the use of the Internet by diverse identity or cultural and social groups has entailed more specific observations and investigations. The Internet, which has also created new spaces for marginalized communities to interact by means of such features as e-mail, online publications and chat rooms, has been, for example, explored for hosting the struggle of ethno-national groups for freedom (Santianni 2003), the formation of national identity on the World Wide Web (Tsaliki 2003) and the emergence of “virtual ummah” and the interactivity between Muslim throughout the West (Mandeville 2003). Cyberfeminism is a further tool of analysis that has been developed for observing women in developing countries who have access to the Internet, which enables them to define the content and shape of cyberspace (see Gajjala 2002; 2003; Gajjala & Mamidipudi 1999).

However, scholars conceive online transnational connections in terms of various metaphors, such a “virtual imagined community” (Gajjala 1999), “informational city and cyberculture” (Irvine 1999), “digital diasporas” (Gajjala 2003), “nations in cyberspace and virtual province” (Hylland Eriksen 2006) and “cybercity” (Carter 2005), for demarcating new frontiers in the development of human relationships in cyberspace. Websites, chat rooms and discussion forums on the Internet are virtual communities that represent more often than not a social world that is no less real for being supported by Internet technologies, with residents drawn from countries worldwide (Carter 2005). Imagining “cyberculture” as a real environment involves the material conditions of the matrix, especially the function of imagined communities and the underlying infrastructure of cyberspace in the global information city (Irvine 1999: 5). In many ways, cyberspatial culture is like the modern spatial city with its segregation of spaces and internal conditions where infrastructure, labor, capital and information are concentrated (Irvine

1999: 5). In other words, the nature of the online discussion largely depends on the politics of interaction within real-life communities (Gajjala 1999). As for the virtual communities and diasporic media, formed around certain national, ethnic or regional identities, they are considered as “imagined communities” (Irvine 1999) that play a considerable role in nation-building processes (Postill 2005).

According to Thomas Hylland Eriksen, nations thrive in cyberspace, and the Internet, which comprises online newspapers, magazines, chat rooms, semi-official information sites, and so on, has during recent years become a crucial place for identity entertainment or nation-holding for those nations that have in one way or another lost their territory (such as Afrikaner-led South Africa), nations that have for political reasons been dispersed (such as Tamil Sri Lanka or Kurdistan), and nations that have large emigrant populations that work temporarily or permanently abroad (such as India or Caribbean island states) (Hylland Eriksen 2006: 1). New technologies enable diasporan groups with origins in repressive or closed countries to mobilize opposition not only within the diaspora but also among other sympathetic groups (Verhulst 1999: 30). Correspondingly, Stefaan Verhulst claims, “electronic communications flows lead to a more immediate, less embedded, more intense and more effective form of transnational bonding” (Verhulst 1999: 30). He argues furthermore that technological innovations can in many cases bring about the construction of new diasporic or in some cases virtual identities, as well as the substantive reconfiguration of existing identities (Verhulst 1999: 30). In any case, it is a way to be empowered by becoming an online community (Gajjala 1999: 2).

The notion of transborder citizenship

As noted above, transborder citizens refer to “people who live their lives across the borders of two or more nation-states, participate in the normative regime, legal and institutional system and political practices of these various states and act on a relationship to more than one government” (Glick Schiller & Fouron 2001; Glick Schiller 2005: 48). The redefinition of transmigrants’ involvement in transnational processes arises primarily from scholars increasing awareness of the partial “deterritorialization” of public spaces and national politics, which gives rise to different methods of participation (Pries 1999). The construction of diasporic identities and transnational communities denotes the existence of a multiplicity of reference frames and forms of allegiance that function over time and space. Transnational ties that are forged as a consequence of massive and circular international migration flows (Pries

1999: 25) do not emerge as an extension of the community of origin, but rather as a result of the presence of refugee and immigrant populations in supranational spaces (see Glick Schiller *et al.* 1992; 1999). In this respect the relation between space and identity is redefined and the transnational communities and their affiliated agencies and organizations are provided with the potential and legitimacy to operate beyond the territories of nation-states and become a device of socialization into a new political culture which is shaped outside the national framework and its institutions (Kearney 1999). However, the notion of transborder citizenship goes beyond a purely legal and juridical definition of citizenship, and even beyond the idea of dual citizenship, with the objective of claiming for transmigrants the right to be social and cultural citizens of various states and to have multiple experiences of living within plural system of laws, customs and values (Glick Schiller & Fouron 2001; Glick Schiller 2005).

If we take into account the consequences of contemporary transnational movements that cross the territorial, cultural and political boundaries of nation-states, the concept of transborder citizenship seems to be relevant not only because of the continuous “politics of difference” that are claimed by diasporan populations in Western democracies but also because of the “expression of identity” that finds a base in the experience of immigration and in fact interconnects two national spaces (Pries 1999). Asserting the notion of transborder citizenship from this point of view implies, however, a “change of position” from a simple academic awareness of transnational relations to a more effective, far-reaching concept of “claim-making” that answers not only to a new transnational space of identity that connects the cultural references of the sending societies to that of the receiving countries (Pries 1999), but also to the “paradigm of legal pluralism” that calls on scholars, politicians and policy makers, social analysts and the media to recognize the participation of people in the normative regime, legal and institutional system and political practices of two or more nation-states (Glick Schiller & Fouron 1999; Glick Schiller 2005: 49).

In recent years various scholars have treated the issue of claiming membership in more than one state. In order to support the idea of so-called “polyethnic rights”, Will Kymlicka (1998) has conceived the notion of “multicultural citizenship”. The author criticizes democratic processes in Western societies for their inability to represent ethnic and cultural differences. This inability is rooted in the inadequacies of the concept of citizenship, that is, the conditions of the realization of the rights of marginalized groups in society (Vali 2003: 71). Michel S. Laguerre (1998) speaks of “diasporic citizenship” while Rainer Bauböck, who earlier presented the notion of transnational citizenship (Bauböck

1994), supports the idea of “multiple citizenship”, which is a reference to overlapping membership of various political communities (Vertovec 2001a). The concept of “flexible citizenship” has been proposed by Aihwa Ong (1999) in order to provide an analysis of new transnational narratives of Asian modernity and valorize new heroes of Asian capitalism as subjects of transnational identity and flexible citizens. The author has argued that a new strategy of flexible accumulation, which challenges the “hegemonic link between whiteness and capitalism”, has promoted a flexible attitude toward citizenship; a flexible citizenship that refers, however, to a set of “flexible practices, strategies and disciplines associated with transnational capitalism”, which create new “modes of subject making and new kinds of valorized subjectivity” (Ong 1999, quoted in Chakravartty 2001: 71).

Moreover, there are further approaches that feed the normative theories that endeavor to conceive a new approach to citizenship. Riva Kastoryano criticizes the projection of citizenship in the European Union for its failure to assert immigrants’ transnational solidarity networks and their claims for the recognition of a different collective identity as the manifestation of the notion of “citizenship as extraterritorial” (Kastoryano 1998). However, the notion of “citizenship as bi-territorial” or “citizenship as multi-territorial” would in this context sound more relevant than Kastoryano’s concept of “citizenship as extraterritorial” (Kastoryano 1998).

In order to actualize new perspectives on transnationalism and citizenship Nina Glick Schiller and Georges E. Fouron have introduced the term “transborder citizenship”, a notion that encompasses people known as “long distant nationalists”, who appear to be inclined to act as members of more than one state (Glick Schiller & Fouron 2001; Glick Schiller 2005).

In this vein, Ralph D. Grillo has advanced the expression “stable dual orientation”, which indicates the presence of immigrant and refugee populations both “here and there” (Grillo 2001). Through examining the formation and structure of the Chinese diaspora in Central America and Panama, Lok Siu, in the style of other advocates of transnationalism, specifies the concept of “diasporic cultural citizenship”, which refers to a process by which diasporan populations assert simultaneous belonging in two distinctly different cultural and political contexts. Siu affirms that participation in diasporic organizations entails both displacement from a homeland and settlement in another specific national context. Diasporic cultural citizenship is the manifestation of a process of claiming a “dual assertion” in the receiving nation that one “enters and gains belonging to the diaspora” (Siu 2001: 8). Furthermore, the “transformation of solidarities and citizenship” indicates that the

nation-state with its condition of social integration through civil, political, social, and cultural rights of citizenship is no longer the one and only entity of social integration. "People unite beyond its boundaries and differentiate within them" (Münch 2001: 189). The unambiguous demarcation between citizens and non-citizens creates a more finely graded overlapping area or a zone of "binational identity" where increasing transnational claims-making provides fewer opportunities for national integration but more chance to enhance transnational integration. According to Richard Münch, this proceeds along with a transformation of national integration based on strong citizenship (Münch 2001: 186). However, for the realization of the notion of transborder citizenship, which is built on social connections to multiple systems of values, laws and familial practices of various nation-states, N. Glick Schiller proposes to move the transmigrant from "legal citizenship into the subject of cultural and social citizenship and its transnational extensions" (Glick Schiller 2005: 52).

In the American context, Latino scholars and activists elaborated the notion of "cultural citizenship" in the 1980s, advocating a multicultural society in the U.S. It was a way to claim the right to be different in terms of the norms of the dominant national community, without compromising one's right to belong. No matter how much the assimilationist and integrationist agendas of the nation-state were criticized by the normative theory of cultural citizenship, this concept seems to be less useful than that of transborder citizenship. For instance, Glick Schiller criticizes the advocates of "cultural citizenship" for not discussing other aspects of citizenship which would actualize "the frequent lack of fit between legal citizenship and the allocation of rights and benefits in the state, the growth of dual or multiple citizenships and the complexities of the concept of citizenship when people live their lives across borders or live within transnational social fields" (Glick Schiller 2005: 54). As an alternative, the concept of social citizenship has been proposed as it appears to be more inclusive, claiming rights substantively on the basis of social practices rather than law. "Social citizenship" makes people able to make claims to belong to a state "through collectively organizing to protect themselves against discrimination, or receive rights and benefits from a state or make contributions to the development of a state and the life of people within it" (Glick Schiller 2005: 55). However, the concept of transborder citizenship is based on the idea of social and cultural citizenship, and expands citizenship claims and practices transnationally. The practice of transborder citizenship takes place in three different but interrelated contexts.

The first context concerns a transnational social field, constituted at the intersection of immigrants' homelands of origin and the

nation-states of settlement. Here the concern is centered on dual loyalties, the formation of political lobbies and diasporic structures in the country of settlement in favor of the former homeland and its political agenda. In this context, diasporic refugees and migrants act as long-distance nationalists, framing ideologies and practices in order to declare that they not only identify with a former homeland but also organize their daily activities on behalf of that land (Glick Schiller 2005: 58). Moreover, transborder citizenry is shaped by the particular circumstances of a specific city or locality of settlement. This context gives an account of a various facets of migrant incorporation in cities and localities all over the world (Glick Schiller 2005: 64). In this respect, the identity of diasporic populations that reflects the localities in which they reside gives birth to a range of transnational arrangements connecting the immigrants' former homelands to their new localities in the countries of settlement (Glick Schiller 2005: 66). The third context is a global one in which immigrants create their transborder networks that simultaneously extend into multiple states. Consequently, there will emerge various forms of global identity and practice in terms of the ethnic, the nationalist and the religious, rooted in diverse legal systems and states (Glick Schiller 2005: 70).

Limits of the concept of transborder citizenship

As indicated above, transnational and diasporic formations and their presence and performances beyond and within the boundaries of nation-states are the manifestation of diverse claim-making processes that researchers endeavor to make intelligible. In this respect, the notion of transborder citizenship has a propensity to be far-reaching. But it would be dangerous to ignore the limits of this notion. It is obvious that transborder citizens in the form of individual or collective, institutional or commercial subjects act both *beyond* and *within* their societies of origin and residence in order to attain new symbols and new identities, crucial for the realization of a status of self-affirmation beyond the boundaries of two societies. However, no one can deny that transnational connections, which deliberately or by chance span the framework of the nation-states, largely escape the control of their institutions. We should, moreover, acknowledge that transborder citizens adopt a stance of resistance vis-à-vis a traditional definition of citizenship and direct control of nation-states. But this should not entail a one-sided dismissal of the role of the nation-states and subsequently a one-sided approval of the fact that transnational performances occur uniquely “beyond” the border of nation-states. Thus, acting transnationally implies that transborder citizens simultaneously act “within” the boundaries of nation-states and take

advantages of their resources or, more, contribute to the appearance of a new type of division of labor within their political and social public spaces (Badie & Smouts 1992). As it is as still impossible to circumvent their powerful existence, states remain imperative actors in the international community. They continue to be the reference and the cosmos of multiple norms while transnational connections reveal the existence of a multi-centered world where flows of various natures are circulating in an unprecedented manner (Rosenau 1990; Colonosmos 1997). In such a context, giving more preponderance to “beyond” than “within” may be deceptive, primarily when it comes to the presence of refugees and immigrants in receiving societies. There is, however, a risk not only of considering the presence of the refugees and immigrants in the nations of settlement as a “problem” but also of exculpating the states and their affiliated institutions and the media of their discriminatory conduct vis-à-vis non-native populations in the societies of residence.

The notion of “stable dual orientation” presents a scenario of “betwixt and between” which according to Grillo refers to the precarious presence of immigrant populations in receiving societies. The author calls to mind Hammar’s (1990) concept of “denizens” in order to evoke the situation of migrants who have the right of permanent residence but remain legally foreigners (Grillo 2001). The transnational claims-making processes may be restricted by xenophobic retrenchment that prevails in the country of residence (Takacs 1999). Various civil institutions and social groups in the receiving Western societies “assess and locate newcomers within given schemes of racial difference, civilization and economic worth”. This is to see “how the specific sociocultural location of newcomers within the nation-state and the global economy determines the manner in which the different regulatory forces socialize them into society” (Ong 1996, quoted in Siu 2001: 11). Producing an exclusionary national identity as an “ethno-culturally homogenous” body (Takacs 1999) in a receiving society is not compatible with the notion of transborder citizenship, which seeks its realization in a much more extended definition of the concept of citizenship.

In view of the fact that much discussion of transnationalism has concerned questions of citizenship and rights (Grillo 2001), it is important to not assume a restrictive and “reductionist” hold on the notion of citizenship. Transborder citizenship refers thus to a set of various claim makings concerning rights and practices both beyond and within nation-states, which is achieved through a “triadic conceptualization” of transnationalism. In this respect, the claims making of the refugees and immigrants is determined by homeland influences, their collective identities and evidently the national citizenship and integration regimes in the receiving societies (Koopmans & Statham

2001). As an inclusive and extensive concept, the notion of transborder citizenship is fundamentally inclined to comprise, within an even more wide-ranging paradigm of a legal plural system, the rights of *ius domicili* and cultural, social, dual and multiple legal citizenship. Changing the conditions of citizenship is, however, not achieved unless the “ethnic” identity of the sovereign as well as the identity of political power in the democratic polity has changed (Vali 2003: 71). In this regard, the discourse of transnational claims-making has shortcomings, as it leaves no room for “non-sovereign identities; the marginal, the excluded” (Vali 2003: 71).

Nevertheless, the notion of transborder citizenship achieves a satisfactory level of relevance for studying the case of diasporan Kurds in France and Sweden and the set of “multiple allegiances” that they experience through living “their lives across the border of two or more nation-states” and participating in the normative regimes, socio-cultural networks and political practices of these diverse states, and the differences that they manifest.

Summarizing theoretical outcomes

In this chapter, the theories of diaspora and transborder citizenship have been the subject of critical reading in order to render them more consistent with and responsive to diasporic relationships. In this respect, the three consecutive elements of diaspora (dispersion, homeland orientation and boundary maintenance), established by Brubaker (2005), have been further expanded.

For instance, it has been shown that dispersion as the most widely accepted element of diaspora does not occur, as the formalist, poststructuralist discourse of diaspora claims, solely as a result of the so-called “nomadic, traveler, fragmented and deterritorialized subjectivity in the post-modern world” (Ang 1993). As contemporary global migration is patterned by inherent social forces and structured by historical processes (Zolberg *et al.* 1989), forced migration, including refugee flux and internal displacement, should consequently be seen as an integral part of North–South relationships, which is closely connected to current processes of global social transformation (Castles 2003). Similarly, the element of “homeland” orientation has been discussed in order to distance it from an essentialist discourse of fixed origin (Brah 1996), trauma and teleology of return (Safran 1991). Instead, a flexible perspective has been adopted with a view to advancing the multilocality of diasporan people and the multitude of strategies they adopt vis-à-vis their homelands of origin. “Home” is a mythic place of desire in diasporic imaginations

(Brah 1996). Likewise, the element of boundary maintenance, which involved the preservation of the distinctive diasporic identity, has been amended by additional perspectives with a view to eliminating or reducing the ambivalence of this issue. This approach was rebalanced mainly through diverting its focus from the “homeland of origin”: it was said that boundary maintenance of diaspora was a concern not uniquely of “homeland of origin” but of the country of residence also. Over-generalizing the “homeland of origin” would, according to our criticism, run the risk of misrepresenting the “real” lives of refugee and immigrant groups and legitimizing racism and discrimination, rooted in the structural and discursive construction of the “otherness” in Western societies. In other words, this study, by referring to the theoretical formation of postcolonial discourse, has redirected the principal question of “where you are from”, which still constitutes the dominant framework for cultural identification and construction of “imagined community”, toward the more relevant question of “where you are at”.

Moreover, the theory of transborder citizenship has been criticized in order to render it stronger in relation to its own stances, which are the claims by transborder citizens to social and cultural citizenship and participation in the political processes and normative regimes of nation-states (Glick Schiller & Fouron 2001; Glick Schiller 2005). As the initial theory of transborder citizenship was not sufficiently clear in specifying, for example, the framework of political and juridical representation of transborder citizens in the country of residence, this study has promoted the notion of transborder citizenship as a set of various claims to rights and practices, manifested both beyond and within nation-states. It was said that the conditions of transborder citizenship are achieved by a “triadic conceptualization” of transnationalism; a reference to the claims making of refugees and immigrants that are determined by homeland influences, their collective identities and evidently the national citizenship and integration regimes in receiving societies (Koopmans & Statham 2001). In order to render the concept of transborder citizenship more inclusive and extensive, the paradigm of a legal plural system which is advanced by this concept should, according to this study, comprise also the rights of *ius domicili* and cultural, social, dual and multiple legal citizenship. Moreover, it was argued that the notion of transborder citizenship should promote the representation of the “marginal” and her or his excluded identity in the political and legal processes of receiving societies, since the conditions of citizenship are not changed unless the “ethnic” identity of the sovereign state as well as the identity of political power in the democratic polity has changed (Vali 2003).

2. Comparative Methodology, Ethnography and the Dilemma of Insiderness: Methodological Considerations

Diasporan Kurds in two different fields: a comparative approach

Undertaking research work in two separate fields in two different west European countries signifies directly that this study adopts a comparative approach.

The comparative approach is a fundamental method in social science that, according to Arendt Lijphart, is used to test the validity of general empirical propositions (Lijphart 1971). It is a way to establish empirical relationships among two or more units while other variables are held constant. The comparative method is generally used when neither the experimental nor the “variable-oriented” statistical method can be employed. In contrast to other methods, this method has a long tradition of qualitative work. As a “case-oriented” approach, the comparative method is sensitive to complexity and historical specificity. It is used for addressing empirically defined historical outcomes. Moreover, it is used for generating new conceptual schemes. The comparative method is principally concerned with actual events, human agency and processes (Lijphart 1971; Ragin 1987).

The method of comparative politics is relevant to this study. Comparative politics is a method that is used in political science for studying the processes and outcomes of politics in a variety of country settings. This method introduces fundamental concepts relating to global political, cultural and economic changes. By using this method the researcher seeks to obtain evidence of causal effects by comparing the varying forms of governments and states in the world across various period of history (Ragin 1987; Scheuch 1990). Comparative politics includes topics such as democratization, state and society relations, identity politics, ethnic relations, social movements, institutional analysis and political economy (Badie & Hermet 1990).

Growing globalization and the concomitant social, cultural and economic flows across national borders can be seen as an essential

reason for carrying out cross-national comparative studies (Øyen 1990). The process of globalization that has affected the cognitive map of people around the world may have shifted the emphasis of the comparative approach.

The development of cross-national research attempts to create a much-needed global perspective on sociological research. Its adherents overcome national, cultural and linguistic barriers in the attempt to provide truly comparative information on the human condition (Kohn 1987). The object of cross-national research is to reduce “unexplained variance and find patterns and relationships, where empirical observations are related to theoretical constructions (Teune 1990; Øyen 1990). With the advent of globalization and so-called “globalization from below” (Fox 2005: 171), the comparative approach today is used in the study of various identity groups that form and gather in diasporas and establish transnational relationships across the borders of nation-states.

According to Martin Baumann, diachronic research on diasporic communities has suggested “developmental phase models which bear fruitful points of cross-cultural comparison and insights”. The author stresses that comparative studies of various diasporan populations and different diasporic situations enable investigation from a similar angle and interrogating approach into different historic and socio-politically contextualized settings. In this regard, the insights gained from, and structured patterns of, one specific case might heuristically be transferred to a different diasporic case, thus intellectually investigating and rearranging the data once again. A further step of comparison, according to Baumann, is to outline the “triangular relationship of diaspora groups”, the homeland of origin and the country of present residence. Moreover, the comparative approach to diaspora leads to “differentiating diasporic dimensions and proposing typologies of varied ranges” that can be applied to “economic, socio-cultural, religious and political spheres” (Baumann 2000: 330–331).

The process of diaspora formation and the development of the practice of transborder citizenship among diasporan Kurds in France and Sweden are open to study by the cross-national comparative method. According to Kohn, there are four kinds of cross-national research, distinguished by the different *intent* of the studies. (1) When the country is the *object* of the study, the investigator is interested primarily in the country itself, but he or she may also be interested in (2) the *context* of the study – that is, when the interest is vested in testing the generality of research results concerning social phenomena in two or more countries, (3) the *unit* of analysis when the researcher investigates how social phenomena are systematically related to the characteristics of countries researched, and (4) phenomena that treat “nations” as components of a

larger international system (Kohn 1987, quoted in Øyen 1990: 6). As the objects of analysis in the transnational relationship in the context of diaspora are constituted by various human relations that cross state-borders, I cannot be agree with Kohn, who erroneously reduces the transnational to an analytical device that “treats nations as components of the international system” (Kohn 1987, quoted in Øyen 1990: 6). It is obvious that the author articulated this statement at a time when theoretical and empirical knowledge of transnational relationships was still limited. But as the statement stresses the use of the comparative method in the study of cross-national connections, it can for that reason be methodologically useful for my study as well.

However, comparing the process of diaspora formation and the development of the practice of transborder citizenship among the Kurds in the regions of Stockholm and Marseille with reference to a variety of related features, essential for the embodiments of their cultural, social, political and philanthropic performances, can be an interesting venture. Here, the relevance of the comparative method lies in the first place in exploring a number of issues such as social background and skills, *assabiyya* networks, cyberspace activities, cultural performances, political mobilization and transnational relations that diasporan Kurds manifest differently. It is about elucidating the social, cultural and political orientations of the Kurds in Sweden and France that take place in time and space and demonstrate different past/pasts and different place/places (Werbner 2002: 125).

As far as the diasporan Kurds in France are concerned, the main stress will be placed on those who settled after the beginning of 1990s, in the department of Bouches-du-Rhône, with Marseille as its departmental capital. They came principally from a particular vast Kurdish region in Turkey⁵ called *Sarhad*. The area is adjacent to the Armenian and Iranian borders, and includes districts such as Van, Muş, Erzurum, Kars, Bingöl, Agiri, and Iğdir. Prior to their arrival to France, this group of people lived mainly in rural areas. The principal settlement areas of the Sarhadi Kurds in the French Bouches-du-Rhône can be found

⁵ Today many Kurds (above all those in diaspora) prefer to use the expressions North Kurdistan, South Kurdistan, East Kurdistan and South-West Kurdistan rather than, respectively, Turkish Kurdistan, Iraqi Kurdistan, Iranian Kurdistan and Syrian Kurdistan. Östen Wahlbeck, the author of *Kurdish Diasporas: A comparative study of Kurdish refugee communities* (1999) is aware of these preferences, which give expression to the experiences reported by his Kurdish informants during his fieldwork. At the same time he uses the terms Turkey, Iraq, Iran and “Kurds from Iran, Turkey and Iraq” because, as the author stresses, these are “more easily understood by the reader, but he “for similar reasons” refuses to use the appellations “Turkish Kurd” and “Iraqi Kurd” because they are potentially offensive and contradictory.

in Marseille, Marignane, Vitrolles and Aix-en-Provence, but also in other part of France such as Alsace, Brittany and the Paris region.

The department of Bouches-du-Rhône is a major stronghold of the famous xenophobic political entity *Front National*. The National Front is partly but deeply rooted in the local and departmental industry. Illegal migrants and asylum seekers contribute significantly to the region's economic development, working in different sectors of an ever-expanding informal economy in the region. The Sarhadi Kurds work primarily in the building and restaurant trades. The Kurdistan Workers Party, PKK, constitutes the major driving force of political mobilization among the Kurdish population in the region.

The diasporian Kurds in the region of Stockholm – as in the rest of Sweden – display a higher level of cultural, political and social diversity than the Sarhadi Kurds from the Marseille region. They come from all parts of Kurdistan, have a highly differentiated social background, and engage in various skilled occupations in Swedish society. Diasporan Kurds in Sweden consider the Swedish capital as one of the most important loci of diasporic actions, where they try, through various collective activities, radio and TV broadcasts, literature and music productions, festivals, and so on to preserve and develop their ethno-national and diasporic identity. Kurdish transnational activities are more conspicuous in Sweden than in other European countries, on account of the presence of a relatively large and relatively highly educated Kurdish refugee community in that country (van Bruinessen 1999).

According to Martin van Bruinessen, after Iraqi Kurdistan, Sweden is the country where “the highest cultural activities take place”. It is essential to observe that a significant number of authors, novelists, poets, politicians, political leaders, intellectuals, scholars, artists, musicians, singers and journalist have successively settled in Sweden since the 1970s. Indeed, the number of Kurdish writers in Sweden clearly surpasses the number of those remaining in Kurdistan (Tayfun 1998, quoted in Ahmadzadeh 2003: 165–66). According to Hjertén (1994), the presence of such a Kurdish intelligentsia has created a specific situation where Sweden is now willy nilly an extended Kurdistan. The number of Kurds who interact between their former and new societies continues to increase in Sweden.

However, comparing the regions of Marseille and Stockholm is quite relevant, as they manifest both similar and dissimilar features: similar because they not only appear to be important centers attracting thousands of diasporan Kurds but also continue to attract those in the search of a better life; dissimilar because they receive Kurdish

populations of quite different compositions, and as they operate in two different labor market structures.

Correspondingly, comparing Sweden and France is interesting to the extent that the countries have different historical backgrounds, economic structures and political constellations. However, the point is not to compare the two countries as such, but to explore the implications of each national context for the diasporan Kurds and the way in which they organize their social, cultural and political lives. This implies automatically that we maintain such a comparative approach as well to the two national integration models.

The French integration model is said to be republican, assimilationist, universalist, secular and egalitarian. It has often been criticized for being monocultural (Khosrokhavar 2001), contradictory and also exclusionary vis-à-vis non-native nationals (Hollifield 1997), while the Swedish integration model has been presented as multicultural, whereby different ethnic groups are allowed to make use not only of state subsidies for setting up cultural associations but also of the opportunities to send their children to lessons in their own mother tongues. However, the Swedish multicultural model has been criticized for being paradoxical and discriminatory (Ålund & Schierup 1991), segregationist (Magnusson 2001), racialized and exclusionary (Dahlstedt 2005; Dahlstedt & Hertzberg 2005; Kamali 2006).

Later chapters will deal with the central issues of the extent to which the French and Swedish integration contexts are exclusionary or inclusionary vis-à-vis the refugee and immigrant population in general and diasporan Kurds in particular, and the extent to which the practice of transborder citizenship is discernable among them.

Observing Kurdish diaspora through ethnography

Ethnography is largely derived from the field of anthropology, where researchers spend time in the field to discern both the depth and the complexity of social relations (Jeffrey & Troman 2004; Hammersley 1994; 2006). Originally, the emphasis in ethnography was on studying an entire culture, since the concept of culture was connected to the notions of ethnicity and geographic location. In recent years, the domain of ethnography has been broadened to include the study of virtually any group, society or institution. Ethnography is often perceived as a specific form of qualitative investigation, and its boundaries with other methods, such as discourse analysis and life history work, are somewhat fuzzy (Hammersley 2006: 3). In the last few years, the concept of ethnography has been treated as synonymous with fieldwork, case study and

qualitative research. Fieldwork implies that ethnographers participate in the lives of the people they intend to study over an extended period of time (Merriam 1988; Fangen 1999).

Ethnography uses observations of social life in *natural settings* or fieldwork. The significance of direct *in situ* observations of concrete sequences of social activities (Baszanger & Dodier 2004) in natural settings is that the data consist of entailments and entanglements of social life and not logically derived abstractions made by the observer. Ethnographic practice implies that data on social life should be analysed through contextualizing rather than segmenting them. Ethnography always works to restore “integument” (covering, enclosing) of the data; for instance, as the holistic aspect of the method applies to the natural settings of social life, while its functionalistic aspect is associated with social institutions and processes outside those settings (Merriam 1988; Chock 1986; 1991).

Accordingly, as outlined previously, the experiences of diasporic identity, diaspora formation, transnational practices and the different levels of the development of the practice of transborder citizenship among diasporan Kurds in Sweden and France have been observed in their “natural setting” or within the framework of a wide, specific “time–space related” context in which the Kurds provide accounts of a range of social, cultural and political experiences that are expressed in both negative and positive terms. By a “time–space related” context is meant that the narrative of diasporan Kurds always contains aspects about when and where things have happened.

The temporary dimension of the Kurdish diaspora is constituted by three chronologically situated major phases: a pre-migration period, an intermediary period and a post-migration period. Correspondingly, the spatial aspect of the Kurdish diaspora consists of three principal “places”: the Kurdish homeland of origin at large, the transitional place between the homeland and immigration countries, and the receiving society. Each place embraces a variety of localities, showing, as said above, how diasporan Kurds in Sweden and France, as a result of the growing disjuncture between their territory, their subjectivity and their collective social movements, create new contexts that Appadurai designates as new “translocalities” (Appadurai 1995). It is worth noting that this “time–space” based diasporic context that gives an account of a multitude of events is devoid of relevance if the qualitative dimension of the Kurdish diaspora is not addressed. The qualitative dimension of the Kurdish diaspora, which is interested in the aspect of “how it happened”, refers to the totality of the experiences taking place within all three phases of the diasporic context and exhibited, as

explained in the opening paragraphs of this study, in terms of negative and positive experiences.

However, through contextualizing the Kurdish diaspora, this study aims to produce a consistent body of knowledge about various forms of diasporic involvement among the Kurds in Sweden and France. Likewise, ethnographic observations make it possible to see how the reductionist–ethnicist “victim-related” mainstream discourse of diaspora gives way to a more inclusive and diversified discourse of the Kurdish diasporic identity and diaspora formation among the Kurds.

In this respect the ethnography has been used as a means not only to interpret, analyze and reconstruct socio-cultural data but also to describe symbolic meanings and patterns of social interaction among the Kurds in Sweden and France (Merriam 1988). This is in accordance with what Goetz and LeCompte describe as a method to “recreate for the readers the shared beliefs, practices, artifacts, folk knowledge, and behaviors of same group of people” (Goetz & LeCompte 1984, quoted in Merriam 1988: 23). As for this study, my objective as an ethnographer was to gain entry into the social life of diasporan Kurds through examining the processes of exchange, referring to those cultural and political values and meanings that were produced in their everyday life (Chock 1986; 1991).

Ethnographic fieldwork among diasporan Kurds in Sweden and France

The ethnographic data of this comparative study were collected from a wide-ranging field of research among Kurdish asylum seekers, refugees and immigrants in the regions of Stockholm (Sweden) and Marseille (France) between 2000 and 2004. Complementary information that was acquired in other countries, localities and places was subsequently added to the original data. The collected data were transcribed and complemented several times to make them up-to-date and compatible with the new political and social disorder that has prevailed in the Middle East since the American-led invasion of Iraq in 2003.

For instance, the emergence of a Kurdish *de facto* state in northern Iraq and its gradual consolidation following the American-led invasion of Iraq has drastically affected the process of the diasporic formation, transnational positionality and institutional practices among the Kurds in France and Sweden. Since then, various political alignments and coalitions have emerged within Kurdish society and the Kurdish political movement.

However, this comparative study has made use of the various techniques that are associated with the ethnographic method (Merriam 1988; Fangen 1999), such as open interviews, spontaneous and projected conversations, participant observation, documentary analysis, life histories, and investigator diaries.

Interview and observation, and existing challenges

Interviewing is among the most challenging form of collecting qualitative data. It is considered to be among the most significant aspect of the *observation–interview–documentation* technique used in qualitative research analysis (Sanger 1996). The person-to-person encounter in which one person extracts information from another is the most common form of interview. Moreover, researchers can make use of group or panel formats to elicit data (Merriam 1988). An interview which takes place within an observational context (Sanger 1996) is a conversation with a purpose. Interviewing is a way of discovering behaviors like feelings, thoughts, and intentions that otherwise cannot be observed directly (Merriam 1988). There are various interviewing methods, the choice of which depends on what the researcher intends to find out. In highly structured interviews, questions and the order in which they are asked are planned. This kind of interviewing method is used for surveying large samples, testing hypotheses and quantifying of results. At the other end of the spectrum, more open-ended, less formal and less structured interviews are used principally to “access the perspective of the person being interviewed” (Patton 1980, quoted in Merriam 1988: 73; see also Fangen 1999).

Alongside interviewing, participant observation, the principal method used in this study, is one of the most common methods of ethnography and qualitative data collection. It implies that the observer becomes a participant in the culture or context being observed. Participant observation is a very demanding method, because entering the context and becoming part of it, and collecting, sorting and analyzing field notes are complicated processes. Normally, participant observation requires months or years of intensive work because the researcher needs to become accepted as a natural part of the social context. Fieldwork, which embraces the social and cultural lives of people being observed, involves entering the site, program, institution, and setting the field to observe the object under study (see Merriam 1988; Kemp 2001; Travers 2001; Fangen 2005). Participant observation as a comprehensive method gives a first-hand account of the social context under study, and when “combined with interviewing and document analysis allows for a holistic

interpretation of the phenomenon being investigated” (Merriam 1988: 102).

Furthermore, participant observation pays particular attention to language as data, because both social value and cultural meanings are created and exchanged at least partly through the medium of language. This is why both what people say and what they do not say become an important concern for both observation and analysis. What people say is socially constituted and situated in a given context. Moreover, people’s talk also constitutes their social lives by specifying, creating, questioning, and changing the terms and frames of their activities (Chock 1986; 1991).

Participant observation faces some major challenges. According to Merriam, the biases an investigator brings to the situation constitute an acute problem, because such biases, inherent to all investigations, affect the way in which the observer sees, records and interprets the data. The researcher affects and is affected by the setting, and this interaction may lead to a distorted perception of the real situation. Furthermore, the schizophrenic aspect of being both participant and observer at the same time creates more problems of bias (Merriam 1988).

As for this study, the method of participant observation enabled me to observe the experiences of diasporan Kurds in both time and space. It was accompanied by many conversations, conducted with different Kurdish notables and ordinary people within various institutions, associations and networks in the regions of Marseille and Stockholm. Along with meticulous observations and numerous conversations, a total of 22 open, semi-structured interviews were conducted. Before and during interviews, I took care to select the interviewees so as to ensure that they would be largely representative of Kurdish diasporic society as a whole. To this end people of different ages and from different sexual, social and political backgrounds were chosen.

In France, an association named *La Maison du Peuple Kurde*, based in Marseille and one of the venues most frequented by Kurds, constituted an important part of my fieldwork. This association performs a multitude of functions for the Kurdish population in the department of Bouches-du-Rhône. It works not only as an instrument of mediation between the Kurds and the local French authorities and the local French entrepreneurs and enterprises but also as an instance of social regulation and political mobilization within the Kurdish community itself.

As I explained at the beginning of this chapter, my acquaintance with Sarhadi Kurds, their social organization and their diasporic activities dates back to the years 1997–98, when I was residing in Provence for the purpose of carrying out studies in political science at the *Institut d’Études Politiques* in Aix-en-Provence. Accordingly, my

earlier contacts with Sarhadi Kurds enabled me to access an important network of different people, which considerably facilitated the fieldwork that I would conduct some years later. Even though I have followed the lives of Sarhadi Kurds continuously in the region of Marseille, it was in 2002 that I first started my systematic field research among them.

I had my first prolonged sojourn among the Sarhadi Kurds in the region in the summer of 2002, followed by shorter or longer sojourns in 2003, 2004, 2005 and 2006. The longest stay took place in 2003. As I had decided to engage in ethnographic fieldwork, participant observation and conversation would constitute the major methods of this study. Consequently I had envisaged using interviewing as a complementary method. However, I conducted an important proportion of my observations inside the association, while observing people and talking to them outside the association was not excluded from plans. Alongside exploring the physical and symbolic aspects of the place, I observed how each afternoon people – almost exclusively male visitors – crowded the association, where they sat around the tables, drank tea and talked about various topics such as the political situation in Kurdistan, the PKK, their asylum cases, their work, families, and so on

As I was to a certain extent empathetic toward my field, I was more often than not invited to join their company and participate in their spontaneous discussions. My Kurdish background and my knowledge of languages – in this case Turkish and Kurdish (North Kurdish or Kurmanji) – was a supplementary advantage that facilitated my entrée into the field. In the course of time I became more and more familiar with the visitors of the association, and this was an advantage to me in conducting conversations and interviews. As I had decided not to limit my field research to a single place, so my observations and conversations were also extended to the places of work and to a lesser extent the homes of Kurds in the region. In company with some friends, I visited various places of work, sometimes in remote areas where Sarhadi Kurds were recruited to build houses and apartments. Whenever I realized that it was inappropriate to hold conversations or carry out interviews in workplaces, it was always possible to make an agreement with the individuals to meet them somewhere in the town. In order to compensate for the lack of female interviewees, my friends often invited me to pay visits to Kurdish families in Marseille, Aix-en-Provence, Marseilles and Aubagne.

In Stockholm, three Kurdish umbrella organizations constituted my principal interview field. They are the Federation of Kurdish Associations in Sweden (*Kurdiska Riksförbundet i Sverige*), the Council of Kurdish Associations in Sweden (*Kurdiska Rådet i Sverige*) and the Kurdish Union (*Kurdiska Unionen*). These organizations operate on behalf of their affiliated associations at the national level, and they are

in various ways connected to Kurdish political formations. I conducted interviews and conversations with, and carried out regular participant observations among, Kurdish notables and ordinary individuals both within and outside these associations.

It was up to a point easier to carry out the field research among diasporan Kurds in Sweden. The reasons could be many. For instance, my being a permanent Swedish resident automatically gave me better access to the Kurdish social networks, associations and other diasporic organizations. The presence of a more diversified Kurdish population in Sweden was a supplementary factor that contributed to more mobility and flexibility in the field.

However, for the interviews I used a tape recorder except in cases where the informant preferred not to be recorded. I always had an interview structure to follow, but it was just as necessary to maintain a flexible attitude. Both interviews and conversations were intended to cover narratives of Kurdistan, routes of exile, asylum situation, settlement in the new society and diasporic activities. I interviewed Kurds in their associations, workplaces and residences.

As indicated above, this study's ethnographic data collected in the first place among diasporan Kurds in Sweden and France were bolstered by complementary information acquired among Kurds in other countries, localities and places. With this in view, document consultations, conversations and observations were conducted within the Kurdish institutions and networks and also among Kurdish asylum seekers, both *en route* and *sur place*, refugees and immigrants in among other places Belgium, Italy, Germany and Iraqi Kurdistan. Between 2002 and 2004 I several times visited the Kurdistan Information Office(s) in Berlin and Italy, the Kurdistan National Congress (KNK) and ROJ-TV in Belgium.

Moreover, in 2004 I traveled to Iraqi Kurdistan, where I met both ordinary people and various political and cultural notables who had connections with European countries in order to gain a better insight into the political, cultural and social orientations of the Kurdish immigrants and refugees toward their societies of origin (Wahlbeck 1999). During my sojourns in Iraqi Kurdistan I even visited the main military base of the PKK in the mountains of *Qandil*, at the meeting point of the Iranian, Turkish and Iraqi borders, where I came across Danish, Swedish and Norwegian citizens of Kurdish origin. These people justified their presence in these remote mountainous areas by proclaiming that they were there in order to fulfill their national obligation, serve the Kurdish political cause with their energy and skill and bring back with them at least a part of the Kurdish political movement once they are back in western Europe.

By way of providing information about France and Sweden and their related political, cultural and economic institutions, at least to the extent that it affects the political and cultural performances of the diasporan Kurds in the two countries, different official documents and reports and even various official Internet sites have been visited. In this respect, my relatively good knowledge of French made the task easier for me. Furthermore, a considerable volume of French literature has been drawn on to complementing the knowledge provided here.

Cyber-ethnography among the Kurds

I have conducted large-scale cyber-ethnographic field research, mostly through visiting a range of different Kurdish websites and chat rooms. The objective was to establish how the Kurds maintain an online relationship at the global level (Carter 2005) and develop it into diasporic cultural and political projects. In that respect, one could say that the Kurdish nationalist movement has been partially transformed into an online cyberspace-conceived virtual community.

In recent years cyber-ethnography has become one of the most appropriate tools of research for those who intend to reach a definition of virtual community (Ward 1999). Through cyber-ethnography anthropological research methods and questions have been transferred into cyberspace, where ethnographic practices evolve in an online context (Gajjala 2002) by studying how technological change such as computer-mediated communication affects social interaction and the creation of new virtual communities (Skinner 2005). As a reflexive methodology cyber-ethnography enables geographically distant individuals to come together to occupy new social spaces online and to define their own reality and perimeters (Ward 1999; Carter 2005).

I have regularly visited and examined Kurdish Internet sites, maintained online conversations with different people and conducted cyber-ethnographic participant observation in a set of Kurdish chat rooms at *Windows Live Messenger*, *Yahoo Messenger* and above all *Paltalk*⁶.

A large number of Kurdish websites – mostly registered in Western countries – publish and circulate information about Kurds. The majority of them are the result of individual initiative to serve private ends, but there are also a good number of individual blogs and websites

⁶ Paltalk is an online chat service for voice and video chatting, with more than 4 million registered users. Categorized chat rooms are also offered, the most popular being those devoted to culture, politics, economy, music and religion, where people play music and sing songs. Users can also chat with their friends from MSN, Yahoo, ICQ and AIM/AOL (Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org>, 2007-02-12.).

that systematically provide their readers⁷ not only with articles on different subjects but also with fresh news about various political and cultural events that concern the daily lives of Kurds. Visiting these websites enabled me able to stay informed not only about political development in Kurdistan but also about those transnational and diasporic activities of Kurds in various countries. As most of the Kurdish websites would advertise, for example, a cultural event, a *Newroz* celebration or a political demonstration in such and such a country or locality, I could at a distance follow developments that concerned my field of study. For instance, as I resided in Sweden – Stockholm at that time – I could, through visiting the Kurdish websites and chat rooms or watching Kurdish satellite TV, above all Roj-TV, easily find out about the activities of diasporan Kurds in the region of Marseille. After the event in question, I could always find a well-written report about it, sometimes accompanied by a great number of digital photos.

At *Paltalk*, where the Kurds are among the most established communities in the category “Ethnic Groups”, I have regularly visited online various Kurdish chat rooms, which started up as early as 2001. Usually, Kurds, above all those in diaspora, have access to a large number of chat rooms that they use as platforms for amusement, social intercourse or political and organizational activities.

Depending on the nature of the visits, the number of chat rooms and also the number of visitors in each room can vary from 15 to 40. It has happened that I have been denied access to a room as the number of attendants of each chat room should not exceed 250. Normally there are a couple of “administrators” in each chat room who keep order. As for me, like any other visitor I first registered myself as a user of *Paltalk*, then chose a nickname and entered online. In line with my initial plans, my visit to the chat room could last from a short stay to a significantly longer one. There were times when I stayed in the room, in accordance with the participant observation method in cyberspace, and listened to the “never-ending” discussions on political, cultural and religious issues that generally concerned Kurdish politics in Kurdistan but also the lives of Kurds in diaspora. I also witnessed how visitors recommended to each other music and songs from different parts of Kurdistan. Moreover, I held hundreds of online conversations with the visitors. The best way to make a participant engage in an online conversation was to send an instant message to the person in question. The acceptance of my invitation by a potential informant signified directly that we were already in a private room where we could talk to each other by means of text or voice. It twice happened that an informant

⁷ Certain Kurdish websites claim that they have at best up to 30,000 visitors per day.

refused to hold a conversation with me as he or she discovered my intention. Generally, there was no need to reveal my identity as it was as easy for me as for anyone else to be one visitor among hundreds.

The problem with cyber-ethnography at *Paltalk* is that the number of male visitors is much higher than that of female visitors. Moreover, there is also an asymmetric attendance across countries. According to my observations, globally speaking Sweden has the larger proportion of the Kurdish *Paltalk* users, while the share of users among the Sarhadi Kurds in the Marseille region is minimal.

Time and mode of ethnography

As for ethnographic projects, they are “never finished, only left, with their accounts considered provisional and tentative” (Walker 1986, quoted in Jeffrey & Troman 2004: 538). It is however, the researchers themselves who define the length of the project and determine its closure. According to Jeffrey & Troman, an ethnographic research project may become a long, episodic narrative that is developed throughout the whole of researcher’s life, or it may vary according to access limitations, project time and the questions raised. Based on their own research projects, the authors identify three different time modes that constitute the nature of ethnographic practice. A *compressed time mode* implies a short period of intense ethnographic fieldwork in which researchers inhabit a research site almost permanently for anything from a few days to a month. A *selective intermittent time mode* involves a very flexible approach to the frequency of site visits. In this time mode the length of time spent on the research may be between three months and two years. The main feature of this time mode is depth of study, which entails progressive focusing for a sustained period. Finally, a *recurrent time mode* is one where the research methodology is formalized by temporal phases and the research project aims “to gain a picture by sampling the same temporal phases, e.g. beginning and ends of terms, school celebratory periods such as Christmas, examination periods, and inspections” (Jeffrey & Troman 2004: 538–544).

The ethnographic time mode of the present study is largely comparable to what Jeffrey & Troman call “a selective intermittent time mode”, as a flexible attitude was maintained concerning not only the frequency of visits and the length of time spent during fieldwork but also the quantity of fields that have been investigated. As indicated previously, the length of time was flexible, and visited fields were numerous, spanning several state borders. In this respect, the selection of a length of time for two years (2002–4), with the possibility of further

complementary intervention in the years that followed, is an indication of the flexible approach of this study.

Thus, the “multi-sited” ethnography (Marcus 1998) that was used in this study allowed me to see the research fields’ multiple local, national and transnational sites within a broader network of social relations in which the process of diasporic formation, transnational relations and the practice of transborder citizenship among Kurds in Sweden and France largely reflect those various positions of power and their struggle for survival and self-realization. This will be developed in the coming chapters.

However, maintaining a flexible attitude vis-à-vis the methods and techniques used and the appointed timetable of this study was very helpful for discerning the depth and the complexity of social structures and relations, the process of diasporic formation and the practice of transborder citizenship that diasporan Kurds experience in Sweden and France.

Undertaking such large-scale ethnographic research was no easy task. Often, my “insider position” was an advantageous factor for gaining entry and confidence in the fields. My informants perceived it as something positive, because it seemed to them that I was about to do “something good for the Kurd”. It was a way for me as a researcher to establish a role based on reciprocal confidence and to develop an understanding of the situation of the participants (Silverman, quoted in Fangen 1999: 1-2 Appendix). However, during the fieldwork I encountered several moments of challenge and difficulties connected to my “insider position”.

Dilemma of insiderness and ethical aspects

When a researcher belongs to the same ethnic, religious, cultural, national and linguistic group that she or he investigates, issues of insider positionality arise. Being an insider affects not only the study participants with whom the researcher interacts, but also the way in which she or he interprets and presents the study findings (O’Connor 2004). The dilemma of insiderness becomes more concrete when the ethnographer is considered to be in the service of a political establishment and professional body or an intellectual organization who seeks to promote the interests of marginalized, exploited or dominated groups. According to Martyn Hammersley, both of these orientations increase the danger of systematic bias. The author outlines that understanding people should not entail sharing their beliefs or being obliged to offer them support, because

this “would considerably reduce the range of people that could be studied” (Hammersley 2006: 11; see also Hammersley 1998).

As for the ethnographic research of this study, it is important to throw light on the so-called insider position that I held among diasporan Kurds in Sweden and France. During the fieldwork I made ceaseless efforts to remain aware that my own background as a former political refugee from a part of Kurdistan, and perhaps my sympathy for the Kurdish cause in general, should not impede me from treating objectively and with due distance the points of view and actions of the those people whom I interviewed and observed. Likewise, the “sympathetic” attitude that I was obliged to maintain vis-à-vis my informants on certain occasions was in one way or another an approach to gaining a better insight into their social and political lives. Through holding an empathetic stance a number of authors have helped to provide new explanations for the position of fieldworkers. The empathetic relationship would enable the fieldworker to make transparent, reconstruct and understand the points of view of the “others”, portrayed most often in the form of collective conscience or culture (Baszanger & Dodier 2004). Meanwhile, I was attentive to the risks that an empathetic relationship would imply for my study. Hammersley outlines that today there is a “strong tendency among some qualitative researchers to treat informants differently, according to whether they belong to dominant or subordinate groups” (Hammersley 2006: 11). Moreover, the empathetic relationship is vulnerable to the criticism that arises from “hermeneutic interpretation of texts and actions”, and certain anthropologists (among them Geertz) distance themselves from the empathetic schema and reintegrate the concept of culture in a hermeneutic process. In this respect, activities are read like texts (Baszanger & Dodier 2004). However, it is essential for the fieldworker to be aware of the risks that an empathetic relationship would entail. At the same time, she or he should keep in mind that the tradition to which the ethnographer belongs can influence – consciously or otherwise – interpretative acts from the field (Baszanger & Dodier 2004). Similarly, the interpretation of the ethnographic data can be influenced by those analytic models and theoretical perspectives that the researcher chooses for her or his investigation.

As indicated previously, the aim of this study is to construct a wide-ranging and heterogeneous context within which the experiences of diasporic identity, diasporic formation, transnational relations, political mobilization, institutional practices, *assabiyya* and social networks among Kurdish refugees and immigrants in Sweden and France take shape. In doing so, a range of concepts and theoretical perspectives on diaspora formation, transnational relations, and transborder citizenship,

assabiyya, and so on have been used. The flexible and multidimensional theoretical approach of this study provides the necessary mechanism for avoiding the possible risks that are connected to the dilemma of being an insider.

Placing these experiences within the framework of a large specific time–space related context where the Kurds bring forward through their narratives a range of social, cultural and political experiences that are exhibited both negatively and positively is in one way or another a way to dismiss the “essentialist/historicist” conception of identity and national origin that according to Vali prevails not only in Kurdish nationalist circles but also among a significant number of Kurdish nationalist scholars (like Jamal Nebez, Muhammad Amin Zaki, or Kamal Madhar Ahmad) who conveniently identify national identity with “human nature, as a quality inherent in the human individual, defining his/her social and political existence” (Vali 2003: 59). Through adopting a constructivist approach, the risk of the bias that insidership and an empathic relationship entail will be largely reduced. In this respect, this study does not intend to focus uniquely on the Kurds as a victimized, “marginalized, exploited and dominated” (Hammersley 2006: 11) group. It will instead criticize the nationalist claim, which is “essentialist” and “historicist”.

Regarding my awareness of the dilemma of insidership and the danger of the bias and partiality, the following example is illustrative. When I was carrying out my observations within *La Maison du Peuple Kurde* in Marseille, I noticed that the statements of its Kurdish members and visitors about the major political and social issues that concerned the Kurdish political movement, the PKK and French politics and society were highly similar. I soon realized that the situation arose from the control that the PKK exerts on this population through its effective organization and its powerful ideological presence. Considered from a Foucauldian perspective, the PKK has throughout the years elaborated a normalizing and disciplinizing discourse (McHoul & Wendy 1995) among its militants and even among non-adherent individuals which determines the boundary between what should be said and what should not be said. Accordingly, I ensured that I did not directly share the beliefs that were conveyed by this group of people. Instead, I decided to go beyond what was said in order to find out what was unsaid.

Questioning the “impartiality” of researchers who undertake investigations into their own ethnic, religious or diasporan groups does not always seem to be a productive attitude. There are researchers who see their “insider position” as an advantage, provided that they are engaged in awareness of conditionality and critical reflexivity throughout the investigation so that “positionality is made apparent”. Patricia

O'Connor, who has conducted research into the contemporary Irish immigrant community in Australia, says that insiders and outsiders are “neither hierarchical nor mutually exclusive positionalities but rather they could simultaneously co-exist and alternate within the same interactional event’ (O'Connor 2004: 175).

3. Forced Migration and the Formation of the Kurdish Diaspora: A General View

This chapter endeavors to give not only an account of the contemporary Kurdish nationalist movement that has been advancing in Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria since the end of the First World War, but also an account of the journey of the Kurdish refugees in order to provide in the first place a comprehensive explanation of the experiences of forced migration, which are perceived negatively by diasporan Kurds in France and Sweden. As Stephen Castles claims, forced migration, including refugee flows, asylum seekers, internal displacement and development-induced displacement has increased considerably in volume since the end of the Cold War (Castles 2003). In this respect, it is important to pose the questions of why the Kurds escape from Kurdistan, how they cover their migration trajectories and refugee routes, and the implications of these negative experiences for their resettlement and their political involvement in the new societies. It is also important to observe how the emergence of a number of new possibilities (both in Kurdistan and in diaspora), relating for instance to the experience of cyber activities, the establishment of satellite TV and radio broadcasts and the emergence of a *de facto* Kurdish state in northern Iraq, has become a turning-point in the diasporic lives of the Kurds as they gradually distance themselves from an idealized and a victim-related homeland discourse in order to conceive a more positive and dynamic account of their diasporic identity. In this respect, the involvement of Kurds in the practice of “long-distance nationalism”, formerly determined more often than not by the discourse of victim diaspora, gradually becomes an indication of the practice of transborder citizenship that has not cease to grow since the establishment of the Kurdish autonomous administration in northern Iraq.

Moreover, this chapter will present the cartography of the Kurdish diaspora in order to illustrate the history of the geographic dispersal of the Kurds at the global level. As the new communication technologies today interconnect in one way or another all Kurdish diasporic communities, wherever they reside, so the illustration of such cartography results in a better understanding of the position of diasporan Kurds in France and Sweden and of their differences. In other words, the social organization of the Kurdish diaspora in France and Sweden cannot

be seen in isolation, as it is part of an evolving transnational network that not only connects the Kurdish “homeland of origin” and the society of residence but also crosses the borders of several other nation-states (Glick Schiller *et al.* 1995; Vertovec & Cohen 1999).

Perceiving the Kurdish identity beyond the notion of “origin” and the Kurdish victim diaspora discourse

Who are the Kurds, and what is the Kurdish identity? Is their identity about a number of common “acquired characteristics”, “culture and traditions”, or a common “ethnic origin”, or is it perhaps a political discourse or ideology that revisits history in order to legitimize its current nationalistic claims?

Kurdish nationalism is a modern construction from the 20th century that is built on the foundation of a common culture, a contiguous homeland, a myth of common origin, a similar language, and above all a history of bitter conflict with dominant states. Kurds believe they are the descendents of the Medes, who were incorporated into the Persian Empire in the sixth century BC (Harff & Gurr 2004: 39). Vali describes the contemporary Kurdish nationalist historical and political discourse as essentialist, because it considers the Kurds as a “uniform nation” that has “sovereign rights” to create a “Greater Kurdistan”; a Kurdistan which is currently ruled by the three sovereign states of Iran, Turkey, and Syria, and in a different way by Iraq. According to Vali, even though the prevailing Kurdish nationalist discourse recognizes the current fragmentation of the nationalist political project resulting from the division of Kurdistan, but maintains “the notion of uniform community and identity, conceived as expression of common origin”, it remains as a result unable to “supersede the existing political boundaries and the structural diversity of Kurdish society in the region” (Vali 2003: 58). In other words, the Kurdish narrative of the common identity and ethnic origin, culture, language, traditions and history is largely conceived by the prerequisites of modern Kurdish nationalism, which is at the same time an important source of political mobilization in diaspora.

As outlined above, the mainstream Kurdish victim diaspora discourse, even though shaken by new diasporic realities, adopts the same essentialist disposition. For instance, the overemphasis on the concept of an “oppressed nation” in the popular Kurdish narrative of exile can be seen also as an inherent feature of the Kurdish mainstream nationalist discourse. In the ethnicist approach, which Vali sharply criticizes, notions of Kurdish community and identity are both “premised on the common national origin, defined in terms of a uniform Kurdish ethnicity” (Vali

2003: 59). Vali judges the essentialist model to be too general and simplistic, and thereby unable to seize the historical specificity and the political and ideological diversity of Kurdish nationalism. Failing to address “the wide conceptual and political variation” of the Kurdish nationalist movement has, according to Vali, been inherent in the essentialist discourse since the beginning of the 20th century (Vali 2003: 59). However, the claims of a nationalistic ideology “are always intrinsic to its subjects – individuals or collective – whose intentions and actions – real or assumed – form the structure of the historical narratives of the origins and development of the ideology” (Vali 2003: 1).

The victim diaspora discourse that strongly prevails among the majority of diasporan Kurds is largely compatible with the dominant primordialist–ethnicist approach of the Kurdish nationalist discourse, which seeks the legitimacy and the *raison d’être* of the Kurdish nation and the Kurdish diasporic identity in history and historical arguments (Vali 2003: 1). Subsequent to a comprehensive population movement and the formation of a significant Kurdish diaspora, not only has the idea of Kurdish nationalism been transferred outside Kurdistan but it was in diaspora that the idea of nationalism took advantage of the democratic circumstances in the West and systematically advanced and reproduced itself.

However, as the largest stateless nation in the world, the Kurds, contrary to what the somewhat simplistic or reductionist victim diaspora discourse claims, constitute a highly heterogeneous population, whose identity embraces a variety of cultural, linguistic, social, religious, geographic and political manifestations. The majority of Kurds are Sunni Muslims, while there are also a number of other significant religious formations such as of Shiite, Jew, Christian, *Alevi*, *Yarsani*, and *Yezidi*, in Kurdistan.

For instance, Yezidism, which is said to represent a mythical interpretation of Islam and claims to have ancient Zoroastrian roots, has similar features to Yarsanism (also known as *Ahl-e-Haqq*) in Iranian and Iraqi Kurdistan and *Alevi* in Turkish Kurdistan. Yezidis constitute a small ethno-religious group of approximately 300,000 Kurdish-speaking (predominantly North Kurdish) people in Iraq, Turkey and Syria. Both *Yezidis* and *Yarsanis* are persecuted from within the Muslim majority, having often been designated as “devil-worshippers”. As a result a considerable number of *Yezidis* have had to leave their native lands. Today, many of them live in Germany (see Izady 1992; Ackermann 2004; Sökefeld 2004). On the linguistic level, North Kurdish (Kurmanji), South Kurdish (Sorani), *Dimli* (*Zaza*), *Hawrami* and *Kalhori-Feili* are the five main dialects that, together with a number of sub-dialects, make up the Kurdish language.

Even though the Kurds share the tragic experience of being oppressed and the recurrent claim to the rights of a nation-state (Griffiths 2002), they have never been in a position to develop a common political project to set up a Kurdish state for all Kurds. Instead, each part of Kurdistan developed its own political agenda, drawn up and promoted by a multitude of political parties and organizations over the years. To gain an insight into the Kurdish political landscape, it suffices to mention the PKK, HAK-PAR, PSK, PWD and DTP (Turkey), PYD, KDPS, PDPKS and Rêkeftin (Syria), PUK, KDP, the Toiler Party of Kurdistan, the Islamic United Front of Kurdistan, the Islamic Movement of Kurdistan (Iraq), and KDPI, KDP-I, Revolutionary Komala, Kurdistan Organization of the Communist Party of Iran – Komala, PJAK and PAK (Iran).

However, the current heterogeneous social, cultural and political diversity of Kurdistan is hardly compatible with the mainstream Kurdish nationalist discourse, which seeks to conceive of the genesis of Kurdish identity in terms of a uniform origin. Vali refuses to espouse such an essentialist approach, because he considers the Kurdish national identity as a modern phenomenon whose genesis should be imagined as a matter of power relations in the “relationship of the self and other with the emergent Turkish, Persian and Arab identities in the early decades of present centuries”. Vali stresses that the emerging Kurdish identity should not be imagined in terms of a uniform origin; as it is never fixed or stable, it should be seen instead as the “divided relationship of self and other, ever-present in every instance of recognition/denial, rebellion/suppression; it is continuously inscribed and re-inscribed in a new system of differences and significations” (Vali 2003: 104).

The rise of Kurdish nationalism and forced migration in Kurdistan: historical background

Estimated to number between 30 million and 35 million, the Kurds, constitute the fourth largest group in the Middle East (after Arabs, Turks and Persians) but are denied political and cultural rights (Hassanpour & Mojab 2004; Vali 2003). The Kurds have found it hard to stamp their identity on a world in which they are split by the constraints of geography among four countries and politically and economically marginalized within them.

The division of Kurdistan between these four sovereign states, and Kurdish life under the jurisdictions of Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria, became a permanent reality after 1923, when the Treaty of Lausanne was signed between the new Turkish state and the victorious allied countries of the First World War. This agreement, which did not mention the Kurds

by name, skipped over the earlier Treaty of Sèvres (1920), which sought to guarantee statehood to Armenia, Kurdistan and Arabia (*cf.* Vanly 1992 Chaliand 1994; Wahlbeck 1999; McDowall 2000). The break-up of the Ottoman Empire after the First World War created a number of new states, but not a separate Kurdistan.

The new national entities such as Iraq, Turkey, Iran, Syria and even the Soviet Union of Stalin largely followed in the footsteps of the Ottoman and Persian empires when it came to the matters of displacement, deportation and, in generally, maltreatment of the Kurdish people, even if it occurred in different historical and political contexts.

Before the First World War traditional Kurdish life was nomadic, revolving around sheep and goat herding throughout the Mesopotamian plains and highlands of Turkey and Iran. At that time the idea of a separate Kurdish state was the concern of only a few urban intellectuals (Harff & Gurr 2004: 43).

During the early 20th century more Kurds began to consider the concept of nationalism, a notion introduced by the British, accompanied by the division of traditional Kurdistan among neighboring countries. The 1920 Treaty of Sèvres, which created the modern states of Iraq, Syria and Kuwait, included the possibility of a Kurdish state in the region, but this was never implemented. After the overthrow of the Turkish monarchy by Kemal Ataturk, Turkey, Iran and Iraq each agreed not to recognize an independent Kurdish state. Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, father of the modern Turkish state, swept aside the Allied demands for freedom of language and culture that had been written into the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne. Then, as later, Turkey's political and strategic importance in containing the Soviet Union overrode other considerations (see Chaliand 1994; Wahlbeck 1999; McDowall 2000; Harff & Gurr 2004).

According to Amir Hassanpour and Sharzad Mojab, the act of forging citizens into a nation, often accompanied by violence, may cause considerable demographic engineering by, among other means, uprooting entire populations. Hassanpour and Mojab show that, for purposes of assimilation, modern states have used, alongside the army and other coercive organs, institutions such as national language, literature, art, education, radio and television. In contrast to their antecedent empires, nationalistic modern Middle Eastern states such as Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey have used such national institutions to equip themselves to "Arabize", "Persianize" and "Turkify" their Kurds (Hassanpour and Mojab 2004: 216).

Having been denied, in the era of nation building, the formation of their own nation-state with internationally recognized territory and borders, the Kurds have instead within each country been

subjected to the politics of assimilation and in many cases to systematic violence. In Turkey, using the names ‘Kurd’ and ‘Kurdistan’ has, since the mid-1920s been a criminal offence on the grounds that violates the “indivisibility of the Turkish nation” and the “territorial integrity of the state” (Hassanpour and Mojab 2004; Vali 2003).

Kurds in Turkey: from total denial to folkloristic existence

In Turkey, the period of the Ottoman Empire’s disintegrating and the initial phase of the new regime was marked by several ethnic conflicts, deportations, population exchanges and popular insurrections that were brutally suppressed by Turkish forces. The most tragic of all these events was the genocide of 1.5 million Armenians in 1915.

The implementation of Kemalism in Turkey, which was the official ideology of this new nation-state, was according to Östen Wahlbeck largely alien to the multi-ethnic environment of the Middle East and Anatolia (Wahlbeck 1999: 44). National liberation, secularism, territorial unity, modernization, centralization, the army and the unity of the language and culture were among the principal concepts that constituted the foundation stones of the Kemalist doctrine in this country. Such a restrictive ideological climate, however, leaves no room for the *others* to display their political and cultural existence in the public sphere (Khayati 2007).

In 1924 the Kurdish language was banned. Thereafter almost all other cultural and symbolic manifestations of Kurdish life were prohibited. The names and appellations of Kurdish cities, towns, villages, rivers, mountains, springs, ways, lakes, and so on have been changed into Turkish through a range of laws. The Turkish state, reluctant in all situations to mention the word ‘Kurd’, began to call the Kurdish people “mountain Turks” (Hassanpour & Mojab 2004). However, the creation of a modern and homogeneous Turkish state has suppressed not only the ethnic and cultural differences in Anatolia (Harff & Gurr 2004) but also the traditional political and administrative organization of the society (van Bruinessen 1999; 2000). The new political climate was the underlying cause of several Kurdish rebellions, such as Sheikh Said’s revolt in 1925, Ihsan Nuri Pasha’s insurrection in 1932, and Seid Reza Dersimi’s uprising between 1936 and 1938 (*cf.* Vanly 1992; Wahlbeck 1999; McDowall 2000).

Many Kurds attach great importance to the Sheikh Said’s rebellion. Even though the official Turkish ideology legitimizes the suppression of this rebellion for being “traditional”, “tribal”, “reactionary” and consequently “destructive” vis-à-vis the modern

Turkish state, Robert Olson considers Sheikh Said's revolt as the first large-scale nationalist rebellion by the Kurds. Olson gives an account of its secular, religious and tribal elements. For instance, the secular political organization Azadi played a fundamental role within the organizational structure of the rebellion. Likewise, Kurdish intellectuals and military officers were at the heart of the nationalist movement in terms of organization and recruitment. According to Olson, the choice of Sheikh Said as the leader of the rebellion can be seen as a deliberate act by the leadership of Azadi. The rebellion's religious character was the result of Azadi's assessment of the strategy and tactics necessary for carrying out a successful revolution. Basically a nationalist rebellion, it made use of religion in terms of mobilization, propaganda and symbols (Olson 1989; Bozarslan 1997).

Many Kurds praise Sheikh Said for his heroic appearance and his legendary speech defending the Kurdish cause at the trial that the Turkish army held after the rebellion was suppressed. He was hanged together with 46 of his companions in Diyarbakir in 1925 (McDowall 2000).

As for the rebellion of Ihsan Nuri Pasha in 1932, which had its stronghold in the region of Sarhad, in the Agiri area, the ambition was to create a Kurdish state. Ihsan Nuri, the leader of the revolt, tried to copy the Turkish model in order to create a nationalist movement that would have at its disposal distinguished political and military structures. But traditional Kurdish society was hardly ready to respond to Ihsan Nuri's political aspirations. The rebellion of Nuri Pasha, known also as the "Agiri revolt", which was also actively opposed by neighboring Iran and the Soviet Union at that time, found it hard to resist the attacks of Turkish army. After the suppression, Ihsan Nuri Pasha was given sanctuary in Iran. He passed away following a traffic accident in Tehran, the Iranian capital, in 1975 (Vanly 1992; McDowall 2000).

The rebellion of Seid Reza, which lasted between 1936 and 1938 in the region of Dersim (presently called Tunceli), stirs powerful sentiments among the Kurds, as the suppression of the uprising was followed by an unprecedented massacre of local Kurds carried out by the Turkish army. According to Martin van Bruinessen, this area of Kurdistan, which is situated in high, snow-capped mountains, was the last district which the Turkish state tried to bring under its control or, as the official language had it, to "pacify" and "civilize". Seid Reza, the leader of the rebellion, was a religious person, but this had not hindered many Kurdish nationalists, or Armenian people who had survived the massacre of 1915, from taking part in the uprising against the Turks. Van Bruinessen (1994) claims that, along with the atrocities of the Turkish army, the population of Dersim suffered enormously from religious,

linguistic and inter-tribal conflicts. In a book published in 1990 in Turkey, the prominent Turkish sociologist Isamil Beşikçi⁸ accused Turkey's one-party regime of the 1930s of having committed genocide in the Kurdish district of Dersim (van Bruinessen (1994).

The brutal suppression of these revolts is evidence that the homogenizing Kemalist ideology was extremely intolerant toward the Kurdish aspiration for claiming national rights. According to Wahlbeck, any expression of Kurdish identity or culture was considered as a manifestation of separatism and a real threat to national unity. Those who infringed the norms were regarded as criminals and punished with harsh prison sentences (Wahlbeck 1999: 45).

Besides the suppression and the banishment of their culture and ethnic identity, Kurds suffer fundamentally from the social and economic underdevelopment of their region in south-east Turkey. In this regard a Kurdish politician in Stockholm stresses:

The Kurdish region is characterized by high rates of illiteracy, high birth and mortality rates and poor health services. The Ankara government has during decades systematically subtracted resources from the Kurdish region. As a result of such a structural disparity between the regions, there are two distinct Turkeys: the northern and western regions are highly developed and cosmopolitan, part of the "first world," while the south and east are truly of the "third world".

As a reaction to the attempted cultural assimilation of 15 million Kurds and to the structural discrimination that drastically affects Kurdish society in Turkey, the PKK launched its first attacks against Turkish military targets in 1984. This organization was able to create a sizable social base that included a considerable portion of workers, peasants and the middle-class students and intellectuals coming not only from the Kurdish region but also from Istanbul and Ankara. There are also many PKK adherents in the Kurdish diaspora in western Europe, Lebanon, central Asia, the Caucasus and Iranian, Iraqi and Syrian Kurdistan. According to Amir Hassanpoor, membership of the PKK has been open to women, and the PKK now claims to have thousands of women in its ranks (Hassanpoor 1994).

However, the response of the Turkish government to the Kurdish nationalist movement was not only one of armed force, but in practice also involved an upsurge in the persecution of all Kurds in

⁸ Beşikçi was the first and for a long time the only Turkish intellectual to publicly criticize Turkey's official ideology and politics for being harmful to the Kurds. The price he paid for his moral and intellectual courage and conviction was high: all his books were banned and he spent more than ten years in prison for writing them and also for defending the Kurdish cause (van Bruinessen 1994).

eastern Turkey (Wahlbeck 1999). During the years of intensive war in the 1990s, the Turkish state deployed some 300,000 troops in the south-east at an annual cost of \$8 billion. Further, the Turkish armed forces instituted a system of “village guards,” paying and arming Kurds to keep PKK guerrillas out of their villages. Villages that refused to participate in the guard system faced demolition by the Turkish military, while those that went along with the Turkish army suffered from harsh reprisals by the PKK. The war escalated dramatically in the early 1990s. According to a report published by Human Right Watch in 1993, between 1991 and 1993 the military razed more than 3,000 Kurdish villages to the ground in an effort to root out PKK sympathizers, creating more than 3 million refugees (van Bruinessen 1999). Subsequently the displaced people were forced to settle in shanty towns in urban areas, so becoming integrated in the misery that already existed (Berruti *et al.* 2002). Between 1984 (the beginning of the guerrilla insurgency in south-eastern Turkey) and 1999 (when the PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan was captured), more than 35,000 people were killed, the majority of them civilians (Berruti *et al.* 2002).

Moreover, extra-judicial killings and “disappearances” have complemented open military actions, and have been continuously carried out by the Turkish authorities against Kurdish politicians, intellectuals and journalists. Active people in the legal opposition organizations have been killed, mainly because they were suspected of having contacts with the PKK (Wahlbeck 1999: 47). The government has also encouraged the migration of Kurds to the cities to dilute the population in the uplands. Turkey continues with its policy of not recognizing the Kurds as a specific ethno-national group within its national borders. The Kurdish-Turkish politician Leyla Zana was arrested in 1994 and served a prison term of 12 years for having spoken Kurdish in the Turkish parliament building.

Following the arrest of Abdullah Öcalan (Apo) in 1999, the PKK has abandoned its demand for an independent Kurdish state in south-eastern Turkey. Instead, it demands the creation of a democratic republic in Turkey in which the cultural and linguistic existence of the Kurds is recognized. Furthermore, it asks the Turkish government to issue a general amnesty for all the PKK members, including Abdullah Öcalan, and to allow them to take part in the political processes of the country. Today, the Party of Democratic Society (DTP) is the principal pro-Kurdish formation conducting legal political activities in Turkey. Abdullah Öcalan has formulated the “new political outlook” for the Kurds in Turkey; he tries to maintain his control of the PKK mainly through those instructions that he sends out from his prison on the island of Imrali. Certain Kurds have sharply criticized the new political outlook of the PKK for its ambiguity and lack of real prospects for the Kurds. The

PKK has been further blamed for the use of coercive methods against its own defectors and also against other non-affiliated persons who criticize the organization for its democratic and political shortcomings.

In October 2005 the European Union (EU) opened membership talks with Turkey, the first time a predominately Muslim nation has been considered for inclusion in the EU. Turkey's bid to join the EU turned a corner with the opening of the long-awaited accession negotiations. The terms of accession and Turkey's long-term prospects for EU membership so far remain unclear.

In recent years Turkey has implemented political and economic reforms intended to appease EU members opposed to its joining. But these reforms have been considered inadequate for Turkey's EU accession. An internal EU report from 2006 claims that many continue to distrust the commitment of the Turkish state to democracy and human rights or its ability to reach European standards in issues such as gender equality, political freedom, religious freedom and minority rights, especially as regards the Kurdish population, non-Muslims, particularly Christians, journalists, homosexuals and lesbians. For instance, former French President Jacques Chirac said that Turkey needs to undergo a cultural revolution before it can join the EU. Freedom of political speech is another area in which some concerns have arisen (*City Journal*, 4 June 2006).

Another key political issue is that Turkey has so far not recognized Cyprus, an EU member. Turkey only acknowledges a renegade Turkish Cypriot state in the north of the divided Mediterranean island.

Opinions critical of the strongly nationalistic line are regularly prosecuted. For example, the famous Article 301 of the Turkish penal code, which is perceived as being contrary to ideas of freedom of speech, states: "A person who explicitly insults being a Turk, the Republic or Turkish General National Assembly, the penalty to be imposed shall be imprisonment for a term of six months to three years." "When insulting being a Turk is committed by a Turkish citizen in a foreign country, the penalty to be imposed shall be increased by one third". It also states that "Expressions of thought intended to criticize shall not constitute a crime" (*Wikipedia*, the free online encyclopedia).

Some voices say that Turkey may abandon or modify Article 301 after the embarrassment brought by high-profile cases. Nationalists within the judicial system, who are not inclined to work for the accession process, have used Article 301 to initiate judicial proceedings against people like the Nobel prize-winning Turkish novelist Orhan Pamuk, the

Turkish novelist Elif Shafak and the late Hrant Dink.⁹ In an interview, Pamuk stated, “Thirty thousand Kurds, and a million Armenians were killed in these lands and nobody dares to talk about it.” Professor Shafak wrote a book dealing with the Armenian Genocide titled *The Bastard of Istanbul* (Wikipedia).

As for the Kurds in Turkey, some criticize the recent recognition of the Kurdish language by Turkish authorities as a cosmetic operation. Kurdish education is provided only through a few private local courses, while television in Kurdish amounts to half an hour a week, under the monopoly of the state broadcasting corporation TRT (*cf. Financial Times*, 5 June 2006; *City Journal*, 4 June 2006; Wikipedia, 2007-04-04).

Before August 2002, the Turkish government placed severe restrictions on the use of the Kurdish language, prohibiting its use in education and the broadcast media. The Kurdish alphabet is still not recognized in Turkey, and use of the Kurdish letters X, W, Q, which do not exist in the Turkish alphabet, led to judicial persecutions in 2000 and 2003.

Currently, Kurds enjoy a kind of folkloristic existence in Turkey. This means that they can make use of their expressive culture, embracing Kurdish narratives, tales, music, dance, and so on. Examples include the celebration of *Newroz*, with its strong political connotation, and the arrangement of different Kurdish song and music festivals throughout Turkey. This folkloristic performance among the Kurds in Turkey is still displayed within private spheres, and, if it is sometimes planned to appear in public (as in *Newroz*), it is most often banned from the center and confined instead to the periphery of the city (Khayati 2007). Regarding the folkloristic existence of the Kurds in Turkey, the words of a Kurdish writer in Stockholm is illustrative:

We should keep in mind that the Kurdish folkloristic existence does not imply directly an improvement of linguistic proficiency among the population. The process of auto-assimilation among the Kurds in Turkey drastically reduces the operational scope of the Kurdish language and

⁹ Hrant Dink, who was the editor-in-chief of the bilingual Turkish-Armenian newspaper *Agos* (Այոս), was best known for his opinions on methods towards a Turkish-Armenian reconciliation and on human and minority rights in Turkey with a special emphasis on the rights of the Armenian minority. He was often critical of both Turkey’s denial of the Armenian genocide and the Armenian diaspora’s campaign for its international recognition. Dink was prosecuted three times for denigrating Turkishness and received numerous death threats from Turkish nationalists, who accused him of treachery. Hrant Dink was assassinated in Istanbul on 19 January 2007, allegedly by Ogün Samast, an ultra-nationalist Turk (www.wikipedia.org, viewed 04-04-2007).

consequently the need of it as a human device for popular or educational use.

Kurds in Iran: violence and folkloristic existence

In the chaotic interlude between the end of the Second World War and the onset of the Cold War, Iranian Kurds set up the short-lived, Soviet-backed Mahabad Republic, only to see it quickly crushed by the central government in Tehran. Afterward, under shah and ayatollah alike, Iran effectively suppressed all Kurdish political aspirations.

Today, Iranian Kurds, who as the third largest ethno-national group make up about 8 million of the population in Iran, are denied their national identity and political rights. Their life is largely marked by the socio-economic, political and cultural outcomes of the Islamic revolution, which triumphed under Ayatollah Khomeini in early 1979. After the establishment of the Islamic Republic in Iran, the supreme leader of the religious revolution declared a “holy war” against Kurds, after which the government launched a military campaign against its Kurdish inhabitants as well as a program to assassinate Kurdish leaders. As a result of this military repression some thousands of civilian Kurds died in armed confrontation with the Iranian army between 1979 and 1992. According to a number of international reports, the Iranian regime’s human rights abuses against Kurds and other Iranian dissidents, carried out until recent years, included political arrests, summary execution and other forms of physical and symbolic violence (*cf.* Wahlbeck 1999; McDowall 2000; Berruti *et al.* 2002).

The main Iranian opposition political formations are the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (KDPI) and Komala (both of which have split twice). Due to internal cleavages, passivity and isolation in Iraqi Kurdistan, and also the assassination of their leaders, which seriously affected their activities, these organizations have become gradually weaker since the late 1990s. It is commonly assumed that agents working for the Iranian regime were behind the assassinations, carried out first in Austria (1989) and then in Germany (1992). In April 1997 these suspicions were confirmed when a German court held Iranian authorities, including the supreme leader, responsible for the murder of three Kurds at the Mykonos restaurant in Berlin (Wahlbeck 1999: 58). Concerning the political destiny of the Iranian Kurds, a Kurdish female activist in France has the following to say:

During all periods of Iranian modern history, the Kurds have been subjected to systematic and sophisticated violence in physical and

symbolic forms. Legitimate and democratic demands of the Kurds have been frenetically labeled as separatists' aspirations and consequently they have been perceived as a direct menace to the territorial integrity of the nation. Hence, the Kurdish problem in Iran is reduced to a security issue, which according to the country's leadership should be solved through military options and practices. Iran is a highly mono-ethnic and mono-confessional state where only Persian and Shiite groups are represented in the country's institutions. The others are subjected to the politics of denial and violence. As a result a large number of the Iranian Kurds have been forced to flee the country.

As a result of the mono-ethnic and the mono-confessional nature of the Iranian state, a range of other ethno-national groups, such as Azeris, Arabs, Baluchis, and Turkmen, have no access to the public spaces of the country. At best, these groups are permitted to have a limited folkloristic existence within the society's private spheres, designated and determined far from these people's approval and admission (Khayati 2007).

Even if a part of the larger Kurdish territory in Iran carries the name "Kordestan" (Hassanpour & Mojab 2004), and even if the Kurdish population enjoys a limited cultural and folkloristic existence, claims for public and political recognition of their identity have been met with repressive methods. For instance, the Islamic revolutionary leader, Ayatollah Khomeini, characterized the Kurdish political leaders and members of the Kurdish political organizations as "impure", "antirevolutionary" and "blasphemous", because he found their political claims incompatible with the ideological and political principles of the Islamic revolution in Iran (Hassanpour & Mojab 2004).

The political situation of the Kurds has considerably worsened since Mahmoud Ahmadinejad became president of Iran. Subsequently, many Kurdish activists have been executed and a significant number of writers and journalists have been arrested.

Since in today's Iran capital punishment for political reasons is inflicted only on non-Persian political activists, one can say that capital punishment in this country is highly ethnicized.

Kurds in Iraq: from genocide to quasi-independence

During the 35 years of the reign of Baath Party in Iraq, violence was the principal way to subordinate, discipline, exclude or, if needed, eliminate the Kurds who were considered as “deviants” and therefore not appropriate for membership of the “Iraqi nation”. As indicated in Chapter 1, the Kurdish people who were the victims of the gas attacks and huge systematic genocidal operations, commonly known as *Anfal* campaigns, were not seen as constituents of the Iraqi nation – a nation that found its legitimacy and *raison d’être* principally in the intersection and juxtaposition of Arab nationalism and Sunni Islam.

In Iraq, the Kurds hoped for more administrative rights and development projects after the overthrow of the monarchy in 1958. But the new Ba’athist government failed to grant the Kurds’ requests. Warfare between Iraqi troops and Kurdish fighters under the leadership of Mustafa Barzani went on from 1962 to 1970, and from 1974 to 1975. The Kurds were promised autonomy in 1970. Further, the Iraqi government sought to impose its plan for limited autonomy in Kurdistan in 1974. The Kurds rejected the terms of the agreement because Iraq would retain its authority in the Kurdish oil city of Kirkuk. Following that, warfare erupted between the two sides in 1974, which the Kurds had to abandon as relations between Iran and Iraq were normalized following the agreement in Algeria in 1975. Consequently, thousands of Kurds were obliged to flee to the neighboring country of Iran (*cf.* Vanly 1992; Chaliand 1994; Wahlbeck 1999; McDowall 2000).

Iraqi attacks on the Kurds continued throughout the Iran–Iraq war (1980–88). The culmination of those assaults was the poison gas attacks on the Kurdish town of Halabja in early 1988, which resulted in the deaths of more than 5,000 civilians and the injuring of a further 10,000. The use of chemical weapons could be seen as a sign that the Iraqi regime had entered a new phase in its war against the Kurds. And indeed, the regime in 1988 introduced the *Anfal* campaigns, an extensive program of Arabization, mass deportation, destruction and above all genocide of the Kurdish population. Between April 1987 and May 1988 thousands of villages were destroyed, and between 150,000 and 200,000 Kurds were killed by various means, including poison gas. Following the *Anfal* campaigns, Kurdish resistance collapsed and subsequently more than 400,000 fighters and civilians fled, some to Turkey but most to Iran (see van Bruinessen 1994; Chaliand 1994; McDowall 2000; Wahlbeck 1999).

After the end of the 1991 Gulf War, yet another Kurdish uprising against the regime was suppressed by the Iraqi army. As a result,

nearly 500,000 Kurds fled to the Iraq–Turkey border, and more than one million fled to Iran. Thousands of Kurds subsequently returned to their homes under UN protection. On the initiative of the British government, a safe haven for the Kurds under the protection of the UN was established in northern Iraq. In 1992 the Kurds established an “autonomous region” and held a general election (Chaliand 1994; Wahlbeck 1999; McDowall 2000). However, the Kurds were split into two opposing groups, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) of Massoud Barzani and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) of Jalal Talabani, which because of old hostilities, struggles for power and disagreement over the tax income from the border trade engaged in bloody warfare between 1994 and 1997 (Berruti *et al.* 2002). According to a Kurdish interviewee, the rivalry between these main Kurdish political formations at that time led to social breakdown, forced internal and external refugee and population movements, human rights violations and, above all, a weakening of the common sentiment of Kurdish identity and national cohesion.

However, in 1999 the two groups agreed to end hostilities in order to reach a stable peace and to rebuild common institutions in this part of Kurdistan. Subsequently, the old Kurdish parliament reassembled in Irbil on 4 October 2002 for the first time in seven years. In line with the agreement between Barzani and Talabani, 49 per cent of the parliamentary mandates were allotted to the PUK fraction and the rest to the KDP. Furthermore, since the overthrow of Saddam Hussein’s regime in Iraq in 2003, the Kurds have worked together with the Americans and other ethnic and religious Iraqi groups in order to attain security and order and establish a functioning federal state in the country.

The establishment of a Kurdish autonomous political administration in northern Iraq, with its power of attraction and absorption, has drastically accelerated the process of diasporic formation and transnational exchanges among Kurds in Sweden and France. The political, cultural and economic orientations of diasporan Kurds toward this part of Kurdistan may function as a dynamic driving force that plays an essential role in the making and remaking of the Kurdish diasporic identity and the establishment of powerful transborder connections that Kurds maintain simultaneously beyond and within the boundaries of several nation-states.

Kurds in Syria: stateless population

In Syria, Kurds have suffered since the 1960s not only from a systematic arabization campaign that seeks to transform the physical and demographic features of Kurdish life but also from exclusion from citizenship. Around 120,000 Kurds lost Syrian citizenship in a special census in 1962 and consequently were declared stateless refugees in a special decree by the Syrian government (Sheikhmous 2000). As a result, Kurds' access to national public services is seriously limited (*cf.* Bozarslan 1997; Kutschera 2000; McDowall 2000; Berruti *et al.* 2002; Hassanpour & Mojab 2004).

In Syria, the Kurds, representing 10 per cent of the national population, are deprived of cultural and political rights. Moreover, Arabs have been resettled in territory between Syria and Turkey to the depth of 10–15 km.

Since the accession to power of Beshar Assad, there has been a gleam of hope that Kurds may be able to express demands for certain basic rights. In October 2002, for the first time in Syrian history a political forum was held on the rights of Kurds in Syria. The Forum was organized by the Kurdish Democratic Progressive Party in the capital, Damascus. "Opposition" parties and a large number of people working to revive civil society participated in the forum. Furthermore, the forum focused on various fundamental topics related to Kurdish national issues (KurdishMedia.com, 15 October 2002).

Cartography of the Kurdish diaspora

The Kurds are primarily divided between the neighboring countries of Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria, but there are additional Kurdish populations scattered throughout central Asia, the Caucasus, the Middle East, Western Europe, Australia, North America and many metropolitan areas such as Istanbul, Baghdad, Tehran, Izmir and Ankara (van Bruinessen 1995; 1999; 2000). However, the outcome of this dispersion is the emergence of a considerable Kurdish global diaspora that today marks its presence beyond and within the borders of many states both quantitatively and qualitatively. Diasporan Kurds maintain imaginary, symbolic and above all practical ties with their homeland of origin not only through the transnational political, social, economic and cultural practices that they maintain across the borders of many nation-states but also through the diasporic accounts that they produce in different forms. The meta-narrative of exiled Kurds, which is based mainly on the experience of

repression, forced displacement, genocide, exile, and so on, constitutes in one way or another the collective memory of the Kurdish diaspora, which in turn generates political mobilization and the practice of long-distance nationalism (Anderson 1998) among the Kurds. The formation of the Kurdish diaspora has both a pre-modern and a modern history (Hassanpour & Mojab 2004).

First, it is important to underline that the presence of the Kurds outside the geographical area of the Middle East is not a new phenomenon. During the last 500 years the Kurdish tribes who lived under the aegis of both the Persian and the Ottoman empires have often been the subject of manipulative displacement or forced deportation, principally because of their specific position in the conflicts between these two classic rivals. Habitually, the old empires used to resolve their differences with the Kurdish tribes through various forms of tacit agreement. The attribution of autonomous spaces to them was an effective method of preventing major conflict. But, in spite of these regulatory mechanisms, a number of Kurdish clans that were considered by the central empires to be “troublemakers” were deported to Central Anatolia and the region of Khorasan in the north-eastern part of current Iran during the 18th and 19th centuries, where they were given land, cattle and other forms of recompense. These resettled Kurds have, in spite of all odds, been more or less successful in preserving their language and unity (Bozarslan 1997).

By the beginning of the 20th century “entire tribes had been relocated outside Kurdistan in Iranian provinces or regions including Baluchistan, Fars, Guilan, Kashan, Khorasan, Mazandaran and Qazvin” (Bahtuyi 1998, quoted in Hassanpour & Mojab 2004: 215). During the genocide of the Armenian population that was perpetrated by Ottoman Turkey between 1915 and 1923, about 700,000 Kurds were forced to move to western Turkey. Due to deportation, labor migration and flight from the war, large numbers of Kurds have migrated to other parts of the states of which they were citizens (Hassanpour & Mojab 2004: 217).

During the period of 1991–94, more than 3,000 Kurdish villages were razed to the ground by the Turkish military forces in an effort to, as the official language put it, “root out PKK sympathizers”. This destructive act created more than three million internal refugees, who resettled in major Kurdish and Turkish cities all over the country (Wahlbeck 1999; Berruti *et al.* 2002).

Today millions of Kurds live in such cities as Istanbul, Izmir, Mersin, Adana, Ankara, Konya, Antalya (Turkey), Baghdad, Basra, Kut, Baquba (Iraq), Tehran, Ahwaz, Hamadan, Tabriz, Qazvin (Iran), and Damascus and Aleppo (Syria) (van Bruinessen 2000). The number of the exiled Kurds in Istanbul was considerably increased, and by the end of

the 20th amounted to the largest urban concentration of this population (Andrews 1989; Bozarslan 1997; Hassanpour & Mojab 2004).

Moreover, displacement of Kurds occurred within Kurdish territory and across the borders of the states in which they resided. The repression that followed the rebellions of the 1920s and 1930s caused the displacement of a large number of Kurds, who resettled in north-eastern Syria. Between the years 1974 and 1975 and during Iraq's genocidal campaigns of 1987–88, thousands of Iraqi Kurds fled to other parts of Kurdistan in Iran and Turkey. This cross-border movement among the Kurds is consistent with the specific geographic location of the Kurdish land and the trans-state character of the Kurdish political movement (van Bruinessen 2000).

In the former Soviet Union, Kurds were considered as a separate ethnic group, although no particular territory was attributed to them. During the 19th century, thousands of *Yezidi* Kurds migrated to Russian-controlled Transcaucasia. Under Stalin a large number of them were deported to central Asia and Siberia (van Bruinessen 2000: 3). Nevertheless, the Soviet census of 1979 recorded 150,000 Kurds in the USSR, but Kurdish nationalists give somewhat inflated estimates and much higher numbers (van Bruinessen 1995). For instance, according to Ismet Chérif Vanly, the number of Kurds in the former Soviet Union in 1990 was about 450,000, of which 270,000 lived in the three Transcaucasian Republics (Vanly 1992). Areas of the Caucasus and Turkmenistan have been traditional places of Kurd settlement for centuries. In a period 1923–929, there was an autonomous region called *Kurdistana Sor* (Red Kurdistan) in Azerbaijan. It consisted of about 25 villages in an area of 5,200 square kilometers situated between Armenia and the previously autonomous region of Nagorno Karabakh, with Lachin as the main town. This autonomous region was dissolved, and later many Kurds from Azerbaijan were deported to Krasnodar (Russia) (Müller 2000).

In 1989 20,000 (out of 40,000) returned to Azerbaijan. The old *Kurdistana Sor* area was disputed in the Armenian–Azeri war for Nagorno Karabakh, and it is now mainly under Armenian control. According to Kurdish estimates, there were more than 250,000 Kurds in Azerbaijan in 1988 (*cf.* Vanly 1992; van Bruinessen 1995; Müller 2000; Hassanpour & Mojab 2004).

Moreover, there are several pockets of Kurdish population throughout Armenia, mostly in the north-west part of the country. Their number has been estimated to be around 50,000. In Georgia are about 34,000 Kurds in the capital Tbilisi, where there is a Kurdish quarter as well. In both Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan there are several villages

with significant numbers of Kurds. In Kazakhstan the Kurds have already obtained the right to use their languages in schools¹⁰.

According to van Bruinessen, the Soviet Kurds have, through their printed media and radio broadcasts (Kurdish radio from the Armenian capital Yerevan), played a major role in the development of modern Kurdish culture and the national awareness of the Kurds in Kurdistan (van Bruinessen 2000: 3-4).

The collapse of the Soviet Union, which was followed by substantial political and social crises, generated significant population movements among the Kurds. As a result, thousands of Kurds from Georgia, Armenia and Russia left their homes and moved to west European countries.

The second important phase of the diaspora formation is the arrival of the Kurds in western Europe, North America and Australia. This phase, which is characterized by the arrival of thousands of Kurdish immigrants, refugees and their families in Western societies, can be explained not only by modern immigration processes, which follow essentially the classical North–South pattern, but also the inauspicious political and social conditions that prevail in Kurdistan. In other words, the uprooting and the resettlement of Kurds in the new diaspora were generated by two main events. First, the economic boom of Western Europe in the 1960s recruited a large number of Kurds as “guest workers” to work mainly in Germany and other western European countries. Second, the ongoing coercive assimilationist project that led to increasing Kurdish resistance, including armed conflict in Iraq (intermittently from 1961 to 2003), Iran (1967 to 1968 and 1979 to the present), and Turkey (1984 to the present), the involvement of Western powers in these conflicts and finally interstate conflicts (Iran–Iraq from 1980 to 1988, and Iraq–Kuwait from 1990 to 1991) which turned the area into an active and enduring war zone, are among other events that produced huge refugee and migratory movements among the Kurds (Hassanpour & Mojab 2004; Emanuelsson 2005).

Prior to the Second World War, a small group of individuals, limited primarily to male members of the Kurdish aristocracy, came to Europe to conduct sporadic political and cultural activities. A few intellectuals and students traveled to Western Europe just after the First World War – for example, the famous Kurdish intellectual and dissident, Kamuran Bedr-Khan, who worked at the Sorbonne in Paris. There he published the *Bulletin du Centre d'Études*, which was ran from 1948 to 1951. The Bedr-Khan family contributed largely to ethno-national

¹⁰ According to van Bruinessen (1995), there are no widely accepted statistics on the numbers of Kurds in the former Soviet Union. Kurdish sources, especially those influenced by nationalist aspirations, used to produce somewhat inflated estimates.

awareness among Kurds in Turkey. Thanks to their efforts, the first Kurdish newspaper, *Kurdistan*, was published in Cairo in 1898. Later, as a result of Ottoman government pressure, the paper had to move to Geneva and then to Folkestone, Britain. After the Second World War, the first group of students, mainly from Iraqi Kurdistan, arrived in different eastern and western European universities. Subsequently, a Kurdish Student Organization was founded in Europe in the 1950s. This type of migratory movement among the Kurds took place in moderate numbers after the end of the war until 1965 (Hassanpour & Mojab 2004: 217–218, see also van Bruinessen 1999; 2000; Sheikhmous 2000).

Larger groups of Kurdish immigrants started to arrive in Europe after 1965. This period was characterized by substantial movement of Kurds abroad as workers, students and candidates of family reunification, from all parts of Kurdistan but also from other areas such as Lebanon and the Caucasus. As a result of the economic boom of Western Europe in the 1960s, a large number of Kurds were recruited as “guest workers” in Germany and, on a smaller scale, in Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, the United Kingdom, France and Sweden. By the end of the 1990s Germany hosted Europe’s largest Kurdish population. Their number is estimated at about 500,000. Furthermore, there are today significant Kurdish immigrant and refugee populations in North America, Australia, Austria, Switzerland, Italy, Norway, Finland, Greece, Cyprus, Romania, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and United Arab Emirates (van Bruinessen 2000; Berruti *et al.* 2002).

The journey of the Kurdish refugees

The escape from Kurdistan often assumes a tragic aspect. According to many Kurdish interviewees, it is an inseparable part of the whole Kurdish tragedy. However, the Kurdish refugee flow, like many other refugee movements at the global level, seems to be both the result and the cause of structural changes and social transformations in undeveloped regions and countries. The context of struggles over decolonization, state formation and incorporation in the bipolar world order of the Cold War have since the 1960s generated conflict, generalized violence and mass flight (Zolberg *et al.* 1989; Castles 2003).

Refugee flows from peripheral regions and Third World countries to wealthy Western societies have more often than not been associated with painful experiences that usually attract conspicuous media attentions. As for the Kurdish refugees, it is the fear of borders, police, killings, human smugglers, shipwrecks, refugee camps and asylum

processes that constitutes an integral part of their collective consciousness in the diaspora.

The arrival of thousands of Kurdish refugees in battered ships can exhibit a little the struggle that they experience in reaching Western Europe. For instance, when more than 900 Kurdish refugees on board the *East Sea* (a more detailed account of this event will be presented in Chapter 3) ran aground on the French Riviera, some French newspapers were quick to use the expression of “boat people” when commenting on this event. The appellation “boat people” contains most often a pejorative connotation in media representation and the popular imagination. Associating the Kurdish refugees with such a deprecatory image acquires a further dimension when numbers of other, smaller damaged boats are observed crossing the seas between Turkey and Greece and between Turkey and Italy or France. The dreadful condition of such boats, the navigational difficulties and the illegality of the voyages have repeatedly done severe human damage to the Kurdish men, women and children on board. It is common to hear about shipwrecks or bodies of drowned Kurdish refugees floating in the Greek or Italian waters. A Kurdish young man who was waiting in Rome to go to another country said that at the beginning of his journey he belonged to a group of nine people, of whom only three remained. “Two of them were injured by the mines at the Iraqi–Turkish borders, one was drowned in the Aegean Sea, one decided to go back and two people are sitting in a Turkish prison”.

The destiny of the Kurdish refugees is largely similar to that of the Central Americans. For instance, the expression of a “cemetery without crosses on the south border” is used by Philippe Revelli to evoke the fate of hundreds of Central American refugees who perish in total anonymity when trying to cross the Mexico–American border (Revelli 2003). This is comparable to the fate of many Kurdish asylum seekers who fall prey to these perilous circumstances that attend their journeys. For many Kurdish refugees and immigrants, the notion of border regularly evokes the negative experiences of suffering, separation, persecution, cultural, social and political fragmentation, and of course smuggling.

It is almost an established practice for migrants from the Middle East to use smugglers for the exit passage through third countries and entry into their selected or unselected destinations. For example, in the case of those Kurds who want to enter Greece, the principal points of entry, as A. Papadopoulou underlines, are the Evros River at the Greek–Turkish border and the islands of the eastern Aegean (Samos, Kos, Rhodes, etc.). According to Papadopoulou, Istanbul and other Turkish coastal cities are major meeting points for both migrants and smugglers, “*qaçaqçı*”. Smugglers arrange the crossing into Europe. Migrants and

refugees “leaving Greece for Western Europe also use the smuggling service by plane, buying fake passports, by car (also hiding in trucks) through Albania, or by boat, crossing from Patras to Italy” (Papadopoulou 2003: 6).

The end of the journey does not in any way mean the end of suffering for the Kurdish refugees. Today, the new migration climate that prevails in the west European countries is not auspicious for the majority of them. For instance, in March 2007 the Swedish Migration Board decided to send back 1,400 rejected Iraqi Kurds (Rättsenheten, Norrköping: Migrationsverket, 2007-03-30). Similar actions had been taken earlier against Kurdish asylum seekers in Britain. In February 2007, British authorities detained a number of Kurdish refugees whom they would deport to Iraqi Kurdistan (*Kurdish Globe*, No 97, 13 February 2007).

Kurds from dormant diaspora to active diaspora: a global view of the practice of long-distance nationalism

According to van Bruinessen, there is a close connection between exile and nationalism (van Bruinessen 2000: 4). The experience of exile has been part and parcel of the history of Kurdish nationalism. In the course of the past century, voluntary or forced displacement was the experience of many Kurds. In their new places, a large number of them have maintained or rediscovered a sense of Kurdish identity and have organized themselves in various institutions and networks. Along with their political mobilization the Kurds have made use of new means of communication in diaspora, which has enabled them to become (re-)oriented toward Kurdistan and their states of origin van Bruinessen 2000: 4). For instance, many Kurds in Germany who had internalized or were reluctant to challenge Turkey’s official ideology that considered every citizen of Turkey as a Turk originally did not describe themselves as Kurds. Gradually they rediscovered who they were and dared to assert their Kurdish identity (van Bruinessen 1999; Griffiths 2002). In this connection, Sheffer evokes the recent substantial growth of the numbers, geographical dispersal and organization of diaspora communities and their greater social and political visibility and influence partly as an indication of the awakening of what the author calls “previously dormant diasporas” (Sheffer 2002: 21). Sheffer’s account is quite compatible with the situation of many Kurds in Germany, and also those in Central Asia and elsewhere who, thanks to the development of satellite TV-stations among the already awakened Kurds, have passed from a dormant

diaspora to an active diaspora since the 1970s. However, as members of a stateless diaspora, the Kurds have developed different political, cultural and economic strategies in their new places of residence.

It is worth noting that there is a basic difference between the strategy choices made by stateless diasporas and those made by state-linked diasporas. The stateless diasporas that legitimize their political orientation toward the homeland of origin by arguing that they are defending the cause of an oppressed people may, according to Sheffer, select a strategy of irredentism or separatism – an allusion to the efforts made by diasporan people “to take or be given land that once was their historical homeland and ultimately establish a sovereign state in that historical homeland” – while state-linked diasporas adopt a strategy of either forming and operating multiple communal organizations or setting up representative organizations that are formally recognized by host governments (Weiner 1990, quoted in Sheffer 2002: 24, 25). Furthermore, state-linked diasporas may restrain stateless diasporas from pursuing radical irredentist strategies if they are living adjacent to their original homelands (Sheffer 2002: 24). As far as the diasporan Kurds are concerned, at the discursive level it is said that the creation of an independent Kurdistan is the duty and the right of all Kurds, but concretely there have been few serious attempts to establish such an independent Kurdistan (van Bruinessen 2000: 1).

Diasporan Kurds are currently politically active. According to Vera Eccarius-Kelly, those Kurdish refugees who, following the military coup in Turkey and the Iranian revolution, entered Germany and other west European countries transferred “clandestine political resistance networks to Europe, and thereby changed the composition of the respective diasporas from predominantly apolitical guest worker communities to networked and homeland-oriented political activist organizations” (Eccarius-Kelly 2002: 92).

For instance, in the United Kingdom and Finland Kurdish refugees create their associations and informal networks in order to use them not only as a supplementary resource to solve the problems arising from incomplete integration in their new societies but also as real mobilization platforms that are largely oriented toward their societies of origin (Wahlbeck 1999). In Germany, where the majority of Kurdish workers were not politicized, the PKK found a fertile soil for recruitment, especially among marginalized members of the second generation. By becoming involved in the PKK’s activities, these new adherents gained a sense of meaning and self-respect (van Bruinessen 1999: 8). As often reported by the political authorities in west European countries, the PKK collects substantial sums of money from Kurdish traders throughout Europe (Østergaard-Nielsen 2001).

However, following the arrest of Abdullah Öcalan in February 1999, the PKK has modified its structural, organizational and strategic operations in order to adjust to a new political reality. This new political reality arises from the PKK's abandoning its original objective – that is, creating an independent Kurdistan – and its adopting a new political discourse promoting “national minority rights” in Turkey. Hence, the European Kurdish diaspora under the influence of the PKK displays the typical characteristic of “social movement organizations”, a concept that Vera Eccarius-Kelly borrows from Charles Tilly, suggesting that participants in social organizations consider themselves as legitimate representatives of their members, publicly present a unified front, push for the recognition of their agenda, develop connections with allied actors and seek new political opportunities for achieving acceptance (Eccarius-Kelly 2002).

For Alynna J. Lyon and Emek M. Uçarer, Kurdish diasporic activism and transnational mobilization under the auspices of the PKK in Germany is a separatist movement outside Turkey that not only presents “a prime example of the diffusion of contention as hunger strikes, protest marches, and terrorist bombings” but is also the source of a serious dilemma for Germany concerning how it should manage its internal policy vis-à-vis its Kurdish residents as well as maintain external relations with Turkey (Lyon & Uçarer 2001). In order to illustrate the relationship between the German state and the PKK, one can cite the former German Interior Minister, Otto Schily, who several years ago maintained that “foreign criminals would be expelled and that the Kurds had to cease illegal actions”. The minister pointed out that his government would not allow Germany to become a playing field for political conflicts that do not belong on German soil. According to Eccarius-Kelly, Otto Schily's statement was a way of indicating that Turkish and German politicians agree that the PKK and its active sympathizers can be classified as “criminals and terrorists” (Eccarius-Kelly 2002). Currently, Sakine Cansiz, together with some other PKK leaders, is in a German jail. Today, the PKK is banned in several west European countries. In this regard, a Kurdish worker in Marseille says:

Kurdish everyday life in itself is a big tragedy. This tragedy implies genocide, forced deportation, persecution, poverty, involuntary immigration and political, cultural and socio-economic exclusion in our countries of origin. Once we arrive in Europe we think that we can achieve our freedom here that we can work freely for our political cause, which is not true. Here, they see to it that our leader is arrested. They label our political organizations as terrorist and they ban them. To tell the

truth, in Europe we obtain neither political freedom nor residence permits for starting a decent life.

The capture of Öcalan by Turkish agents touched off heated and sometimes violent protests by thousands of Kurds living in Western Europe. It stirred “strong emotions among Kurds of all political persuasions and a sense of unity that had rarely been experienced before” (van Bruinessen 2000: 16). In some cases, young Kurds resorted to self-immolation in order to demonstrate their injury by what they called the “perfidy of the world”. Omar Sheikhmous and Magdalena Wernefeldt considered the uprising of the Kurdish youth of the second and third generations as a sign of a new ethnic revival, arising mainly from their experience of frustration, marginalization and exclusion (Sheikhmous & Wernefeldt 1999). Following the capture of Öcalan, the PKK declared a unilateral ceasefire with the Turkish government, allegedly with the aim of becoming a legal political party in Turkey.

The practice of long-distance nationalism found fertile soil in many west European countries that offered new political opportunities to the Kurdish diaspora through supranational bodies such as the European Parliament, the Council of Europe, the European Court of Human Rights, the European Court of Justice and the European Commission. Furthermore, the Kurdish diaspora has reached out, with great success, to “individual allies within the EU structures, including members of the Party of European Socialists (PES), the Confederal Group of the European United Left (EUL), and the Green/environmental factions” (Eccarius-Kelly 2002: 92).

For instance, the European Parliament voted in September 2007 on a report detailing Turkey’s progress toward accession to the European Union. The European parliamentary resolution called on the Turkish government to pursue a democratic solution to the Kurdish question following the “encouraging statement” by Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who in a meeting in the major Kurdish city of Diyarbakir had admitted the existence of the Kurdish problem and called for a solution. The report also urged the Turkish authorities to lift restrictions on political parties such as the pro-Kurdish political party HADEP and to allow the Kurdish language to be used in the education system and media. Furthermore, it was stressed that it was essential “to strike a balance between the need to control the situation as regards security, avoiding civil military strains, and effectively promoting the political dialogue and the economic and social development of the ‘south-east’ region through a comprehensive strategy supported by adequate means” (Khayati 2006).

In exile Kurds try to preserve and develop their ethno-national identity through various means. Film production and radio broadcasts in the Kurdish language are considered an effective way of doing so. Many Kurdish authors and intellectuals have contributed to the production of a substantial number of Kurdish books, journals and other publications. They are published in Germany, France, Belgium and the Netherlands, but above all in Sweden, where the enterprise has been generously supported (van Bruinessen 1999: 9). The Kurmanji literature, for example, is said to have experienced a renaissance in exile (van Bruinessen 2000; Ahmadzadeh 2003). The Kurdish Institute of Paris, which was founded with the support of France's Mitterrand government by Kurdish intellectuals living in different European countries pioneers attempts to develop a standard for Northern Kurdish (Kurmanji) and organized a number of "conferences and a journal that published lists of agreed upon terms for objects and concepts in various spheres of life" (van Bruinessen 1999: 9).

In order to reinforce the Kurdish language, culture and literature, similar institutes were established by Kurdish intellectuals in Brussels (1989), Berlin (1994), Moscow (1996), and Washington DC (1997) as well as a well-endowed Kurdish library in Stockholm (1997), each serving a different clientele and promoting a distinct type of activity (van Bruinessen 1999: 9). Concerning the cultural and linguistic performances of the Kurdish diaspora, a Kurdish woman in Sweden says:

This is among other things an outcome of the opportunities to freely express a Kurdish identity, to read Kurdish books and newspapers and to write and publish in our own language, which was prohibited in our former places of residence.

As well, many Kurds join human rights organizations and different Kurdish cultural organizations. Some of the Kurdish refugees had earlier been active in Turkish, Iraqi, Syrian or Iranian left-wing parties. These activists believe that as immigrants they have many problems in common with other ethnic groups. These supra-ethnic performances among the Kurds have, however, diminished drastically since the 1990s. For instance, in Sweden, one cannot find any platform, association or institution where Kurds engage in joint cultural or political activities with, for example, Persians, Turks, or Iraqi or Syrian Arabs. Quite the reverse: many networks and institutions have been founded exclusively by and for the benefit of Kurds from all parts of Kurdistan.

Since the 1990s Kurds have expanded their transborder political activities in Western Europe. Offices affiliated to all Kurdish political parties and organizations and also to the Kurdistan Regional

Government (KRG) have been opened in countries such as Germany, Sweden, Norway, France, Belgium, Switzerland, Italy, the Netherlands, the USA and Australia. A number of institutions affiliated to the PKK have also been established, for example, the Kurdish Red Crescent and Con-Kurd in Germany. During the first self-proclaimed ceasefire (in 1994), the PKK attempted to initiate a Kurdistan National Congress, but the party revised the idea during its fifth congress in 1995 so as to create what was to become the Kurdistan Parliament in Exile. The Kurdish Parliament of Exile held its first convention in the Netherlands. Since 1996 its headquarters has been located in Brussels. It consists of 65 deputies including 6 former parliamentarians of the pro-Kurdish political party DEP who managed to flee abroad, 12 members of the ERNK (the political branch of the PKK at the time) in Europe, as well as various Kurds living abroad, among them the distinguished Kurdish scholar Ismet Chérif Vanly. The last named was the chair of the parliament (see also van Bruinessen 1999; Wahlbeck 1999; Berruti *et al.* 2002).

According to van Bruinessen, the Kurdish Parliament in Exile “never lost the stigma of being a PKK front”, because in reality it never seriously deviated from the PKK party line (van Bruinessen 2000: 15). However, after being severely criticized for its affiliation with the PKK and for not being active enough, it has made way for another Kurdish umbrella organization, the National Congress of Kurdistan (KNK). This new political body made its appearance in 2000 with more than 170 deputies. The KNK aspires to represent all Kurdish political and cultural interests, and has its headquarter in Brussels.

It is interesting to note that the KNK and even the PKK seem to have a desire to include various groups and representatives of other identities, such as Assyro-Chaldeans, Yezidis, Alevis and Islamic groups in their movement. In recent years, Yezidis, Alevis and Kurdish Islamic groups have started to organize in Germany. Furthermore, the PKK has tried to connect independent Kurdish intellectuals to their affiliated institutes and associations (van Bruinessen 1999; 2000). A Kurdish politician, an opponent to the PKK, explains its political methodology thus:

The PKK, which has expanded its activities in Western Europe during the last two decades, can be without any doubt apprehended as one of the major driving forces of the Kurdish diaspora. Even though the party has tried sometimes to show a more moderate attitude in recent years, and tried to tolerate critical opinions from Kurdish society, there are still examples of attempts to silence or threaten opponents.

However, the KNK, which aspired to be an organization for all Kurds, experienced more or less the same destiny as its predecessor, the Kurdish Parliament in Exile. Because of its close affiliation to the PKK, it did not succeed in bridging the gap with other political organizations and as a result it failed disastrously to act as a national platform for all Kurds. Consequently, autonomous Kurdish politicians who were not affiliated to the PKK have left the organization. Currently, the KNK, with reduced resources, carries out very limited political activities among the Kurds.

As for the use of satellite TV stations and the Internet, due to both the civil liberties and the new technologies enjoyed in the diaspora the Kurds have achieved a degree of sovereignty both online and on air (van Bruinessen 1999).

Kurdish diaspora on air and online, and its limitations

The contemporary process of globalization, which has been accelerating strongly since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, and the end of the bipolar international political system have not diminished the importance of ethnicity and the struggle of the subjugated ethnic groups to achieve their national rights and political sovereignty. As part of the social, cultural and political arrangements in a globalized world, the Kurdish political movement in Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria has become aware of the significance of the print media, satellite radio and television and even the Internet. In this regard, diasporan Kurds have played an essential role.

In 1995 the first Kurdish satellite television station, MED-TV, was created in exile. MED-TV has been viewed not only by Kurds but also by many international political observers as a powerful instrument of nation-building that was launched by members of the Kurdish diaspora (van Bruinessen 2000: 12). Hassanpour considers the emergence of MED-TV as a Kurdish reaction to the majority's censorship (Hassanpour 1998), while van Bruinessen considers it as an indication of competition "between two nation-builders, the Republic of Turkey and the Kurdish movement" (van Bruinessen 1999: 10). For many Kurds the competition between these "two nation-builders" is exceedingly asymmetric, as the Kurdish side has access to very limited resources while the Turkish side has a set of large economic enterprises, national institutions and hundreds of TV stations at its disposal.

Following the arrest of the PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan in 1999, the Independent Television Commission in the UK revoked the broadcasting license of MED-TV because it supposedly “broadcasting terrorist propaganda of the Kurdistan Workers Party” (Hassanpour 2003). MED-TV was closed down evidently as a result of direct pressure from the Turkish authorities, which claimed that it was the mouthpiece of a terrorist organization (Allen 2003; Hassanpour 2003). The establishment of Medya-TV a few months after the closure of MED-TV in 1999 has been considered by many Kurds as a further indication that diasporan Kurds, particularly those around the PKK, according to a male Kurdish writer in Stockholm, were more than ever determined to continue to make use of such significant devices of nation building.

More than one decade after the establishment of the very first satellite television, the Kurdish people have today access to a significantly greater number of satellite TV and radio stations, not least four newly established channels, Sweden-based Rojhelat TV, Newroz TV, and Komala TV, and France-based Tishk TV. These new satellite TV stations, which follow in the footsteps of other, more established Kurdish TV channels such as Roj TV, Kurdistan TV, Kurdsat, and Zagros TV, have been in the same way added to the arsenal of the Kurdish national movement. Additionally, a number of satellite and local radio stations broadcast permanently to their Kurdish audiences; they include Radio Nawa, Radio Mesopotamia, the Voice of America (Kurdish), Radio Rojhelat, Radio Zayele (a gift from the Swedish state to the Kurds), Radio Komala, and the Voice of Kurdistan. Moreover, Radio Zrebar, Radio Ashti, Radio Lawan, Radio Hawdam and Radio Jinan (Women Radio) should be mentioned as local radio stations that occasionally entertain Kurdish audiences mainly living in Stockholm.

During 12 years of Kurdish TV broadcasting, a great quantity of various social, political and cultural programs has been produced. They include, for example, political panels, music and poetry shows, and news broadcasts, and have been perceived as significant “on air” platforms of identity making and nation-building for Kurds throughout the world. On the importance of the satellite TV broadcasting, a Kurdish journalist in Stockholm has this to say:

I remember the time when the Kurds had at their disposal a very limited number of radio stations, which were hidden in the mountains. These mountain radio stations had difficulty reaching their audiences not only because the technology was extremely poor but also because of sabotage and interference by the dominant regimes. Today, the Kurdish outlook is quite different. Thanks to immigration and also the creation of a *de facto* independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq, the Kurds have managed with

great success to establish several satellite TV and radio stations, websites, journals and reviews. Having access to modern media is indispensable for all nations that are in the making. The Kurdish nation is also about to be made.

It is important to stress that television and radio are not the only means of identity making that diasporan Kurds use. Further impressive developments have been observed in the domain of the Internet. The increasing number of Kurdish websites, web catalogues, online publications and chat rooms appear as various cyberspaces or “online” platforms that, along with the “on air” television and radio arrangements, offer the Kurds new spaces of communication that challenge the existing geographic, political and cultural constraints in Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Syria and in the diaspora. For example, it suffices today to look through different search engines, where one can come across an abundance of web addresses such as *Kurdistan Net*, *Kurdish info*, *Kurdistan Press*, *Kurdish News*, *Kurdish Globe*, *Kurdistan Observer*, *Kurdistan Post*, *Zkurd*, *WeKurd*, *Kurdish Media*, *Renesans*, *4Rojhelat*, and more, all evidence of how the diasporan Kurds are making their presence felt in the cyberspace created by Internet.

The increasing use of Internet among Kurds arises mainly from the initiative shown by many devoted and competent individuals living in different Western societies. The great number of websites that belong to Kurdish political parties and their affiliated organizations indicates that diasporan Kurds have been active in transferring an important part of their nation-building project and their political rhetoric and activities to the domain of Internet.

The relevance of the Internet as a transnational communicative space for political participation among the Kurds in diaspora can be highlighted by several examples. In August 2006, the Iranian Kurdish socialist organization *Komalah* held its 12th congress in the Kurdish city of Sulaymaniyah, in Iraqi Kurdistan. Since many of the organization’s members and leaders were unable to “physically” attend the assembly because they resided in Sweden, the organizers of the congress were obliged to coordinate two ten-day-long simultaneous meetings in Kurdistan and Sweden that were connected with the help of chat rooms (MSN, Yahoo, Paltalk) on the Internet. According to one of the participants, the result was highly satisfactory.

Furthermore, the influential independent and non-profit Centre of Halabja against Genocide and Anfalization of the Kurds (*Chak*) was created on the initiative of a number of Kurds in various Western countries in a Paltalk chat room in 2001, with the objective of drawing the attention of the world to Iraqi operations of *Anfal* against the Kurdish

people which, as explained previously ended in the killing of 182,000 Kurds in 1988 (Human Rights Watch 1993). As an extended organization, *Chak* has affiliations in Kurdistan, Canada, Australia, Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands, Finland and Germany.

As discussed earlier, the use of chat rooms for amusement or political and organizational purposes is highly popular among Kurds. For example, a great number of Kurdish Paltalk chat rooms remain open to visitors day and night. The visitors suggest music to each other, and sing and tell jokes while at the same time engaging in a variety of discussions on political, cultural, social and religious issues that concern Kurdistan above all but also the receiving societies in which diasporan Kurds reside. In a sense, the ways in which Paltalk visitors are organized largely correspond not only to the real lives of the Kurds in diaspora but also to the social and political realities that prevail in Kurdistan. In this respect, the gap between the “virtual” and “real” experiences of the Kurds becomes minimal.

Even if the use of satellite TV stations and the Internet enables the Kurds to sustain affective transnational connections with their homeland and to assert a collective identity that spans the boundaries of several nation-states, the Kurdish “diasporic media” (Karim 2003; Georgiou 2005) suffer from certain major limitations as well. Turkey, a country on its way to becoming a member of the European Union, has long criticized Denmark for not banning the Kurdish Roj-TV, on the pretext that it is a propaganda medium for the PKK, a terrorist organization. At the end of September 2006, 56 Kurdish mayors stood trial, charged with aiding terrorists by arguing for keeping a Kurdish TV station on the air. In reality, the mayors from the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP) were indicted because they wrote writing a letter to the Danish Prime Minister, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, asking him not to ban the Denmark-based Roj-TV, despite claims by Turkey that it was a PKK propaganda machine.

As a consequence of an overwhelming filtering campaign that the Islamic regime of Iran has carried out against oppositional websites during recent years, transnational “on air” connections between the Kurds in diaspora and the Kurdish homeland has become severely restricted. Additionally, the Iranian authorities permanently harass people who use parabolic antennas for watching Kurdish satellite channels. In Syria, the authorities strictly control the Internet, and this poses real problems for those who want to report political events that concern the Kurds.

Contrary to what happens in Iran, Turkey and Syria, the use of cell phones and the Internet is increasing in Iraqi Kurdistan. After the ouster of Saddam Hussein by the American army, Iraqi Kurdistan had an edge on the rest of the country. As security has deteriorated in central and

southern Iraq, many international companies and organizations have based themselves in the safer Kurdish region. Internet cafés and cell phone shops can be found in abundance in all Kurdish cities and towns. Even nomads, whose main source of income is goat and sheep herding, are equipped with cell phones. But by European standards it is still a small minority that has access to cell phones and above all to the Internet. The limits of globalization become further salient when we realize that three major mobile network providers share the market between them almost exactly in accordance with political competition in Iraqi Kurdistan. It is easier to make calls internationally than to the neighboring political territory.

In Western societies the Kurds, like other ethnic groups, have been stigmatized for their so-called “deviant” behavior of watching television. In Sweden, housing companies and corporations have often ordered residents of the suburbs to remove their parabolic antennas from their balconies, on the pretext that they pose a danger to passers-by. In the media, the use of parabolic antennas has been depicted as an indication of the immigrant’s reluctance to be integrated into the Swedish society. This has created frustration among many people who use satellite TV stations to keep themselves informed about social and political developments in their homelands. This kind of television watching has been perceived by the “majority” society as a clear sign of the social and cultural distance that the “minority” maintains from the Swedish integration enterprise. The ban on parabolic antennas is in striking opposition to the notion of transborder citizenship, which claims cultural and social citizenship in two or more nation-states for refugees and immigrants. However, it will suffice to take a walk in Stockholm’s many neighborhoods to see how hundreds of parabolic antennas make the physical aspect of the suburbs completely different from that of the city center. The Kurds are among those residents who regularly make use of parabolic antennas.

Implications of *assabiyya* for the Kurds

Perceived as the manifestation of “solidarity” (Roy 1996) and “group feeling” (Spickard 2001) among particular social groups and network allegiances of various sizes, and appearing in the form of tribes, clans, personal relationships, extended families, religious sects, brotherhood formations, inhabitants of a certain place, and so on (Roy 1996), the Ibn Khaldunian concept of *assabiyya* concerns the lives of Kurds not only in Kurdistan but also in the diaspora.

In the first place, Kurdish society is concerned with the persistence of different forms of *assabiyya*. Based upon various structural lineages, the tribe is the most prominent expression of the persistence of *assabiyya* in Kurdish society. It is worth bearing in mind the name of some tribes and clans (*eşîr*) such as *Mîlanî, Jalaîî, Moqrî, Hassanî, Brukî, Torin, Swedî, Haydari, Ömerî, Dekşurî, Hevêrkanî, Şêxbiznî, Millî, Bucak, Rêşpotinî, Jirkanî, Jaf, Goran, Mergeyî, Xoşnaw, Dawodî, Pişderî, Herkî, Mizûrî, Doskî, Zêbarî, Biradostî, Lolan, Barzanî, Berwarî, Surçî, Miranî, Şikak, Mamedî, Zerza, Bilbas, Mameş, Milkarî, Mengur, Gewirk, Swesinî, Debokrî, Wermeziyar, Êlkanî, Feyzullabegî, Tileko, or Qazî* in order to realize, in contrast to mainstream Kurdish nationalistic discourse, the existence and the persistence of *assabiyya* in Kurdish society. Along with the tribes and clans there are other social formations that display their “group feeling” in religious terms. Two main Kurdish brotherhood Sufi groups (*tariqat*) are *Naqshbandî* and *Qaderî* (Roy 1996), which together with a number of other socio-confessional formations such as *Barzanjî, Nuranî, Kulijî, Berîfkanî, Nehrî, Şêx-ul-îslami*, constitute evidence of a society where *assabiyya* still offers a frame of allegiance and identity.

According to van Bruinessen, the “modern” and centralized states (most consistently Kemalist Turkey and Pahlavi Iran) have made noticeable efforts to detribalize Kurdish society by physically removing the heads of clans (*serok eşîr*) from the tribes and sometimes by deporting entire tribes. The successes of such actions were only temporary because, as van Bruinessen outlines, the modernizing and centralizing states provided new resources that the Kurdish tribes could exploit (van Bruinessen 2002: 183). The formation and the continuity of tribal structures in Kurdish society in different phases of history were the products not only of the interaction of this society with two ancient empires (Turkish Ottoman and Iranian Safavid and Qajar) and new modernizing and centralizing states in Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey, but also of inter-tribal conflicts and coalitions. It is worth noting that the size, the power of continuity and the degree of complexity of Kurdish tribes have fluctuated considerably over time (van Bruinessen 2002: 183).

Andreas Wimmer points out that the Western media’s portrayal of the problem of the Iraqi Kurds under the reign of Saddam Hussein was largely inaccurate because observers adopted the narratives of Kurdish nationalists in their analysis the destiny of an oppressed ethnic minority, but forgot overlooked the fact that a part of this minority regularly rallied to the Iraqi government (Wimmer 1998). Throughout, the whole post-war history of the Kurdish nationalist resistance and the Kurdish tribes, clans and confessional groups has been subjected to various acts of interference in Iran, Turkey, Syria and Iraq. The

interactions becomes further complicated when the dominant central states themselves are *assabiyya* states but conceal their shortcomings behind a universal nationalist, religious or ethnic discourse. In this respect, the Iraqi government under Saddam's supremacy and the regime of the Assad family in Syria are illustrative examples (Roy 1996).

For instance, in the majority of the Arab countries the *assabiyya* constitutes the hard core of the state. The regime in Iraq was basically a Sunni configuration with *Tikriti assabiyya* at the center, which has been destroyed by the regime change following the American-led invasion in 2003. In Syria an *Alawit assabiyya* constitutes the power basis of the state, while others rallied to it in accordance with the logic of the patron–client relationship.

Assabiyya states in the Middle East may appear to exemplify the concept of neo-patrimonialism, a notion Max Weber originally conceived by in considering the “traditional forms of state dominance”. According to Michel Camau, even though neo-patrimonial states use modern and sophisticated means of governing, they seek to segment the society through the steady manipulation of the traditional social and cultural structures. The objective of the state is to prevent the emergence of oppositional forces among the population. In a neo-patrimonial state, social institutions and civil society benefit from a very fragile autonomy. The leader of a neo-patrimonial state (exclusively a male figure) wields a great deal of charisma and appears as a “good father” and “full of care” for the “well-being” of his subordinate people. Personal contacts come before institutional relationships. Appointments to posts are not decided on the basis of skill or and proficiency but mainly on the basis of loyalty. There is a patron–client relationship according to which resources are distributed in order to sustain allegiance (Flory *et al.* 1990: 418).

It is important to stress that the interaction between Kurdish *assabiyya* groups (*xêl, eshir, êl, xizm, malbat, tariqat, xêzan*) and the states is not a purely internal affair. At the same time as Kurdish *assabiyya* groups cross the boundaries of states and establish themselves as transborder social forces in the diaspora, they occupy part of the economic and political spheres at home. For instance, in Iraqi Kurdistan, where Kurdish *assabiyya* had to adapt themselves to new realities after the defeat of Saddam Hussein in Kuwait in 1991, and after the overthrow of his regime in 2003, *assabiyya* relationships there have been complicated. According to Wimmer there has been a highly complex and ever-changing structure of relationships, tactical alliances, and tribal fissions and fusions, and an endless history of betrayal and renewed friendship, clandestine agreements and surprising changes of sides (Wimmer 2002: 124).

The impact of the states on tribal society has been all-encompassing particularly in periods when Kurdish tribal militia have been organized. The emergence of pro-state tribal militia dates back to the early 1960s, when Kurdish nationalists waged an armed struggle against the central government in Iraq, in which both sides mobilized certain Kurdish tribes against others in a highly complex pattern of alliances and oppositions. For instance, the large leading *Barzani* tribe, supported by some other clans, was actively involved in the Kurdish nationalist movement, while others such as *Zēbarî*, *Biradost* and *Lolan* collaborated with the government (van Bruinessen 2002: 175, see also Bozarlan 1997; Wimmer 1998). The use of the Kurdish *assabiyya* by the regime of Saddam Hussein was complicated. However, the collaborating Kurdish tribes and *tariqat* sects that were mobilized by the Iraqi government as irregular cavalry regiments *fursan* in the 1960s and as militia commandos (*mustashar*) in 1980–88 were immediately given the nickname of “donkey foal” (*jash*) by the nationalists (van Bruinessen 2002: 175) as a way to disgrace the pro-state Kurdish militia.

A similar phenomenon could also be observed in Turkey in the 1980s and 1990s, when violent warfare took place between the guerrillas of the PKK and the Turkish security forces. The Turkish government responded to the PKK offensive in 1984 by creating a Kurdish militia called the “village guards”, *köy korucuları*. By the end of 1990s, there were officially some 65,000–70,000 Kurdish militiamen. The expansion of the “village guard” system is mainly due to the intransigent conduct of both the Turkish forces and the PKK guerrillas against the villagers. The Turkish logic that Kurds are either “village guardians” or “PKK sympathizers” had devastating consequences for local population. On the other side, the PKK have obliged people to fight for them as otherwise they would face fierce reprisals. In Turkey, the Kurdish tribes have played a considerable role in electoral activities and border smuggling as well. The political parties and the local authority forces take considerable advantage of tribal arrangements. M. van Bruinessen considers the establishment of the “village guard” system as a move in the direction of the re-tribalization of large parts of Kurdish society in Turkey (van Bruinessen 2002: 177).

In Iran, when the Kurdish organizations the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan, PDK-I and Komala started their struggle against the Islamic regime of Iran in the days following the Iranian revolution of 1979, the authorities responded by establishing the “Muslim Fighters” (*Peshmergey Musulman*) among some pro-state religious and tribal *assabiyya* groups.

Today, the situation has partly changed. The establishment of a Kurdish *de facto* state in northern Iraq and the dispersion of the Kurdish people in the diaspora had considerably affected the structures and continuity of *assabiyya*. Kurdish political leaders belong to wide international networks of communication and support. Their political movements are more likely to emphasize modern political objectives such as autonomy or federalism (Harff & Gurr 2004: 43). Nowadays, large parts of many tribes are urbanized, living in major Kurdish cities and in non-Kurdish cities such as Istanbul and Ankara. However, urbanization has not completely erased tribal values and tribal organization among these *assabiyya* (van Bruinessen 2002). Despite these changes, “clan and tribal loyalties remain important for many Kurds, in cities and the countryside, and continue to provide the basis of support for contending political movements” (Harff & Gurr 2004: 43).

As a result of global migration, a part of the Kurdish *assabiyya* has moved to Western countries to join the existing diaspora. The delocalized Kurdish *assabiyya* groups have neither dissolved into the receiving societies nor sustained their previous forms of organization in the diaspora. They have, rather, recomposed themselves and adapted to the new order of things. More detailed accounts of the existence of such Kurdish *assabiyya* networks in Sweden and France will be given in the coming chapters.

The emergence of the de facto state of Iraqi Kurdistan

Iraqi Kurdistan, which has been a self-ruled region since the 1991 Gulf War, is building a new infrastructure (Leezenberg 2005: 631). Alongside the economic development that has accelerated during recent years, there is an emerging civil society that is engaged in plans to achieve changes and improvement in the political, social, cultural and legal spheres. While the Kurdistan region is developing, the appalling footmarks of the previous regime (Akrawi & Nûjen 2006) and the less than constructive attitude of the neighboring countries remain as a considerable issue of concern to the people of Iraqi Kurdistan.

However, with the objective of achieving functioning democratic constitutional institutions, mainly through the exercise of the executive power according to regional laws and the participation of the population in the political processes, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) is according to the official discourse encouraging not only different states to open their political offices and consulates and invest in economic activities of the region but also the entire Kurdish population in the diaspora to take part in the political, social and economic processes of

Iraqi Kurdistan. In this respect, several countries, among them France, Russia, Iran and the Czech Republic, have already established consulates and political offices in Iraqi Kurdistan. As well, a large number of international companies have in one way or another started to invest in different economic activities and business sectors.

Economic prospects in Iraqi Kurdistan

The Kurdish region, considered an “oasis of stability” (S. Negus, *Financial Times* 26 October 2006) in Iraq, is now going through unprecedented economic development. A British trade delegation, made up of Lord Tim Clement-Jones and members of the Middle East Association (MEA), including Michael Hodges of HSBC and Chris Holden of Price Waterhouse Coopers, paid a visit to the Kurdistan region in Iraq and described it as “full of potential for investment”. Members of the delegation met several senior ministers as well as many individuals in the private sector in Kurdistan with the reported objective of gaining a relevant understanding of the business climate and investment opportunities in the Kurdish region. After the visit, they maintained that they were satisfied with the security situation of the region and also with the Kurdish leaders, who have a “good vision” for the future of their region, as the principal conditions conducive for doing business.

Likewise, several U.S. companies, including Ford, General Motors, Cummins, Motorola, Federal Express and Daimler Chrysler, have also paid visits in order to evaluate the business climate in the oil-rich Kurdish region. Indeed, already in the region are investors from China, South Korea, Turkey (with a turnover that exceeds \$1 billion) and the Middle East, including the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Lebanon (www.kurdistanincorporation.com, 2007-03-26).

The push for development includes a Western-style advertising strategy that targets consumption items and business areas such as cable TV, mobile phones, magazines, the Internet, accommodation, and household items. According to M. E. Ross (MSNBC, 14 November 2006) the region’s economy already is one of the strongest in the Middle East.

Iraqi Kurdistan is striving toward building an infrastructure to attract foreign investment as well as tourists, mostly Arab Iraqis from the southern part of the country. Michiel Leezenberg sees a revival of a Kurdish local tourism sector in the late 1990s. He argues that the Kurdish region with its numerous summer resorts in the mountains has a good economic potential in this domain. In the summer of 2004, more than

200,000 tourists, mostly Arabs from southern Iran and neighboring Arab countries, were expected to visit Kurdistan (Leezenberg 2005: 638).

After 1992 Kurdistan launched a rebuilding program. According to a statement from the KRG Ministry of Public Works and Housing, between 1992 and 1999 around 1,000 km of new roads and highways were built in the region, 600 km repaired and 15 new bridges constructed. Moreover, the statement claims that nearly 132 million Iraqi dinars were spent on restoring manufacturing industries by buying essential machinery, equipment and raw materials, especially for textiles, cigarette and canning factories and marble quarries. Moreover, a total of 26 per cent of the regional budget was spent on constructing, restoring, resurfacing and building government offices. According to the same source, a movement of “cleaning major cities and towns, building of new drainage systems, water supplies, traffic signals, recreational parks, and so on has been initiated and reforestation of burned out villages and areas is taking place” (www.krg.org & www.kurdistancorporation.com, 2007-03-26).

Kurdish officials say that the stability of the Kurdish region has allowed it to achieve a higher level of development than other regions in Iraq. For instance, in 2004 “the *per capita* income was 25 per cent higher than in the rest of Iraq” (www.krg.org & www.kurdistancorporation.com, 2007-03-26). The two chief cities of the region, Irbil and Sulaymaniyah, both have international airports serving destinations through the Middle East and parts of Europe. Irbil is connected by direct weekly flights to Stockholm and Frankfurt. The KRG also has plans to build a media city in Irbil and free trade zones near the borders of Turkey and Iran.

Using Iraqi oil production as a main resource (Leezenberg 2005), the Kurdish government continues to receive a portion of the revenues from Iraq’s oil exports, which amounted between 13 per cent and 17 per cent of the country’s national budget.

In order to promote, facilitate and establish business and investment opportunities in the region, the Kurdistan Development Corporation (KDC) has been created; this is a partnership with the KRG that functions as an investment holdings and trading company, with offices in London and the Kurdish capital Irbil. (www.krg.org)

On 30 January 2006, the Kurdistan Region Assembly passed an investment law for promoting business and tourism in the region. Under the new law, foreign investors will enjoy the same rights as Iraqi investors, with full ownership of their projects. Companies are given the option of transferring profits or income abroad without having to pay taxes or customs (Ross 2006).

Following the removal of the regime of Saddam Hussein and the subsequent violence, the three provinces that are under the control of the KRG have enjoyed a satisfactory level of security and stability. This has allowed the KRG to sign a number of investment contracts with foreign companies. In 2006 the first new oil well since the invasion of Iraq was drilled in the Kurdistan region by the Norwegian energy company DNO (Wikipedia.org, 2007-04-28). The Kurdish government estimates that the region has reserves of 45 billion barrels of oil, and at least 100 trillion cubic feet of natural gas (Ross 2006). The KRG has signed exploration agreements with two other oil companies, Canada's Western Oil Sands and the UK's Sterling Energy.

Since 2003, Kurdistan's strong economy has attracted around 40,000 Arab job seekers from the rest of Iraq. According to Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, since 2003 the number of millionaires in the Kurdish city of Sulaymaniyah has increased from 12 to 2,000, evidence of the financial and economic growth of the region (Ross 2006).

Since 1992 the KRG has endeavored to turn the state-controlled banking system into a loose network of financial institutions engaging in normal banking activities. These would include lending to civil servants, taking deposits and paying salaries on behalf of the government. Currently, the Central Bank of Kurdistan does not set interest rates (Source: www.krg.org & www.kurdistancorporation.com 2007-03-26).

It is worth noting that Kurdish people in the diaspora remit a significant amount of the foreign currency to the KRG's coffers, which in turn influences the country's assets (kurdistancorporation.com 2007-04-28).

As for the consolidation of the Kurdish political system, considerable efforts have been made to form a civilian and pluralist government for the region. Nevertheless, the political institutions and economic organizations of the KRG remain fragile. The course of success and prosperity is obstructed by both internal and external factors (Leezenberg 2003; 2005).

Limitations of politics in Iraqi Kurdistan

In 2002 Wimmer pessimistically described the Iraqi Kurds as "the object of history" because of the "inability of the Kurdish parties to seize the gained post-Gulf War opportunities" to take their destiny into their own hands. According to Wimmer, it was instead the Turkish army detachments, Iranian secret services, Iraqi government agents, and, last but not least, hundreds of returnees employed by different UN

organizations implementing the oil-for-food agreement that would make the history of the Kurds in northern Iraq (Wimmer 2002). Both the KDP of Massoud Barzani and the PUK of Jalal Talabani were to be blamed for this failure.

Wimmer maintained that the power base of the two dominant Kurdish parties, which consisted of renewed alliances and patron–client relationships with tribal chieftains, Kurdish servants of the former Iraqi government, Kurdish refugees returning from Iran, and inhabitants of the so-called collective towns formed principally out of ancient rural populations, further worsened the situation (Wimmer 2002).

Maintaining such alliances with incongruent social and political forces has its price. According to Wimmer, Kurdish political organizations made use of three contrasting sources of income that aggravated the political situation in Kurdistan and transformed politics into a “very risky undertaking”. Before the American-led invasion, customs and street taxes were collected on trucks that crossed the Iraqi–Turkish and Iraqi–Iranian borders in Ibrahim-Khalil, Haji Omran and Bashmaq respectively. For instance, the border post to Turkey generated revenues of around \$50,000 each day (Wimmer 2002: 121) and was one of the major causes of civilian conflict between the KDP and the PUK during 1994–98. The second source of revenue came from international NGOs, IGOs and UN organizations. In order to get things done in the field, NGOs were constrained to enter “symbiotic relationship with one or two of the parties”: an undertaking that contributed to cleavages dividedness in the political culture of Iraqi Kurdistan (Wimmer 2002: 122). The third source of income came from direct financial contributions by the neighboring states and their secret services. Wimmer states that it was obvious that “Iran, Turkey and Syria financed different political parties in the North, the Turks the parties of the Turkmen and sometimes the KDP, Iran a radical Islamist party as well as temporarily the PUK, Syria during much of the nineties the PKK and temporarily the PUK, Saudi Arabia the Islamic Movement and different NGOs allied to them, and so on” (Wimmer 2002: 121).

According to Wimmer, in such a volatile political environment, where the number of the actors in the field was so high and “tactics is everything” while “strategy was a luxury” (Wimmer 2002: 125), the Kurds could not become “the subject of their own history”. Instead, they were doomed to remain “the object of history” (Wimmer 2002; 125). Wimmer’s pessimistic view contains a certain degree of relevancy, but not to the extent that the Kurds in Iraq are unable to assume a prominent position in the political processes of the country. The American-led invasion of Iraq and the overthrow of Saddam Hussein’s regime have fundamentally changed the geopolitical equations of the

Middle East. Consequently, the Kurds' room for maneuver has expanded in such a way that they are now an important part of the geopolitical structures of Iraq. Since 2003, the two main Kurdish political organizations have improved their cooperation and have been able to present a unified political front. Even before the American-led invasion of Iraq, the Kurdish region was far better off under Kurdish rule, in spite of its shortcomings, than it was under the Ba'ath regime (Leezenberg 2003). The approval of an oil law by the Kurdish parliament that opens the way for international investors can be seen as a positive move for the economy and the general welfare of the Kurdish people. However, successful in neutralizing and warding off the risk of being an eternal "object of history," the Kurds still have much to do to become the "subject of history."

Civil society in the Kurdish region is strongly clientelized by power elites through party patronage (Leezenberg 2005: 643). Kinship, interpersonal relationships, and *assabiyya*-based relationships have been an influential source of nepotism when it comes to the restructuring of the state apparatus and local bureaucracy. Simultaneously, the Kurdish region is struggling against the palpable inefficiency and tangible corruption that occasionally give rise to popular protests in the Kurdish localities (Ross 2006). Moreover, the Kurdish region suffers heavily from mass emigration, which has been one of the most prominent social phenomena since the late 1990s. According to Leezenberg, this massive brain drain has negative long-term social consequences, as it is frequently younger persons from the better-educated urban milieu that decide to leave (Leezenberg 2005). The most striking problem is, of course, the deplorable conditions for women in Kurdistan, perpetuated in numerous acts of "honor killing" and rituals of "self-immolation".

Many Kurds in diaspora blame the two dominant Kurdish parties for their inability to create a genuinely democratic political environment that might provide Kurdish people of all social categories with structures of participation. In this regard a Kurdish woman in Sweden has said:

After all these years of oppression and genocide, a part of Kurdistan is now liberated. I hope that Kurdish political parties are much more mature than they used to be some years ago. They should build up a genuinely secular state beyond the power of political organizations. They should also opt for democracy and promote women's position in Kurdish society. They should put an end to corruption. They should work hard to

implement Article 140¹¹ for including the city of Kirkuk in the Kurdish administration.

Summary

The political situation of the Kurds in Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria that has been described in this chapter shows that the dispersal of diasporan Kurds, contrary to the claim of the formalist/poststructuralist/nomadological discourse of diaspora, does not occur voluntarily. It is a traumatic experience that makes a deep mark on the memory of those Kurds who were forced to leave Kurdistan. Insistence on the victim diaspora discourse by diasporan Kurds is justified by a certain tragic course of events such as the politics of denial, the practice of assimilation, persecution, maltreatment, massacre, destruction and above all the campaigns of *Anfal* and the gas attacks. More concretely, the experience of oppression in Kurdistan legitimizes escaping from it.

The experience of oppression, which is the foundation of the victim diaspora discourse, cannot provide the analytical basis for further positive diasporic arrangements among the Kurds. Forced dispersal has indeed been the cause of the emergence of radically new types of political, cultural and social structures, as the Kurds have successfully created a considerable diaspora and transfer part of their national struggle to it. As was discussed in this chapter, a large number of Kurds rediscover their Kurdish identity in their societies of residence and in doing so they pass, as Sheffer (2002) points out, from a “dormant diaspora” to an “active diaspora”. Consequently, it is in diaspora that, through developing their culture and language, creating their TV stations and finding access to the Internet and the world of cyberspace, Kurds may become fervent “long-distance” nationalists and transborder citizens.

¹¹ Article 140 of the Iraqi constitution has been established to solve the problem of the oil-rich city of Kirkuk. The objective was to hold a referendum in Kirkuk and the disputed territories around the city in order to determine their future status by 31 December 2007. The Iraqi Kurds were among the major supporters of the Article 140 as they wanted to include Kirkuk and the region around it in their political administration. The Kurds who were forcibly displaced from Kirkuk by the regime of Saddam Hussein are believed to account for a majority in the city and the region around it. However, as Turkey and the Turkmen and Arabs inhabitants of Kirkuk were reluctant to see the region officially transferred to Kurdish control, the deadline passed without the referendum being implemented. At the end of 2007, a UN-negotiated agreement gave the various sides a further six months to find a solution to the deadlock. The Iraqi Kurds still push for the implementation of the Article 140 (Jenkins 2008).

This chapter also shows the complexity and heterogeneity of Kurdish society, mostly through actualizing the importance of *assabiyya* not only for the political, social and cultural organization of the society but also as regards the sophisticated relationships that it maintains with neo-patrimonial states of the Middle East. The establishment of the Kurdish autonomous political administration in northern Iraq, its economic prospects and its political limitations have also been discussed. For many diasporan Kurds, the Kurdish autonomous region is the only “liberated” part of Kurdistan, whose interaction with the Kurdish diaspora in the West gives expression to the practice of transborder citizenship, as manifested in considerable transnational exchanges, including diasporan Kurds’ support for democracy and reform in Iraqi Kurdistan.

4. The Kurdish Diaspora in France

This chapter examines the social experiences of diasporan Kurds in France, more precisely those in Marseille/Bouches-du-Rhône, relating to the process of diaspora formation, transnational relationships, the practice of transborder citizenship, socio-cultural networks and institutions, ethnic mobilization, and social exclusion in French society. These diasporic experiences are not discernable unless the national context in which they take place is evoked.

For instance, the prevailing restrictive immigration policies and refugee regime in France, which have been fixed on reaching “*immigration zéro*” (Hollifield 1997a; Berruti *et al.* 2002) since the beginning of 1990s, have not been very propitious to Kurdish asylum seekers and refugees. The cases of Sangatte and the *East Sea* will be cited as illustrative examples not only of how the so-called threshold of tolerance (*seuil de tolérance*) toward the immigrant population has been transgressed but also how certain everyday situations can be transformed into pure “human misery”. Similarly, the working conditions of Kurds in the region of Marseille will be actualized. It will be also interesting to see how Sarhadi Kurds mobilize their diasporic resources (*assabiyya*, networks, and associations) in order to compensate for the deficiency of official integration structures in Bouches-du-Rhône.

In order to depict the French integration context, this chapter will exhaustively describe the phenomenon of “*banlieue*” (suburb). A number of scholars consider “*banlieue*” as the expression of a “new form of colonialism” (see Maspero 1990; McNeill 1999; Boulhais 2005; Murray 2006) that accounts for the increasing housing segregation of the immigrant populations and an ethnically “divided society” rooted in a kind of monocultural state (Khosrokhavar 2001) which bases its legitimacy mainly on its republican, universalistic (*universel*) and secular (*laïc*) characteristics (Khosrokhavar 1996; Schnapper 1998).

From a general perspective, in such a political context non-French ethnic groups are perceived as having “traditional” and “introverted” cultures that should be denied access to public spaces. Correspondingly, as the culture of the “Other” is confined to the private spheres, and as the state institutions and persons in authority consider the integration of non-natives as the “problem of immigrants” (*problème des immigrés*) (Grillo 1985), it will be important to see how Sarhadi Kurds in

the Marseille region maintain their *assabiyya* networks and their practice of transborder citizenship.

Part I

The French republican model of integration

France is a country with a strong sense of identity and tradition, manifested mostly through the so-called *exception française* (Sorman 1992; Wiewiorka 1997). This “exception” has its origin in the Jacobinical model that portrays France as a secular (*laïc*), unitary and indivisible Republic, as declared in the laws of Jules Ferry from 1882 and 1885 and reaffirmed in the 1905 law on the separation of church and state, which removed from the state any attachments to a particular religion and any obligation to recognize, fund or subsidize any religion or belief (Gagnon & Pagé 1999: 49, see also Lelièvre 2000). This confirms the image of a “centralized and assimilationist Republic, whose initial aim was, as was maintained by Eugen Weber (1979), to transform peasants into Frenchmen by destroying their local cultures” (Dimier 2004: 837).

In France, the predominance of a universalist view of citizenship implies that members of a national society are integrated by individual citizenship (Schnapper *et al.* 1998). As Brubaker stresses, the dominance of citizenship over nationality and of the political over ethno-cultural conceptions of nationhood is founded on the secular and universalistic premises of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution and embodied in national institutions such as the army, administration, networks of communication and transportation and especially schools (Brubaker 1992).

The laws of Jules Ferry empowered the French state to act as an educator state (Lelièvre 2000), which made school compulsory and removed all denominational elements from education. Civic and moral education was instituted in place of religious morality (Gagnon & Pagé 1999). In other words, “the School of the Republic” (*l'École de la République*) became one of the most essential institutions of nation-building or, as Jeremy Jennings states, as “the principal site for the inculcation of republican values” (Jennings 2000: 579), in order not to only counteract any kind of cultural and social division but also to initiate a process of national unification and forge the identity of the French republican citizen, especially through the use of a single language and the introduction of a uniform educational curriculum for all students (Gagnon & Pagé 1999; Lelièvre 2000; Johansson 2001).

The French Nationality Law (*code de la nationalité*) is based in the first place on the *jus soli* – people are French because of their place of birth and residence (i.e. France) even if their parents are foreign – and to the lesser extent on the *jus sanguinis* – people are French whatever

their place of birth and residence provided that their parents are French. The rules on nationality are set out in the ordinance of 19 October 1945 (modified in 1973, 1984, 1993 and 1998) (Peignard 2001). Accordingly those children who were born in France of foreign parents not born in France acquired French nationality automatically, on condition that they had lived on the territory for at least five years (Schnapper, Peignard & Kreif 1998). Following the famous Pasqua–Méhaignerie Law of July 1993, applicants for French nationality had to produce a “manifestation of desire” (*manifestation de la volonté*) to become French. As for “*double nationalité*”, Algerians and Portuguese are among those immigrant populations that benefit from this right (*cf.* Schnapper, Peignard & Kreif 1998; Peignard 2001).

The general political and administrative organs of France, which are highly centralized, make it possible for the state to exercise strong control over public life. In line with the statist Jacobin ideology, social unity, cultural assimilation and the centralization of policy became the principal institutional characteristics of government bodies (Gagnon & Pagé 1999).

Since the beginning of the 1980s, there has been a desire to recreate the regions, which would function as intermediary administrative units between the national and local communities that would re-establish ties between the political centre and the fringes. Following the political takeover of the French Socialist Party under François Mitterrand as its leader in 1981, a decentralization law was adopted in order to transfer certain powers to the regions. This process was accelerated as the regions were given administrative autonomy in becoming important tools to address territorial inequalities (Dupoirier 1998). Moreover, the EU helped regions to act as potential competitors to the states with regard to the production of goods and services, economic development and political and social integration (*cf.* Dupoirier 1998; Sysner 2006).

As for immigrants in France, they obtained the right to create their own associations as a result of a law passed in October 1981. This was followed by a differentialist discourse launched against the Jacobin and assimilationist tradition, a discourse that took shape around the principal slogan of the “right to be different” (*droit à la différence*) and was, according to Brubaker, a new way to demand a “multicultural ‘heterophile’, antiracist and egalitarian society” (Taguieff 1994, quoted in Brubaker 2001: 536). However, the differentialist discourse has never been transformed into genuine “multicultural” projects in French society. Accordingly, the associative structures could not make claims for specific (political, social, cultural) rights. Nor could they demand that the state recognize the “ethnic” or national origins of their members (Schnapper, Peignard & Kreif 1998).

Over the last two hundred years, France has received a great number of foreign immigrants, the majority of them in search of employment or political asylum. As France has a long tradition of linking nationality to territory, a tradition that has fostered a policy of assimilation regarding its foreign-born (Kastoryano 2002), the larger part of those immigrants who arrived to France over the last one hundred years have been assimilated into the dominant French culture (Schnapper, Peignard & Kreif 1998). According to Kastoryano, the process of assimilation has been facilitated through a number of government policies that have long made the assertion of cultural difference and diversity among immigrant populations secondary to assimilation, predominately in the name of a single nation and culture. In such a context, naturalization is an easy task for the immigrants, but difficulties arise when immigrants seek to preserve their own cultural identities (Kastoryano 2002).

Even though immigration has long been part of modern French history, it has always been associated with a constant “problem” that would challenge the French identity and the French cultural specificity (Grillo 1985).

Institutions for the reception and integration of immigrants and refugees

France has an official framework, including several state institutions, for managing the reception and settlement immigrants and refugees. The agency Direction de la Population et des Migrations, created in 1966 under the authority of the Ministry of Social Affairs, prepares and coordinates population policy in general and immigration policy in particular. Likewise, it defines the framework of naturalization and access to it. The Office Français de Protection des Réfugiés et Apatrides (OFPRA), created in 1952, is in charge for dealing with requests of asylum seekers for sanctuary (Schnapper, Peignard & Kreif 1998: 6).

In France there are three different types of asylum status. Conventional asylum (*asile conventionnel*) is granted those asylum seekers to whom the Geneva Convention of 28 July 1951, as modified by the protocol of New York on 31 January 1967, applies. Constitutional asylum (*asile constitutionnel*) is concretized in the Preamble of the French law of 1946, and is granted those asylum seekers who are “persecuted for the reason of their action in favor of freedom”. Along with these two forms of asylum, additional asylum may be sought for territorial protection. This kind of asylum (*asile territorial*) may not be sought by ordinary application to the OFPRA and is instead dealt with by the Interior

Ministry. This additional provision, whose legal basis is the so-called *Loi Chevènement*, from 1998 was specifically established for providing temporary asylum to those Algerian asylum seekers who suffered from persecution by non-state actors in the mid-1990s (Lloyd 2003: 326; see also d'Haëm 1999).

France has a mixed reception structure for people who are given a temporary residence permit (APS). They can choose between living in the society at large, where they can make their own individual arrangements, or being placed in a one of the reception centers for asylum seekers (Centre d'Accueil pour Demandeurs d'Asile, CADA), maintained at the national level by France Terre d'Asile (Lloyd 2003: 324).

As the French reception structure is not sufficiently funded to offer proper services to the refugees, a number of NGOs step forward to monitor the situation. Two such organizations that have been active at the national level for many years are CIMADE and Forum Réfugiés. CIMADE is an ecumenical organization that provides administrative, legal and social support for asylum seekers. It has 60 local groups that offer refugees language and training courses at the same time as it lobbies for more humane treatment of refugees. CIMADE was founded in 1939 with the initial objective of supporting displaced people who had fled the Spanish civil war (Lloyd 2003: 325).

Additional humanitarian organizations such as the Red Cross, Salvation Army and Restos du Coeur are active in monitoring refugee reception. According to C. Lloyd, the assistance of the NGOs is essential for those asylum seekers who lack access to substantial and well-organized community networks. In this respect, Lloyd cites the Kurds as a successful refugee community, as they have developed throughout the years considerable diasporic networks and associations in France. These diasporic networks appear more often than not as a real alternative to the inadequate French refugee reception structures for (Lloyd 2003: 325).

To counteract the development of anti-immigrant tendencies, discrimination and racist attitudes, the government has a number of legal instruments. For instance, French legislation forbids acts of discrimination and racism in various arenas of public and daily life. France is a signatory of the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination from 1965. This puts the country under an obligation to take adequate measures to protect, and to ensure effective avenues of recourse for, individuals who suffer from discrimination. The anti-racism law, unanimously passed in June 1972 and effective as of 1 July of the same year, strengthens that commitment. This law stipulates in particular:

That it is prohibited, subject to punishment, to incite discrimination, hatred or violence against anyone, either individual or group, for reasons of origin, membership of an ethnic group, nation, race or religion. And that anyone who slanders or insults others for these reasons shall be answerable to the law. Any authority or public servant refusing a right to an individual on the basis of that person's origin is subject to conviction (Gagnon & Pagé 1999: 56).

In 1989 Le Haut Conseil à l'Intégration (HCI) was created. The task of this institution was *inter alia* to produce each year a document that gives a statistical account of the social and economic position of "foreigners" and "immigrants" in French society (Fassin 2002). As a consultative institution, the HCI was established to help the government to frame new integration policies and to make proposals for the reform of the "Nationality Law" (*Code de la nationalité*) (Schnapper, Peignard & Kreif 1998: 6). The HCI in 1998 presented a report to the French Prime Minister that Didier Fassin considers as a symbolic turning point in the history of the management of the "immigrant question" because it tended, along with the identification of integration indicators, to recognize the existence of discrimination in the country (Fassin 2002: 405). Moreover, the French government, although it disliked the American concept of affirmative action, in 2001 urged the French school of political science –traditionally the bastion of the French political elite – to recruit students from "low-performing suburban schools" in the so-called "zones of prioritized education" (*zones d'éducation prioritaires*, ZEPs).

A further sign of political progress in terms of "positive discrimination" was the appointment of immigrants to high-ranking government positions. For example, in 2004 Aïssa Dermouche, of Algerian origin, was appointed a regional prefect by Nicolas Sarkozy, the current President of the Republic, who was Interior Minister at that time: the first time an immigrant had held such a high position within the highly visible Interior Ministry (Yazbeck Haddad & Balz 2006: 29).

After taking office as President of France in May 2007, Sarkozy also appointed Rachida Dati as Minister of Justice. Rachida Dati, the daughter of illiterate Algerian and Moroccan parents, studied law at university and then accounting, working for Elf, the oil giant. She trained as a magistrate from 1997 to 1999 and joined M. Sarkozy's Interior Ministry in 2002, playing a key role in improving relations with immigrant communities in the suburbs. Rachida Dati acted as M. Sarkozy's spokeswoman during his presidential campaign. She is the first person from an ethnic minority to hold a senior French cabinet post. Moreover, the prominent founder of the organization *Ni putes ni soumises*

“Neither whore nor subdued“, Fadela Amara (with a background from Algeria) and Rama Yade (with a background from Senegal) have been included in the newly established right-wing French government in order to take care, respectively, of the Ministry of Urbanization and human rights issues within the Ministry of the Foreign Affairs. As a result of Sarkozy’s will to restructure governmental bodies, the Ministry of Co-development, Immigration, Integration and National Identity has been created. Brice Hortefeux has been given the responsibility of managing this new ministry.

Historiography of immigration in France

In contrast to certain states in western Europe, France has a long tradition of being a country of immigration (Doomernik 1998). France’s role as a *pays d’immigration* in the history of migration movements from both European and non-Europeans countries spans several historical periods.

The first modern mass immigration into France began in the early 1850s when the Second Empire’s (1852–70) economic expansion and industrial growth created an unprecedented demand for labor that could not be met nationally. In spite of this long tradition of receiving immigrant populations, it was really until the mid-1970s and the early 1980s that French historians and scholars began to pay attention to the history of immigration and the impact and influence of immigrants on the development of French society (see Le Moigne & Lebon 1999; Noiriel 1988; 2002; Weil 1991; 1995; Schnapper 1992; Schor 1996; Témime 1999).

Scholars have observed that the government was attentive to the control of the migratory influx as well as to the integration of those foreigners who already lived in France. Furthermore, the French government was preoccupied by labor trafficking and illegal work. As for the ordinary citizen, it was hard to get a clear idea on the issue.

However, the first period of rapid industrialization (1851–70) created a strong need for unskilled labor which was mostly supplied by surrounding countries such Belgium, Italy and Spain. Moreover, many migrants from Poland and Portugal were also attracted by the opportunities in French manufacturing, construction work and agriculture. It is important to underline that there was a considerable variation between regions in terms of the level of development and the nature of the available work. The north-eastern part of the country had flourishing coal, textile and steel industries, while the south received Italian and Spanish immigrants to work in agriculture (Noiriel 1988; Doomernik 1998; Témime 1999; Weil 1995).

The second period of immigration into France occurred under the Third Republic (1870–1940), when immigration into the country continued to increase. By that time France had become a major industrial power. According to various sources, foreigners, who constituted only 1 per cent of the population in 1851, had increased to nearly 3 per cent by the mid-1880s (Weil 1995; Le Moigne & Lebon 1999; Noiriél 2002). The augmentation of the foreigner population prompted the French government to adopt the decree of 2 October 1888 requiring all non-French individuals to register their residence at town and city halls throughout the country. Five years later the Act of 9 August 1893 was ratified in order to authorize the municipalities to establish local registers for foreigners. Moreover, this bill obliged those who provided accommodation to foreigners to report them to the local authorities within 24 hours (Lochak 1997).

France continued to actively recruit foreign workers both during and after the First World War in order to relieve its domestic labor shortage, which was a direct consequence of the war. According to Le Moigne & Lebon, immigration into France at that time was the consequence of a natural decrease in the population and the post-First World War economic expansion. Le Moigne & Lebon stress that the immigrants mainly comprised young wage-earning people who took up occupations that were new or had been abandoned by French, mostly within building, the metallurgical industry, coal mines, quarries, agriculture and household occupations (Le Moigne & Lebon 1999). As an additional measure to control and regulate this large-scale immigration, the French government issued the decree of the 21 April 1917, which gave the prefects authority to issue an identity card to each foreign worker who was over 15 years old and who in effect held an employment contract (Lochak 1997).

This period was also marked by the arrival of thousands of political refugees, mostly from Italy after Mussolini's accession to power in 1922 and from Spain during and after the civil war of 1936–39. In addition, many Russians and Armenians arrived in France, fleeing respectively the Bolshevik Revolution and Turkish persecution (McNeill 1998: 1).

Italian and Polish immigrants were particularly numerous (808,000 and 508,000 respectively) and by 1931 represented together more than half of the all foreign workers in France. Other important immigrant communities during this period were Spaniards (352 000), Belgians (254,000), Portuguese, and, of course, colonized Africans, who began to appear on French soil mostly after 1921 (Le Moigne & Lebon 1999: 7). According to statistical materials from INSEE, the number of foreigners in France, which was 1,110,000 in 1911, increased to

2,729,000 in 1931 and constituted 6,6 per cent of the total national population (INSEE 1997:17). However, this influx of migrants, which reached its peak on the eve of the 1930s, was halted by the economic depression of the following years. Consequently, due to a shrinking market which could no longer offer the promise of a better life, more than one million immigrants left the country, whether willingly or otherwise, as was the case with the Polish immigrants who were forcibly repatriated by the trainload (see Schor 1996; Lochak 1997; Le Moigne & Lebon 1999). In the context of crisis, above all on the eve of the Second World War, the French government decided, under the Act of 2 May 1938, completed some months later by the decree of 12 November, to reshape the legislation then in force and to provide an overall policy for the control and regulation of the arrival and settlement of foreigners in France (Lochak 1997).

The era of “three decades of glory” (*trente glorieuses*)

In the wake of the Second World War, the French government concluded that immigration was indispensable to recovery from the damage inflicted on the country's economy during the war. Another alleged reason for encouraging immigration was the low rate of population growth (*la dénatalité française*), which has always been a preoccupation of the French government. There was no disagreement that recruiting a foreign workforce was an obvious and an immediate necessity for the reconstruction of French industry. Disagreements among the decision makers were principally centered on the nature of France's immigration policy and the origin of the immigrants who would arrive in the country. Subsequently, it was agreed that, without making it clear or imposing any ethnic quota, European immigrants were preferable to Africans and Asians. For this purpose, the Office National d'Immigration (ONI) was created as an important instrument of France's post-war immigration policy. The agency was established under a government ordinance of 2 November 1945 that fully authorized the new institution to organize and control immigration into the country. In order to manage the influx, different organizations were created, such as the Interdepartmental Commission of Settlement and Assimilation, the National Commission of Labor and the Interdepartmental Commission of Immigration. The objective of these institutions was principally centered on issues of national origin as well as the quality and quantity of the potential immigrants to France. In this respect, Italian immigrants constituted the quintessential choice for the ONI. This was manifested in a bilateral agreement that was signed with the Italian government on 22 February

1946. Soon after, France opened its first recruitment office in Italy (Lequin 1992; Schor 1996; Le Moigne & Lebon 1999).

Nevertheless, the French government completely failed in its ambition to manage an organized, optional and controlled immigration into France. For instance, a problem for ONI was that Italians and other Europeans, with the exception of Spaniards and Portuguese, were not particularly interested in settling in France. Moreover, structural inadequacies in the introduction and the reception of immigrants further reduced the interest of European workers in moving to France. The introduction procedures were quite complex, the reception of families in particular was neglected, and the housing problems remained unsolved. The shortfall of European immigrants was compensated by illegal and seasonal workers and migrants from France's colonies or former colonies in north and sub-Saharan Africa. Enjoying freedom of entry since Algeria was still a part of France, Algerian immigrants with 155,000 arrivals in the period of 1950–55 grew to be more numerous than many other immigrant communities, including the Italians. Seasonal workers from Algeria also came in large numbers, forming a considerable group of 175,000 people. Those immigrants who entered the country illegally between the late 1950s and the 1960s were subsequently regularized *ex post facto* by the French government, which seemed to be satisfied to see the labor shortage improved and foreign workers filling low-paid jobs that French nationals were reluctant to accept (*cf.* Lequin 1992; Lochak 1997; d'Haëm 1999; Le Moigne & Lebon 1999; Noiriël 2002).

However, the decade 1955–65 was marked by a profound transformation in labor market conditions and structures. The war in, and the independence of, Algeria and the modification of the international context, which was marked by a wide fluctuation of migratory influx into France, can be seen as major reasons for this transformation. During the period 1955–61 the ONI managed to introduce or regulate 432,000 permanent workers, mostly from Spain, Morocco, Portugal and Algeria. But this figure was far from the initial forecast of the Office National d'Immigration, which gave the impression of a migratory influx slipping from the control of the public authorities generally and the ONI in particular, which regulated the new settlers *a posteriori* (Le Moigne & Lebon 1999: 9).

The end of the war in Algeria led not only to the return of a significant number of French soldiers but also to the spectacular arrival of hundred of thousands of French-Algerian settlers (*les pieds noirs*), which brought about an exceptional growth of the active population in general. During the period 1962–65 the number of the immigrants amounted to 673,000 persons, of whom 324,000 were repatriated French-Algerians, 111,000 came from Algeria and 238,000 from other countries. One of the

most important characteristics of this immigration phase was the visible modification of its structure and origin. At that time, as immigration from Italy had declined considerably, there was an important augmentation of migrants from Spain and Portugal (who increased from 20,000 in 1959 to 200,000 in 1965) and above all of those from former colonies and protectorates (Algeria with 1 million migrants in 1965 as well as Morocco) including Black Africa (Le Moigne & Lebon 1999: 9). It is essential to bear in mind that colonialism was the most effective channel of migration into the country. France could regularly call not only on military reinforcements if necessary but also on potential labor from all its colonies in north Africa and certain countries in sub-Saharan Africa, Indochina and even its DOM-TOMs (Départments et Territoires d'Outre-Mer) such as Guadeloupe, Martinique, Réunion and French Guyana. Family reunification among Spaniards was a further important factor which contributed to the structural modification of migration in France during 1962–65 (see d'Haëm 1999; Le Moigne & Lebon 1999; Noiriel 2002).

Apart from some slackening of immigration in 1966–68 and also in 1971, the arrival of foreigners accelerated during the early 1970s. Beside several thousand Portuguese who entered in 1970, the arrival of many Moroccan, Tunisian and Turkish (including a large number of Kurds) immigrants resulted in and ethnic and cultural diversification of the labor structure in the country (Le Moigne & Lebon 1999: 10).

As indicated, the objective of the French government was to sustain a controlled and directed immigration: not an easy task. However, a decree that came into force on 23 February 1972 was not only as a mechanism of control but also a restrictive measure as far as immigration was concerned. The new decree was supported by the ordinance of 1975 which made the entrance of foreigners totally dependent on economic circumstances and the situation in the labor market. The implementation of the new decree brought about a considerable reduction of the rate of immigration. Finally, as a result of a stagnant labor market, the French Council of State and the Ministry of Interior and Employment decided to issue a number of decrees suspending immigration and even family reunification (McNeill 1998).

Thus, the post-war immigration historiography that ran from 1946 until 1974 – a period generally known as the “*trente glorieuses*” during which France exulted over an unprecedented economic expansion and a spectacular augmentation of the foreign population which according to Guy Le Moigne & André Lebon rose from 1.7 million in 1946 to 3.4 million in 1975 (Le Moigne and Lebon 1999) – had come finally to an end (*cf.* Noiriel 1988; 2002; Lequin 1992; Schnapper 1992; Weil 1995; INSEE 1997; Le Moigne & Lebon 1999; Témime 1999).

Subsequently, a new immigration phase emerged, marked by family reunification and refugee influx.

France as a *terre d'asile*

It is quite clear that France, following the oil crisis of 1973 and its impact on French industry, put the brakes on the influx of immigrants, even though the end of the *trente glorieuses* was not under any circumstances synonymous with a complete end to the arrival of foreign populations in the country. From the beginning of the 1980s, immigration acquired a new feature in France. The traditional admission of an immigrant workforce that was a salient characteristic of the post-war economic expansion suddenly gave way to a much more diversified and globalized migration in terms of national and geographical origin, ethnicity and gender. This new immigration pattern, which prevailed throughout the 1980s and 1990s, involved in the first place those who entered France as beneficiaries of family reunification. This was an important phenomenon that brought about the so-called *feminization* of the foreigner population (Castles & Miller 1998). This refers to the increase in the number of women coming to France to join their husbands or their fathers. This category was mainly made up of people from former French colonies, who maintained their numerical supremacy over all other immigrant groups such as Turks, Spaniards and Portuguese. The process of family reunification was regulated by decision of the Council of State from November 1978. It was in this period that a large number of Kurdish families (almost exclusively from Turkey) arrived in France and, together with many other arriving immigrant families, populated the numerous newly emerging French suburbs (*banlieues*). The *Cité des 3,000* in Aulnay-sous-Bois on the outskirts of Paris, with its evidence of increasing social degradation, became an important residence for many of them (Elayyadi 2004).

The creation of the EEC and the EU, which granted freedom of movement to all EU citizens, gave rise to other categories of residents settling in the country in their capacities as students, visitors, investors, managers, and so on. Seasonal workers and temporary immigrants constituted a further category among foreigners in France, even though it is impossible to obtain proper statistics or a good estimate of their numbers. The sojourn of thousands of illegal immigrants (*les clandestins*), asylum seekers and refugees from various countries obliged the French government to issue a general amnesty that aimed at regularizing 130,000 people in 1981–82. This policy of indulgence or, as Daniel Lochak designated it, *l'état de grâce* was incontestably a direct

consequence of a fundamental political shift, characterized by the arrival of the Socialists in power in 1981 under the leadership of President François Mitterrand. Thus, the presence of illegal immigrants (*les clandestins*), the undocumented (*sans papiers*) and the asylum seekers (*demandeurs d'asile*) in French society was legalized by means of a number of regulatory measures, including the issuing of a residence permit (*carte de resident*) to all undocumented people (Lochak 1997; Berruti *et al.* 2002). The new policy made it possible for foreign populations to move from an illegal and a temporary form of sojourn to a permanent and legal one. The *état de grace* was, however, not durable because it was strongly challenged by the emergence of the extreme right on the French political scene.

The emergence and empowerment of the xenophobic Front National (National Front) with its charismatic leader Jean-Mari Le Pen brought about a new political climate in France, noticeable above all in the domain of immigration and the presence of foreigners in the country. This shift in the public debate enabled anti-immigrant forces to demand a restrictive refugee regime, which conditioned the country's immigration policy for two decades. In this respect, different laws and circulars were adopted on the issues of restricting the inflow and repatriation of rejected refugees (*les deboutés*) and immigrants; but they were apparently not enough to dissuade a significant number of illegal immigrants, asylum seekers and transitory refugees from arriving in France throughout the 1980s and 1990s, in the hope of finding refuge in a country which was now called a *terre d'asile*.¹² For instance, some 21,500 requests for asylum were lodged with the French Office for the Protection of the Refugees and Stateless Peoples (OFPRA) in 1997. Of the 93,000 residence permits which were issued in 2000, 52,000 were delivered to those who applied under the categories of "spouse of French national" and family ties, 6,000 to the category of "salaried employee" and 5,200 to political refugees (Berruti *et al.* 2002: 41–43).

At the time of the census of 1990, 3,596,602 foreigners were living in France, out of a total population of 56,700,000 inhabitants: that is, 6.35 per cent of the whole. This figure is comparable to that in 1931 (2,890,000 foreigners, 6.6 per cent of the total population): over a long

¹² *Terre d'Asile* is not solely an ideological or discursive manifestation of the French republican idea, with its readiness to receive refugees from the whole world with open arms. It is also a common term that includes 90 reception centers throughout the country. Founded in 1971, *France Terre d'Asile* received its first group of refugees from Chile after the coup there in 1973. In 1994 *France Terre d'Asile* signed "an agreement with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to set up legal service for statutory refugees and training facilities" (Lloyd 2003).

period, the foreign population in France has remained stable as a percentage of the total population (d'Haëm 1999: 5).

However, for many immigrants and refugees France was and is still considered as a *terre d'asile* that holds out the possibility of realizing the dream of a better life, while for many others this old country is in a position only to provide temporary refuge or free passage to more attractive destinations.

The outline of zero immigration

As indicated above, as a result of the oil shock of 1973, France, like several other western European countries, halted the further recruitment of foreign workers. Since then, French immigration policy has focused primarily on discouraging and stemming the immigrant influx. By the early 1990s the extreme right National Front political party has influenced a significant part of the country's electorate with its demand for the expulsion of "all Muslim immigrants from France". The response from different points on the political spectrum was to argue in favor of a more restrictive immigration policy (Hollifield 1997; Guiraudon 2002). To implement the demand for restrictions on immigration, for instance through imposing the policy of so-called "zero immigration", the "Pasqua Law", named after the interior minister Charles Pasqua, was adopted in 1993. As a result, foreign graduates were denied residence permits and even prohibited from accepting jobs offered by French employers. Further, family reunification became significantly harder for those foreign spouses who had been residing illegally in the country before their marriage (Guiraudon 2002).

According to Guiraudon, "these repressive measures rendered formerly legal migration flows illegal". Consequently today, in spite of a partial regularization of the undocumented (*sans papiers*) in 1997, there are still many illegal immigrants living in the country considered to be "impossible to expel" (*inexpulsables*) and "impossible to regularize" (*irrégularisables*) (Guiraudon 2002: 3).

Despite the Pasqua Law which was partially designed to deter potential refugees from coming to France, the number of applications for full asylum in the country increased from 31,000 in 1999 to more than 47,000 in 2001. This was a 52 per cent increase, and an increase for a fifth consecutive year (Lloyd 2003: 324).

When Socialist Prime Minister Lionel Jospin assumed office in 1997, he commissioned a report by the prominent political scientist Patrick Weil to survey France's immigration structure and to elaborate policy recommendations particularly on integration and illegal

immigration. The outcome was a report (*L'immigration et la nationalité*) that laid the groundwork for a new immigration law in 1998. The report criticized the Pasqua Law of 1993 for “depriving France of human capital and undermining its national interest in global competition for the brightest minds through discouraging foreign students and young professionals from settling in France”. Consequently it recommended easing conditions of entry for skilled researchers. Moreover, the new law was a way somehow to liberalize French citizenship, permitting children born in France of foreign parents and having resided in France for five years to become French citizens automatically at age 18 (Guiraudon 2002: 3).

In 2003 France enacted a new law on immigration. Its architect was Nicolas Sarkozy (Interior Minister at the time). It proposed certain major changes in the immigration structure of the country (Melting Pot Europa 2006). Prior to the adoption of the new law, Sarkozy rejected criticism and said that he was determined to pursue his acts against what he called “group flights”: an allusion to those immigrants who come to France legally and stay there clandestinely. According to N. Bell, “group flights” was Sarkozy’s new version of Charles Pasqua’s “charter travelers”: his term for the “hidden immigrants” (*clandestins*) and “undocumented” (*sans papiers*) (Bell 2003). Claire Rodier of the French Lawyers Association (*Gisti*) criticized the new law on the grounds that it would make papers hard to obtain because it introduced an integration contract, made detention before expulsion longer (from 12 to 32 days) and introduced fingerprinting for all applicants for visas or residence papers (Melting Pot Europa 2006).

At the beginning of 2006, a new draft immigration law was introduced in the French National Assembly by Nicolas Sarkozy. The new legislation called for new requirements to be imposed on foreign workers, students, and those who wanted to join their families in France. The new bill, which was approved some months later by both the lower chamber and the upper house, required immigrants from outside the EU to sign a contract agreeing to learn French and to respect the principles of the French Republic. Moreover, it would be more difficult for non-European immigrants to bring their families over to join them. The bill made it harder for unskilled migrants to settle in France and abolished the right of illegal immigrants to remain after ten years (www.workpermit.com, 2007-05-25).

Once again, Sarkozy’s proposals were criticized for containing “racist politics”, which would “pander to the far right”. The former Interior Minister, who took control of the 2005 riots in the impoverished suburbs, rejected the criticism and said that the new law would bring France into line with other countries. This was perhaps an

allusion to the 1999 EU Amsterdam Treaty, which seemed to be an agreement between the EU countries on two major points: effective limitation of immigration and simultaneously effective integration of immigrants (Heckmann 1998). He argued further that the 2005 riots across the country showed “the system of immigration and integration was failing” (BBC News 17 June 2006).

However, French human rights organizations severely criticized France’s new immigration bill and called it “racist”, saying it would be “a black mark on the country”. The French League for Human Rights (LFRH), which is an umbrella organization for eight human rights groups, considered the new law as “a blatant violation of immigrants’ rights” because it was founded on a “selective racist approach”. LFRH’s media officer Patrick Emanuel described the new bill as “inhuman”, because it did made exceptions for “neither the handicapped nor patients who need residence permits to get charge-free medicine”. The human rights organization Act Up, which is among the eight signatories, compared Sarkozy with the National Front leader Jean Marie Le Pen. Left-wing politicians in the French Parliament described the clause as an offense to the second- and third-generation immigrants (workpermit.com).

Moreover, Ammar Al-Asfar, Lille’s Mosque Imam, said the new immigration law was the latest of a series of laws that “restrict the lives of immigrants and raise their ire”. The new immigration law has been seen as a part of the west European post-September 11 security politics that also challenges the Muslims population in France. For instance, the French Parliament previously gave its final backing to a new anti-terrorism law that “would make it possible to install video cameras on the public transport system and in places of worship, including mosques” (BBC News 17 June 2006).

The concept of a “threshold of tolerance” (*seuil de tolérance*), which was originally introduced by the sociologist René Giraud in 1991, suggesting that the increasing number of immigrants was a threat to social cohesion in France (McNeill 1998), now turned into the discourse of “zero immigration” (Hollifield 1997), which seeks to legitimize the emergence of a kind of police state, inclined to control and supervise its own citizens day and night.

The era of the *banlieues*

Banlieue is the French word for “outskirts” or “suburb”. Originally it was used to describe any geographic residential area on the outer edge of a city. Accordingly, elegant and wealthy areas such as Versailles, Le Vésinet, Orsay and Neuilly-sur-Seine were counted as Parisian *banlieues*. During last three decades, there has been a considerable shift in the usage of the term in the French context. Today, the word *banlieue* is principally used as a sociological concept to describe ethnically segregated housing areas mainly around Paris, but also some other large French cities, where inhabitants suffer from various forms of social exclusion (Wikipedia.org).

The emergence and growth of suburbs in France goes back to the period of the *trente glorieuses*, the post-war years that witnessed rapid economic expansion. During this period, the French state and major industrial employers encouraged immigration of young workers from the former colonies, mostly from the Maghreb, to help fill labor shortage. With the accelerating immigration movements toward France, accompanied by an impressive baby boom in the 1950s and 1960s, the French government realized that the housing situation was precarious. The destruction wreaked by the First and Second World Wars had left France with a severe housing shortage (cf. McNeill 1999; Elayyadi 2004; Social situation in the French suburbs 2007). Post-war France suffered heavily from an acute scarcity of accommodation, overcrowding, a “dilapidated housing stock in need of modernization and a large population resident in the so-called *bidonvilles* (shantytowns) that were found in most large cities and were only replaced in the 1970s” (McNeill 1999: 3).

The repatriation of 900,000 French colonists (*pieds noirs*) to France in the days following the independence of Algeria (Jordi 2000), together with a large number of Algerian Jews (Yazbeck Haddad & Balz 2006) and 91,000 *harkis*, has further aggravated the housing crisis. The *harkis* were the native Algerians who fought with the French army against the FLN during the Algerian war of independence (Boulhais 2005). Upon their arrival to France they were placed in internment camps, while the *pieds noirs* settled mostly in southern France, above all in the city of Montpellier. After a while, the *harkis* went on to live alongside other Algerian, Tunisian and Moroccan immigrants in the shanty towns (Boulhais 2005).

However, the housing deficiency was so blatant that many well-known personalities felt obliged to urge the French government to intervene rapidly. For instance, during the winter of 1955 Abbé Pierre, the French popular priest, asked the government to work in favor of the

country's large homeless population. In order to put an end to the practice of illegal squatting in public spaces and also to provide for new immigrants, the government embarked on huge housing projects, named the "new towns" (*villes nouvelles*), including Sarcelles, Cergy-pontoise, Marne-la-Vallée and Sénart. These projects were partially financed by the Marshall Plan and organized through central planning (Social situation in the French suburbs 2007).

During the *trente glorieuses*, which were the key years of the growth of the *banlieues*, some three million public housing apartments (*logements sociaux*) were built (McNeill 1999: 3). At that time, the construction industry worked overtime and at full speed to build the high-rise housing estates (Elayyadi 2004). These new apartment blocks were primarily inhabited by members of the middle class. As the housing situation improved, most middle-class residents moved out and found better houses elsewhere. Meanwhile immigrants left the shanty towns for the apartment blocks. Similar trends were observable in the Swedish context.

This period was called "the years of concrete" (*les années de béton*), because it was when "bulldozers and cement mixers worked overtime to clear France's overcrowded inner city slums and *bidonvilles* in order to produce clean, modern homes, the majority of which were large high-rise estates situated in suburb districts" (McNeill 1999: 3). The new apartment blocks were termed "apartments with moderate rents" (*habitations à loyer modéré HLM*), and districts of blocks were called *cités* (housing estates) (McNeill 1999; Murray 2006; Social situation in the French suburbs 2007).

As the *trente glorieuses* ended, the *banlieues* began to appear as a "source of problems" in French political debates. Since the late 1970s, the *banlieues* have been evoked in popular opinion, in the media and amongst France's political elites as "demonized spaces of social fragmentation, racial conflict, (sub)urban decay, criminality and violence". Some French sociologists have even termed a phrase – "*stigmates territoriaux*" (Bachmann & Basier 1989) – to describe the stigmatization of many of France's *banlieues* (McNeill 1999). Today, the word *banlieue* evokes a different set of connotations, such as *l'insécurité*, *le drogue*, *le désordre civil*, *la délinquance*, *quartier difficile*, *la criminalité*, *les travailleurs clandestins*, *l'Islam radical* and even *le terrorisme* (McNeill 1999; Murray 2006; Yazbeck Haddad & Balz 2006).

The decay of the *banlieues*, social exclusion and ethnic discrimination

As indicated above, the end of the golden age of the modern housing estates, triggered by the oil crisis of 1973, was followed by changes in the social structure of the *banlieues*. According to McNeill, “factory closures and increasing unemployment began to have considerable impacts on the social cohesion and living conditions of the *banlieues*”. Those housing estates, which were genuinely ambitious projects during the period of economic growth, were now largely maladapted to the changing economic climate. Similarly, those housing estates that were built close to factories to supply their labor needs soon found themselves with huge numbers of unemployed tenants in abandoned peripheral suburbs (McNeill 1999: 4).

The situation had been aggravated when in 1989 the French government decided to reduce the number of subsidized housing units available in the *cités* by 300,000. Accordingly, the problems of overcrowding and squatting were exacerbated. The remaining housing apartments, were suffering heavily from, for instance, water damage, insulation problems, broken elevators or other structural deficiencies (Silverstein 2005, quoted in Yazbeck Haddad & Balz 2006: 27).

The social degradation of the *banlieues* and the riots that have erupted have attracted the attention not only of the general public and journalists but also of social scientists. In order to illustrate the fate of the *banlieue*, the French anthropologist François Maspéro decided in 1989 to explore, as he put it, the Parisian *terra incognita*, and found a “sense of urgency to overcome his initial fear of what he may discover in the suburbs: he felt the need to tell the world that he was about to visit a new meaning, and establish the historical significance of the suburbs” (Maspéro 1990 quoted in Elayyadi 2004: 5-7). A concrete example of the link between the economic recession and housing decay that Maspéro described in his open-ended discovery *Les Passagers du Roissy-Express* (1990) was the *Cité des 3,000* in Aulnay-sous-Bois, itself subject to four nights of rioting in October 1993 (McNeill 1999).

Maspéro says that the basic curse of the *Cité des 3,000* in Aulnay-sous-Bois was not drugs, delinquency, intolerance, illiteracy and racism. The real problem of the *Cité des 3,000* was the French automaker Citroën, which in 1971 opened a factory in Aulnay-sous-Bois when it desperately needed to recruit a significant number of unskilled workers for assembly line work. North African and Turkish immigrants were those who could provide the company with the needed labor. It was impossible for the immigrant population of the *Cité des 3,000* to find new

jobs when Citroën and other companies began to lay off workers in the 1970s and 1980s. Suddenly, as the residents found themselves without jobs, so they became poorer, more marginalized and more vulnerable to discrimination. The situation was aggravated when the *cit * became overcrowded with newcomers. Officials allowed the numbers of residents to grow beyond the real capacity of the housing estates (Elayyadi 2004). The overpopulation of the *cit * by non-native ethnic groups coincided with the exodus of its wealthier residents (skilled and semi-skilled people with higher incomes) who moved away to private suburban estates. The residents who could not afford to move out faced “rapidly deteriorating social conditions and a further impoverishment of amenities available to them” (McNeill 1999: 4).

The *Cit  des 3,000* plays an important role in the life of diasporan Kurds in France, as the majority of the Turkish citizens who settled in this suburb at the beginning of 1970s were Kurds. They were also among the people Maspero describes in *Les Passagers du Roissy-Express*. In accordance with what Maspero claims, many Kurds evoke the memory of the “gloomy” years after the shutdown of Citro n with strong sentiments. As with many other residents of the *Cit  des 3,000* in Aulnay-sous-Bois, the experiences of the Kurds tell of a more or less decadent *cit * with growing social problems.

As illustrated by Abdeljalil Elayyadi, the example of the *Cit  des 3,000* in Aulnay-sous-Bois shows that “immigrants’ lack of access to proper housing, their low salaries and the high living expenses in the cities, where the jobs were usually found, made it difficult for them to locate a suitable and affordable place to rent or lease” (Elayyadi 2004: 10). Moreover, as a result of discrimination on the part of landlords, they could not rent suitable apartments. They are most often accused of not paying their rents on time and of having children that create problems for other residents because they are “uneducated” and “delinquent” (Elayyadi 2004: 10).

Moreover, these examples demonstrate clearly how the *cit s*, as Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad & Michael J. Balz outline, epitomize exclusion in French society (Yazbeck Haddad & Balz 2006: 27). According to the authors, the *banlieues* “suffer from the problems of crime, unemployment and poor education – problems that are magnified among second- and third-generation immigrant youth in the suburbs” In this respect, suburbs are designed as self-contained units because they are isolated from surrounding suburbs and central Paris (Yazbeck Haddad & Balz 2006: 27). “The feelings of isolation created by the geographical isolation of *les banlieues* from the city – most are cut off by various communications arteries (motorways, railway lines etc.) – were

exacerbated by the decline in living conditions and many residents came to feel themselves captives in hostile social desert” (McNeill 1999: 4).

Inflammatory and pejorative language has been systematically used against non-native ethnic groups. For instance, in 1991 Jacques Chirac, then Mayor of Paris, deplored the situation of the French people, who were disturbed by “the noise and the smells emanating from the homes of their foreigner neighbors” (Murray 2006: 33). At the same time he felt sorry for the French young employed couples, who were at a permanent economic disadvantage compared with the immigrant Muslim, who with his “two wives and fifteen children” could take considerable advantages of the country’s social services.

Even though there are no official statistics on ethnic minorities in France, since these would not be in line with the republican principle of equal citizenship under the law regardless of background, there is evidence that shows the extent to which French society is ethnically and socially stratified. For instance, the unemployment rate among 15–24 year-olds in poor, predominantly black- and Arab-populated city suburbs reaches 40 percent, almost twice the national average for the same age group. The level of unemployment for French university graduates is 5 per cent while among graduates from France’s north African communities it is over 26 per cent (Murray 2006: 28). As the level of unemployment is high in the *banlieues*, a large number of people have to make use of the so-called “minimum inter-professional wage for growth” (*salair minimum interprofessionnel de croissance*, SMIC). This is a minimum that hardly permits its beneficiaries to survive.

Roxane Silberman, Richard Alba and Irène Fournier have conducted a survey among second-generation immigrants in France at the moment of the transition from school to labor market. The authors investigate ethnic differences in the processes of labor market entry, where they find that “groups who come from former French colonies and/or are dominated by Muslims are substantially, if not severely, disadvantaged”. According to the authors, on the whole the children of North African immigrants enter the labor market with educational qualifications that are on average below those of the native French, but the much higher level of unemployment among them cannot be explained by educational differences. They certainly suffer from severe discrimination in the French labor market that is intrinsically divided “ethnically” (Silberman, Alba & Fournier 2007).

The structural disparity between the center and the periphery is aggravated by a vicious circle of crime and police brutality. For instance, an ordinary identity check of non-white youths, which is often initiated by the inevitable “show me your papers please”, may turn into police brutality. A further indication of unpleasant police practices is the

use of the pejorative and condescending “*tu*” instead of the more respectful “*vous*” when addressing non-white people of north African and sub-Saharan descent (Murray 2006: 32).

However, as the crime rate is higher in the *banlieues*, the French media do not hesitate to make headlines about the lack of security: an issue that in turn generates valuable propaganda for the extreme-right National Front, which likes to fish in troubled waters. The theme of security helped Jean-Marie Le Pen, leader of the National Front, win more than 20 per cent of the French vote in the 2002 presidential elections (Yazbeck Haddad & Balz 2006: 27).

The riots of November 2005, triggered by socially and ethnically alienated second- or third generation teenagers, predominantly of sub-Saharan and Maghrebin immigrant groups in the suburbs of Paris, Lille and other French cities, can, according to Yazbeck Haddad & Balz, be seen as a painful reminder that France’s integration project has, to put it bluntly, failed. The authors say that the grand French ideal of *égalité*, which proclaims the equality of all citizens of the Republic, appears to be incompatible with 21st-century reality, not least because the notion of *égalité* is itself a “by-product of France’s colonial past” (Yazbeck Haddad & Balz 2006: 23).

The *banlieue* uprising of November 2005

In October and November 2005, France witnessed an unprecedented series of riots and violent clashes between youths and police. The riots were triggered in 27 October 2005 as a group of teenagers were playing football in the Paris suburb of Clichy-sous-Bois. When police officers arrived to check their identities, they tried to run and hide. Three of them, thinking that they were being chased by the police, climbed over a wall to hide in a power substation. As a result, teenagers Zyed Benna (17 years old, of Tunisian origin) and Bouna Traore (15 years old, of Malian origin) were electrocuted by the transformer in the station. The third boy, Muhittin Altun (17 years old, of Kurdish origin), was seriously injured. The police denied that the teenagers had attempted to hide from them. Three days earlier, on 25 October 2005, Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy had visited the Paris suburb of Argenteuil to see how new measures against urban violence were working. As he had said that crime-ridden neighborhoods should be “cleaned with a power hose” and described violent elements as “gangrene” and “rabble”, he was pelted with stones and bottles (Pironet 2006; Radio France info).

Three days later, on 30 October the violence reached Aulnay-sous-Bois, where rioters ransacked a police station and burned 177

vehicles. Gradually, violence spread beyond the Paris region and reached the eastern cities of Dijon, Lyon and parts of the south and west.

On 8 November the French government authorized a number of emergency actions to suppress the unrest, under which local authorities imposed curfews and restricted people's movements across more than 30 French towns and cities, including the Paris suburbs. However, in three weeks of rioting about 9,000 vehicles were burned, hundreds of schools and public buildings were damaged and more than 3,000 people were arrested. It was the worst urban violence to hit France (Pironet 2006; Radio France info).

In his first public speech "Declaration to the French" (*Déclaration aux Français*), since the rioting began, President Jacques Chirac pledged to create opportunities for young people in an effort to prevent any resurgence of urban violence. Likewise, he urged the French to combat discrimination, something that he said would "weaken the very foundations of the French Republic" (Murray 2006). The president had previously promised the nation to restore the order. As for Nicolas Sarkozy (the Interior Minister at that time), during the episode he made consistent use of firm language and insisted on so-called "zero tolerance" toward the rioters (Vidal 2005).

For many, the former Interior Minister of France seemed all along to be playing a provocative role. According to Dominique Vidal, he was already motivated by his presidential ambitions with an eye on his rivals Dominique de Villepin, the Prime Minister, and the leaders of the right, Jean-Marie le Pen and Philippe de Villiers. Vidal claims that Nicolas Sarkozy obviously "kindled the fire the better to praise himself for extinguishing it". His verbal provocation excited certain police officers, who were tempted to behave like a colonial army in suburbs mainly populated by French of Arab or African origin (Vidal 2005). However, the use of curfew was the first time the 1955 law had been implemented on mainland France: a law which made possible the massacre of several tens of Algerians in the region of Paris on 17 October 1961 (Vidal 2005; see also Elayyadi 2004).

Even though the use of inflammatory language by the former Interior Minister, designating rioters of the Parisian segregated suburbs as "scum" and "rabble" (*racaille*), was widely criticized, his popularity subsequently increased by 11 per cent, according to an Ipos-Le Point opinion poll (Murray 2006: 33). He showed his authority immediately after the riots by deporting a 22-year-old man back to Mali; six more expulsions followed.

This increasing popularity can be seen, however, as indicating not only that mainstream French society approved of Sarkozy's draconian

conduct vis-à-vis the suburb riots of 2005 but also that a dominant extreme-right discourse was still gaining currency.

According to a recent study by Sylvain Brouard & Vincent Tiberj on how, prior to the presidential elections of 2007, the issues of immigration and above all of the rioting of 2005 were perceived by French people during the debates, two out of every three electors on the right attributed the suburban uprisings not, for instance, to the bankruptcy of the social system or to discrimination and unemployment, but to increasing “anti-French racism”, “delinquency”, “inadequacy of parental authority” and the attempt of certain “Muslim groups” to gain power in these suburbs (Brouard & Tiberj 2006: 1–2). It was in such a distorted political climate that Sarkozy became the most popular political personality in France, with some 68 per cent of those who were interviewed by Ipos-Le Point condoning his conduct toward the suburb riots (Murray 2006: 33).

The French authorities have even blamed the *banlieue* rappers for being one of the catalysts of the suburb uprising across the country. Rap and hip-hop artists, who have long been a part of France’s immigrant youth music culture, have been held responsible for imitating American rappers and reproducing in their musical lyrics anti-France sentiments among ethnic groups.

The uprising of November 2005 in the French *banlieues* was not the first of its kind but the most extensive and the most impressive among the constant suburban riots in France. This is why the uprising of 2005 necessitates new reflections and new angles of approach in order to go beyond all prejudices and preconceived ideas about this crisis. This is why the French national model of integration must be questioned in its totality.

The riots of November 2005 were started, as Graham Murray meritoriously stressed, “by disenchanting youths spread across France and left parts of country damaged and shocked” (Murray 2006: 26). Those who were involved in the riots were mostly French-born children of North African and even Kurdish immigrants; they complained of heavy-handed policing and of being excluded from mainstream society (workpermit.com). In order to bring the uprising under control, a state of emergency was invoked, allowing the imposition of curfews and the deployment of thousands of police reservists and paramilitary CRS (Murray 2006).

A male Kurdish writer in Paris with whom I had an online conversation pointed out that, in order to explain the suburban rioting of 2005, social scientists should go beyond socioeconomic factors. Accordingly, for Murray French suburbs are rather ethnically segregated “ghettos” (Murray 2006). Likewise, Maspero considers “banlieues” as

“sites of memory” (*lieux de mémoire*) (Maspero 1990) that France deliberately and steadily overlooks because they call to mind both the nation’s painful colonial past and also its failure to realize *liberté, égalité* and *fraternité* for all members of society. Instead of using the suburbs as “lieux de mémoire” to confront its colonial past, France has chosen to be amnesic – perhaps the only way to exclude the *banlieue* and the accumulated post-colonial memories there from the nation’s historical accounts or at best, as Alec G. Hargreaves outlines, to relegate it to the periphery of the national history (Hargreaves 1995). When necessary, the *banlieues* are portrayed as a “deviant” geographic area which can hardly be compatible with life in mainstream society and above all with the “fundamental values of the Republic” (*grandes valeurs de la République*) (Elayyadi 2004; Murray 2006).

Islamization of the riot discourse

In the French popular imagination, fed more often than not by the political rhetoric of the National Front, the *banlieues* have been perceived not only as a major source of violence, drug abuse and crime but also as a place where young people of North African descent are blamed for returning to the “original” faith of Islam, transforming it into a fundamentalist ideology and then “turning their backs upon the welcoming embrace of French civilization” (Jennings 2000: 580).

Since the presidential elections of 2002, which were marked by the notable success of Jean-Marie Le Pen of the National Front – he obtained the second highest number of votes after Jacques Chirac – there has been, according to Murray, a process of “LePenization” of French political discourse. Accordingly, targeting “*les immigrés*” and associating them with issues such as “*l’insécurité*”, “*l’Islam radical*”, “*la clandestinité*” and “*la délinquance*” has become politically convenient (Murray 2006: 32). Since then such issues have acquired the same salience in electoral debates as jobs, education and health (Murray 2006: 32). Murray claims that, along with the “LePenized” racist political discourse, a recent phenomenon that has also contributed to the promotion of the political right in France is that a number of French intellectuals have in recent years, especially since September 11, adopted “views which are strikingly similar to those of the American neoconservatives”. For instance, “the Huntington ‘clash of civilization’ theory, the threat of Islamic fundamentalism, the menace of urban violence and the necessity of defending western culture and values” are among the beliefs and values that a number of French philosophers have adhered to (Murray 2006: 33).

The force of this argument will be still more salient when one looks at analyses of, and comments about, the French suburb riots that have been made in the American context. As Yazbeck Haddad & Balz note, American commentators were actively involved in identifying Islam as a major source of the French *banlieue* riots of November 2005. For example, Robert Spencer perceived the uprising as a “clash of values”, while Mark Steyn referred to it as the beginning of a “Eurabian civil war”. Daniel Pipes described the riots in *The New York Sun* as the “first instance of a semi organized Muslim insurgency in Europe”, as demonstrated by “Muslim youth” shouting “Allah-u-Akbar”, while Patrick Buchanan saw the perpetrators of the riots as “the soaring Muslim population who act as a Fifth Column inside Europe” (Yazbeck Haddad & Balz 2006: 24).

Correspondingly, in the French context, as already noted, a number of philosophers express views of this kind which according to Murray are “confined to the extreme Right”. For instance, in an interview with the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* Alain Finkielkraut, referring to the suburban riots of November 2005, maintained that “Blacks and Muslim-Arabs were involved in an anti-Republic pogrom”. In the same way, André Glucksmann considered the riots as the manifestation of “nihilism” and “pure hate”. He defended Nicolas Sarkozy’s derogatory language when used the word “scum” (*racaille*) when referring to the “undesirable elements” in the housing estates, while another French philosopher, Pascal Bruckner, complained that the general political climate in France made it impossible to have “a debate on radical Islam, immigration and nationalism without being branded a fascist”. For Héléne Carrère d’Encausse (an expert on Russia), the youths of North African and sub-Saharan African descent have little to do. “They are only loitering around in the streets . . . because a big number of these Africans practice polygamy” (Murray 2006: 34-35).

In recent years, the practice of polygamy has been systematically associated with people who have their origin in Maghreb and the sub-Saharan Africa. In 2007 a representative for the newly established Ministry of Co-development, Immigration, Integration and National Identity revealed that his government intended to expel 25,000 illegal immigrants from France, arguing that France was unable to welcome “*toute la misère du monde*”. Moreover, he blamed “certain immigrant groups” for maintaining the “practice of polygamy”, which he said was hardly compatible with the “*valeurs républicaines*” (Radio France Info 2007-06-01). One might ask whether it is relevant to consider – as the French racist and “culturalist” political discourse often suggests – the culture and religion of the young Maghrebin and sub-Saharan people (called “*beurs*” by mainstream society) as a major cause of urban

violence and thus a menace to French national identity and “republican values”.

The Islamization of the suburbs riots, which is connected to the fear of Islam and its extremist elements, is not a new phenomenon in France. This fear of Islam, which is currently fed by the terrorist attacks of the September 11 and the global campaign against the cartoons in a Danish newspaper portraying the prophet Muhammad as a terrorist and lecher, dates back to the 1995 bombings in the Paris metro and other public places (killing eight and injuring around 150), which alerted the French to the threat of Islamist extremists. The French authorities do not take long, as Anouar Boukhars maintains, to reveal the nexus between drugs, crime and radical Islamism and the “discrete pattern of terror networks like the ‘gang of Roubaix’”, which according to Boukhars is a collection of militants of Algerian descent led by Christopher Caze, a 25-year-old convert who had traveled to Bosnia to work as a hospital medic only to return as a dangerous “jihadist” (Boukhars 2006: 9).

Certainly, no one can deny that Islam with its 2.8 million believers constitutes the second largest religion practiced in France (Jennings 2000), as manifested by a large number of important practices, symbols and rituals in public spaces (Césari 1994), or that a number of “Salafist brothers” were in one way or another engaged in politicizing Islam and, as the French Scholar Olivier Roy maintains, in de-culturalizing and individualizing youth in order to provide an alternative cultural paradigm and a new Islamic discourse (Roy 2005). This new Islamic discourse does not promote a return to traditional Islamic customs. Quite the reverse: the new Islamic discourse is conceived as a model of the “born again” that works for a (re)Islamization of individuals within a de-territorialized “*ummah*”, disconnected from traditional cultures and societies (Roy 2005; Boukhars 2006). The new Islamic political discourse adopted by a number of youths in the *banlieues* urges its adherents to distance themselves from the culture and the tradition of their parents (Roy 2005).

In an interview with *ISIM Review*, Laurent Chambon, a French sociologist, displayed his preoccupation with the Islamization of the riot discourse and about the way in which the French state manages the riots and violent clashes in the *banlieues*. For the sociologist the riots were not triggered by a number of “youth gangs inspired by radical Islam” but by the “precariousness of everyday life in the French *banlieues*” (*ISIM Review*, No 17, 2006), or, as Olivier Roy remarked, by “an underclass, despised, excluded and ignored from the destitute neighborhoods” (Roy 2005).

However, the French *banlieues* and the riots that have recurred there since the early 1980s should be seen not only as an

indication of the failure of the French model of integration but also as “sites of memory” (*lieux de mémoire*) for the French to become aware of own national identity: a national identity that has long been in an unacknowledged crisis.

The crisis of French monoculturalism and the place of the “Other” in French society

As indicated previously, national integration in France is founded on the Jacobin political tradition of universalism and secularism, which not only proclaims the separation between religion and the state but also between the private and the public domains. The outcome of this tradition, which has had its ups and downs over the last two hundred years, is said to be the emergence of an assimilationist and homogeneous nation that expresses its universalistic tradition not only in the mass media and legal dispositions but also in social theory, which is less inclined to the notion of “cultural diversity” than to the concept of “class struggle” (Ghorra-Gobin 2006: 2).

As Dominique Schnapper stresses, terms such as “race”, “ethnicity”, or “minority” are not used in the French context because they have “racist” connotations and are considered as scientifically (biologically or sociologically) irrelevant (Schnapper 1998). According to Schnapper, most French intellectuals refuse to use the notion of “race” and its associated concepts because it they consider it “dangerous” (Schnapper 1998). This position necessitates the dismissal of American and British models of integration, which refer constantly to such notions as “race”, “ethnicity”, “minority” or “cultural diversity”.

Although assimilation has been the more or less a constant principle of integration in French history for well over a century, the new wave of immigrants from the Maghreb, sub-Saharan Africa and Asia during the post-colonial era of the late 20th century has rapidly and profoundly changed social and cultural conditions of French society. These immigrants have posed challenges to France’s social and political institutions because they are culturally and ethnically distinct from earlier waves of immigrants of European origin. Consequently, the myth of France as a culturally distinct and homogeneous nation has been rigorously exposed. Immigration, as the most significant and pressing issue in contemporary France, has severely tested France’s universalist republican ideals. It has erupted in flashpoints such as the Islamic headscarf affair and the reform of the French nationality laws, as well as becoming central to the political debate with the rise of Jean-Marie Le Pen’s extreme right-wing National Front. It is, however, a challenge

shared by the so-called “French of old stock” (*français de souche*) and by immigrants, and it affects all aspects of French society.

Many scholars doubt France’s ability to retain the universalist ideals of the French Republic and its assimilationist integration model and to make a “mould” (*moule*) society out of a large number of different ethnic groups with fairly varying cultures and traditions. Moreover, the French conception of the republic, which places a strong emphasis on *de jure* equality, is also challenged by evidence of the *de facto* inequality that immigrant populations experience in their daily lives (Banton 2001). The absence of social equality in French society should lead us to ask the following question: how can the French integration model retain its legitimacy and *raison d’être* when the rhetoric of social equality between immigrants and the “French of old stock” is used as the sole reason for banishing ethno-cultural differences from the public spheres of society? However, it is essential to note that behind the glorification of the French Republican model as “secular”, “universal”, “democratic”, “sovereign” and “modern”, as well as the rejection or stigmatization of “non-French” ethno-cultural identities as “traditional”, “communitarian”, “particularist”, “introverted” (*replié sur soi*) and “inassimilable”, there is in reality, as Farhad Khosrokhavar has outlined, a monocultural society (Khosrokhavar 2001) which finds it hard to realize its ambiguities, contradictions, limits and difficulties.

According to Khosrokhavar, monoculturalism refers to a specific form of managing the social field within which a dominant culture occupies the entire public space: a dominant culture that asserts itself as the only legitimate culture at the expense of all others. Monoculturalism relies mostly on state institutions or on the political relationships in the society (Khosrokhavar 2001: 17). In the French case, the citizen is an abstract concept, produced by the Enlightenment. The abstract French citizen has internalized the idea of the separation between the private and the public. The public sphere is, then, that of rationality and the managing of the citizen’s autonomy by the state, while the private sphere is that of nature, which is opposed to culture. Sexuality and emotional relationships belong to the private sphere. For instance, the private is more or less the irrational domain of those sentiments, personified par excellence by women, children and those excluded social categories that are otherwise invisible in public spaces. In this respect, the citizen is by definition the man of the public, while the private sphere is managed by other kinds of intelligibility (Khosrokhavar 1996; 2001).

Equally, Khosrokhavar considers French universalism as an abstract construction. It functions as a standard cultural model that occupies the entire public space. In that sense, the public space is entirely reserved to the “pure” political claims of citizens and political

organizations, while the claims to “particularistic” manifestations are confined to the private domain. Khosrokhavar underlines that the Republican model takes its vigor from the promise of the integration that it aims to offer society’s disadvantaged members, on condition that they abandon their “particularism” in the public space and that as sovereign individuals they identify themselves with the nation-state (Khosrokhavar 1996: 115). But due to its nature, the Republican model finds it difficult to acknowledge that modern France is a multicultural society (Murray 2006), where ethnic groups struggle not only to achieve a social position equal to that of the “French of old stock” but also to achieve their “*droit à la différence*” in the public space. Particularly, the viability of the north African “Muslim” immigrants’ “integration” into French society has been the focus of concern, given that their presence in France poses a considerable challenge to the relevance of the political theory of French republicanism as a whole (Jennings 2000).

Accordingly, since the end of the 1980s an increasing number of French scholars have expressed concern about the crisis of the Republican model of integration and announced the end of the “French exception”. They have also made an effort to promote a specific form of multiculturalism, which would be more compatible with the French condition (see Wieviorka 1997; 2000; Khosrokhavar 1996; 2001). Khosrokhavar argues that, due to the disappearance of both external and internal enemies, today’s nation-states do not need to preserve their monocultural institutional structures. As for internal enemies in France, Khosrokhavar stresses that the antagonist revolutionary project was long ago replaced by inter-class dialogue, at the same time as conflict between Catholics and seculars has moderated (Khosrokhavar 2001: 17).

Cynthia Ghorra-Gobin argues that the Republican assimilationist model was efficient only throughout the industrial period, as its principal objective was to realize a homogeneous society. But today, given the structural changes in capitalist economies, the traditional theory of assimilation is no longer valid (Ghorra-Gobin 2006: 3).

As the French model has denied the immigrant populations the “right to be different” (*droit à la différence*), without giving them in return the equal opportunity that was promised by the Republican model, it has lost its credibility and become subjected to crisis (Khosrokhavar 1996). The following tale of a Kurdish student in Aix-en-Provence is illustrative of the experience of denial among immigrant populations:

Prior to my arrival, I believed that each democratic nation had at its disposal necessary mechanisms for solving internal ethnic conflicts, even if it was a matter of the recognition of cultural and linguistic rights among ethnic groups. After a while, I realized, however, that there are

various forms of democracy. For example, in Belgium, Switzerland and even in the Netherlands and Sweden, the cultural right of ethnic groups is recognized while in France any kind of ethno-cultural claim is considered as a threat to the national identity. I don't want to say that France is like Turkey, but they are very similar when it comes to denying the identity of other ethnic groups. As a Kurd, who came to France with a huge experience of exclusion, I wished that France was different.

As the Republican model has a “universal” vocation, it seems to strive to convince the world that it is independent of time and space and therefore not in need of updating. In reality, as Jennings maintains, behind the claim of being “universal” lies a “sense of the fragility of social consensus and the fear that all particularisms – Breton, Corsican, Occitain, or whatever – pose a treat to national unity” (Jennings 2000: 578). In other words, a rigid and inflexible French universalism that claims to be rooted in the “philosophy of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, now looks more and more like a form of European ethnocentrism, and thus like a form of domination rather than liberation” (Jennings 2000: 579).

Moreover, the French model is inclined to inflict a specific form of violence on youths of immigrant origins, predominantly through fragmenting them and making them internalize attitudes that the opposite of universal values. For instance, indignity, distrust vis-à-vis the family and community, the impossibility of relying on others, and unwillingness to cooperate are among those negatives attitudes that steadily fragment youths of immigrant origin in the *banlieues* and prevent them from becoming organized in what Khosrokhavar calls the “positive community” (*communauté positive*) (Khosrokhavar 1996: 116). For want of the *communauté positive*, they constitute instead, once again in the words of Khosrokhavar, “new deviant communities” (*néo-communautés déviantes*), most often in the form of *ad hoc* groups whose *raison d'être* is to “kill their annoyance” or to get hold of economic resources in order to satisfy their “bulimia of consumption” (Khosrokhavar 1996: 117).

The *banlieue* riots of 2005 showed the way in which France's determination to suffocate the identity, culture and religion of its ethnic populations has “inadvertently and unwittingly created social groups who have become united in their misery and now in resistance” (Murray 2006: 30). However, the model of “*universel abstrait*” seems to me even more intransigent in view of the massive vote by French people of “old stock” for the xenophobic National Front of Jean-Marie le Pen (Murray 2006: 30). The differentialist discourse, which reached a certain level of popularity in the 1970s and 1980s, has once again given way to an

assimilationist political climate. According to Brubaker, even the much-needed rhetoric of “*droit à la différence*” disappeared rapidly and gave way to a new slogan of “right to be the same” (*droit à la ressemblance*) associated especially with the famous organization SOS-Racisme and its emblematic leader Harlem Désire (Brubaker 2001: 537).

As the old internal and external enemies have disappeared, the Republican model has found itself in need of a new imagined enemy, which would function as a contrasting image against which it could sharpen its own image. Consequently, the issue of immigration has become essential, not the least because, according to Guy Sorman, it calls for material (employment, housing), cultural (education, leisure), spiritual (Islam) and emotional (violence, sexuality) satisfaction. In this respect, the immigrant, which this time appears as the “*Other*” *par excellence*, becomes the subject of a radical conceptual change, transcending the traditional boundaries of the political rivalry between the French Right and Left. Sorman maintains that “immigration in France is not a title of glory; it is not exhibited, it is concealed; the worship of ethnicity and roots is not glorious because it is not the variety taken for granted but its rejection”. Immigration is something that enables the French to oppose but also to exist. The immigrant fulfills the essential function of scapegoat. In the era of the absence of ideological conflicts, he or she remains the eternal suspect in society. He or she is the possible menace and potentially guilty. It is around him or his alien status that political rituals are done and undone (Sorman 1992: 171).

As soon as the immigrant makes an effort to take a position in the public space with his or her own symbols or clothes, he or she is immediately excluded from it. For instance, the Islamic headscarf affair “*l’affaire du foulard islamique*” has since October 1989 – when three Muslim girls were suspended from a state school in Creil, near Paris, for wearing Islamic headscarves – been a major moment of fear, confusion and xenophobic manifestations for France (Guiraudon 2002). According to Shmuel Trigano, the event had in reality less to do with headscarves than with “the national identity of a France confronted by immigration and the expression of an identity that was threatening to the nation” (Trigano 2002: 4).

In his book *Ideologies and Institutions in Urban France*, Grillo shows how the French government, preoccupied with urban problems, tried to integrate immigrant populations into social and political institutions. For instance, through the so called “*Action socio-éducative*” social workers tried to “insert” north African immigrant families in particular into French mainstream culture. The French administration considered this process as social and cultural “evolution”, or, in the words of social workers, “*overture d’esprit*” or sometimes even

“*prise de conscience*” (Grillo 1985: 297). Grillo says that this revealed a highly prejudiced system of cultural values where the institutional and ideological structures of the country conceive of the immigrant as an eternal problem (Grillo 1985: 297).

Perceiving immigrants as a problem arises from the particular form of French citizenship, which according to Tony S. Jugé and Michael P. Perez is an expansion of whiteness, rooted in the concept of “otherness” (Jugé & Perez 2006: 188). Jugé and Perez maintain that this model, as a political concept of French nationalism, has an assimilationist overtone that casts immigrants into the role of the “other” (Jugé & Perez 2006: 189). The researchers refer to Bonilla-Silva (2003) and maintain that “the historical realities of ethnic and racial identity in terms of colonial constructions of ‘otherness’ are ignored because of the false perceptions of “color-blindness” (Jugé & Perez 2006: 189). In such a context, immigrants from the former French colonies will be treated as inferior colonial subjects. As France makes use of them as cheap workers in its labor market, a kind of cultural division of labor is imposed. In this regard, cultural difference is subsequently added to the class structure of the society, at the same time as immigrants are requested to erase their past (Jugé & Perez 2006: 196). This is why the French announce proudly that “*their modèle d’intégration* is the antithesis of Britain’s multicultural society, which is caricatured as a ‘multitude of ethnic and religious ghettos’” (Murray 2006; Yazbeck Haddad & Balz 2006).

In France the British integration model is regularly perceived as “communitarian”: an epithet used to “ascribe negative connotations to multiculturalism and the recognition of ethnic groups that may have distinct identities” (Murray 2006: 37). Demonizing the concept of multiculturalism is in reality a way of avoiding seeing oneself in the mirror; not least because such an act may make France aware of certain painful experiences that are rooted in its colonial past and its pro-Nazi Vichy government during the Second World War. Hence, imagining a glorious image of self induces France to maintain a kind of “*amnesia collective*” (Sorman 1992: 175).

During the 1850s it was the Belgian immigrants that French hated. The Italians, who are “invisible” today, were the subject of violent racist attacks in the early 1900s. The Poles, very good Catholics, were no better treated by the native French than the today’s Zairians (Sorman 1992: 177). Stigmatized more than any other immigrant and refugee population in France, the North African and the sub-Saharan Muslim immigrants are currently among the most undesirable immigrants groups in the country.

Sorman argues that in France it is impossible to be both French and something else at the same time. For instance, one has to

choose between Islam and France. The issue of “double belonging” – of which Captain Dreyfus was the victim in his time – has been steadily on trial in France (Sorman 1992: 190). The dominant Republican model rigorously excludes the “possibility of the notion of hyphenated national identities (e.g. Algerian–French)” (Yazbeck Haddad & Balz 2006: 26). In this respect, the experience of diasporan Kurds in France, which will be examined more closely in the following sections, further illustrates the issue of hyphenated national identities and the practice of transborder citizenship.

Part II

Formation of the Kurdish diaspora in France

There are various difficulties in trying to estimate the size of the Kurdish population in France. For example, like other Western nations, France registers its Kurdish immigrants or refugees as Iranian, Iraqi, Turk or Syrian nationals. Consequently, the presence of Kurds on the French soil as a specific community or identity group with a legal and institutional status is not recognized. Asylum seekers are the only ones whose ethnic identity is established, but only by those public institutions responsible for asylum applications. However, the number of Kurds is not acknowledged in French national statistics. Hence, estimates range between 100,000 (Mohseni 2004) and 150,000 (Berruti *et al.* 2002). The Kurdish Institute of Paris estimates the number of Kurds in France to be between 100,000 and 120,000 (www.institutkurde.org, 10-09-2006). However, the Kurdish population in France was estimated to be 70,000 in 1989. It is important to note that those 17,355 Turkish citizens who requested asylum at the end of 1980s were constituted mainly of Kurds fleeing the widespread confrontations between the Kurdish guerillas and the Turkish army (Berruti *et al.* 2002: 33).

According to E. Doru, earlier estimates should be revised, especially since the number of illegal Kurdish immigrants and asylum seekers is constantly increasing (Berruti *et al.* 2002). The Kurdish diasporic community in France is dominated by Kurds from Turkey, while Kurds from Iran, Iraq and Syria are ranked behind the first group according to their numbers (Berruti *et al.* 2002).

The presence of the Kurds in France is not a new phenomenon. When the French government began to seek foreign labor during the 1960s, approximately 15,000 Kurds arrived in France. They were among the 30,000 Turks who came to the country as a result of the Franco-Turkish agreement on immigration. The majority of them settled in the region of Alsace-Lorraine (Bozarslan 1998).

The oil crisis of 1973, with its enormous impact on the French economy, led to a significant decrease in the migratory influx into the country. As a result of the economic recession, Kurds, who henceforth were unable to enter France as legal immigrants, continued to arrive through adopting other options. The establishment of family reunion option paved the way for hundreds of Kurdish families, which arrived en masse during 1979–80. A larger number of Kurds were asylum seekers, whose arrival reflected major events such as armed confrontations between the Kurds and the Iranian government following the

inauguration of the Islamic Republic in 1979 and the military coup in Turkey in 1980. This period coincided with the accession of the French Socialists to power in 1981, followed by a number of positive reforms in the domain of immigration policy. For instance, issuing a “general amnesty” for thousands of illegal immigrants, which was the most important feature of immigration policy reform, has favored many Kurds, not only those who were already in France but also those who hastened to enter France from elsewhere before the new law lapsed. However, the new policy, which entailed the regularization of thousands of illegal and undocumented immigrants (“*clandestins et sans papiers*”), transformed immigration from a temporary into a permanent phenomenon. As already noted, many Kurds benefited from this possibility and some even left other west European countries like Germany and the Netherlands in order to take advantage of this immigration policy (cf. van Bruinessen 2000; Berruti *et al.* 2002; Mohseni 2004).

Furthermore, the war between Iran and Iraq (1980–88), the launch of a Kurdish guerilla warfare by the PKK in Turkey (1984–99 and once again in 2004), the use of chemical weapons and the launch of the genocidal campaign *Anfal* against Kurds in Iraq (1987–88), the defeat of Saddam Hussein in Kuwait, followed by the repression of the Kurdish uprising and consequently the exodus of hundred thousands of people (1991) and the intensification of a “fratricidal” war between the two main Kurdish political formations, the KDP and the PUK, in southern Kurdistan (1994–97) were among other factors that produced a refugee influx from Kurdistan.

Concerning the arrival of Kurdish refugees, a Kurdish researcher in Marseille claims that from 1984 onwards the growth in the number of Kurds who applied for family reunion in France was intimately connected to Kurdish conflict and the unstable political situation in Turkey. At the same time, a large number of solitary Kurdish asylum seekers (mainly males) had fled their native places, left their families behind, and covered a lot of ground in order to reach France, while facing various forms of danger on the way and numerous complicated procedures when they presented their asylum applications to the authorities.

Those Kurds who arrived in France in the 1980s, after the political transformations in Iran, Turkey and Iraq, constituted the first Kurdish refugee generation in the country. They were in possession of a good level of intellectual capital and political awareness: useful resources that helped an important number of them to undertake university studies or follow their political activities in the new society. This characteristic of the refugee group – that is, being influenced by the idea of national struggle – distinguished them from their predecessors, who were

significantly less politicized. However, the increasing ethno-national awareness among the Kurdish population and the creation of certain cultural associations and informal transnational networks in France can largely be explained by reference to the background of the daily efforts of this “politicized” refugee group (Berruti *et al.* 2002).

As for the housing of the diasporan Kurds in France, one can admit that the Kurds, like many other immigrant and refugee populations, are generally dispersed throughout the country, living most often on the fringes of large French cities. The majority of the Kurds from Turkey tend not only to live in the suburbs but also to congregate in the same suburbs, mostly reflecting their local or genealogical identities prior to their arrival to France (Berruti *et al.* 2002: 53).

Despite the restrictive French refugee policy, articulated particularly in the Pasqua Law of 1993, Kurds continued to arrive to France during the 1990s and the beginning of 2000s. In the course of 2001, 5,344 asylum seekers from Turkey entered France. The numbers of asylum seekers from the same country was 6,600 in 2002 and 6,500 in 2003, which shows that the influx of Kurdish refugees was increasing rather than decreasing. In total, more than 50,000 Kurds arrived in France between 1990 and 2002, either as asylum seekers or seeking to be reunified with the other members of their families already settled in the country (Berruti *et al.* 2002; Mohseni 2004).

The episode of the *East Sea* and the Kurdish refugees as “boat people”

The most spectacular influx of Kurdish refugees into France occurred in mid-February 2001, when the half-wrecked Cambodian-registered ship *East Sea* run aground on the French Riviera with 912 Kurdish refugees (of whom 200 were children, including three babies born on board), mostly from Iraq and Turkey. French police and government officials believed that the ship, which had sailed from Greece and then made a stopover in Turkey, was deliberately grounded 20 meters from the shoreline at Boulouris beach between the southern town of Saint-Raphael and the French Riviera resort of Nice. According to French officials, the vessel, which was built in 1966, was later towed toward the nearby naval port of Toulon, but sank in shallow waters before reaching the harbor. French police found no sign of the ship’s captain and crew. The experience of the *East Sea* was more or less identical with the event of *Ararat*, a vessel that was intercepted in southern Italy in 1998 with 825 Kurdish refugees aboard.

However, the French media deplored the precarious condition in which these Kurdish refugees traveled. In this regard, a 22-year-old Kurdish man from Turkey who had traveled with the *East Sea* gave the following account:

We spent eight days at sea in very horrible conditions. We had so little to drink and to eat and many times nothing at all. We were forced to remain standing on top of one another down in the hold of the ship during the trip. It was terrible to hear children crying, for they were thirsty or hungry or suffered from seasickness. The parents could not do much for their children. It was a pure inferno. No one could take care of the anyone else. Everybody thought of himself or herself.

A Kurdish asylum seeker from Marseille who shared the same experience reported:

Without hygiene facilities we could not wash ourselves. So we were obliged to remain in our own dirt during eight days and eight nights. Prior to the voyage, I knew that it would be tough but not so tough that people would want to die. Our destination was Italy, but strange to say, we came to France instead. It is the deed of the human smugglers, who are always unpredictable for their victims. They only care for the money they get from the travelers. This time, the smugglers received more than \$4,000 per adult and \$1,700 per child.

The *East Sea* event is a small part of the entire Kurdish migratory trajectory and refugee journey that Kurds undertake. As was indicated previously (see also Chapter 2), the Kurdish refugee influx into wealthy Western societies assumes a tragic aspect. The escape from Kurdistan, which is more often than not associated with fear, police, killings, and human smugglers, hence becomes internalized by the diasporan Kurds as a part of their collective consciousness.

This dramatic event attracted huge attention from the French and international media. As France had never before experienced such a refugee arrival *en masse*, the fate of the refugees who arrived in France in such a precarious condition became a subject of intensive debate among French politicians, especially regarding how to manage the refugee problem in general and this Kurdish case in particular (Guiraudon 2002: 1).

For instance, Daniel Vaillant (French Interior Minister at that time) deplored the incident and urged the French authorities to fight people who “exploit human misery” and those who run “trafficking rings”. Likewise, French President Jacques Chirac claimed that his country had never witnessed human trafficking on such a scale.

Moreover, he had shown his dissatisfaction with this kind of “illegal, dangerous, inhuman and unacceptable” transporting of people, to which he urged the international community to “react to prevent this sort of situation happening again and to bring those responsible to justice” (CNN.com).

At that time, French Socialists appeared less indulgent to immigration and according to Virgine Guiraudon called for a “firm response to the Kurdish immigrants in order to deter further arrivals”, while the French Right, by contrast, declared their solidarity with a people oppressed by Middle Eastern powers. But the need for a European solution to the question of immigration and human smuggling was the essential issue that France’s political elite did agree on (Guiraudon 2002: 1).

Finding a solution to the issue of immigration among the EU nations had been underlined a while before the *East Sea* event, when the British authorities in 2001 discovered in the port of Dover the bodies of 58 Chinese migrants who had suffocated in the back of an airtight truck during a ferry crossing from the Netherlands. Following this, EU ministers agreed to speed up moves to harmonize their asylum and immigration policies (CNN.com). The idea of a harmonized and common immigration and refugee policy had been advanced after the Treaty of Amsterdam was adopted by the EU countries (other than the UK, Ireland and Denmark) and associated Schengen countries (Iceland and Norway) in 1999 (Guiraudon 2002: 1).

However, following the *East Sea* episode, France acknowledged that, like Italy and Greece, it had now become a transit country for those illegal migrants and asylum seekers who intended to go on to the UK and Scandinavian countries. In fact, this could clearly explain why more than a third of the *East Sea* passengers had “disappeared” without applying for asylum in France, where the chance of obtaining it was minimal in any case (Guiraudon 2002: 1). In January 2002, only 156 of the survivors of the *East Sea* remained in France (Berruti *et al.* 2002: 46). However, the disappearance of the Kurdish refugees evoked some ire in Britain, whose government feared that they were on their way there (Guiraudon 2002).

Along with the *East Sea* incident, British fears had been aggravated by a makeshift refugee camp that was set up in 1999 in the small French town of Sangatte in the Nord-Pas-de-Calais region at the French end of the channel tunnel. The Sangatte camp had housed thousands of refugees (mostly Iraqi Kurds and Afghans) awaiting an appropriate opportunity for crossing the Channel to Britain by jumping on trucks or trains in Calais. It is essential to evoke the Sangatte camp not only because it was a source of tension between the French and British

governments (Guiraudon 2002) but also because it was associated with a number of painful experiences among Kurdish refugees.

Painful memories of Sangatte

The Sangatte refugee camp, which had been a warehouse used for the construction of the channel tunnel, was transformed into a reception center by the French government in 1999 in order to provide basic accommodation for refugees who would otherwise be forced to sleep rough in the streets, public parks and railway and bus stations. The Sangatte camp, which until its closure in mid-December 2002 was supervised by the French Red Cross, was initially set up to house 600 refugees. Gradually the number of refugees in the camp increased and reached 1,900 in July 2002. Of those who passed through Sangatte, 80 per cent were single young men (James 2001; BBC News 2002).

As the Sangatte refugee camp had often been used as a point of departure toward Britain, both the British government and the Eurotunnel company urged the French authorities to close it down. In order to gain an idea about the refugee influx that made use of the Sangatte camp, it is worth noting that in the first half of 2001 alone about 18,500 refugees had been intercepted by Eurotunnel when trying to enter Britain via the channel tunnel. By the time Sangatte closed down, a total of 67,000 refugees had passed through its doors. There was danger involved, a dozen asylum seekers died in their attempts to reach Britain, crushed, electrocuted or drowned. Undeterred by the catastrophic fate of the people who perished, new groups were always ready to try “their luck again to end their ceaseless wanderings” (Kremer 2002).

However, following a number of meetings between the representatives of the two governments, the camp was definitively closed. At the time of closing, there were about 1,500 refugees in the camp.

As a result of this bilateral agreement, the UK government agreed to take responsibility for 1,000 Kurds (admitted on work visas) and 200 Afghans who were identified by the UNHCR as having strong family links to the UK. As for the French government, it agreed to take responsibility for all the remaining residents of the Sangatte refugee camp (around 300 people) and for those who were already housed elsewhere or had been already deported (around 500 people). Moreover, France consented to watch over the area in order to control the movements of possibly illegal immigrants in future: an assignment that did not appear to be easy for the French government (World Refugee Survey 2002 Country Report 2002; Kremer 2002).

According to a report published by *Médecins du Monde* in December 2006, four years after the closure of the Sangatte refugee camp there were still hundreds of refugees on the streets of Calais waiting to go to the UK. The report also evoked the precarious situation of the refugees, claiming that among them one could find minors without parents, children, and pregnant women (*Médecins du Monde* 2006; TF1 15 December 2006). The experience of Sangatte has left its mark on the memory of many diasporan Kurds in France and Britain. In this connection, the experience of a former female resident of the Sangatte camp (currently a refugee in France with her family) is illustrative:

My family has survived the Sangatte camp. It was not a refugee camp, but rather a concentration camp. As resources and the number of staff were so limited in the camp, people had to fight against each other for survival, often violently. Afghans and Kurds fought between themselves many times. A Kurdish man was killed and three more were injured. It was as if we had lost our human nature. We had all become like wild animals. We didn't care any more about hygiene, health or cold. Our major concern was food. Every noon, there was a long queue in front of the canteen. The way was marked out by wire netting. It was a real struggle. The strongest had to wait at least two hours to get it. I was ashamed in front of my children. I was crying all the time. We didn't like either going into the village nearby, because the people there hated us. It seems that the Kurds are created only for suffering. Finally, we were obliged to abandon our goal, which was to join my brother and his family in England. Then we got help of some other Kurds here in France. They helped us as well to apply for asylum and to find a place to live. Our travel from Kurdistan to Europe was horrible but the worst of it was Sangatte. We can never forget this nightmare.

Here is another account by a 23-year-old Kurdish man who does not want to give up his dream of crossing the Channel in the tunnel:

During last three years, I have been on my way to Britain. First, it was Turkey and Greece, then Italy, where the immigration authorities took my fingerprints. Later, I arrived to France and was placed in the Sangatte camp, which was the worst refugee camp in Europe. Together with some friends, I tried twice to jump under the trucks going through the tunnel. Unfortunately, I failed both times. After the close-down of the camp, I lived temporarily with different friends. I cannot apply for asylum in France since because of my fingerprints I will be sent back to Italy. So I stay in France clandestinely until I find a proper opportunity to go to England. The only thing that is clear to me is that I will never go back to Kurdistan. It is impossible.

The accounts of these two Kurdish refugees give evidence of many similar cases when it comes to the migratory trajectory of the Kurds. They indicate how the dream of reaching safety or a better life elsewhere can turn into a nightmare. As in other refugee groups, the Kurds in the Sangatte camp have seen how in an overcrowded refugee camp situated in open countryside, far from the local population, the French Red Cross and its overburdened employees constituted their only link to humanity. Moreover, the experience of Sangatte shows that asylum seekers, as a less legally protected human category, can easily become the object of racism and maltreatment. The refugee camp of Sangatte is furthermore significant testimony of an inconsistent and failed European immigration policy with respect to asylum seekers. According to Kremer, Sangatte was a place “without precedent, temporary yet fixed, with no real perspective on the future”. It was where “the hordes of sensation-seeking media have failed to convey a far more complex reality than that of south-north migration, founded on human distress” (Kremer 2002).

The experience of Sangatte showed that, for the larger part of the Kurdish residents of this camp, France – despite its idealistic ascription as a *terre d’asile* – is nothing more than a waiting room or a *terre de transition* toward other destinations within the EU, above all Britain.

Institutional activities and the practices of transborder citizenship among diasporan Kurds in France

France has been the domicile of a considerable Kurdish migratory population for more than four decades. As a highly heterogeneous population, they remain as diversified as they were prior to their arrival to France, where they have been dispersed over a number of geographic areas.

However, there is a considerable Kurdish gathering in the east of France. Originating mainly in the Kurdish villages in south-eastern Turkey, this group of Kurds was among the first Kurdish immigrant wave to arrive to France. Similar patterns of residence of Kurdish communities can be found in Brittany and Normandy (Berruti *et al.* 2002: 35). The Parisian region alone is home to half the Kurdish population, who reside predominantly in the suburbs, where like any other ethnic group they are struggling against different forms of social exclusion while at the same time creating their diasporic associations and networks.

Generally speaking, Kurds in France are faced with difficulties concerning asylum application procedures at OFPRA, entry

into the French job market, residence, discrimination, stigmatization and also the way in which they are treated by French police. In this respect, the experience of Sarhadi Kurds, which will be dealt with later, is illustrative.

In 1983, at the initiative of some Kurds l'Institut Kurde de Paris was created. As one of the most important Kurdish formations in the diaspora, it describes itself as an "independent, a non-political and a secular organization" which functions as a "meeting place for Kurdish intellectuals and artists with diversified horizons, as well as Western specialists on Kurdish questions". Furthermore, this institute says that it works for the preserving of the Kurdish language, history and cultural heritage as well as for "helping to integrate Kurdish immigrants into their new host societies in Europe" and even for acquainting "Europeans with the history, culture and the people of Kurdistan and their current situation" (www.institutkurde.org 2007-05-11).

Along with artistic and cultural activities, L'Institut Kurde de Paris (Kurdish Institute of Paris) undertakes various forms of research and organizes seminars and conferences, mostly concerned with the Kurdish language, literature, politics, culture and social life. The Institute has also founded a scientific and cultural board including five sections, dealing respectively with social sciences, language and literature, arts, human rights and information and socio-cultural activities. It is very active in research through the award of fellowships, the organization of conferences and colloquia, and the publication of scientific journals: *Studia Kurdica* (1984–93) and *Études Kurdes* (since 2000). Several dictionaries, linguistic magazines and multi-disciplinary reviews have been published. In association with the Fondation France Liberté, the Norwegian Labor Organization (LO) and UNESCO, the institute has published a series of teaching books for Kurdish pupils in primary, middle and high schools. As a result, 385,000 books have been distributed in Iraqi Kurdistan. Moreover, in the course of 2006 alone three major conferences and symposia were held in different topics with reference to the Kurdish life in general. For instance, the World Congress of Kurdish Studies, which was held in Irbil, the capital of Iraqi Kurdistan, between 6 and 9 September 2006, can be seen as an important assembly where a great number of scholars, researchers and politicians (Kurds included) from the American and European continents shed light upon different aspects of Kurdish life. The conference, which was organized by the Kurdish Institute of Paris in partnership with Salahadin University in Irbil and with the support of the Kurdistan Regional Government and the French Ministry for Foreign Affairs, can be thus seen as a transnational meeting place not only for Kurdish scholars and politicians from all parts

of Kurdistan but also for non-Kurdish scholars and researchers who carry out research on Kurds.

The Kurdish Institute of Paris has also developed a program of financial support for a limited number of Kurdish students to study in France. It organizes an annual competition for Kurdish students who have passed their baccalaureate examination and wish to go on to university in France. Since the creation of the Kurdish Institute of Paris, 306 students (of whom 137 are women) have benefited from the scholarships (www.institutkurde.org 2007-05-11).

As for the leadership of the Kurdish Institute of Paris, the organization is keen to maintain a transnational profile. Consequently, the organization's board, consisting of twelve members – four of whom are representatives of the French ministries of Culture, National Education, Interior and Social Affairs – includes academics and other Kurdish notables from Britain, France, Sweden, Germany and the United States. It is worth noting that the Kurdish Institute of Paris has enjoyed financial support not only from different ministries and foundations in France but also from the Norwegian Foreign Affairs Ministry, the Swedish Agency for International Development and the Swedish Olof Palme International Center (www.institutkurde.org 2007-05-11).

As well as the Kurdish Institute of Paris, diasporan Kurds in France have created other associations throughout the country. In the first place, we can mention the Centre d'Information du Kurdistan, created in Paris in 1993, whose objective is to “denounce and prevent all forms of repression and human rights violations” to which Kurds fall victim. Concretely, this organization seeks to establish contact with French authorities, political leaders, parliament deputies, politicians, human rights organizations, and so on in order to draw their attention to the Kurdish cause. Moreover, the Centre d'Information du Kurdistan aims at “alerting the international community on the situation of the Kurdish people”, mainly through attending meetings of the United Nations Commissions (or sub-commissions) on Human Rights, the European Council and the European Parliament. It is also assigned the task of providing the French public with information on Kurds cultural activities, for example through the publication of magazines and reports and also the arrangement of seminars and conferences. For instance, the Centre d'Information du Kurdistan used to publish the triannual *Rapport Kurdistan*. Furthermore, it is said to provide support for the “integration of the Kurds in France” (Berruti *et al.* 2002: 13).

Another Kurdish association worthy of mention is the Kurdish Cultural Center of Ahmet Kaya, which was created in the beginning of 2001. Situated in Paris, this organization is engaged mainly in cultural activities and in promoting Kurdish music and Kurdish literature. It also

functions as a meeting place for many Kurds who want to enjoy a moment of leisure or conversation during the day.

The Kurdish Cultural Center of Ahmet Kaya is named after the well-known Kurdish–Turkish singer and poet who reached the apogee of his career in the mid-1980s and the 1990s. During his career he recorded about 20 albums and was known for his protest music and stands on social justice. Most of his work is in Turkish. At a televised annual music award ceremony that was broadcasted on the famous Turkish SHOW TV in 1999, Ahmet Kaya was designated as the Musician of the Year. At that event, he spoke out about his “Kurdish” background and said that he wanted to produce music in his native Kurdish as naturally as he does in Turkish. “Kaya went into exile in France in June 1999 on account of various charges arising from his political views. Among them were the accusations that he had performed in front of a poster for the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) at a 1993 concert in Germany”, and that he had made statements in support of the ex-PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan and had referred to Turkey as a ‘dishonorable people’s country’”. In connection with an artistic appearance, he announced that he had recorded a song in Kurdish and intended to produce a video to accompany it. Following this, he was attacked by some Turkish singers and even by his public because of his stance on the use of Kurdish. “In March 2000 he was sentenced in absentia to three years and nine months in prison on the charge of spreading separatist propaganda. He died of a heart attack in Paris in 2000, at the age of 42, and is buried in Père Lachaise cemetery” (www.wikipedia.org 2007-04.06). It is worth noting that the Kurds pay particular tribute to the Père Lachaise cemetery because it is the last resting place for some other prominent Kurdish personalities in addition to Ahmet Kaya, such as Yilmaz Gunay (a famous Kurdish cinema director, winner of the Palme d’Or in 1982 in Cannes), Abdulrahman Ghassemloo and Sadeq Sharafkandi (two Iranian Kurdish leaders assassinated by Iranian agents respectively in 1989 in Vienna and in 1992 in Berlin).

The Fédération des Associations Kurdes en France (FEYKA-Kurdistan) is another major Kurdish organization that diasporan Kurds have created since the beginning of 1990s. It is an umbrella organization that coordinates the activities of several Kurdish associations throughout France, including the Maison du Peuple Kurde in Marseille. Simultaneously, the FEYKA-Kurdistan together with a number of other umbrella associations is part of a larger Kurdish confederation that operates at the EU level. This confederation, which is called Kon-Kurd, has its headquarters in Germany.

Kurdish associative life in France is confronted with a number of challenges. In the first place, one can understand that these

associations do not maintain a balanced attitude towards the politics of the homeland on the one hand and the integration of Kurdish immigrants and refugees in French society on the other. Even though these associations maintain an “integrationist” position at the discursive level, they seek legitimacy through advancing the Kurdish cause in Iran, Turkey, Syria and Iraq rather than through stressing asylum-related difficulties and the problems of social exclusion and racism that diasporan Kurds experience in France. However, this attitude is inherent in mainstream Kurdish diaspora discourse, which seeks to organize the greater part of its diasporic practices on the basis of the so-called “homeland orientation”. In this connection, a Kurdish accountant in Marseille says:

The problem of the Kurdish asylum seekers and Kurdish refugees and immigrants in French society is no less important than the difficulties that they were experiencing in their native countries and regions before their arrival to France. But it is quite normal to see that the majority of the Kurdish people in the diaspora place a greater stress on the Kurdish homeland, simply because this homeland has been treated so badly by the dominant states. It is not easy to turn around this image among Kurds.

However, the Kurdish Institute of Paris holds a number of conferences on the immigration movements and integration of Kurds in western societies. For instance, it organized a sizable conference in February 2006 in Paris where a significant number of researchers and scholars dealt with the integration of Kurds in EU countries.

A further challenge that diasporan Kurds in France experience is the divisions between the Kurdish associations in France that mainly reflect political divergences and social allegiances. For instance, the Kurdish Cultural Center of Ahmet Kaya and the Fédération des Associations Kurdes en France (FEYKA-Kurdistan) with all their associated structures are more or less affiliated to the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), while the Kurdish Institute of Paris, which considers itself as politically unaffiliated, has traditionally been supported by all Kurdish political formations other than the PKK. This political dividing line has more often than not been reinforced by a kind of conspiracy theory, which is quite common among PKK followers, that the Kurdish Institute of Paris and its chairman give inappropriate information about the PKK when addressing the French authorities.

Moreover, the dividing line between these associational structures can be discerned when one observes the social background and characteristics of each side’s target group. The Kurdish Institute of Paris is mainly supported by the Kurdish elite, predominantly by Kurdish

scholars, politicians, poets, writers, artists, and so on worldwide while the Kurdish Cultural Center of Ahmet Kaya and the FEYKA-Kurdistan appear more often than not as transnational platforms for organizing and mobilizing Kurds for cultural and political demonstrations at the grass roots.

After being banned in EU countries, the PKK delegated its authority to its associated legal organizations throughout Europe. This is a way for the PKK to maintain its supremacy over a considerable part of the European Kurdish diaspora, which according to Eccarius-Kelly (2002) displays the typical characteristics of “social movement organizations that search for new political opportunities and political acceptance” (see also Chapter 2).

Sarhadi Kurds in the region of Marseille

The majority of Kurds, who have settled in Provence, primarily in the department of Bouches-du-Rhône whose capital is Marseille, since the beginning of 1990s, are refugees and asylum seekers originating from a particular vast sub-region of the Kurdish area of Turkey called Sarhad. This region is adjacent to the Armenian and Iranian borders and includes thousands of villages and major towns and cities such as Van, Muş, Varto, Hınıs, Erzurum, Kars, Agiri, Bingöl, Iğdir, and Dogubayazit. It is worth noting that Sarhad is a purely Kurdish appellation, stemming from the time of the Ottoman Empire or perhaps even earlier, when the administrative division of the regions was quite different from that of the current Turkish nation-state. Even though the Turkish state today no longer makes use of the term in administrative and geographical contexts, Sarhad continues even today to be perceived, along with other ancient geographical or regional entities such as Garzan, Botan, Amed, Mardin and Kocgiri, as an important source of identity formation among the Kurds in Turkey. It should be stressed that even though these geographic identities used to be in competition or conflict with each other, mostly reflecting rivalries between principalities and chieftains in former times, today they do not evoke such cleavages. Nor are they advanced as political challenges to or political substitutes for the Kurdish mainstream political movement. Rather, they contain a number of references to certain specific forms of boundary-maintenance embedded in their daily lives.

For instance, Sarhadi Kurds claim that their expressive culture, embracing narratives, tales, music, dance, legends, oral history, folklore, proverbs, popular beliefs, customs, and so on is almost unique when compared with other Kurdish regions in Turkey. Likewise, they

pride themselves on preserving this “rich culture” from the “harmful Turkish assimilation assault”, especially as it is maintained not only by native Sarhadis in private but also by the diasporan Sarhadi Kurds in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Armenia, Georgia, Russia, Germany and France. It is important to bear in mind that most of the diasporan Kurds in central Asia and the Caucasus have migrated or been displaced from the region of Sarhad.

However, originating predominantly in the rural areas of Varto, Hınıs, Erzurum Bingöl and Muş, the diasporan Sarhadi Kurds in Bouches-du-Rhône – whose number is estimated to be between 3,000 and 3,500, and to comprise mostly males – display a number of distinctive features in their diasporic narratives. Above all, they evoke the experience of trauma and oppression in Kurdistan as a main cause of their escape from it.

The memory of homeland among the Sarhadi Kurds

The first group of Sarhadi Kurds arrived in Provence at the end of the 1980s, in very small numbers. It was in the mid-1990s that the influx started to grow and accelerate. The growth in numbers was more or less a consequence of the armed conflict between Turkish forces and Kurdish PKK guerillas, which was both accelerating and intensifying at that time. In order to suppress the guerilla insurgency and its material and symbolic support from the civilian population, the Turkish government decided to destroy more than 3,000 Kurdish villages and hamlets in the first half of 1990s (Human Rights Watch 1993). As a result, more than three million people were displaced. The major part of this displaced population was in one way or another forced to settle in the various shanty towns in Kurdish and Turkish urban areas. The region of Sarhad, which was in the past one of the “carnage areas” for the Armenians, has been hit heavily by the displacement program of the Turkish government. In this regard, the experience of a young Kurdish asylum seeker in Aix-en-Provence is illustrative:

I can never forget what we went through in Turkey. It was not a nightmare but a real horror story. I remember the day the army and the *kurucu*¹³ came to our village. They told us that we had to choose between two options: to collaborate with them as village guards or to leave immediately. My father wouldn't become a *kurucu* and fight against the Kurdish guerillas, because I had a cousin within the PKK. Finally, like the other families we left our village, which had been home to all of our

¹³ *Kurucu* is the name given to those Kurds who collaborate with the Turkish army.

ancestors. The Turkish army then destroyed the village. In the first place, my family moved to Van to join some of our relatives there. As the economic situation was not so positive there, we decided to move on to Mersin. During this harmful displacement, I lost both my grandmother and my uncle. I was lucky in that I had a couple of cousins in France. They helped me with my trip. The best thing about my coming to France is that I am spared Turkish military service. I have informed the French OFPRA about what I went through, but I am not sure that they believe my story.

This account indicates that migratory movements, far from being one-sided occurrences, are complex and multifaceted phenomena that leave their mark on immigrants and refugees as multi-level time-space related experiences. In order to further elucidate the phenomenon, we quote from the account of another Kurdish asylum seeker in Marseille:

When my family moved to the Turkish city of Izmir I was only a child. At that time, many Kurds were abandoning their villages because of economic problems and poverty. As our agriculture was meager and there was no industry in the region a large number of Kurds had to find means of subsistence in the Turkish metropolis or in west European countries. Several years after our settlement in Izmir, I returned to the Kurdish area of south-eastern Turkey to do my military service. At that time, the war between the Turkish army and the Kurdish guerillas was at its peak. I was dismayed by the idea of fighting against Kurds. However, a few days after my arrival I realized that many villages were devastated. The physical aspect of Kurdistan was totally different from what I had heard from my parents during my childhood. I cannot reveal everything that I witnessed during my military service. But I can tell you that it was so horrible. I have never seen such an atrocity in my life. I couldn't simply hold out and that was the reason I finally deserted. I was lucky that I had some relatives here in France. They helped me to flee Turkey.

The accounts of these two young Kurdish asylum seekers (both were building workers) embrace several interrelated dimensions. In the first place, these accounts reveal that internal population movement, reflecting structural differences between Kurdish and Turkish areas, was a perceptible reality in Kurdish society long before the war of 1984. Moreover, the accounts indicate the ways in which the Kurds are affected by the war and its consequences. As a result of deep social transformations, caused by the war between the Turkish army and Kurdish guerillas, hundreds of thousands of Kurds were forced to leave their native villages and towns in a process of forced migration which had both an internal and an external dimension. In this respect, Castles sees

forced migration as both the result and the cause of social transformations in the South. According to Castles, the violence destroys “economic resources, undermines traditional ways of life and breaks up communities” (Castles 2003: 18). The persistent armed conflict that gave rise to the process of social transformation generated large-scale population movements abroad, but particularly to large Turkish cities and towns such as Istanbul, Izmir, Ankara, Adana, Gazi Antep, Mersin and the tourist areas of Alanya and Antalya. For instance, as a result of internal Kurdish migratory movement, the population of the Turkish coastal city of Mersin has increased and been transformed to such an extent that today Kurds constitute 30 per cent of its inhabitants.

According to the former chairman of the ex-pro-Kurdish party DEHAP in the office of Istanbul, the internal displacement had a huge impact on social and demographic constellations in urban areas. He maintained that this displaced population had to struggle hard for surviving in the new environment, which could neither absorb them socially and culturally nor provide them with decent jobs. It is important to stress that the displaced Kurds were never compensated for the loss of their lands and animals (van Bruinessen 1999). Many Kurds blamed the Turkish government for being completely indifferent to the resettlement and rehabilitation of these people. In this regard, a former female activist within Kurdish civil society, who now lives in Marseille, said the following:

The situation of thousands of Kurds who have been forced to settle in large Kurdish and Turkish cities is deplorable. They suffer from widespread social and economic problems. The problem is aggravated because according to the prevailing assimilationist ideology no problem may be called the Kurdish problem, and consequently no solution is suggested. The denial of Kurdish identity and the accumulated social and economic problems make the situation untenable for the Kurds. This is why many of them prefer to emigrate if they have the necessary resources at their disposal.

As a part of a wider global immigration process, the arrival of Sarhadi Kurds in France, which follows more or less the pattern of the migratory trajectory from a less wealthy and deprived Kurdistan to a rich and wealthy European country, mostly known as North–South syndrome, can largely be explained by what Castles calls the sociology of forced migration. According to Castles, the sociology of forced migration, which must include the refugee influx, asylum seekers and internal displacement in a transnational context, is the study of current processes of the global social transformation which is an integral part of the North–South

relationship. It is important to examine the social processes in which human agency and social networks play a considerable role and also the position of the states that treat migration as a security issue (Castles 2003).

The popular homeland narrative among the Sarhadi Kurds in the region of Marseille is evidence of a persistent negative and traumatic memory of a native place, associated most often with population movements (*kocberî*), war (*şer*), persecution (*eşkence*), political instability (*tevlîhevî siyasî*), state of emergency (*rewşa awarte*), atrocity (*hovêtî, bêrehmî*), assimilation (*asimilasyon, helandin*), national struggle (*berxwedan*) and nostalgia (*xerîbî*). This memory is essential for maintaining diasporic boundaries.

Sarhadi Kurds as eternal asylum seekers

A further distinctive feature of the diasporic accounts of the Sarhadi Kurds in Bouches-du-Rhône involves the unpleasant asylum conditions that these people have been experiencing since the 1990s. Accordingly, they have developed a kind of asylum discourse that portrays their situation as asylum seekers as unsustainable. For many of these Kurdish asylum seekers, who have long been waiting for their applications for asylum to be approved, the notion of time has painful connotations. They blame OFPRA for being reluctant to treat the asylum dossiers submitted. Furthermore, they acknowledge the impossibility of being reunified with their families if they are denied refugee status.

The following account of the World Refugee Survey portrays the gravity of the asylum conditions for the Sarhadi Kurds in Bouches-du-Rhône:

For Instance, in 2001, the French Refugee Appeals Commission (Commission des Recours des Réfugiés – CRR) conferred refugee status on 2,380 individuals out of 22,090 decisions taken, an 11 percent approval rate. An estimated 14,000 to 15,000 persons requested territorial asylum in France in 2001, with an approval rate of 3 percent. In 2002, the same Commission granted refugee status to 2,600 individuals out of 21,700 decisions taken, a 12 percent approval rate. In 2001, about 30,000 persons requested territorial asylum in France, of which the Ministry of Interior made decisions on about 17,000, with an approval rate of 2 percent. The French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (OFPRA) conferred refugee status on some 6,500 individuals, out of some 66,300 decisions made on the merits of the case, an approval rate of almost 10 percent compared to a 12 percent approval rate in 2002.

The Refugee Appeals Commission (CCR) granted asylum to some 3,300 persons (World Refugee Survey 2001; 2002; 2003).

The complexity of the asylum procedure is an additional factor that engenders difficulties for the Sarhadi Kurds. As indicated previously, along with OFPRA, a set of different state institutions are involved in dealing with asylum applications. Moreover, there are various forms of refugee status, which further complicates the situation. As knowledge of the French language and information on French society are limited among the Sarhadi Kurds, their ability to follow the asylum procedure is considerably reduced. This is why more often than not they have to turn to the French refugee NGOs or their own social networks or associations, given that in France there is no state-supported interpreter service as there is in Sweden. Illustrating the painful experience of asylum among the Sarhadi Kurds, a Kurdish restaurant worker who has been in France since 1991 has the following words to say:

It seems that I will never obtain my refugee papers in this country. My demand has been rejected several times and now I live as a *clandestin* after 12 years. I hope that the French government has realized that I, as a Kurd, cannot return to my village in Kurdistan because the village does not exist any more. Four years after coming to France, I heard that it was destroyed by the Turkish army. I left my wife, my little son and the rest of my family behind. Now, they live in Istanbul because of the war. I want to be frank: the worst for me was the waiting during all this period. Do you think that I would be able to see my family one day?

The account of a Kurdish woman in Marseille is likewise illustrative:

First, my husband arrived in France alone. I remained in Kurdistan together with my two children. After several years, he told us that we could not go to France legally because he had not received his refugee papers. As we missed each other so much, he decided to make us come illegally. My husband paid half of our traveling expenses, while his family took responsibility for the rest. After a terrible sea voyage from Turkey to Italy, we arrived finally in France. From the beginning, it would have been impossible to survive if we had not our close relatives to help us. As we cannot speak French it is important that we help each other. Everything is so complicated here. It is not easier for the families. Every morning and evening, I say thank God, because we are still alive. There are so many Kurds who die when they are on their way to Europe, while hundreds of thousands of Kurds who succeed in arriving in France and ask for asylum. Believe me, their condition is no better than it was in their villages and towns. They only believe that here is better.

According to C. Lloyd, the list of asylum seekers applying for refugee status in France does not only “reflect the conflicts in the world today, but also the existing populations in the country, especially the Kurds and the Turks who have developed a vibrant community structure over the past thirty years” (Lloyd 2003: 330). By this the author means to emphasize the importance of the diasporic structures, especially when a receiving country like France has no appropriate structures to offer the refugee and immigrant populations despite its claim to be a *terre d’asile*.

As the Kurds have difficulties obtaining refugee status in France, they sometimes resort to certain specific acts such as hunger strikes or demonstrations. For instance, in March 1991 Kurds, Malians, Haitians and refugees from Cape Verde went on hunger strikes in protest against the delays in the processing of their asylum applications (Lloyd 2003: 330). Twelve years later, that is, in February 2003, French authorities granted asylum on a collective basis to a group of 27 Kurds from Turkey who had staged a hunger strike after the authorities rejected their claims. The government stated that the decision was made on the basis of “new elements” without specifying what they were. Later in May 2003 a group of 91 Kurds (also from Turkey) went on hunger strike, demanding collective asylum (35 had exhausted all appeals, 34 had claims pending, and 22 had not yet claimed asylum) as soon as possible, while another group of 21 rejected “*déboutés du droit d’asile*” Kurds ended their hunger strike when the authorities agreed to re-examine their applications (World Refugee Survey 2004).

Today, many Sarhadi Kurds in Bouches-du-Rhône and other places in France are still denied refugee status. As they are aware of the importance of being recognized by the OFPRA as political refugees, their never-ending condition as asylum seekers plays a considerable role in maintaining their negative perception of French society. However, being a long-lasting asylum seeker is a further distinctive feature of the lives of Sarhadi Kurds that, along with their homeland memory, reinforces the diasporic boundary that they maintain vis-à-vis French society.

Assabiyya and solidarity networks among the Sarhadi Kurds

A further specific feature that the narratives cited above display is the strong *assabiyya* relationship among the Sarhadi Kurds in Bouches-du-Rhône. From the narratives of the Sarhadi Kurds, it may be concluded that *assabiyya* is a recurrent device of affiliation among these people. The majority of Sarhadi Kurds undertake their refugee journeys to France with support from their families and relatives both in the homeland of origin and in the receiving countries. *Assabiyya* emerges as the indication of a strong sense of group feeling and internal solidarity that, in the context of immigration and diaspora, transcends the boundaries of nation-states (Roy 1996; Spickard 2001).

A number of clans such as *Milani, Jalali, Moqri, Hassani, Bruki, Swedi* and *Haydari* are associated with the Sarhadi Kurds. These large clans or meta-*assabiyya*, which for centuries been among the most important, if not the only, forms of social organization and frames of allegiance for the Kurds (van Bruinessen 1992), cannot sustain their original forms in the context of diaspora. As Roy has outlined, in diaspora *assabiyya* – well aware of the new circumstances – adopt new strategies and reshape their internal structures as well as their discourses (Roy 1996). Following this logic, the Sarhadi Kurds in France rarely refer to these old clans, even if they have preserved a certain degree of influence. They have been replaced by *assabiyya* of lesser magnitude. The new *assabiyya* are the consequence of the imbrications between locality (*gund*) and genealogical ties (*malbat*). For instance, if it was the large tribes such as *Milani, Jalali, Moqri, Hassani, Bruki, Torin, Swedi, Haydari* that were the indications of *assabiyya* among Sarhadi Kurds in old days, now it is their local and genealogical identities such as *Karapınar, Binpınar, Beliltaş, Duman, Karaçopan*, and so on that appear to be relevant and better adapted to their daily needs in Bouches-du-Rhône and also to the conditions of the labor market in this part of France. The fact that a large number of those Kurds who live together in a *banlieue* of the French city of Rennes belong more or less to the same extended family and come from the same village of Karapınar (near Erzurum) indicates clearly the coincidence between local attachments and genealogical ties. Likewise, it shows that the ties among the extended family (*malbat*) which are maintained in the country of immigration have their roots in the country of origin (Berruti *et al.* 2002). In this regard, a Kurdish male worker from Marseille has following to say:

It is normal to be attached to the *malbat*; if not, there is nobody to help you. It is a Kurdish tradition to show solidarity to each other within the family. Through sticking together we become stronger and children feel safer and more secure. All these people you see here could not have fled Kurdistan and come to France if they had not helped each other. *Malbat* is like a natural law that is valid in every situation, in peace, in war and above all in *welaté gharibiyé* (exile).

This account shows that *assabiyya* is a discernable reality, deeply rooted in those social and cultural formations that Sarhadi Kurds have constructed around various genealogical ties over the years: an *assabiyya* that can in the context of diaspora both survive and become stronger, mostly through maintaining a flexible attitude and adopting new strategies in its new social environment.

As relationships within the Kurdish *assabiyya* are hierarchical, especially by reference to gender and age, it appears to a certain extent similar to those interpersonal transnational relationships that R. Ballard discovered among the migrants in the Mirpur District in Azad Kashmir in northern Pakistan, Jullundar Doab in Indian Punjab and the Sylhet District in eastern Bangladesh. Ballard stresses that in such a context “super-ordinates are expected to exercise authority over and to take responsibility for their subordinates, whilst subordinates are expected to respect and obey their super-ordinates’ instructions” (Ballard 2001: 9). However, unlike their counterparts in South Asia, among Sarhadi Kurds the younger male migrants assume a part of the responsibility for the subsistence of other members, particularly with the help of remittances.

According to Van Hear, remittances from abroad play a considerable role in the “survival of communities in many developing countries, including many which have suffered conflict and produced refugees”. Van Hear maintains that through the remittances they send refugees and immigrants can exert significant influence on their countries of origin (Van Hear 2003: 9). The accounts of many Sarhadi Kurds bear out Van Hear’s claim. Let’s see what Vedat, a 32-year-old restaurant worker from Aix-en-Provence has to say in this regard:

Honestly, I am not working for my own sake. I have left behind not only my parents, sisters and brothers but also my wife and my three children. As the war destroyed everything and also our previous sources of subsistence, my family had to move to Adana. Even though they work quite hard their incomes are not sufficient for the rent and living. Thank God, my daily expenses are quite limited, so I am able to send almost all the money I save to them. I miss them very much but I have no other choice until I feel myself sufficiently prepared to go back to them. In

other words, I cannot make any better of it unless I obtain refugee status (*iltica*). Without *iltica* I am like a prisoner without societal rights. I wish I could bring my wife and my children here. However, I must be happy, for many of us from the same village support each other. The French government has totally forgotten us.

It is worth noting that *assabiyya* or other similar kinship-related networks may sustain an internal stratification in the context of diaspora. It can imply the existence of an over- and subordinated relationship between those who have more resources at their disposal and those who are employed by the resource-holders. For instance, newcomers can constitute an important source of cheap manpower, which does not easily dry up. Cheap undocumented labor is the guarantee of rapid capital accumulation for those who hold an entrepreneurial position within the group (Roy 1996). Even though there is a certain degree of hierarchy within each Sarhadi *assabiyya*, it would be less relevant to consider it as evidence of internal exploitation. The resources accumulated by the Sarhadi *assabiyya* are just sufficient to guarantee their survival and maintain solidarity among them. It frequently happens that responsibility for an entire family rests on the shoulders of a sole man. Sometimes he has to work harder than usual in order to be able to send money to his children, whom he has probably not seen for a long time (Berruti *et al.* 2002). However, the role of entrepreneur has been played more often than not by those Kurds who have no *assabiyya* or those who come from other regions than Sarhad.

A further form of internal solidarity among Sarhadi Kurds is the fact that they stand by each other when it comes to the issue of home address. The fact that the recognition of refugee status and other alternative residence permits from the prefecture is linked to the possession of a home address, which is not supplied by the authorities, enables anyone with a permanent home address to authorize other Kurds (preferably from the same *assabiyya*) to register themselves at his address.

Moreover, since the Sarhadi *assabiyya* does not form a counter-hegemonic discourse to the mainstream Kurdish nationalist discourse, it can provide the Kurdish political movement with additional support in the diaspora. If a highly esteemed member of an *assabiyya* joins the PKK, it is highly likely that other members will follow suit to all appearances as a result of the constraint of group feeling and allegiance.

From the above accounts, it may be concluded that Sarhadi Kurds have no choice other than to make use of their *assabiyya* networks as a substitute for the deficient integration structures in French society. Generally, as the Kurds in France experience many difficulties

concerning access to the French labor market, they create their own economic milieu, especially in the form of inward-looking and marginalized family businesses and other *assabiyya*-related jobs in the building and restaurant trades. As a result, diasporan Kurds remain disconnected from mainstream society – a situation which is in fact in glaring contradiction with the French integration model, which claims to be a universal project. But however useful ethnic networks and *assabiyya* may be, and however organized the Kurdish diaspora may be, they cannot be appropriate alternatives to the welfare state and its related structures (Wahlbeck 1999).

The fact that Sarhadi Kurds, like certain other Kurdish refugee and immigrant groups (especially Kurds from Turkey) throughout the country, appear more or less as “close-knit communities” is a situation that cannot be seen as propitious for women and young girls. For the Sarhadi Kurds in France who live in families, there is a dividing line that determines the social roles within the group on the basis of gender, legitimized if necessary by reference to “Islamic culture” (*musulmantî*) and “Kurdish culture” (*kurdêtî*) or the notion of “honor” (*şeref – namûs*). Most of the time, the women stay at home and look after their children while waiting for their husbands to come home from work. This condition makes Kurdish women much more vulnerable than their husbands and children because, as the make few contacts with life outside the community, their general knowledge of France and their chances of learning the French language are drastically limited. According to Eyubb Doru, while the Kurds from Turkey have effectively succeeded in advancing their cause abroad, the cause of Kurdish women seems rather to have regressed. In this regard, Doru has reproduced accounts of a number of young Kurdish girls who deplore the condition of women within the Kurdish community, insisting that “in their villages and towns of origin, things were more evolved than in the neighborhoods they lived in, in France” (Berruti *et al.* 2002: 60).

The Sarhadi Kurds are praised for their quality as hard workers; they are at the same time blamed for living in a close-knit community without having any contact with mainstream society. In this regard, a Kurdish student in Aix-en-Provence has following to say:

The process of “cultural mutation”, that is, the full abandonment of the “peasant mentality”, among this group of Kurdish immigrants has not been realized, and this is less a consequence of cultural persistence among the group than a result of large-scale unemployment and deficient integration mechanisms that counteract the process of proletarianization of the Sarhadi Kurds in the new country. In reality, they never acquired a French

proletarian culture. Today, they are forced to remain somewhere in the background of society.

According to the president of the Kurdish association La Maison du Peuple Kurde in Marseille, the prevailing exclusionary and discriminatory practices, the economic recession and the upsurge of unemployment can be apprehended as significant factors that have effectively hindered the process of proletarianization of the Sarhadi Kurds, as they are not recruited by French industry and as are not members of trade unions. Reinforced by the constraints of *assabiyya*, this situation largely counteracts the individual initiative and mobility among the Sarhadi Kurds.

However, the non-realization of individual identity among Sarhadi Kurds is in sharp contrast with the French integration model which is an outcome of a “daily referendum” (*plébiscite de tous les jours*) (Renan 1992) among all self-realized members of the nation.

However, as part of globalization and transnational processes, *assabiyya*-related relationships among Sarhadi Kurds in the French Bouches-du-Rhône are manifestations of extensive networking processes and entrepreneurial initiatives “from below”. In this respect, R. Ballard speaks of many millions of people who “have been able to disentangle themselves from the marginalized positions out in the periphery in which they had hitherto been confined and to tap into the much richer spectrum of opportunities available in some sectors of the metropolitan core” (Ballard 2001). Correspondingly, the experience of Sarhadi Kurds shows that a population movement from a peripheral position in the South to a prosperous North has taken place. But it remains to be seen to what extent this movement from South to North has enabled them to “disentangle themselves from the marginalized positions out in the periphery”. In any case, the position of Sarhadi Kurds in French society is far from promising.

Sarhadi Kurds in the French labor and housing markets: between exclusion and invisibility

Since the mid-1990s France, like Italy, has been a transit country for thousands of illegal immigrants and asylum seekers who try to make their way to Britain or, to a lesser extent, northern Europe. Accordingly, the region of Marseille has been transformed into a crossroads and a meeting place for many Kurdish refugees and illegal immigrants who contemplate seeking their “fortune” elsewhere than southern France. On their way toward coveted “luck”, these asylum seekers, mostly Iraqi Kurds, make

contact with settled Sarhadi Kurds, exchanging with them hundreds of accounts of their common suffering, their political and socio-cultural experiences and their migration trajectory, most often soaked in pain, tragedy and trauma. In this regard, the experiences presented above of Sangatte and the *East Sea* are significantly illustrative.

According to the president of the Kurdish association La Maison du Peuple Kurde in Marseille, since the French traditional labor market was as a result of the economic conjuncture of the 1970s no longer able to offer foreign workers new jobs, a large number of Kurds who had lost their jobs were more or less obliged to turn toward their own social networks and internal resources in order to find means of subsistence other than the deficient French labor market. Reflecting the available competences and professional skills they had acquired in their countries of origin, they started up various entrepreneurial economic activities. There is a shared knowledge among Kurdish refugees and immigrants stressing that Kurds from Diyarbekir work generally in the domain of house maintenance, equipment and interior decoration, while Kurds from Mereş and the Sarhad region are active respectively in the restaurant trade and house construction. The professional achievements of Sarhadi Kurds would be fairly compatible with the particular conditions of the labor market in Bouches-du-Rhône.

As outlined by the president of La Maison du Peuple Kurde, the existence of a substantial informal labor market with a specific structure and a variety of non-declared options in Provence is highly consistent with prevailing patterns of international migration. The branches within this informal economy include the restaurant business, agricultural activities and above all a significant building sector with the capacity to provide jobs for hundreds of Kurdish asylum seekers. This region not only has the capacity to recruit those Kurdish refugees and asylum seekers who already live there but also possesses a strong potential to attract and absorb many other Sarhadi Kurds whose asylum applications have been rejected by other EU countries. This kind of clandestine labor mobility, which is particularly observable between Germany and southern France, is hardly possible without transnational networks or *assabiyya*. In this respect, the account of a Kurdish mason in Marseille is illustrative:

In Germany, the only available job for me was to work occasionally in Turkish and Kurdish restaurants. After three years, my relatives suggested that I join them in Marseille. As I was a good mason, it was not so difficult to find a place in the construction line. I am completely aware that in both countries I have to live as an illegal refugee; but I know also that the climate of southern France is better. There is a recurrent

reputation about us, the Sarhadi Kurds, for being a hard-working people and I assure you that our working condition is very strict

Speaking of the reputation of Sarhadi Kurds as a hard-working people, a Kurdish university graduate in Aix-en-Provence has the following to say:

The reputation of being hard workers stems first from the traditional life of Sarhadi Kurds as farmers who worked in their meager agriculture with very limited resources. Moreover, the harsh climate of the region of Sarhad is a further feature to take into account. In Turkey, as their region was economically discriminated against by the Turkish government, a big number of them, long before the war started, decided to migrate to larger Turkish cities in order to find positions in the enormous building sectors there. When they came to France they had in their luggage not only their skills as good construction workers but also their reputation as hard workers. But I think it would be rather better to focus on their harsh conditions and the exclusion they experience than on their imagined human qualities.

According to a Kurdish politician in Marseille, the development of the regional and local economy in Bouches-du-Rhône depends partially on the contribution of illegal immigrants and asylum seekers, who presence has increased in the various sectors of an ever-extending informal economy in the region in recent years. The interviewee maintains that promoting informal economic activities and encouraging illegal immigrants and rejected refugees to take tough jobs in these informal sectors is the solution that seems to be the consequence of a “tacit agreement’ among all the political, economic and administrative actors in this part of France. Similarly, a Kurdish construction worker who is at the same time a rejected (*débouté*) asylum seeker maintains that “the police and other local authorities are perfectly aware about what is going on but they prefer to close their eyes to it as if nothing is abnormal”.

Along with those Sarhadi Kurdish families, living for instance in the neighborhoods of Marseille, Aix-en-Provence and Montpellier in Provence, there are a large number of solitary males who live in quite large groups in sublet apartments in towns and cities like Marseille, Marignane, Vitrolles, Aix-en-Provence, and so on in Bouches-du-Rhône. Housing conditions among this group of Kurdish asylum seekers are far from satisfactory. Generally, they live together and most often form groups of between seven and fifteen persons in the same apartment – often not in a good condition – which is rented normally by a person who holds an official status in the country. However, this way of living has a

number of advantages. In this respect, the remarks of a Kurdish asylum seeker are interesting:

It is less expensive for us to live in groups and share accommodation because we need to save our money to send it to our families in Kurdistan. On the other hand, we cannot rent a house on our own account because we have no residence permit. So before obtaining refugee status you have no right to rent an apartment or buy a car. Our apartment is rented by another Kurd who already has a residence permit. We pay him for this service. But there are other Kurds who do the same favor for nothing. Another advantage is that we can protect each other if need be.

Every evening, the inhabitants of Marignane¹⁴ can pass by a quite a large number of Kurdish refugees, gathering in small groups. Their sunburnt faces and their physical appearance indicate quite clearly which social position they occupy. They stay there, observing the indifference of the inhabitants and even of the police, who pass them by from time to time without paying them any attention. The same interviewee explains:

We used to come into town almost every evening after a hard day's work, the occasion for many to call their families in Kurdistan. Even though many of us possess a mobile phone, it is expensive to use it. The major handicap that we experience here is the French language. Given our situation and the way we work, it is almost impossible to go to school to learn French. Moreover, it is not easy to find free language courses for those who lack a residence permit. So we come here just to pass the time. The police and people here know very well that we are not criminals but hard-working refugees. So they have to be tolerant toward us.

The position of the Sarhadi Kurds in the labor market in Provence should not be seen as an isolated phenomenon. As a population movement "from below" (Ballard 2001: 2), it may be seen as a consequence of so-called globalization and industrial restructuring, which have generated a more fragmented and polarized employment market (Castles & Miller 1998). This polarization highlights the relationships between post-Fordist transformations, the migration influx from underdeveloped countries and the emergence of new informal arrangements in Western societies (Quassoli 1999: 212). Foreign investment and the relocation of many manufacturing job from richer countries to the less wealthy parts of the world have created a new situation in which new migratory flows from the South daily add to the

¹⁴ An important stronghold of the extreme right-wing National Front.

workforces of what Saskia Sassen calls “global cities” (Sassen 1998). The correlation between global cities and distant localities has created “paradoxes wherein enormous wealth and highly remunerated professional employment and Third-World-like employment conditions in underground industries” coexist. The growth of illegal employment, which often coincides with high unemployment among citizens and resident aliens, is characteristic of global cities (Castles & Miller 1998). The gap between the growth of unemployment among nationals and other residents on the one hand and the emergence of an informal economy for illegal immigrants on the other has created favorable ground for xenophobic and racist rhetoric, advanced mainly by the extremist National Front in southern France. As outlined previously, the involvement of the National Front is deeply rooted in the local and regional industry and capital investment: a local economy that cannot turn its back on illegal immigrants, who can be found in abundance in the region and who can be recruited in an informal way in the agricultural, restaurant and above all building sectors. The case of the Sarhadi Kurds is not exceptional. However, there is a paradox between the need for illegal immigrants and the xenophobic rhetoric that blames the same illegal migrants and asylum seekers for “harming French culture and abusing French welfare”. A Kurdish politician in Marseille explains this paradoxical situation thus:

The region of Provence is an important stronghold for the National Front. I can hardly believe that the socio-economic dynamic of the region is not – at least partly – connected to this political organization. It is so demagogic to reproach illegal immigrants for being harmful to French welfare and the national culture, at the same time as they are recruited in the most unpopular sectors without any legal status or protection. Here, the Kurds are the real losers in this unfair equation, not least because they are victims of both racist discourses and the discriminatory French labor market.

In common with many other immigrant groups from countries said to have a greater cultural and geographical distance from France, Kurds are experiencing many difficulties regarding their position in French society. For the Sarhadi Kurds the situation is twice as hard. From their diasporic narratives, it may be concluded that they are experiencing in the first place not only striking social exclusion but also a kind of anonymity and invisibility in French society. As they are not connected to governmental institutions such as the state Social Security or taxation authorities, they are unable either to carry out their civil duties or to claim their civil rights in the way they could if they were included in the French

integration curriculum. In the event of accidents at work they are deprived of legal protection.

Kurdish children have no right to receive instruction in their mother tongue in France. This situation, which conflicts with EU language policy, does not mean that learning foreign languages is banned from the country's education system. Even though immigrant languages have no legal status in the French educational curriculum, it is possible for immigrant children to receive instruction in the language of their parents in certain primary schools. This has been achieved following bilateral agreements signed between France and immigrants' countries of origin. As the Kurds do not have their own state and have no official status as a distinct ethno-national group in the country, Kurdish cannot be a part of the curriculum of French state schools (Berruti *et al.* 2002). If they want to organize language instruction for their children, Kurds have once again to do it on their own account.

A further sign of exclusion that the Sarhadi Kurds experience is the way in which the Kurds and their organization are treated by the French authorities. For instance, the PKK, which is one of the most influential political organizations in the Kurdish diaspora in Western Europe, was officially banned by the French government in 1993. This is interpreted by many Sarhadi Kurds as a "discriminatory act" against them that can only be "beneficial to the Turkish state". This may explain the numerous raids (*raffles*) that the French police carry out on persons and associations that are said to be affiliated to the PKK.

For instance, in February 2007, 13 Kurds from Turkey were arrested in the Paris region departments of Yvelines, Hauts-de-Seine, Seine-Saint-Denis and Val d'Oise, as part of an investigation headed by France's top anti-terrorist judge, Jean-Louis Bruguière. According to the authorities, the Kurds were seized on suspicion of "money-laundering on behalf of the banned Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)". Likewise, in June 2007 eight "suspected" members of the PKK were detained in France in what was said to be a "criminal investigation" into attacks on Turkish interests. The eight, who are believed to be members of the PKK's youth wing, were arrested in the northern Paris suburbs and near the cities of Bordeaux and Marseille.

La Maison du Peuple Kurde in Marseille as a normalizing institution

La Maison du Peuple Kurde in Marseille is the sole Kurdish association in the Bouches-du-Rhône that plays a significant role in the life of Sarhadi Kurds. The association, which is based in an old building situated in a middle-sized street, is the subordinated member of FEYKA-Kurdistan, the umbrella Kurdish organization that, as noted above, operates at the national level in France. Through its membership of FEYKA-Kurdistan in a confederation of associations (Kon-Kurd) that acts at the EU level, La Maison du Peuple Kurde is automatically a transnational institution.

Inside the building there is a huge portrait of Abdullah Öcalan, which together with a number of banners in multiple colors and the pictures of some eminent martyrs attracts the attention of visitors. The ornament reveals at first glance that there is an affinity between the PKK and La Maison du Peuple Kurde in Marseille. Since the PKK was banned in 1993, civil institutions act on its behalf. This method has been used in several EU countries.

Like other Kurdish associations in France, La Maison du Peuple Kurde has formulated its programmes and objectives in relation to two main fields of activity: “promoting the culture and the integration of Kurds in France”. According to the chairwoman of La Maison du Peuple Kurde, the association was created to “assemble the Kurds under the same roof with the objective of facilitating their integration and developing their culture”. More concretely, the association provides Kurdish asylum seekers with a range of practical assistance such as language training, legal aid, translation of documents and arrangement of accommodation. It is worth noting that La Maison du Peuple Kurde is chaired by a woman: a somewhat paradoxical choice that according to a Kurdish economist in Marseille was no accident in the sense that a woman’s face projects a better image as well as masking the strong deficit of female members within the association. Additionally, the appointment of a chairwoman is in accordance with the feminist discourse proclaimed by the former PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan. Regardless to the role attributed to her by outsiders, it is hard to deny the chairwoman’s influence within the La Maison du Peuple Kurde as she was the only person who could speak French fluently and connect the association and its members to the outside world. However, irrespective of how this association describes itself, it can be seen as the most influential institution in the lives of Sarhadi Kurds in Bouches-du-Rhône.

In the first place, it serves as an additional employment agency. The recruitment of Sarhadi asylum seekers occurs more often than not through Kurdish contractors or so-called middle men who are affiliated to La Maison du Peuple Kurde. The contractors are in turn connected to French entrepreneurs who are interested in the cheap, hard-working and abundant Kurdish labor that can be found in the region.

Moreover, the association serves as a link between the Kurdish community and the French authorities. For example, when an individual gets into trouble with the police or other authorities, the association intervenes immediately to negotiate on behalf of the person in trouble. Moreover, according to its chairwoman La Maison du Peuple Kurde has been quite successful in “mobilizing material and symbolic resources in favor of the Kurdish cause”. In this connection, the association has regular contact with French NGOs and French authorities such as the municipality, the County Council (*le Conseil Général*), the Prefecture (*la Préfecture*) and French members of the European Parliament.

Besides being the link between Kurds in search of work and French entrepreneurs, La Maison du Peuple Kurde in Marseille also acts as a genuine political and social platform that mobilizes diasporan Sarhadi Kurds in the Marseille region for political events and cultural demonstrations. In this context, the powerful discourse of the PKK, with a good deal of normalizing and discipline, is constantly reproduced by La Maison du Peuple Kurde.

For instance, the association does not approve of the evoking of internal divergences relating to the existence of *assabiyya*, political diversity and ideological contradictions inside the diasporic community, as the prevailing discourse depicts the Kurdish diaspora as an integral part of a unified and coherent national community determined sooner or later to achieve its self-realization under the leadership of Abdullah Öcalan. In such a context, individual initiative, already much limited by the discriminatory structures of French society and also the *assabiyya*, is once again held back by the constraints of the PKK discourse. In terms of Foucault, one can see that the Sarhadi Kurds have become the product of a kind of power/knowledge related order of things (Bevir 1999). Correspondingly, as a main transmitter of the PKK’s political discourse among the Sarhadi Kurds in Bouches-du-Rhône, La Maison du Peuple Kurde appears as a “space in which technologies of domination work through an individual acting on himself, and in which the technologies by which individuals act on themselves coalesce to form structures of coercion” (Bevir 1999: 350).

Along with the celebration of the *Newroz* (the Kurdish national feast) and the arrangement of musical soirées, La Maison du

People Kurde in Marseille takes charge also of the mobilization of Sarhadi Kurds for political demonstrations that usually take place in both France and other EU countries. For instance, every year Kon-Kurd arranges a large-scale festival for several thousands of Kurds in Germany, which is also an appropriate occasion for many Sarhadi Kurds to travel abroad and come together. The most recent of these events was the meeting in Strasbourg, where hundreds of Sarhadi Kurds gathered together with many thousands of other diasporan Kurds to show their support for the imprisoned PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan.

The political mobilization among Sarhadi Kurds indicates that they are intensely committed to the Kurdish national struggle. In this respect, they consider themselves as the most intransigent of Kurdish groups: a “quality” that they justify by evoking their traumatic memories of Kurdistan relating to wartime atrocities, discrimination, forced displacement and mistreatment, and so on. According to a Kurdish politician, the feeling of pride and loyalty among Sarhadi Kurds is to certain extent rooted in their tribal culture and their traditional social organization. However, the convergence between local and geographic belongingness on the one hand and the memory of oppression on the other has created both a process of identification and a powerful sense of “being the same” among this group of Kurds.

Summary

This chapter has studied the life conditions of Sarhadi Kurds in the region of Marseille in Bouches-du-Rhône with reference to the study’s primary objective, which is to explore the process of change from a negative “victim-related” perception of self into a more positively and dynamically conceived form of it. By contextualizing a number of diasporic trajectories and occurrences, actualized through the narratives of Sarhadi Kurds, we have seen that the victim sentiment persists among this population. The principal reasons behind this persistent victim diaspora discourse are the experiences of oppression and forced migration that Sarhadi Kurds retain in their “collective memory”. As was discussed, Sarhadi Kurds regularly relate the experiences of discrimination, politics of denial, assimilation, persecution, deportation and massacre inflicted to them by the Turkish state and Turkish army. In this respect, the political destiny of the Kurdish homeland is portrayed through each individual traumatic experience.

The dominance of the victim diaspora discourse among Sarhadi Kurds is to a large extent compatible with one of Safran’s principles of diaspora: admitting the existence of forced dispersal, as it

was the case with, for instance, Jews, Armenians, Greeks and Africans (Safran 1991; see also Cohen 1995; 1996; Brubaker 2005).

This chapter shows that there are three principal factors that slow down the process of change from a negatively conceived victim diaspora into a positively conceived active diaspora (Sheffer 2002). The first factor is the social composition of the group concerned. As for the Sarhadi Kurds, the majority of them originated from a particular vast Kurdish region in Turkey, called Sarhad, which is situated adjacent to the Armenian and Iranian borders. The rural background of Sarhadi Kurds, together with their low level of education, constitutes a considerable obstacle for them in achieving a higher-level practice of transborder citizenship.

The integration context of France is the second constituent factor that holds back the realization of the practice of transborder citizenship. It does not make things easier for the Sarhadi Kurds. This context given here comprises not only the French historiography of immigration but also various immigration policies and refugee regimes that have been shaped over the years. For instance, we have seen that French immigration policy, which has been fixed on attaining “*immigration zéro*” (Hollifield 1997; Berruti *et al.* 2002) since the beginning of 1990s has not been very propitious for many asylum seekers and refugees who sought sanctuary in France. As for the Sarhadi Kurds, their condition of being constant asylum seekers without obtaining refugee status, together with the cases of Sangatte and the *East Sea*, show not only how France’s so-called “threshold of tolerance” (*seuil de tolérance*) toward immigrant populations has become restricted but also how certain ordinary situations become transformed into pure “human misery”.

Moreover, the chapter shows that in France the differentialist perspective on immigration yields gradually to assimilation in a very subtle and sophisticated way (Brubaker 2001) while at the same time the false perception of “color-blindness” obscures the historical realities of ethnic and racial identity in terms of colonial constructions of “otherness” (Jugé & Perez 2006). Likewise, it has been seen how in that country non-native and non-white subjects have always been perceived as *étrangers* (foreigners) and as the source of continuous societal “problems”: problems which should be solved through the interventions of public institutions and actors (Grillo 1985). We have also seen how the xenophobic National Front occupies a large part of the country’s social and political field (Schain 1988) and how ethnic youths of the suburbs (*banlieues*) through violent riots struggled to manifest their dissatisfaction with racism, discrimination and Islamophobia (Murray 2006). The discussion has shown how the *banlieues*, perceived by a number of

scholars as the expression of “new form of colonialism” (cf. Maspero 1990; McNeill 1999; Boulhais 2005; Murray 2006), experienced not only increasing housing segregation among immigrants but also a “line of demarcation” that more and more gives way to a “divided society” which is deeply rooted in the official structures of the French monocultural state (Khosrokhavar 2001) and which seeks legitimacy through considering itself as a republican, universalist (*universel*) and secular (*laïc*) institution (Khosrokhavar 1996; Schnapper 1998).

It has been seen that in such a context the cultures of the non-French are perceived as “traditional” and “introverted” and should not be given access to public spaces. Likewise, it has been realized that Sarhadi Kurds in the French context are given very few of the cultural and material resources that would enable them to escape from their inferior position in the social hierarchy. In the Marseille region, they are largely confined to the “illegal” building sector without being protected by any official structures. Moreover, we have seen that the Sarhadi Kurds have recourse to their *assabiyya* not as a supplementary means of social promotion but as a substitute for the deficient French integration structures.

The third constituent factor that counteracts the practice of transborder citizenship among the Sarhadi Kurds is the presence of the PKK and the way in which this organization spreads its political and ideological influence among this population. As the PKK is banned in France, the “mobilizing mission” (*mission mobilisatrice*) is transmitted to the affiliated federations and associations. In this respect, La Maison du Peuple Kurde in Marseille acts among Sarhadi Kurds as a ubiquitous instance of regulation and political mobilization. In such a climate, the participation of the Sarhadi Kurds in normative regimes and political processes (Glick Schiller 2005) becomes drastically reduced.

This chapter has also looked at various Kurdish associations and institutions that play a considerable role in the political, cultural and social lives of diasporan Kurds in France. L’Institut Kurde de Paris, Centre d’Information du Kurdistan and Fédération des Associations Kurdes en France (FEYKA-Kurdistan) are the important instances of diaspora formation, transnational connections and transborder citizenship acting among the Kurds in France. In this regard, L’Institut Kurde de Paris can be seen as one of the most successful Kurdish institutes in diaspora.

5. Kurds in Sweden as Transborder Citizens: A General View

At the end of January 2006 the Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) Nordic Representative, Taha Barwari, was the host of the first Kurdish Gala in Stockholm. The Gala, which was attended by numerous Kurdish and Swedish celebrities, gave Mr Barwari an opportunity to appraise not only a group of leading Kurds who over the preceding years had been successful in various areas of Swedish life but also native Swedes who had in one way or another taken an interest in the Kurds and publicly promoted their cause.

At this event the famous Swedish actor Gösta Ekman was given an honorary award by the jury of the Gala for "shedding light on a matter which was cast in total darkness until the 1990s and giving the Kurdish people his support when they needed it the most". Fredrik Malm, then president of the Liberal Youth of Sweden, was another Swedish personality who was awarded for "his public dedication to the Kurdish question and promoting the Kurdish people's rights in different arenas with striking empathy and understanding".

In addition, the jury decided to name the Swedish pop idol Darin Zanyar "Kurd of the Year 2005", stressing the Kurdish teenager's conspicuous achievements in the domain of the pop music and also his ability to "introduce the Kurds on a new arena and to inspire through his success a whole new generation to take pride in their origins. The jury noted that Darin Zanyar "carried his Kurdish inheritance with authenticity and simplicity and directed the interest of his audience towards his two countries, Kurdistan and Sweden". Darin's award was presented by Morgan Johansson, the then Swedish Minister for Public Health and Social Services.

In his speech to the participants at the Gala, Taha Barwari celebrated the "successful achievements" of the Kurds in Sweden and expressed his gratitude to the Swedish friends of Kurdistan: "Tonight we celebrate and honor Kurdistan in Sweden, and Sweden in Kurdistan."

This Swedish-Kurdish juxtaposition opens up a multidimensional and sophisticated transnational social field. By observing this transnational social field closely we can conclude that diasporan Kurds in Sweden give a clear expression to the practice of

transborder citizenship as they live their lives across the borders of two or more nation-states and as they participate in the normative regimes, socio-cultural networks and political processes of Sweden and Kurdistan (Glick Schiller 2005).

The Kurdish Gala, which won praise from several Kurdish websites and even radio and TV stations, was not unique. It was one among hundreds of such events that have given expression to the experience of diasporan Kurds in Sweden of living across the borders of two or more nation-states. Hence, the cultural, social and political intersections and interactions of Sweden and Kurdistan create a transnational social space where the process of Kurdish claim-making for “participating in the normative regime, legal and institutional system and political practices” (Pries 1999) gives rise to what Eva Østergaard-Nielsen calls the “dual political agenda” (Østergaard-Nielsen 2000) that diasporan Kurds maintain in both Swedish and Kurdish politics.

As discussed in previous chapters, the establishment of a Kurdish *de facto* state in northern Iraq has, with its power of attraction, drastically accelerated the process of transnational exchanges and the practice of transborder citizenship among Kurds in Sweden. The nature and the order of these exchanges range from significant political and cultural performances to regular social and economic activities. Diplomacy, political demonstrations, electoral campaigns, commemoration and celebration of specific national days, arrangement of festivals, associative performances, music production, publication of literature, newspapers and reviews, radio and TV broadcasting, cyberspace activities, money remittances, and so forth are among the activities that constitute the observable forms of social relationships and transactions that the Kurdish diasporic population performs in Sweden. The establishment of a direct flight connection between Stockholm and Irbil greatly facilitates transnational exchanges between the two socio-geographic entities. As the narrative of diasporan Kurds shows, living in Sweden today does not in any way mean that the strongly politicized Kurdish diaspora is away from home. In other words, the practice of transborder citizenship among diasporan Kurds in Sweden creates a new notion of home, which can be imagined beyond any assimilationist form of state belongingness as it is lived both here and there.

In accordance with the study’s objective, this chapter will describe the Swedish context by discussing national identity and ethnic boundaries, providing a historic overview of immigration to Sweden and also explaining various immigrant policies, refugee regimes, integration structures, citizenship frameworks, and labor and housing market conditions that have been shaped over the years. The social, political and cultural orientations of the Kurds will be situated within the Swedish

national context, exhibited both negatively and positively. As for the experience of social exclusion, discrimination and xenophobia among diasporan Kurds, this chapter will give an account not only of the position of the Kurdish population in the Swedish labor and housing markets but also of a racist discourse that has arisen in the Swedish media in recent years concerning the Kurds. This negative image of the Kurds is derived primarily from the assassination of the Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme – an event that was in some way connected to the PKK – but also from the sensitive issue of the so-called “honor killings” that have been associated mostly with the Kurds in recent years. However, these negative experiences of the Kurds display cannot be understood except within the framework of wider discursive and social practices.

This chapter also discusses the formation of diasporic institutions in Sweden, the emergence of transnational networks and the practice of transborder citizenship among the Kurds. Thus, the specific Swedish model has provided positive opportunities for Kurds to build their diasporic organizations and develop their culture and language. A number of leading personalities in political and cultural life have emerged under the specific conditions of diaspora formation in Swedish society. Moreover, I give special attention to the notion of *assabiyya* and its importance for diasporic experience and organization among Kurds in Sweden. Different forms of Kurdish *assabiyya* will be explored. At first sight, *assabiyya* can be perceived as a negative experience, connoting a close-knit diasporan population following certain traditional practices that may, for instance, militate against “individual emancipation” or be “harmful” to women. But *assabiyya* can as well be perceived as a positive social experience, not only as an alternative to the inadequacy of the official integration structures in the receiving society but also as a site for preserving internal solidarity and group feeling.

Part I

Swedish immigration, refugee and immigrant policy

Since the end of the Second World War Sweden has, in relation to the size of its population, received large numbers of asylum seekers and refugees as well as labor migrants. An impressive body of immigration, immigrant, refugee and integration policies and laws has been framed; on several occasions it has been amended and reformulated, and its institutional framework adjusted or radically changed.

Immigration policy is mainly expressed in terms of principles indicating which foreigners can be awarded residence permits in Sweden. Refugee policy deals with those dimensions, contributions, arrangements and measures that a country adopts in order to aid and support people fleeing from their homelands. Refugee policy is likewise connected to a country's involvement in reducing and containing global refugee problems. Immigrant policy addresses those immigrants and refugees who have residence permits and who live permanently in the receiving country. This policy comprises generally a number of measures and rules aimed at helping those individuals who want to settle in a host society. A given country's immigrant policy directly affects socio-political policy areas like housing, education, the labor market, health care, childcare and care for the old (Södergran 2000: 40).

The arrival of hundreds of thousands of immigrants and refugees in Sweden has generated not only a new demography but also a new social and cultural reality. In order to manage this new "heterogeneous" reality, the Swedish state over the years has developed and implemented different legal frameworks, which have not only marked the transition from an immigration to an integration era (Jederlund 1998; Westin 2000) but also established an effective program of integration that would give immigrants and refugees the same living standard as the rest of the population (see Södergran 2000; Westin 2000; Johansson 2005; Schierup, Hansen & Castles 2006). Developing integration projects and controlling and managing immigration and refugee flows have been permanent matters of concern for Sweden. However, in the mid-1970s Sweden established its very first all-embracing multicultural minority policy, based on three principles: freedom of choice, equality and cooperation. Consequently, a number of institutions, services and regulations promoting integration appeared. In 1998 the National Integration Board (*Integrationsverket*) was created with the objective of promoting the integration of foreign-born residents in the country (Södergran 2000; Berruti *et al.* 2002). Correspondingly, the

Swedish Minister of Integration proposed replacing the word immigrant (*invandrare*) with “person of foreign background” (*personer med utländsk härkomst*) in laws and official speeches, in order to counteract “us and them” thinking in the society (Jederlund 1998).

Immigration and refugee flows into Sweden: a historic overview

The expansion of Swedish industry in the 1960s encouraged employers to speed up the process of recruitment. The 1960s were a decade of large-scale labor immigration, with 30,000–60,000 people arriving each year. At this time immigrants came principally from the former Yugoslavia (Agreement of 1966) and Greece, Finland and Turkey (Agreement of 1967). Despite these agreements, the majority of the immigrants arrived in Sweden on their own initiative or under family reunion (Fact Sheets 1994; Södergran 2000; Johansson 2005). The pace of immigration continued to quicken in succeeding years, attaining a yearly net figure of 70,000 (Westin 1993). At that time, assimilation was the goal of Swedish immigrant policy.

The economic migration to Sweden came to an end in 1972. This year marked a turning point, since thereafter it was mainly Scandinavian citizens who satisfied Swedish industry’s demand for labor. Finnish immigrants were the largest Nordic group to benefit from a free labor market agreement, signed by the five Nordic countries Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden in 1954. Under this agreement, Nordic citizens enjoyed full rights to live and work on Swedish soil (Södergran 2000: 45). This governing mechanism made Sweden’s neighboring countries its largest source of immigration after the war (Runblom 1998; Jederlund 1998).

Between 1980 and 1990 the Swedish Immigration Board granted permanent residence permits to approximately 250,000 refugees. The most significant inflow of refugees occurred in 1992–94, when Sweden provided a safe haven to more than 170,000 people fleeing from the war in the former Yugoslavia. The end of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina led to a clear diminution in the number of asylum seekers arriving in Sweden. The total number of aliens who in one way or another were awarded residence permits in 1995 was 32,486. One year earlier, Sweden had received 79,000 refugees (see Westin 1993; Jederlund 1998; Södergran 2000).

During 1995–99 Sweden experienced a period of relative stability as regards the arrival of asylum seekers and their relatives. It was only in 2000 that the number of foreign arrivals significantly increased.

For the first time since 1995 the number of foreigners surpassed the threshold of 40,000. It is important to stress that the majority of those who arrived in Sweden during these years (except 1993–94) were not themselves refugees but relations of refugees entering under family reunion (Jederlund 1998; Södergran 2000; Berruti *et al.* 2002).

The arrival of the asylum seekers and their relations after the era of labor immigration had ended was not the only issue of concern for Swedish researchers in the domain of global migration. For instance, the presence of a large number of cultural and ethnic groups in Swedish society has brought about an undeniable transformation of Sweden's population structure, not only demographically but also socially, politically and culturally. According to Harald Runblom by the mid-1990s nearly 950,000 of Sweden's 8.8 million inhabitants were people born in another country, while the total number with "foreign backgrounds" (born abroad or having at least one foreign-born parent) was 1.6 million, or nearly one fifth of inhabitants of Sweden (Runblom 1998).

In 2003 and 2004 asylum seekers from Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Azerbaijan and Turkish Kurdistan were among the dominant refugee groups who arrived to Sweden. During the same period we can also detect the arrival of smaller groups from Somalia, other countries of the Horn of Africa and West Africa, Kosovo, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Russia (Westin 2006).

Today Shiite Muslims from Iraq constitute the largest asylum seeker population in Sweden. The American-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the sectarian violence that followed can be seen as the major cause of the flight of refugees from Iraq. It has been estimated that 20,000 people arrived from Iraq in 2007. For instance, half of the 2,092 people who applied for asylum in April 2007 were Iraqis ([www.migrationsverket.se 2007-05-07](http://www.migrationsverket.se/2007-05-07)).

Control and regulation of the influx

Immediately after the Second World War the Swedish government drafted immigration and refugee laws and policies without showing any real interest in how foreign nationals would be treated in the country. Perhaps the regulation of 1954 was the first measure in the area that showed concern about the destiny of immigrants and refugees in Sweden, as it was designed to prevent the arbitrary treatment of foreign nationals while as far as possible ensuring them a secure place in the community (Immigration Controls 2000).

Since 1996 Sweden has been a signatory of the Schengen Agreement, which allows for the free movement of people across the borders of the participant states. The Schengen Agreement, together with the Dublin Agreement,¹⁵ can be seen as an important step in the direction of a harmonized common immigration and refugee policy among the EU members (Johansson 2005; Westin 2006).

However, it was only in the mid-1960s that the issues of “adaptation, integration, and minority problems” begun to be discussed in a more serious way. During this period, the debate was centered on two related fields: first, the need for a restrictive immigration policy, and second, the necessity of developing an integration program at the domestic level. The first significant steps toward the integration of foreign populations were the introduction of Swedish language teaching (SFI) and the creation in 1969 of a central authority – the National Board of Immigration (*Invandrarverket*) – to regulate the influx. Nevertheless, this new authority was not yet in charge of the reception of asylum seekers and the resettlement of refugees. This task was instead entrusted to the Swedish Labor Market Board (AMS) until the 1980s (*cf.* Westin 1993; Jederlund 1998; Södergran 2000; Johansson 2005).

Swedish immigrant policy in the 1960s: assimilation as the guiding concept

From a historical perspective, Sweden was, as was indicated above, transformed in a very short period from a relatively homogeneous country into a multi-ethnic and multicultural society. For many years assimilation was the guiding concept, which postulated that immigrants should be integrated according to Swedish social and cultural norms (Diaz 1993).

At the end of the 1960s, Swedish decision makers realized that the presence of foreigners in Sweden was no longer a temporary matter. They concluded that it was illusory to believe that the majority of immigrant workers, who had arrived many years earlier in search of a job or a better life, would voluntarily return to their native countries. In this respect, José Alberto Diaz stresses that the immigrant populations in Sweden, like those in many other Western societies, have managed to

¹⁵ The Dublin Agreement established cooperation to ensure that asylum seekers can make only one application for asylum in the “Dublin area”. This agreement determines the process of asylum applications among the signatory states of the Schengen Agreement. The Dublin Agreement allows the use of the electronic fingerprint database (Eurodac) in order to identify persons who make more than one request for asylum.

progress from a temporary resident status to a permanent one (Diaz 1993).

Assimilation was considered as an adequate model, which its advocates claimed would bring about a well-functioning society without significant conflict or communication problems between the “new” and the “old” populations. In this regard, the main method was assumed to be the integration of the new populations in different key sectors of the society: a social “operation” which was considered as essential for achieving assimilationist objectives (Diaz 1993; Jederlund 1998; Södergran 2000).

Three different arguments were advanced at that time. The first argument was a cultural one, which stressed national feeling and national belongingness and the maintenance of the Swedish language, culture and values, and encouraged immigrants to become assimilates into the majority’s culture and norms (Jederlund 1998; Södergran 2000; Johansson 2005). A second, sociological argument urged cultural minorities to adapt to the cultural values of the majority. Advocates of this approach claimed that assimilation would counteract isolation and social breakdown among immigrants. A final, rational argument stipulated that an assimilationist strategy would play an anti-discriminatory role (Diaz 1993).

It is important to stress that “culture” was not the leading integration concept at this time. The objective was to assimilate immigrants not to the majority’s culture and norms but to the society’s tangible structures, that is, the Swedish labor market and welfare state. In this respect, the rhetoric of Swedish immigrant politics of 1975, which was conceived in terms of the notion of equality (*jämlikhet*), was in line with what the American Milton Myron Gordon (1964) called “structural assimilation”, as it aimed to provide immigrants with the same social rights as native Swedes (Öberg 1994).

However, it was not long before this assimilation policy was called into question and gave way to a new model, namely, integration. The Swedish authorities now argued that the Swedish population was aware that Sweden already had a multi-ethnic society. This awakening would gradually lead to a greater tolerance toward non-native ethnic groups and a greater vigilance against racist tendencies in the country (*cf.* Westin 1993; Jederlund 1998; Södergran 2000).

From assimilation to multiculturalism

The first public objection against the policy of assimilation was raised in an article by David Schwartz (1964) in the Swedish newspaper *Dagens Nyheter*. Schwartz urged the Swedish intelligentsia to open a public debate on immigrants' adjustment to, and integration into, the society. Schwartz invoked the "moral responsibility" of the Swedes and urged them to take responsibility for the integration of the immigrant population into the society. The principal guideline was to protect the culture and the traditions of minorities, to secure the well-being of immigrants, and to eliminate procedural obstacles to their naturalization (Ålund & Schierup 1991).

The Swedish government realized as early as the 1960s that the issues relating to minorities deserved more attention and commitment. It became apparent that many foreign workers and immigrants had plans to stay permanently in Sweden, and as a result they could no longer be considered as a temporary labor forces. Consequently, it was affirmed that the way in which immigrants and refugees were resettled would play a fundamental role in the process of their integration into Swedish society. Furthermore, the children of the immigrants had already reached school age. This posed a further challenge to the Swedish education system and the Swedish government (Jaakkola 1987).

Moreover, there was an economic or pragmatic argument to the effect that the change from assimilation to "multiculturalism" opened new possibilities for the social and economic development of the country. For instance, the Swedish Parliament suggested that Swedish society would benefit more from the interaction between the "minority and majority cultures" than from a policy of cultural assimilation. The Parliament also subscribed to the humane argument according to which each person had the right to preserve her or his ethnic identity. At the same time, it was also a pragmatic political choice to support the protection of minorities' rights (Westin 1993; Jederlund 1998; Södergran 2000). The Swedish authorities were attentive to those ethnic conflicts that emerged in a number of west European countries such as Germany, Britain and France in the mid-1960s. According to Charles Westin, potential conflicts between Swedes and immigrant populations would certainly degenerate into serious social problems (Westin 1993).

The abandonment of the assimilationist policy in favor of the protection of the cultural and ethnic heritages of ethnic groups was in line with the prevailing philanthropy and idealism in Sweden, where there was at that time a popular movement in favor of a liberal migration policy. The deceased Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme undoubtedly

contributed to the emergence of such a policy. This “lawyer” of the Third World had an ambition to ensure Sweden a place in the international avant-garde (see Jederlund 1998; Södergran 2000; Berruti *et al.* 2002).

A further factor contributing to the emergence of a multiculturalist discourse was the political stability of the country and the existence of a broad political consensus between the political parties on the issue of immigration. This greatly facilitated cooperation and compromise. The immigrant policy adopted in 1976 reflected this compromise in various respects. In a sense, the new policy can be regarded as a synthesis of social democrat and non-socialist values, as manifested in a discourse of international solidarity that combined a socialist humanitarian discourse and a liberal Christian discourse (Widgren 1987).

Moreover the historical, economic and political context of the country was sufficiently favorable to actualize the notion of integration in the public debate (Lundberg 1987). Thus, a new minorities policy was conceived with the objective of developing an “equal social status for immigrants and refugees” in the new “multicultural” society (Södergran 2000: 51).

Outlines of the immigrant and minorities policy of 1975: institutional frameworks

The guidelines of the new minorities policy in Sweden was conditioned by the adoption of multiculturalism in the mid-1970s (Ring 1993) even though the term “multiculturalism” did not appear in the initial documents of 1975. It is only at the end of the 1980s that Sweden described its minorities policy as “multicultural”.

The new policy involved a conceptual alteration, which replaced the term “foreigner” (*utlänning*) with “immigrant” (*invandrare*). Perhaps it was a way to introduce a more comprehensive designation of non-national Swedes. Consequently, foreign citizens who resided permanently in Sweden, along with Swedish naturalized foreigners and their children, were regarded as “immigrants”. Perhaps this was a less pejorative term in the Swedish language, but it still had negative connotations. One can imagine the effect of this shift of terminology if it were extended to the domain of law and social praxis; the country would move abruptly to having a million immigrants in a total population of 8,3 million at the beginning of 1980s (Fred 1983).

However, the approval of “multiculturalism” was optimistically considered as a necessary step which would provide the Swedish government with useful and functional methods for integrating

different immigrant groups into society. The objectives of this new immigrant policy, which reflected, and was motivated by, experiences and ideas from the 1960s, were founded upon three different principles, namely, equality (*jämlikhet*), freedom of choice (*valfrihet*), and partnership (*samverkan*). According to these principles, immigrants should be given the necessary means to integrate while still having the chance to maintain their cultural heritage and their ethnic identity (see Ring 1993; Jederlund 1998; Södergran 2000; Berruti *et al.* 2002).

The equality principle implied that immigrants should have the same opportunities, rights and obligations as the rest of the population. Freedom of choice meant that members of ethnic minorities should be allowed, if they so wished, to retain and develop their culture and ethnic identity. Cooperation and solidarity entailed that immigrant groups and the Swedish-born populations should work together to resolve issues of common interest (Jederlund 1998).

To counteract the exclusion of minorities from the political and social spheres, the Swedish authorities developed a number of concrete measures. Among them were two penal provisions. The first, “Against illicit discrimination” (*olaga diskriminering*), stipulated that nobody must be subjected to less favorable treatment because of his or her race, skin color, national or ethnic origin, or confession. The second penal provision, “Against threats and agitation against a group of the people” (*hets mot folkgrupp*), specified that the expression of threats or contempt toward a group of people, whether orally or in print, was prohibited (*cf.* Jederlund 1998; Södergran 2000; Berruti *et al.* 2002).

An Ombudsman (*Ombudsman mot etnisk diskriminering-DO*) was established in 1986 with the responsibility to protect immigrants from ethnic and racial discrimination. There have been demands to close down the office following the victory of Centre-Right political parties in the general elections of 2006. According to the Ombudsman, discrimination can be defined as “unequal treatment of comparable cases”. “When for example a job applicant, due to his or her foreign origin, is not treated in the same way by an employer as a person of Swedish origin – that is ethnic discrimination.” It was also considered as discriminatory when an employer requires from a job applicant a better fluency in Swedish than is necessary for the job (Jederlund 1998; Södergran 2000; Berruti *et al.* 2002). The Ombudsman has been criticized for being insufficient to counteract ethnic discrimination in Swedish society (Khayati 1998).

A direct outcome of the 1975 immigrant policy was that in many municipalities various “Immigrant Offices” were created with the task of welcoming and integrating the newcomers. Among their priorities was the arrangement of school places, work, accommodation, Swedish

language courses and professional education for refugees and their children. Each Immigrant Office was equipped with an interpreter service, which helped newcomers in their contact with the authorities and services like hospitals and care centers.

A further result of the proposal of 1975 was the granting of voting rights to immigrants after three years of permanent residence in Sweden (SOU 1975:15), but only in church, municipal and county elections. Immigrants were also given the right to stand as candidates in local elections (Schierup, Hansen & Castles 2006).

Another important feature of the immigrant and minorities policy of 1975 was the “mother tongue” reform that was introduced in 1976. Under this reform Swedish municipalities received government subsidies for instruction in the mother tongue in public pre-schools, primary schools and secondary schools for those immigrant children who requested it and who spoke a language other than Swedish in the home (Södergran 2000: 52).

After a decade of working with the guiding principles of “equality, freedom of choice, and partnership”, the Swedish government decided to propose new concepts for immigration and the minorities policy. The appearance of negative attitudes toward foreigners in Swedish society was an alarm bell warning the Swedish government to abandon the minorities policy of 1975. In the second half of the 1980s, Swedish multiculturalism began to exhibit serious signs of crisis. For the Swedish government, preoccupied by the rise of racism, discrimination, unemployment and ethnic segregation, it was time to announce the outlines of a new immigrant policy with certain cultural-assimilative overtones (Berruti *et al.* 2002: 147).

Emergence of racist and discriminatory trends: from immigration to integration

During the 1980s, as the number of refugees of non-European origin grew, Swedish political parties were not very inclined to discuss questions about immigration and the integration of refugees and immigrants into the society. One major reason for this reluctance was the traditionally strong political consensus that Sweden was free from racism and ethnic discrimination, and consequently that it was not necessary to have a debate on the issue (Berruti *et al.* 2002: 147–48). However, at the end of the 1980s this political consensus was eroded, and the need for a debate was recognized. The public debate that was launched by the Swedish political parties on immigration basically coincided with the assassination of the Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme in 1986; a tragic

event that had wide international repercussions. This assassination, which according to some theories was connected to the Kurdish organization of PKK, resulted not only in a number of Kurds being placed under so-called “municipality arrest” but also, according to certain Kurdish sources, in an intensification of racist opinions against the Kurds.

In 1985, the government launched its plan of refugee settlement in all Swedish municipalities. The small commune of Sjöbo located in the southern Swedish region of Skåne in 1988 organized a symbolic local referendum to reject its share of the refugee quota. A majority of voters opposed the reception of refugees in their commune. According to Rojas (1993), these refugees, who originated for the most part in the Middle East, were believed to have values and standards unacceptable to the inhabitants of Sjöbo (*cf.* Diaz 1993; Södergran 2000; Berruti *et al.* 2002; Johansson 2005). This event, which was debated intensively in the Swedish media and also among the social scientists (Fryklund & Peterson 1989) was in one way or another the beginning of a new stage in the history of Swedish immigration in which the presence of refugees and immigrants in Sweden was for the first time associated with “problems” (Rojas 1993). This “double estrangement” in Sjöbo (Fryklund & Peterson 1989) was in total disagreement with the assumptions of the minorities policy of 1975, which considered immigrants as bearers of resources and progress for Sweden. At the end of the 1980s and during the first half of 1990s, anti-immigration and anti-immigrant attitudes extended to the Swedish political Left. At that time, asylum seekers and migrants from certain countries were considered as being less welcome in Sweden. On 13 December 1989, the Swedish Social Democrat government issued the so-called *Lucia-resolution*, which tightened the granting of residence permits. Under the new definition, Sweden would in the future mainly grant asylum to those refugees who met the Geneva Convention’s criteria for refugees. Christina Johansson points out that the Swedish government’s adoption of a restrictive immigration policy was legitimized through the promotion of an integration discourse (Johansson 2005: 162–63). Put simply, leading Swedish politicians advanced the following argument: we should control the influx of immigrants and refugees to Sweden as it would otherwise be difficult to integrate the refugees already residing in the country. So, “stop immigration for the sake of integration”.

However, parallel with this intense “integration *versus* immigration” debate, racist actions against immigrant and refugee populations had received an unprecedented impetus. At that time, several refugee camps (for instance, those in Kimstad, Bocksjön, Flen och Kollbäck) and Muslim holy places (the mosque of Trollhättan) became the targets of racist attacks (Sandström 1990; Schierup 1994). The horror

among immigrants and refugees reached its climax when a certain John Ausonius, known in the Swedish media as the “Laser Man” (*Lasermannen*) stepped forward. From August 1991 to February 1992, Ausonius shot eleven people in Stockholm and Uppsala with a rifle equipped with a laser sight, killing one and seriously injuring the others. The victims were all immigrants with distinct physical traits such as black hair or dark skin (John Ausonius, Wikipedia 2007-05-03). The Swedish anti-immigrant party New Democracy (*NY Demokrati*) emerged from this xenophobic political climate. The newly formed political party was relatively successful in the elections of 1991; it won sufficient votes to exceed the threshold of 4 per cent for obtaining 25 seats out of a total of 349 in the Parliament.

The economic recession of the 1990s, which had direct effects on the public finances and also on the budgets allocated to the reception of refugees, likewise did not bode well for Sweden’s immigrant and refugee populations (*cf.* Jederlund 1998; Södergran 2000; Westin 2000; Johansson 2005; Schierup, Hansen & Castles 2006). These populations were hit hard by the 1990s economic crisis, which inaugurated an era of intensified ethnic divisions in a changing Swedish labor market (Schierup, Hansen & Castles 2006: 209).

According to a report published by the Swedish Labor Market Board (AMS) in 1997, annual average unemployment among non-Scandinavian immigrants was more than 30 per cent at the same time as the rate among native Swedes was only 7 per cent. Among those immigrants who had arrived more lately, the figures were even higher (Arbetsmarknadsstyrelsen 1998). According to Åke Sander, the economic crisis in Sweden was one of the major reasons behind the change in Swedish public opinion and the rise of anti-immigrant sentiments (Sander 1993).

Social exclusion and housing segregation among the non-dominant ethnic groups and the rise of xenophobia and racism in the society prompted the Swedish government to frame new policy directions before it was too late. Both the government and Parliament agreed that this time the focus must also be on integration, and education, employment and housing segregation among immigrants and refugees would be the essential priorities of Swedish politicians and policy makers (Jederlund 1998). Moreover, henceforth integration was to be an ongoing societal process involving the active and reciprocal participation of both the majority and the ethnic minorities. In other words, the new integration policy made clear that all citizens, be they immigrants or native Swedes, should together counteract discrimination, social exclusion and housing segregation (Dahlstedt 2001). Subsequently, the old “immigrant and minorities policy” was replaced by a new model, which was formulated

in legislation titled “Sweden, the future and diversity – from immigration politics to integration politics”. As articulated in the new program, the objective was to build a society where “each person was given the opportunity to contribute with her/his unique skills and experience to enable society’s diversity to function as a whole and become a joint asset to all” (Prop. 1997/98). Considerable institutional reform was also envisaged.

Institutional reforms, participation, citizenship and diversity: integrationist rhetoric or legitimate practices?

In accordance with new integration programs, the Swedish National Immigration Board (*Invandrarverket*) was no longer the only institution responsible for the introduction of immigrants and refugees into the society, as responsibility for the social integration of immigrants and refugees was transferred to a new central government agency, the National Board of Integration (*Integrationsverket*). The National Immigration Board remained the official body for taking decisions on residence permits, asylum applications, family reunion, refugee quotas, foreign students, citizenship and repatriation (Berruti *et al.* 2002: 153). Meanwhile, the new National Integration Board, which was created in 1998 following the approval of the new law was given responsibility for:

Creating social solidarity based upon the ethnic and cultural diversity that naturally arises when people of many different origins live together, promoting equal rights and opportunities for everyone, regardless of ethnic and cultural background, preventing and combating xenophobia, racism and discrimination through developing a society characterized by reciprocal respect and tolerance and that enables all citizens, regardless of background, to participate and share responsibility (www.integrationsverket.se, 2004-02-18).

Concretely, a number of integration areas would be of interest to the National Integration Board. In introducing newcomers to Swedish society, the new body would offer new residents proper opportunities to achieve “financial self-sufficiency” and the chance to become actors in civil society. In this context, Swedish municipalities, which – on the basis of bilateral agreements with the government – receive refugees and their relatives on their soil, play the major role in framing the introduction strategy for each newcomer. For its part, the government provides assistance to municipalities in implementing the introduction, which is

individualized and employment-related. The strategy chosen was based upon the personal skills and experience of the individual, and was results-oriented. It was also considered to stimulate new forms of cooperation between municipalities and employment offices. Furthermore, the integration program should aim to provide newcomers with financial support during the introduction phase by other means than social allowances (Prop. 1997/98; SOU 1998:73).

As indicated above, since 1999 there has been a new law against ethnic discrimination, which offers the foreign-born protection against abusive treatment in work and education. In order to overcome discrimination against refugees and immigrants in workplaces and other public institutions, employers have since May 1999 been under an obligation to establish a “diversity plan” (*mångfaldsplan*) within their organizations and companies. The initial aim of such a project was to map the internal composition of the staff within the organizations and institutions concerned, and to highlight the advantages of a diversity plan in order, as it explained, to achieve *later on* a general alteration of attitudes within each institution with respect to the recruitment of new staff from ethnic backgrounds other than that of native Swedes. According to the government ordinance, the long-term objective of such a diversity program was to attain a situation where the ethnic composition of the workforce in all organizations and institutions would reflect the existing ethno-demographic composition of the Swedish population at large. In other words, in coming years 10 per cent of all civil servants must officially be recruited among foreign-born people in Sweden (Khayati 2003). It was expected that the Swedish integration policy, which principally advocated the participation of all citizens in democratic decision-making processes in order to shape policies, would be affected by the diversity plan (Prop. 1997/98).

As the diversity policy did not achieve its goals, the Swedish government set up a new commission in 2003 in order to study how immigrant and refugee populations could gain influence and obtain access to power. Professor Masoud Kamali (born in Iran) was appointed chair of the commission. He engaged a large number of independent researchers, mostly young postdoctoral sociologists, anthropologists, economists and political scientists, for specific studies and tasks. The commission released a report in 2005, in which the researchers claimed that non-Swedes suffered largely from what they called structural discrimination. In order to counteract such structural discrimination, the report proposed that the Swedish government should apply affirmative action on a large scale not only to ethnic or migrant populations but also to those native Swedes who occupy a low socioeconomic position in the society (Westin 2006).

An important means to ensure the political participation of immigrants and refugees in the Swedish society is Swedish citizenship which is available to immigrants after five years' residence, to political refugees after four years, and to immigrants from the Nordic countries after two years, with no formal requirements for cultural or linguistic assimilation. Foreign-born individuals who have been convicted for criminal offences are excluded from citizenship (Westin 2000; Gustafson 2002).

Swedish citizenship is largely based on the principle of *ius sanguinis*, whereby children inherit citizenship from their parents. Being born in Sweden of non-native parents does not mean that one automatically obtains citizenship; to that extent, the principle of *ius soli* (whereby people acquire citizenship of a county by virtue of being born in it) is not applied. As for the issue of national identity, Sweden is among those nations that do not clearly differentiate between ethnic and civic notions of identity. This may be a result of the perception that Sweden has been ethnically a relatively homogeneous nation. However, "being Swedish" refers both to an ethnic identity, which embraces language and culture, and to a civic identity, which embraces citizenship (Johansson 1999; Westin 2000). Since July 2001, dual citizenship has been fully accepted in Sweden. It implies that foreign nationals who acquire Swedish citizenship through naturalization need not henceforth renounce their previous citizenship (Gustafson 2002: 469). Does the acquisition of political citizenship automatically entail an improvement in non-natives' social and political positions? Researchers seem to be skeptical about this.

For instance, Per Gustafson stresses that immigrants and refugees experience substantial social and ethnic differentiation in Swedish society, irrespective of whether or not they are Swedish citizens (Gustafson 2002: 469). In other words, the acquisition of the Swedish citizenship can be seen as a gain in juridical terms but does not include the possibility of becoming culturally and ethnically Swedish. In order to conceptualize the condition of those immigrants who do not obtain Swedish citizenship, the Swedish political scientist Tomas Hammar has introduced the notion of "denizens". The development of citizenship rights without formal citizenship has been called "denizen rights". The concept of "denizen" refers to the fact that immigrants enter a host society through three successive gates at each of which states may exercise control over the admission, namely, immigration regulation, regulation of domicile and residential status, and naturalization. According to Hammar, immigrants who pass through the first gate may proceed to secure domicile and residential status but not naturalization status. In the respect, the author suggests a new category of people who

have the right of residence but not of permanent membership of the host nation (Hammar 1990). According to Margarete Haderer, the “denizen” is a meeting point between two categories, those non-citizens who can be neither repatriated nor naturalized, and those citizens who, as a result of an increasing desertion of the codified instances of political participation, exhibit an evident tendency to turn into denizens (Haderer 2005).

However, preoccupied by the less propitious life conditions of the non-native population, the Swedish state decided to elaborate the new integration policy and to implement it in various political, cultural and socio-economic areas. In this regard, hundreds of projects have been initiated. Among those projects that were directly and indirectly aimed at the refugee and immigrant populations at local, regional and national levels, one can mention the so-called Metropolitan Program (*Storstadsatsning*), which was carried out in three main urban areas, namely, Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö. The central purpose of this project was to break the social and ethnic segregation of refugee and immigrant populations and to work for equal living conditions and opportunities in the larger urban areas. Moreover, the Metropolitan Program was aimed at creating better conditions for economic growth and competition in the urban areas, thereby enabling the suburbs to help with the creation of new jobs (Pro. 1997/98:165; Urban 2005).

The main motivation for the Swedish government in launching the Metropolitan Program was first and foremost the 1990 crises that deepened the economic and social divisions between the suburbs and the large city centers. In order to overcome these socio-economic discrepancies, the government decided to allocate two billion Swedish kronor to different municipalities in so-called “deprived” areas. This grant was used to finance various projects in problem areas such as urban planning and urban environment, economic growth, education, employment, and diminution of social allowances among immigrants. Moreover, reinforcement of the position of the Swedish language, improvement of school quality for immigrant children, public health and democratic participation were among those problem areas that have been prioritized. The municipalities of greater Stockholm that especially profited from this investment were Haninge, Huddinge, and Botkyrka. The common characteristic of these municipalities was in the first place the existence of suburbs with a high concentration of foreign-born people suffering from a high rate of unemployment (Urban 2005). For instance, 61 per cent of the inhabitants of Fittja, a neighborhood in the commune of Botkyrka, were foreign-born, mainly in the Middle East, Africa and Latin America, and have been experiencing an unemployment rate of 58 per cent (NUTEK 2001). However, despite the launch of these projects, and despite the solid efforts and commitment of local government officials,

social workers and project leaders to generate “genuine local citizenship through broad social inclusion”, the immigrant and refugee populations in the suburbs continue to suffer from social marginality, stigma and ethnic segregation (Schierup, Hansen & Castles 2006).

Prior to the Swedish general elections of 2002, issues relating to immigration and the integration of immigrant and refugee populations became an important part of the election propaganda of the Swedish political parties. For instance, the Social Democrats, known as the traditional architect of the Swedish welfare state, affirmed that they were against labor immigration, while the Moderate Party eagerly endorsed it. At the time, the Moderate Party, together with the Liberals, supported the idea that the immigrants and refugees should have an adequate knowledge of the Swedish political system and the Swedish language and culture if they intended to be fully integrated into the society. It also stressed that such cultural and linguistic accomplishments should be considered as a necessary condition for immigrants and refugees to obtain Swedish citizenship. The Liberals’ position was considered as signifying that Sweden was returning to the experience of 1960s, when immigrants were encouraged to assimilate in Swedish society (Dahlstedt 2001; 2005).

After approximately four decades of unremitting effort, the objective of creating a society where all ethnic and cultural groups and individuals should be given “the opportunity to contribute with their skills and experience to enable society’s diversity to function as a whole and become a joint asset to all” (Prop. 1997/98) seems far from being accomplished. A tangible distance demonstrably remains between foreign-born and native Swedes, as the Swedish labor and housing markets show evidence of ethnic division (Schierup, Hansen & Castles 2006: 197) and racial/ethnic inequality (Behtoui 2006). A recent Integration Report states that the employment rate varies as between foreign-born individuals and natives by 17 per cent. Similarly, the over-representation of the foreign-born individuals in the so-called “vulnerable” housing areas further reinforces ethnic cleavages in Swedish society (Rapport Integration 2005).

Sweden has long been regarded as a model welfare state that promotes social justice and equality. Many of the non-European ethnic and cultural groups that have over the years taken advantage of the country’s generous immigration policies upon their arrival at the same time experience widespread forms of discrimination and social exclusion (Pred 2000). Today, a significant number of researchers and scholars have called Sweden’s integration policy in Sweden into question, not least because of its inability to achieve its initial goals. Far from being a simple matter of concern for the Swedish government, the “failure” of the project of integration has been analyzed by scholars within the wider and

deeper social, political and cultural contexts of Swedish society. For some researchers, the hierarchical ethnicization of the Swedish labor and housing markets is inherent to the Swedish political system, whose democratic institutions function more often than not as the “reserved” domains of the “white subject” (Dahlstedt 2005; Mattsson 2005). Additional concepts such as the “death” of the Swedish model (Madeley 2003), the “divided city” (Magnusson 2001), “structural discrimination” (Dahlstedt & Hertzberg 2005; Mattsson 2005), “the segregating integration” (Kamali 2006), and so forth have been advanced as further indications of the “paradoxical and discriminatory characteristic of the Swedish multiculturalism” and the abrupt interruption of the dream of “equal opportunities” for all Swedish residents that once was the principal ambition of the old “home of the people” (*folkhemmet*) (Schierup & Ålund 1991).

Ethnic and racial boundaries in the Swedish “people’s home” (*folkhem*)

Over the course of the 20th century, Sweden was not been unfamiliar with the spread of racial and racist sentiments. The first Race Biological Institute in the world was created in the Swedish city of Uppsala in 1921. It was an official institution, founded on the initiative of Swedish politician Hjalmar Branting (a Social Democrat Prime Minister) and the right-wing leader Arvid Lindman (*cf.* Diaz 1993; Johansson 1999; Johansson 2005). According to the historian Rune Johansson, the institute was established in order to identify those areas where the “Nordic” race was “best” preserved and then to try to safeguard what were said to be “valuable Swedish racial characteristics” as distinct from the so-called “inferior racial features” among the population. In other words, conceiving theoretical grounds for “an exact race hygiene” and a rational population politics was the principal objective of this institution. Moreover, the author claims that the growing Swedish Nazi movements of the 1920s and 1930s made considerable use of certain specific elements such as racial theory, national self-glorification and anti-democratic ideas that were circulating in the debates of that time. Even though these racist movements were not electorally successful, they gained some sympathy among the population. Their ideas implied a considerable admiration for power and strength, and anti-socialism, which found expression mostly through glorifying German culture and promoting solidarity with the German nation, which was said to share a common destiny and racial heritage with Sweden (Johansson 1999: 329–30). It is also noteworthy that Carl Von Linne, the Swedish taxonomist,

was among the first to “categorize different human races and attribute mental features based on appearance and skin color” (Hällgren 2005: 323).

For certain researchers it was the Swedish Race Biological Institute and the spread of racial ideas that paved the way for the emergence of the politics of sterilization that Sweden pursued in accordance with two laws from 1934 and 1941 (Spektorowski & Mizrachi 2004; Broberg & Tydén 2005). The target groups (traveling people and Gypsies) were those who were considered as “deviants”. As a result, 62,888 acts of sterilization were performed between 1935 and 1975 (Spektorowski & Mizrachi 2004: 333). Spektorowski and Mizrachi claims that Sweden’s politics of sterilization is worthy of consideration for two main reasons. In the first place, the number of acts of sterilization performed on physically healthy individuals in Sweden was greater than those in other Nordic countries. Second, the Swedish Social Democrats, who were at that time influenced by the idea of “efficiency, productivism and the elimination of social marginalization”, played a considerable role in generating the act of sterilization (Spektorowski & Mizrachi 2004: 334). Accordingly, it is plausible to consider the acts of sterilization as a part of the creation of the Swedish people’s home (*folkhem*).

Historically, the *folkhem* emerges from those struggles of Swedish social democrats beginning as long ago as the 1920s to achieve a secure and prosperous society for all Swedes. This amounted to “an ever-reforming welfare state that constantly strived to make conditions better for its citizens” (Andersen 2007: 8). Creating a *folkhem* for all Swedes implied that the Swedish Social Democrats, as the dominant political party in Sweden, had to play down the politics of class in favor of an all-embracing hegemonic political discourse that could represent the “whole people’s interest” (*cf.* Johansson 1999; Broberg & Tydén 2005).

This hegemonic *folkhem* ideology can be seen as well as the outcome of historical compromises between Swedish employers and workers (Hällgren 2005). In a sense, the harmonization between the official politics and the economic development of the country brought about a nationalization of the Swedish population (Broberg & Tydén 2005). Consequently, the *folkhem* had acquired “qualities of a modern foundation myth which had become a reality for the people, as social democratic ideas captured the essential nature of the nation” in order to define the framework of so-called “Swedishness” (Andersen 2007: 8).

The welfare state, designated as the “model society”, “third way” or “middle way”, further reinforced the process of idealization and glorification of the Swedish “welfare nation” (*cf.* Johansson 1999; Johansson 2005; Broberg & Tydén 2005). Moreover, evoking certain specific qualities and notions such as “country of consensus”, “ability to

adapt” and “pragmatism” can be seen as a further step in this direction (Ålund & Schierup 1991).

Swedish neutrality, and also the politics of non-military alignment in war that Sweden has pursued since the forced cession of Finland and its annexation by Russia in 1809–10, can be seen as an additional feature of how Swedes perceive their national identity. Moreover, at the international level Sweden’s image has long been that of a nation strongly committed to a just and equitable world order. This positive perception of Sweden that has been functioning as a “surrogate nationalism” at the global level has been further reinforced not only by the country’s substantial commitment to foreign aid and its engagement for peace but also by the existence of a leader such as Olof Palme, who is more often than not portrayed as the incarnation of the “Third World consciousness” and a “progressive internationalist” ambassador (Andersen 2007).

As Rune Johansson stresses, Swedes have strongly emphasized the Swedish welfare particularity as a way to distinguish other Swedish assets in relation to the wider world, for instance in the domain of sports or other activities (Johansson 1999: 332). According to Christina Johansson, even if the Swedish “welfare nation” and the Swedish self-perception does include civic ingredients, Sweden’s excluding attitudes toward immigration and immigrant groups, which are perceived as threatening the potential of the Swedish welfare state, shows that it contains just as many ethnic features. It is worth noting that a more or less regulated Swedish labor market, characterized more often than not by the mechanisms of welfare state and collective agreements, can play an important role. However, Johansson refers to Henrik Berggren and maintains that the boundary between the “ethnos” and “demos” is obscure in Sweden and that consequently the framework of Swedish citizenship is obscure, too. Is it based on the values of universal human rights or on ethnic belongingness (Johansson 2005: 47)? In this respect, the homogenizing project of the *folkhem* was less inclined to include certain ethnic groups that were perceived as “deviants”. The main reason was that national unity, as the fundamental norm of the Swedish welfare state, displayed strong ethnic overtones which also functioned as a demarcation line not only vis-à-vis native minorities such as Sami, Swedish Finns, Romani and Tornedalers,¹⁶ but also vis-à-vis all other cultural manifestations that could be perceived as non-Swedish, above all those of

¹⁶ Sweden has five national minorities: Jews, Roma, Sami (also an indigenous people), Swedish Finns and Tornedalers. The historical minority languages are Yiddish, Romany Chib (all varieties), Sami (all varieties), Finnish and Meänkieli (Tornedal Finnish). Swedish minorities policy provides support for all five of Sweden’s national minorities in order to keep these languages alive (Source: Regeringskansliet, www.sweden.gov.se, 2007-03-11).

immigrant and refugee groups (*cf.* Johansson 1999; Broberg & Tydén 2005; Johansson 2005). According to Camilla Hällgren, the Sami suffered greatly heavily from centuries of oppression by the state; for instance “grave-robbing, skull measuring, conflict over religion and rights of land possession and poor education for Sami children” (Hällgren 2005: 323).

The place of the “Other” in Swedish society: structural discrimination and the emergence of Sweden Democrats

In reality, contrary to popular belief, Sweden has never been an ethnically and culturally homogeneous nation. However, as a result of a large-scale refugee influx and immigration from many religiously, culturally and linguistically different regions and countries, and thereby the emergence of a new social, cultural and demographic reality, there is a common recognition in the popular debate that Sweden is not a homogeneous nation. In this respect, the debate is no longer centered on uniformity and conformity, but on the notions of “us” and “them”. Today, there is a general acceptance that more than one million of the country’s population have identities other than the traditional Swedish one. But this new reality is not sufficiently powerful to counteract the dichotomized perception of the “Other” and “Self” and thereby to persuade the mainstream nationalist discourse to imagine “Swedishness” in more comprehensive and inclusive forms. This time, Sweden is not perceived as a homogeneous whole but as a country inhabited by two different populations or ethnic groups that live, not necessarily together, but side by side. They are on the one hand a “homogeneous Swedish native population” and on the other the immigrant groups (Johansson 1999: 334). In other words, this is a way to reject the fact that Sweden is a multicultural society where immigrants and refugees and their children and grandchildren should, according to the integration framework, enjoy equal status in the society’s political, social and cultural spheres.

As the ethnic division of Swedish society became a tangible reality, many social scientists began to analyze this new reality and wonder why the socio-ethnic division discernable in the Swedish labor market and housing areas emerged and persisted. Should we consider the segregation of immigrants as a self-chosen option or as a result of prevailing discriminatory mechanisms (visible and invisible) embedded both in Swedish society’s tangible structure and in the Swedes’ popular self-perception and national imagination?

Scholars say that, notwithstanding Sweden's international reputation for human rights and democratic values, the country suffers considerably from increasing racism, xenophobic attitudes and discrimination (*cf.* Svanberg & Tydén 1999; Pred 2000; Dahlstedt 2005; Hällgren 2005). Ideas about "Swedishness" and who counts as a Swede or, conversely, "not" a Swede persist in current Swedish society (Mattsson 2005: 139). Accordingly, concepts of race and the occurrence of racialized practices create forms and processes of social exclusion and ethnic division on more or less explicitly racist grounds (Norman 2004). Magnus Dahlstedt stresses that there are numerous dimensions of discrimination and stigmatization of ethnic groups in Swedish society; racist tendencies and racialized practices are deeply rooted in Swedish democracy and Swedish state institutions (Dahlstedt 2005). In this way, the "mono-cultural" characteristics of Swedish democracy form an obstacle to the realization of the "multicultural citizenship" which should grant all citizens, Swedish and foreign-born alike, basically equal rights. But there is in fact a highly unequal division of political, social and economic resources in Swedish society (*cf.* Ålund & Schierup 1991; Dahlstedt 2005; Schierup, Hansen & Castles 2006).

As a sign of increasing xenophobic attitudes in the Swedish society one can cite the spectacular advance of the Swedish far-right political party, the Sweden Democrats, (*Sverigedemokraterna, SD*) in the Swedish general elections of 2006. Sweden Democrats considers itself as a nationalist political formation that opposes all forms of racism. But notable political observers describe Sweden Democrats as xenophobic and anti-immigrant, aiming to encourage all refugees and immigrants who came to Sweden after 1970 to return to their countries of origin. Like many other European xenophobic organizations, the main political rhetoric of this party is constituted around the concepts of "security" and "tradition". In this regard, immigrants and refugees who according to Sweden Democrats are the bearers of different cultures can pose serious risks to the country's security and traditions (Sweden Democrats, Wikipedia 2007-05-11).

Fifteen years after the noteworthy breakthrough of New Democracy (*Ny Demokrati*), the Sweden Democrats advanced strongly in the 2006 Swedish general elections. The party gained 2.9 per cent of the vote at the national level and thus ensured governmental financial support for the next four years. The party has not managed to cross the threshold of 4 per cent for achieving representation in the Swedish national Parliament, but it has reinforced its position in various local assemblies, particularly in southern Sweden. By virtue of receiving 22.3 per cent of the vote in the city of Landskrona, the party is the third largest on the city council. The party gained a total of 162,463 votes in the whole of

country, giving it 286 local seats in 145 Swedish municipalities (Sweden Democrats, Wikipedia 2007-05-11).

Far from being an outlandish organization on the periphery of Swedish political life, the Sweden Democrats, and its progress in the Swedish general elections of 2006, can be seen as disadvantageous to the non-native populations in the country.

However, as was indicated previously, in the report which was presented by the Integration Commission (*Integrationskommittén*) in 2005, the authors, who in their contributions make use of post-colonial theoretical perspectives, argue that non-native Swedes suffered from the so-called structural discrimination. According to Katarina Mattsson, structural discrimination appears as an everyday practice, formed by the discourses of “Swedishness” and the idea of “Western white” which are strongly embedded in Sweden’s public institutions. She maintains that the political and social boundaries between “us” and “them” appear in various forms, and in this respect the notion of “Swedishness” is steadily evoked as equivalent to a number of other concepts such as birthplace, citizenship, blood bond, culture, language and appearance, which function as permanent indicators of who conforms to the dominant norm and, conversely, who does not (Mattsson 2005: 151). In a sense, the lower positions that immigrant and refugee populations occupy in society’s different spheres is the consequence of a valorizing perception of “self” and a racializing view of “other”. The report of the Integration Commission has, however, been questioned by a number of critical voices. For instance, Charles Westin claims that the report does not identify the causes of structural discrimination; it was criticized by the main trade union and the employers’ association, as well as center-right political parties, for being an ideological tract rather than a serious analysis with recommendations for “developing feasible strategies to deal with the shortcomings” (Westin 2006).

However, I appreciate the way in which so-called Critical Whiteness Studies (Mattsson 2005) depicts the framework of belonging in Sweden. The relevance of “racializing” theories is uncontested to the extent that they identify the boundaries between the dominant “selves” and the dominated “others” within a complex constellation of power in the Swedish national context. But it should be underlined that this way of perceiving the order of things is open to criticism. At first sight, Critical Whiteness Studies seems to have deterministic overtones as it conceives the “other immigrants” in the “white societies” as everlasting “objects” and “victims” of an ever-changing power structure, who are doomed never to become the “subjects” of their own history. Moreover, Critical Whiteness Studies appears to be more or less simplistic and copies the

methodology of the dominant culture as it reduces “immigrants” to a single group of people who share the same experiences.

However, the advocates of Critical Whiteness Studies in the Swedish context should pay recognize that immigrant and refugee populations do not participate in only one cultural-political system, that of the nation-state of residence. Today many ethnic and cultural groups in Western societies have become diasporic and maintain transnational ties and practice transborder citizenship through participating in the political processes and normative regimes of at least two nation-states (Glick Schiller 2005). Diasporan groups assert belonging in and identification with their respective nations of residence at the same time as they claim collective identification with their transnational networks and the practice of their transborder citizenship. In a sense, simultaneous belonging in two distinctly different cultural and political systems demonstrates that the exclusion of diasporan subjects in their state of residence, contrary to the claims of Critical Whiteness Studies, cannot be a simple matter of structural discrimination in the social and political spheres of a single society, that of the country of residence. It is also a matter of claiming a distinct diasporic identity that goes beyond the political and cultural boundaries of a single nation-state. In other words, the critics of structural discrimination cannot see those processes whereby marginalized groups maintain and reproduce their national or diasporic identities. In this respect, the practice of transborder citizenship among diasporan populations can be seen as a genuine effort to achieve cultural-political empowerment and social change. The deterministic nature of Critical Whiteness Studies blinds itself to the claim of diasporan populations to be both “there” and “here” and to participate in a “dual political agenda” (Østergaard-Nielsen 2000), which is given expression in a set of counter-hegemonic oppositional social movements (Eccarius-Kelly 2002). The presence of diasporan Kurds in Sweden demonstrates this.

Part II

Diasporan Kurds in Sweden: arrival and settlement

The presence of the Kurds on Swedish soil is a new phenomenon. The arrival of the Kurds to Western Europe in general and in Sweden in particular can largely be explained by the experience of modern immigration processes, which essentially follow the classical North–South pattern of immigration. Along with those Kurds who came to Sweden as regular immigrants, a large number of Kurds have arrived in this country as asylum seekers or under family reunion. However, as a part of the post-war immigration and refugee influx, many Kurdish immigrants and refugees arrived in Sweden together with many other settled immigrant and refugee populations. They have contributed to the emergence of a new social and political reality in the country. As indicated above, the general conditions of diasporan Kurds in Sweden are both positive and negative as they are subjected to the experiences of social exclusion, ethnic discrimination and xenophobia at the same time as they develop a considerable range of diasporic structures.

The post-war Kurdish immigrants provided needed manpower for the booming industry of Western Europe. Germany was the country that received the largest number of Kurds at that time. As was indicated in previous chapters, the number of Kurds in Germany today is estimated to be 400,000 among the total of over 2 million people originating in Turkey (van Bruinessen 1999: 7).

The first groups of Kurdish immigrants arrived in Sweden after 1965. This group came mainly from Kurdish towns and villages of central Anatolia in Turkey. After the international oil crisis of 1973, which put an end to labor immigration, Kurds continued to arrive in large numbers in west European countries. This time it was the Kurdish women and children who made use of family reunion to join their husbands and fathers in the new homelands. Furthermore, the arrival of thousands of Kurdish asylum seekers and refugees along with many other refugee groups in Sweden can be seen as a part of Sweden's post-war history (Berruti *et al.* 2002: 165).

In 1973 labor immigration to Sweden from non-Scandinavian countries ceased. Accordingly, Sweden entered a new immigration phase, characterized by the arrival of a large number of asylum seekers mainly from the Latin America, the Middle East, Africa, and also Kurdistan. Throughout the new immigration era, which runs from 1973 until the present day, thousands of people have arrived in Sweden mainly under

family reunion, essentially those families whose “pioneers” had been already accepted as refugees (Westin 1993).

Kurdish refugees arrived in Sweden from all parts of Kurdistan and from other areas such as Lebanon and the Caucasus. The first group of Kurdish political refugees came to Sweden after the military coup in Turkey in 1971. The pace of the arrival of Kurdish refugees from Turkey accelerated after the state of emergency was declared in 1978 and war broke out in Kurdish areas in 1984. Kurdish immigrants and refugees from the Turkish part of Kurdistan most probably form the largest group within the Kurdish community in Sweden (Berruti *et al.* 2002: 166).

The next largest group of Kurdish refugees in Sweden comes from the Iraqi part of Kurdistan. They arrived essentially after the Gulf War and the breakdown of the Iraqi administration in Kurdistan in 1991. The outbreak of the civil war between Kurdish groups in the first half of the 1990s, which coincided with the increasing ease of global communications and contacts and the emergence of well-developed Kurdish transnational networks, can be considered as an important factor that facilitated the movement of the Kurdish refugees across the nation-state borders (Berruti *et al.* 2002: 166).

The arrival of asylum seekers from Iraqi Kurdistan continued during the late 1990s and the first years of the new millennium. Under a decision of the Swedish government from April 2002, Kurds who come from the Kurdish autonomous zone in northern Iraq are in general not considered to be in need of protection in Sweden. However, due to the lack of cooperation of neighboring countries and the fact that the Kurdish regional government in northern Iraq is not internationally recognized as an independent political entity, the rejected Kurdish asylum seekers could not be sent back to Iraqi Kurdistan. As a result, they were forced to remain either in refugee camps or to live with their relatives throughout the country until further notice from the Swedish National Migration Board.

As for the Kurdish refugees from the Iranian part of Kurdistan, the first group arrived in Sweden at the beginning of 1980s. The Islamic revolution of 1979 in Iran and the Iraq–Iran war of 1980–88 were among the factors that forced many Kurds to leave their native villages and towns (*cf.* Wahlbeck 1999; Alinia 2004; Berruti *et al.* 2002). As neighboring countries such as Iraq and Turkey were not reliably safe, many of these Kurds ended up in Europe (van Bruinessen 2000). A considerable number of people who had previously been active in various Kurdish oppositional organizations came to Sweden as quota refugees (Berruti *et al.* 2002).

Syrian Kurds are less numerous than other Kurdish groups. They have sporadically arrived in Sweden in small numbers since the 1980s. They are motivated to flee Syria mainly by the denial of their citizen rights, forced displacement and the politics of arabization that the Syrian government imposes on the Kurdish population in the country (*cf.* Wahlbeck 1999; van Bruinessen 2000; Alinia 2004).

Since the host countries of Kurdish immigrants and refugees register them as Iranian, Iraqi, Turkish or Syrian citizens, it is scarcely possible to estimate the true number of Kurds in Sweden. However, according to popular estimates, the number of Kurds is between 40,000 and 50,000. This “statistical invisibility” creates a sense of frustration among the Kurds in the European countries, as many Kurds see their representation in the national statistics of countries of residence as a useful means of identity making, not least because such representation is perceived as a way to distinguish Kurds from Persian, Arabs and Turks. It is worth stressing that their invisibility in national statistics has also paradoxically functioned as a “line of demarcation” that strengthens the self-assertiveness and diasporic identity among the Kurds. The well-developed Kurdish associative life is a significant indication of the fact that the Kurds’ cultural and political activities do not observe the official lines of nationality that they had to follow prior to their settlement in Sweden. In this connection, a male student who is active in a Kurdish association has the following to say:

Immigration has entailed genuine possibilities for the Kurds to establish their own associations and reinforce their national identity. For example, Kurds in Sweden have been quite wise to take up the opportunities to create an abundance of associations. In doing so, they do not need be Iranian, Turkish, Iraqi or Syrian. Diaspora is the first place that gives them the possibility to be Kurds.

The majority of Kurds in Sweden reside in larger cities such as Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö. However, a significant number of Kurds live in medium-sized cities and towns like Örebro, Linköping, Karlstad, Västerås and Eskilstuna. During recent years, the Kurds have exhibited a strong tendency to move toward Stockholm, mainly to access the more dynamic labor market in the capital.

It is said that the Kurdish diasporan population does not constitute a homogeneous group in Sweden, as it displays a tangible diversity and disparity in terms of origin, political background, social basis, gender, age, religiousness, education level, migration trajectory, duration of settlement, access to the labor market, nature of occupation, housing condition, family situation, and so forth. Like many other

immigrant and refugee groups, the Swedish Kurds stand for multifaceted social, cultural and political experiences that may attract the attention of those who wish to carry out sociological studies on this population. However, as indicated above, these experiences can be negative as well as positive, embracing for instance the position of Kurds in the Swedish labor market and housing areas, and the experience of exclusion, racism and discrimination, as well as the chance to maintain and expand their culture, language and literature, establish their transnational networks and practice transborder citizenship.

Kurds in the suburbs: the experience of housing segregation

Sweden has an international reputation for its progressive social politics, human rights, democratic values and expansive welfare system (Hällgren 2005). It is also known to be ambitious in the domain of immigration and integration. Contrary to this reputation, marginalization, social exclusion, and ethnic and social segregation are tangible realities in the country.

For Thomas Brante and Eva Fasth (1982), segregation is a voluntary or an involuntary process whereby populations are spatially separated from each other. Segregation can occur on the basis of social status, race or ethnic belonging (Bunar 1999). According to I. Molina, the concept of segregation, as it is used in many different contexts, is semantically related to a distinction between various parts of a whole. The notion has been used, for instance, with reference to a labor market segregated between women and men or segregated classes in a school (Molina 2001). In a sense, the operational field of the term embraces socio-economic issues (Bunar 1999).

However, as a result of mass immigration and refugee influx into the Swedish metropolises and consequently the transformation of demographic, social and ethnic relations and the new structural conditions and institutional practices that followed, there is today evidence of the emergence of a large number of urban areas with high concentrations of foreign people. Since the early 1990s, residential segregation has been seen as an important research field for social scientists but also as a political problem for Swedish decision-makers (Andersson 1998a).

Prominent Swedish researchers have paid attention to the growing unemployment, social marginalization and increasing ethnic residential segregation processes in Sweden's largest cities (*cf.*; Andersson & Molina 1996; Andersson 1996a; 1998a; 1998b; 1999; Molina 2000; 2001). As Roger Andersson argues, ethnic housing segregation is an intra-urban phenomenon that must be perceived from a

broader geographical perspective. He argues that there are three major ways to explain the phenomenon. The cultural(ist) approach maintains that ethnic housing segregation is a consequence of the cultural distance between natives and non-natives and that origin-related attributes have a great influence on the level of integration in the new country. The anti-racist approach sees ethnic segregation as a result of discrimination in the housing market, produced and maintained by “popular imaginations, whereby the urban space becomes racialized and some neighborhoods become stigmatized”. Finally, the structural approach emphasizes lack of choice and human capital resources among immigrants and exclusion in the labor market, which generate ethnic housing segregation (Andersson 1998a: 398).

I. Molina has criticized the culturalist approach as unable to explain ethnic housing segregation. Molina admits that there is certainly a kind of cultural attraction that can to a limited extent affect the spatial distribution among certain immigrant and refugee groups, but it is far from being all-embracing. For Molina, not all immigrants are attracted to each other by virtue of common cultural identity which would be maintained and reinforced, for instance, through their common language, religion, norms and value system. According to Molina, this kind of reasoning runs the risk of generating the very idea of “blame the victim”, as if ethnic segregation were a free choice and a self-chosen strategy for immigrants above all when looking at the society’s prevailing political, economic and cultural foundations, and also at the attitudes of the native population toward the “others” (Molina 1997; Bunar 2001).

As for the diasporan Kurds, the larger part of them live today in several major Swedish urban neighborhoods. However, the majority of Kurds live in suburbs such as Rinkeby, Tensta, Hjulsta, Akalla, Husby, Kista and Skärholmen in Stockholm, Alby and Fittja in Botkyrka, Vårbygård and Flemingsberg in Huddinge, Hjällbo, Hammarkullen and Bergsjön in Gothenburg, and Rosengård in Malmö. For instance, Kurds together with Turks (the latter group is significantly less numerous) constitute 5 per cent of the total inhabitants of Fittja, a neighborhood in southern Stockholm. More than 70 per cent of this neighborhood’s population have non-native ethnic backgrounds (Pripp 1999). Due to the lack of reliable statistics, it is not easy to estimate the true number of Kurds in this residential area, but there are indications of a high concentration in Fittja of Kurds from the Turkish region of Konya.

The majority of these Kurds reside in rentals (mostly publicly owned rental apartments, available for all kinds of households), built initially to house Swedish families leaving the inner city in order to live in high-rise buildings, for instance those of Fittja. Once immigrants, refugees and asylum applicants moved into a neighborhood, native

Swedish families made use of their superior economic situation and moved out to single- and multi-family houses. Consequently, the immigrants remained the only inhabitants of the suburbs (*cf.* Andersson 1996a; Andersson & Molina 1996; Molina 1997). The Stockholm region provides an example.

The arrival of immigrants and refugees from abroad in the Stockholm region, together with significant internal migration, has led to a great number of municipalities having strikingly high concentrations of immigrants. In 1995, 19 of the “immigrant-dense” residential areas in the region of Stockholm comprised 20 per cent of all foreign-born residents, but only 4 per cent of natives. Moreover, these areas accommodate a great number of ethnic groups and nationalities. For instance, the number of nationalities present in Ronna (a suburb of Södertälje municipality) is 49, while in Rinkeby (a suburb of Stockholm) the number is 127. In eight of the areas one can find more than 100 different nationalities, mostly from non-European countries. If we view the residential pattern from an ethnic perspective, considerable variation is evident. While more than half of the Turkish-born population (the majority of them are Kurds) and a number of other nationalities such as Iraqi, Greek, and Lebanese live in these large “immigrant-dense” residential areas, we find only 5 per cent of all Norwegians and Germans and less than 10 per cent of all the Finns in the same areas (Molina & Rydh 1999).

These examples show clearly that the spatial distribution of immigrants largely follows a racial and ethnic boundary, which is deep-rooted, as Andersson underlines, in the imagination of the native population that give birth to discriminatory structures in Swedish society (Andersson 1998a; 1998b). Accordingly, housing mobility among refugees and immigrants is considerably obstructed by these structural barriers. In that sense, the experience of housing segregation among the Kurds is largely compatible with the prevailing discriminatory tendencies that are determined by ethnic demarcation lines and structural inconsistencies in Swedish society. In this connection, a Kurdish resident of Skärholmen, a suburb in southern Stockholm, has following to say:

I have been waiting more than eight years to find a new apartment for my family without any result. I have two children whom I want to go to school in a better housing area. In Skärholmen, you have not too many choices. I have been living in Sweden during the last 22 years of my life. I became a Swedish citizen four years after my arrival. I was very young when I arrived in this country. I am really weary of being an eternal immigrant. It seems that Swedish accommodation agencies sift out the applicants on the basis of their names, color of skin and hair and their accent. Unfortunately, this is the reality of this country and our children

have to pay for the mistake their parents made many years ago. I wonder if they had any choice so as to avoid their fates.

Another Kurdish voice cites a similar problem of housing mobility for refugee and immigrant populations in Sweden. The voice belongs to a Kurdish woman from the neighborhood of Vårbygård, with whom I had a conversation in a building belonging to a Kurdish association in the same area. She said:

I am a divorced woman with three children, of whom two are teenagers. I am also an early retired individual for reasons of ill-health. I worked eight years in a packing factory. For the sake of my children's education and their future, I have decided to move to Stockholm, where my younger sister also resides. But my expectations were not fulfilled at all. Everything turned into a nightmare for me. My eldest daughter got into an unpleasant youth gang here. I wonder if all these young boys and girls have any future in Vårbygård. However, I tried to get a loan from the bank to buy an apartment in a better place, but in vain. The bank says that my income is insufficient for the loan. On the other hand, the public accommodation agencies say that they cannot help me because I am new to Stockholm.

According to Andersson, ethnic belonging remains the main barrier to housing mobility among refugees and immigrants from non-European backgrounds. Andersson argues that the publicly owned rental apartments have been transformed into a specific housing segment where immigrants and refugees are over-represented and tend to remain in such housing for longer periods than the Swedish-born population, even when their economic situation improves (Andersson 1999; see also Velásquez 2005). Many Kurdish interviewees criticized Swedish integration policy as ineffective in counteracting social and economic exclusion and spatial segregation. They said that the issue of housing segregation should not be seen exclusively in its socio-economic aspect; it is also a question of "how native Swedes constitute their image of *us* and on *our* children in their mind and imagination". In this connection a Kurdish man from Åkersberga, a Swedish locality situated 40 kilometers from Stockholm, has interesting experiences to relate:

When some years ago I decided to buy a private house, I was prepared to make the highest bid among those who were interested in buying the same house as myself. I was sure that my last offer was 30,000 crowns more than the interested individual who was just behind me on the bid list. But I was so astonished when the estate agent told me that there were several buyers with considerably higher bids than mine. I could have

reported this case to the Ombudsman against Ethnic Discrimination, but I did not. How could I find evidence of ethnic discrimination in this affair?

During recent years, one can discern a tendency among Kurdish families to leave the publicly owned rental apartments in the segregated neighborhoods and to move into cooperative housing with better standards. But this kind of housing mobility among Kurdish families in the Stockholm region has its limits. In this regard, a Kurdish male accountant in Stockholm maintains that, because of lack of economic resources and banks' refusal to give loans to individuals with immigrant backgrounds, the number of Kurdish house buyers remains restricted. Moreover, he says that because these cooperative apartments are situated on the fringes of the same housing areas, this kind of housing mobility may involve only an insignificant relocation from some less-good apartments to some better-built ones. In other words, such housing mobility does not represent a true gain in housing condition. The example of those Kurds who buy cooperative apartments or private houses demonstrates this, as they remain in the same ethnically segregated neighborhoods.

Due to the structural differences, most Swedish suburbs have been transformed into housing ghettos for various ethnic groups from the Middle East, the Balkans, Latin America, Asia and Africa. One of the main consequences of such structural disparity is a high level of unemployment and a chronic dependence on social benefits among immigrant and refugee populations in the segregated neighborhoods. According to a report in the *New York Times* by the American journalist Christopher Caldwell in February 2006, 70 percent of the 14,000 residents of Rinkeby, near Stockholm, receive social benefits. Certainly, Caldwell's report may be somewhat exaggerated as he presents Sweden as one of the most ethnically segregated countries, but one cannot deny that the unemployment rate in many suburbs is constantly higher than those in "Swedish" areas. According to Caldwell, criminality is far higher than the average in Rinkeby; and this is a reason why many employers refuse to hire residents from this neighborhood. In order to further concretize the conditions of the "immigrant dense" housing areas, I refer to a particular occurrence that was cited in Caldwell's report:

Nalin Pekgul, the head of the National Federation of Social Democrats Women, has announced in a radio interview in the beginning of 2006 that she was looking to leave Tensta (a neighborhood in Northern Stockholm). The reason was said to be Islamic radicalization and the rising insecurity *à la France*. As the former member of the Swedish parliament for eight years, Nalin Pekgul evokes the good old times of Tensta when she arrived from Turkish Kurdistan in 1980; also when

Tensta and the neighboring development in Rinkeby seemed to offer the best of both worlds – Swedish security and a cosmopolitan mix of cultures. At that time, 40% of Tensta was immigrant then, much of it Greek. Today, immigrants and their children make up closer to 85% of the residents (Caldwell 2006).

These suburban areas, which are commonly known as “one million program” neighborhoods, were part of a government-subsidized drive to build a large number of new apartments and other homes over a ten-year period during the 1970s (Urban 2005). Despite the authorities’ good intentions – they wanted to create neighborhoods with attractive and roomy apartments with high standards – today their inhabitants struggle against the deficiency of private and public services, an impoverished physical environment, low levels of education and low incomes (Jederlund 1998; Dahlstedt 2005).

In order to overcome ethnic and social segregation in the suburbs, the Swedish government has since the beginning of 2000 been involved in a number of projects. As indicated above, an overall project aimed at giving metropolitan regions good conditions for growth, and a second project aimed at breaking social, ethnic, and discriminatory segregation in the metropolitan regions and at promoting equal living conditions for the inhabitants of these greater urban areas. Accordingly, special funds were allocated to the government’s Metropolitan Program. A total of 24 exposed residential areas in seven urban municipalities signed local development agreements with the government, worth about 200 million euros (Prop. 1997/98:165). However, despite the government’s efforts, ethnic segregation remains a major problem in Swedish cities. The “One million program”, which once was intended to be the most audacious project of modern times in Sweden, has been transformed into a kind of segregated backyard of the post-industrial era (Bunar 1999).

Living in ethnically segregated residential areas is not an issue of concern only for adults. Youth and children are as much concerned. Many Kurdish families express their preoccupation about the living conditions of their children, their schools and of course their future; a future which, they say, does not look very promising.

Our children live in segregated housing areas, go to segregated schools and grow up in segregation. Tensta has destroyed my son. As a result of school segregation, the linguistic ability and the intellectual capacity of immigrant children can never be on an equal footing with the children of native Swedes.

These striking words were spoken by a male Kurdish taxi driver who feels himself powerless in the face of the drug abuse that has afflicted his 17-year-old son.

A number of scholars have studied the so-called school segregation and the social problems related to it in Sweden's major suburbs. For instance, Nihad Bunar describes school segregation as very problematic in the suburbs, given that social and ethnic housing segregation drastically affects the work status, pupil structure and reputation of the local primary schools. Bunar argues that these kinds of school have been largely stigmatized as a "bad learning environment" with a high level of pupil dropout, economic difficulties and reduced possibilities of development (Bunar 1999).

School segregation is not the only challenge facing Kurdish children in the neighborhoods of major Swedish cities. Child poverty directly affects Kurdish children in the socially deprived housing areas. According to a report published by the Swedish Save the Children Fund (*Rädda Barnen*), the living conditions of children from foreign backgrounds are significantly inferior to those of Swedish children. As for native Swedes, the "poverty indicator" shows that one child on ten lives in poverty, while the figure is four of ten for children from foreign backgrounds (Salonen 2002).

Kurdish *assabiyya* in Sweden

It is essential to note that certain Kurdish groups prefer to live close to each other in a given housing area. Far from being explained by the culturalist approach, which emphasizes the religious, ethnic and national origins of segregated people, this tendency should be related to much deeper and complex social characteristics that are inherent in the groups. In this regard, *assabiyya* and other similar networks play a considerable role.

As presented in previous chapters, *assabiyya* is the manifestation of "group-feeling" (Spickard 2001) among particular social groups and network allegiances of various sizes, like tribes, clans, personal relationships, extended families, religious sects, brotherhood formations, and local communities (Roy 1996). The Ibn Khaldunian concept of *assabiyya* concerns the lives of Kurds not only in Kurdistan but also in the diaspora. Transformed clans, tribes, extended families and religious brotherhoods constitute the most expressive forms of *assabiyya* among diasporan Kurds in Sweden. The internal relationships of the Kurdish *assabiyya* are regulated by the permanence of the group, strong internal allegiances and solidarity, and the practice of endogamy: a range

of characteristics that give expression to the *doxa* of the group. In this connection, the case of a male Kurdish politician and also subway worker in Stockholm is illustrative:

Ibrahim has been living in Sweden for 16 years. He lives with his wife and his three children in a private house outside Stockholm. Ibrahim has his origin in the rural areas of Konya, a large city in Turkey, on the central plateau of Anatolia. The rural populations of Konya consist of a number of Kurdish tribes (Jalalî, Milanî, Şêxbiznî, Haydarî, etc.) that were moved from Kurdish areas in the course of the 1600s and the beginning of the 1700s. As indicated in Chapter 2, the rivalry between the Persian Safavide and Turkish Ottoman Empires was the principal reason for this population transfer. For its part, Persian Safavide dynasty had also transferred a large number of Kurds from the same tribal populations to the north-eastern Iranian province of Khorasan, near the current Afghani border. Thanks to the new communication technologies and the development of Kurdish nationalist movements in the diaspora, Ibrahim has discovered that today he has many relatives in the Iranian province of Khorasan. This is why he decided to travel to Iran in order to pay a visit to those he calls his relatives (*mirov*). Hitherto, Ibrahim has been among his relatives in Khorasan several times and envisages keeping up his pace of travel as the relatives receive him as a member of their families.

The case of Ibrahim shows that a distance of almost four centuries and 20 generations between the Kurds from Turkish Konya and Iranian Khorasan has not brought about a real separation, as *assabiyya* endures in the form of group feeling and group solidarity.

The meaning and the practice of *assabiyya* is not acknowledged by the entire Kurdish population in Sweden. For many Swedish Kurds, especially those who identify with mainstream Kurdish nationalism, traditional social formations like *assabiyya* are perceived as being “harmful to the general Kurdish national interests”. This is why many Kurds are reluctant to acknowledge the existence and the function of Kurdish *assabiyya* in the diaspora. It is important to note, however, that the external boundaries of the Kurdish *assabiyya* in Sweden are to a certain extent unfixed and movable; but this is far from a sufficient reason to deny their existence. Kurdish *assabiyya* in Sweden may be relevant in the shape of both transformed and recomposed religious brotherhoods, clans and tribes, but mostly in the form of extended families and genealogical networks; and their existence is limited to certain Kurdish groups. In order to concretize the performance of *assabiyya* networks among diasporan Kurds in Sweden, some specific cases can serve as illustrations.

For instance, there is a high concentration of Kurds in Borlänge, a middle-sized Swedish town in Dalecarlia (*Dalarna*). The Kurdish community in Borlänge is dominated by two main *assabiyya* groups. In the first place, there are the *Gremîrî* people, who originated in the village of *Gremîr* (Girmeli in Turkish), which is situated near the Kurdish town of Nusaybin on the Turkish–Syrian border. The second main Kurdish *assabiyya* in Borlänge is the *Hermessî* people, who come originally from the village of *Hermess* near the Kurdish city of Batman in Turkey. These two groups share a number of characteristics.

They have both developed over the years an internal solidarity, based principally on a strong sense of togetherness and allegiance. This internal solidarity finds expression in a number of concrete practices, exhibited for instance through a number of social and political manifestations such as commitment to the Kurdish nationalist cause, local identity and transnational connections to the villages and towns of origin, the practice of endogamy, practice of self-employment or so-called “ethnic business”, living in the same housing areas and providing material and non-material assistance to other *assabiyya* members who are in need. Likewise, the *Aznawirî* Kurds (from the village of *Aznawir*, Siniртеpe in Turkish, also near the Kurdish town of Nusaybin) in Västerås, and to a lesser extent the Kurds from the village of *Xanik* (Kozluce in Turkish, also near Nusaybin) in the Swedish town of Åkersberga display more or less the same social features.

For instance, the pizzeria and kebab restaurant business and to a lesser extent the cafeteria business in Borlänge is dominated by *Hermessi* and *Gremîrî*, and labor for this economic activity is recruited internally. The practice of internal recruitment among the *Hermessî* and *Gremîrî* populations is extended to their localities of origin in Turkish Kurdistan, maintained mostly through matrimonial practices. In this regard a female Kurdish student has the following to say:

Usually, they see to it that their daughters and sons marry someone from the same village and, preferably, a close relative or cousin. If a daughter of one of them wants to choose somebody out of her family for marriage, irrespective of whether he is a Kurd or a Swede, she will be hindered, because it is seen as a loss for the family.

As for the issue of spatial settlement, the Kurdish families from the *Hermessî* and *Gremîrî assabiyya* prefer normally to live in the same housing area, in the same block if possible. In order to clarify the function of such an accommodation strategy, the same Kurdish student says:

Living in the same building or at least in the same street has several advantages. In the first place, the sentiment of fear and homesickness is minimized when people live side by side in their new country. Secondly, in that way, they help each other with the care of children and other needs. It will as well bring about more freedom for the men when it comes to managing their jobs and even their recreational activities outside their houses.

The above-mentioned Kurdish groups also maintain a well-developed transnational mobility. For instance, they transfer part of their incomes to their villages and towns of origin. The nature of these transfers varies, from typical practices of money remittance to more ambitious projects, most often building houses or opening local businesses.

Moreover, the *Aznawirî*, *Hermessî* and *Gremîrî* immigrant populations are actively involved in a range of political activities that in one way or another concern the Kurdish nationalist movement. They contribute to the Kurdish nationalist movement most often through participating in cultural festivities, institutional practices and political demonstrations, and also through the payment of the so-called “revolutionary taxes” to Kurdish political organizations. In this context, the Workers Party of Kurdistan (PKK) comes to the fore.

Another major case that can exemplify the role of *assabiyya* among diasporan Kurds in Sweden is that of the *Konya* Kurds¹⁷ in the Stockholm neighborhood of Fittja. The *Konya* Kurds manifest many socio-organizational features that are similar to those of the *Aznawirî*, *Hermessî* and *Gremîrî* populations in the localities of Västerås and Borlänge. But there are certain differences as well. The most distinct characteristic of the *Konya* Kurds is that they maintain more flexible and movable external boundaries. They appear to be politically, culturally and professionally more polyvalent and multifaceted than the other *assabiyya* groups. A significant number of the *Konya* Kurds do not identify with

¹⁷ As presented above, Konya, historically known by its Latin name *Iconium*, is a city in Turkey on the central plateau of Anatolia with a population of 1,412,343 (Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Konya>, viewed 2007-05-18). Mostly a rural population, the Kurds of Konya moved or had been brought to this area under the Ottoman Empire. Currently, due to increasing emigration, the number of Konya Kurds has considerably decreased in their localities of origin.

Kurdish nationalism but with *Nurcî*, an Islamic movement rooted in the traditional Islamic movement of the early 1920s in Turkey.¹⁸ As indicated previously, the *Konya* Kurds are among the largest groups of inhabitants of Fittja.

In Sandviken and Gävle, two neighboring Swedish localities 120 kilometers to the north of Stockholm, one can find the Kurdish clans (*mablat*) of *Bêtî* and *Haco* consisting of 500 people, originally from the districts of Midyat and Nusaybin in Turkish Kurdistan. Even though the social organization of the “*malbat*” of *Bêtî* and *Haco* has been modified in diaspora, the clans nevertheless maintain a sense of *assabiyya* and togetherness. For instance, the *Haco assabiyya* considers itself as part of the Kurdish aristocracy, who are not only very loyal to the Kurdish cause but also promote the Kurdish culture, literature and music.

Further examples indicate the coincidence of *assabiyya* and segregation in the spatial segregation among diasporan Kurds in Sweden. For instance, the case of *Eliasi* Kurds in the Swedish towns of Kalmar and Karlstad and to a lesser extent in Eskilstuna, Linköping and Katrineholm is a further example that illustrates the point.

When Iraqi troops entered Iranian territory in the days that followed the Iran–Iraq war in 1980, more than 50,000 civilians from many Kurdish villages on the Iranian side were taken as prisoners of war. After a while, they ended up, in deplorable conditions, in a large refugee camp near the Iraqi town of Al-Rumadi, in the middle of the Iraqi desert. As they were registered as refugees by the UNHCR, a significant number of them were gradually transferred, with the help of the International Red Cross and other humanitarian organizations, to certain countries in Western Europe, above all Sweden and Norway, and to a lesser extent Finland, Canada, Australia, Switzerland and New Zealand. These Kurdish refugees were made up of several clans and similar social groups who prior to their captivity and forced exile maintained a sense of “group feeling” and internal allegiance whether on the basis of clan belongingness or geographic and local identity. *Eliasi*, *Bawajani*, *Bajalan* and *Hawrami* were among the salient appellations that frequently recurred. Politically, they sympathized with the Kurdish movement in Iran, more specifically with the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (PDK-I). Being the largest of these groups, the *Eliasi* Kurds constitute today a considerable Kurdish community in the Swedish cities of Kalmar, Linköping, Katrineholm and Karlstad. Wedding ceremonies, cultural festivals, holiday camps and political arrangements summer constitute essential meeting places for *Eliasi assabiyya* in Sweden. Their destiny

¹⁸ The founder of the *Nurcî* Movement was Saïd Nursî, a prominent figure of Kurdish origin, but controversial at the same time, not least because of his collaboration with Mustafa Kamal Atatürk against the Kurdish rebel leader Sheikh Saïd in 1925.

reinforces the sense of *assabiyya*, and, to use Bourdieu's terms, the framework of a common "doxa" that they hold among themselves.

The above discussion shows that, even though the Kurdish *assabiyya* may not sustain their original social organization in the diaspora, as they are affected by the constraints of geography, history, politics and culture, they continue to exist in modified forms. Adapting to new circumstances, they have to abandon some of their old strategies and develop new ones.

Ethnic divisions in the Swedish labor market: Kurdish taxi drivers in the city

Due to the absence of official statistics, it is difficult to establish reliable figures on the employment of Kurds in the Swedish labor market. However, observations, interviews and conversations that I have conducted among diasporan Kurds in Sweden record a strong impact of "ethnicity" on the positions that the Kurds occupy or, conversely, do not occupy in the Swedish labor market. For instance, I interviewed a number of Kurdish taxi drivers in various places in Stockholm. The interviews were mostly carried out face to face, and I recorded their answers. Moreover, I met a significant number of them in various places that they used to frequent in Stockholm. The objective was to find the proper occasions for conversations but also to get a better insight into their daily lives through my observations. Along with the taxi drivers, I conducted a number of interviews with certain Kurdish men and women with different social backgrounds and professions. The most important targets groups were found in the restaurant and cleaning sectors, but my informants also included university students, artist, political and cultural personalities, businesspersons, shopkeepers, and asylum seekers.

Many Kurdish men work within the restaurant and pizzeria business, mainly in the Swedish major cities. Most of them arrived in Sweden during 1970s and 1980s as immigrant workers, from central Anatolia and from other Kurdish towns in Turkey. As a result of the end of labor migration and the economic crises that followed, above all those of the 1990s, which entailed a real transformation of the Swedish welfare state (Schierup, Hansen & Castles 2006), the character of employment among Kurds has undergone considerable change. The increasing unemployment in the Swedish labor market, along with personal aspirations, persuaded many Kurdish workers to abandon the world of the paid jobs in order to become partner in or owners of restaurants or pizzerias. As indicated in Chapter 3, the growing numbers of self-employed Kurds have made use of reunion the social organization of

assabiyya to make up labor shortages in their businesses. A former restaurant owner in Stockholm explains this change in orientation in the following way:

After 12 years working in different Swedish factories, I became unemployed. As I had five children, I decided to open a kebab restaurant to experience something new. I did not want to become dependent on social benefits. From the beginning, I was very uncertain, but seeing that my children were growing, I seized the opportunity. Little by little, things got better. Today, as I am retired, I do not need to work, but thank God, the family is larger now and it can afford to take good care of the work. Thank God! Currently, we manage three different restaurants in three different places.

These remarks indicate the more or less uncertain positions that immigrants occupy in the Swedish labor market. According to Pernilla Andersson and Eskil Wadensjö, the low employment rate, low wages and dependence on social benefits are among the major problems that constrain many immigrants from becoming self-employed. Andersson and Wadensjö conclude from their study of Sweden and Denmark that immigrants are over-represented among the self-employed (Andersson & Wadensjö 2004).

Another major line of work which has attracted public attention in recent years is the taxi driving service, which has offered many Kurdish men a source of self-sufficiency in larger Swedish cities such as Stockholm and Gothenburg. Unlike the restaurant and pizzeria business, which was activated by Kurdish immigrants who came in the late 1970s and the beginning of 1980s, the taxi driving service has attracted almost solely those Kurds who arrived in Sweden as refugees at the end of 1980s and throughout the 1990s. It is difficult to estimate the exact number of the Kurdish taxi drivers throughout the country, but the taxi service is among the most important parts of the Swedish labor market, providing taxi drivers with employment and access to a reliable source of income.

Most interviewees suggest that more than 1,500 persons are in one way or another connected to the taxi business. If this figure corresponds with reality, we can conclude that, given the relatively small size of the Kurdish population in Sweden (between 40,000 and 50,000), the taxi business accounts for a relatively high proportion of the diasporan Kurds in Sweden.

However, around this business sector a genuine socio-professional field of Kurdish taxi drivers has emerged since the early 1990s: a highly complex field that encompasses a range of social

networks, organizational arrangements, competing individuals and sometimes conflict between rival interests.

Among this group, one can find individuals who are at the same time company-owners, employers and own drivers. For instance, one individual can register in his or her name a taxi company that has at its disposal one or at best two taxis. The company-owner can recruit one or two taxi drivers who normally drive the same taxi on different shifts day and night. Each registered taxi company has to be subcontracted to a major Swedish taxi company, normally in order to be connected to its switchboard, which is necessary for access to the service. The majority of Kurdish taxi drivers in Stockholm work for the Swedish *Taxi Kurir*, but other companies such as *Taxi Stockholm*, *Taxi Transfer* and *Taxi 020* are no less attractive.

The Kurdish taxi driving field in Sweden constitutes a kind of “male community”, which attracts Kurds from various backgrounds and experiences from different parts of Kurdistan. The most remarkable aspect of this sector is the particular social composition that this socio-professional category represents. For instance, among the Kurdish taxi drivers in Stockholm one can find writers, poets, teachers, university students, artists, singers, debaters, former guerrillas, politicians and even leaders of Kurdish political organizations. For some people, the personal qualities and skills that the Kurdish taxi drivers exhibit can be perceived not only as an important means of integration into Swedish society but also as an additional source of human capital for “promoting the Kurdish cause” and the practice of transborder citizenship in diaspora. Other interviewees believe that such claims are exaggerations that can make people blind to what is really happening in Swedish society. In this regard, a former Kurdish taxi driver has the following to say:

For the taxi driver it is pretty clear that it is almost impossible to maintain a satisfactory level of general knowledge or basic intellect in such a stressful and sometimes inhuman condition. It would be quite logical if I were to say I was, prior to my arrival to Sweden, much more educated during the time I was fighting in the remote mountains of Kurdistan against the Islamic regime of Iran. At that time, I had plenty of time to read books, listen to different radio station and above all to take part in those discussions that we held on different political issues. As I became a taxi driver after my arrival to Sweden, I had no time to read papers or even watch TV.

Furthermore, today a significant number of Kurds, both women and men, work as interpreters and home language teachers and also as ticket-sellers or conductors on the Stockholm subway. As for Kurdish women in the Swedish labor market, they pursue a quite different

line of work from Kurdish men. Accessible jobs for this group of people can be mainly found within childcare and care for the elderly and the home-help service. Cooking, cleaning and shop assistance are among other sectors that offer job opportunities to Kurdish women.

Working conditions have been particularly problematic for those Kurds who arrived during the economic recession years of the 1990s. This group of refugees, who came mainly from Iraqi Kurdistan, has been among the most affected in terms of employment, housing and education. The economic recession of the early 1990s resulted in high unemployment rates that put pressure on policies at all levels. The economic downturn has also led to a dramatic worsening of the government finances, with declining tax revenues and increased expenditures (Schierup, Hansen & Castles 2006).

A report published by Statistics Sweden (SCB) and the Swedish National Institute for Working Life (ALI) in 2002 found that the economic recession of the 1990s was closely connected with the worsening of the general welfare of the foreign population in Sweden. According to the report, the degradation of living conditions and general physical health was much more visible among refugees and immigrants than among native Swedes. For instance, the rate of redundancy of refugee and immigrant populations that had entered Sweden in the 1990s was 33 per cent, while that for native Swedes was only 8 per cent. Similarly, earnings for those refugees who had been in Sweden less than ten years were 50 per cent lower than those of native Swedes (Vogel, Hjerm & Johansson 2002). In this period, the unemployment rate among certain ethnic groups (for example the Somalis) was 98 per cent (AMS 1998).

Living conditions were not promising either for Kurdish asylum seekers (both rejected and non-rejected applicants) and also for those Kurdish refugees who had been given temporary residence permits. Currently, a great number of Kurdish asylum seekers in Sweden do their utmost to overcome those awkward obstacles that prevent them not only from becoming ordinary residents with a “legal status” but also from acquiring the very simple means of surviving as “decent human beings”. For instance, a big number of rejected Kurdish asylum seekers are struggling against the odds to avoid deportation. According to the Swedish National Migration Board, currently 1,400 Iraqi Kurds run the risk of being deported to Iraqi Kurdistan after their temporary residence permits have expired. The Swedish National Migration Board considers Iraqi Kurdistan as a secure region, and so there is no need to give refuge to asylum seekers from there (www.migrationsverket.se, 2007-05-02). In this connection, a young Kurdish asylum seeker gave expression to his concerns:

My life is not a life. It is a nightmare now. I don't know what is going to happen to me and many others like me. I have been in Sweden for the last five years of my life. I have been working and staying here and there, most often in very deplorable conditions that one cannot imagine. I would rather die here than return to my country. I told them I was from Kirkuk and they know that this city is not safe. But they say that my grounds for asylum are inadequate. They say that I lie and I am not from Kirkuk. I don't lie. I only want to stay here because I have nowhere to return to.

Another asylum seeker had more and less same worries:

I am working at a hotel as a cleaner. My work is hard and my wage is low. My appeal at the Migration Board was turned down last time. Now, it is the Administrative Court that deals with my application after I have appealed. I am not optimistic at all. After more than four years, I have no idea about my future. The only thing that is clear to me is that I am working hard and I pay 32 per cent of my salary to the Swedish government as taxes without being covered by the public insurance services. It does mean to me that I have no rights to report sick, to make use of holiday compensation or to save for my pension. Do you not think it is a modern form of slavery?

The living conditions of these Kurdish asylum seekers go far beyond the conception of ethnic division in the Swedish labor market. It represents indeed a new dimension of social exclusion and ethnic discrimination that perhaps necessitates the elaboration of new theoretical frameworks. Kurdish asylum seekers in Sweden live in a kind of "total invisibility".

Certificated and graduated persons with a Kurdish background are another significant group who experience marginalization and discriminatory treatment in Swedish society. For instance, at the beginning of the 2000s about 8,500 unemployed individuals (many Kurds included) with university degrees or similar certificates who had difficulty finding access to the Swedish labor market (*Metro* 3 September 2002). A Kurdish interviewee who had a university degree from Iran said:

There is in Sweden an abundance of visible and invisible discriminatory mechanisms, which are inbuilt in the country's administrative system and also in the mind of the native people. So the background aspects and other individual characteristics such as name, religion, culture, color of the hair and skin play a considerable role when an applicant with a "deviant" ethnic background applies for a job. I am referring to my own experiences. It does not matter how many job applications you send to

the employers. As your name is Mohammad, Fatima, Jamal or Karim you are not appointed. In the end, the only solution is may be to take up an alternative occupation within the restaurant and pizzeria business or taxi service.

Discrimination against job applicants with Arabic-sounding names in the Swedish labor market has been demonstrated in a study carried out by Magnus Carlsson and Dan-Olof Rooth in 2006. In this study, the authors examined the extent of ethnic discrimination in the Swedish labor market and found a net discrimination of 29.4 per cent against the group in question (Carlsson & Rooth 2006: 2).

However, in order to overcome the problem of unemployment among graduates with foreign backgrounds, the government decided to launch a project called “Plus Qualification” (*Pluskompetens*). The project, which was started with the collaboration of Swedish National Employment Agency and a number of companies such as Ikea and Volvo, aimed to provide recruitment possibilities for many graduates from foreign backgrounds (*Metro* 3 September 2002).

Similarly, Mona Sahlin, the former Minister of Integration, who was aware of the problem, announced her intention to propose a bill to create a more favorable climate for competent persons with refugee and immigrant backgrounds in the Swedish labor market. The minister stressed that she was in favor of a kind of “positive discrimination” which would assist employees with foresight to recruit competent persons among the non-native populations. She meanwhile clarified that she was against any compulsory “quota system” (*Metro* 14 May 2002). The significance of Mona Sahlin’s statement is evident when compared with that made on 27 October 2005 by the French former Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy when referring to youths with immigrant backgrounds at the time suburban riots in France. The Swedish political leader criticizes Swedish society for being discriminatory vis-à-vis the non-native populations, while the French minister describes rioters as “gangrene” and a “rabble”.

As indicated above, the Metropolitan Government Program was also set up to give the so called “one million program” areas ample scope for sustainable long-term growth and thereby promote new job opportunities both in the metropolitan areas themselves and in the rest of Sweden. Moreover, the long-term ambition of the Metropolitan Program was to put an end to social and ethnic segregation and to work for equality and equal opportunities in terms of living condition for the inhabitants of the big cities.

Although all Swedish employers since 1999 have had an obligation to establish within their organizations a so-called diversity

program (*mångfaldsplan*) to prevent ethnic discrimination and also to encourage the recruitment of persons with ethnic backgrounds other than that of native Swedes, the outcome is far from satisfactory. A female Kurdish student at Södertörn University College in Stockholm says: “it seems that people like us are doomed to a kind of permanent house arrest. It is difficult to break up the status quo in Sweden.”

Margareta Wadstein, the former Ombudsman against Ethnic Discrimination (DO), once said that 70 per cent of Swedish employers had no idea what the law (against ethnic discrimination) implied. According to Wadstein, the situation was worse within the Swedish trade unions, given that 75 per cent of the elected officials in the unions did not have an adequate knowledge about the measures that should be taken in case ethnic discrimination occurs (*Metro* 13 October 2001).

Taking into the account the position of Kurdish workers and job applicants in the Swedish labor market, one can say that this market is ethnically divided and stratified. It is to say that ethnicity appears increasingly as a central and decisive marker for how the labor market is structured and organized. According to Carl-Ulrik Schierup, ethnic division of the labor market follows the same pattern as the power relations between the majority and minority populations in the host society as a whole. The liaison between these two sides is characterized by a kind of superiority–inferiority relationship, determined normally by the majority (Schierup & Paulsson 1994). In this respect, the gender, ethnic background and culture of the refugee and immigrant play a considerable role when one takes into account the occupation that is allocated to her or him as a “deviant” person in the ethnically structured Swedish labor market. Placing different ethnic groups in an order of precedence within the Swedish labor market implies that one can claim that today in Sweden there are, for instance, “Iranian jobs”, “Yugoslavian jobs”, “Greek jobs”, and so on (Schierup & Paulsson 1994). Correspondingly, “Kurdish jobs” are mostly discernable in the domain of taxi driving services and restaurant and pizzeria businesses for men, and in childcare, care for the elderly, shop assistance, cooking and home-help services for women.

Sweden, which experienced a real shift in attitudes toward non-Swedes, above all in the period after 11 September 2001, has seen the emergence of a new form of social exclusion and ethnic discrimination. A growing informal sector creates a kind of “grey zone” in the labor market where the role of the trade-union movement, “national regulations and collective agreements are becoming increasingly undermined”. As Schierup, Hansen and Castles (2006: 216) have indicated, this is about an emerging “racialized informal” sector in Sweden, which like elsewhere in Europe constitutes “the least privileged

section of the domestic labor force with diminishing protection against predatory exploitation". The "grey zone", according to Schierup, Hansen and Castles, includes, among other things, "a growing homework sector mainly populated by undocumented women" and also a growing number of rejected male asylum seekers, including a large number of Kurdish asylum seekers who as a result of Sweden's tightened asylum policies hide from the migration authorities and police. It is important to add that a large number of Kurdish asylum seekers in this "racialized informal grey zone" are neither rejected nor accepted. They are just living in an "invisible zone" that is formed during their period of waiting.

The stigmatized image of Kurds in the Swedish media: "honor killing" as a boundary-making phenomenon

The murder of Fadime Shahindal, a young Kurdish-Swedish woman, by her father in the Swedish city of Uppsala on 21 January 2002 stunned the entire population. Thousands attended her funeral in the Lutheran cathedral of the city. According to many official and unofficial sources, her "crime" was that, by rejecting an arranged marriage and choosing her partner, she "shamed" her family.

Two years before the Fadime murder another Kurdish-Swedish girl, Pela, was brought to Iraqi Kurdistan, where she was brutally murdered by her uncles at the instigation of her father. Her younger sister brought the case before the Swedish court. The murderers were arrested and sentenced to life imprisonment after their return to Sweden (*Aftonbladet*, 4 September 2001).

On July 2002, Asrin Masifi a 21-year-old Kurdish-Swedish girl, was found dead in her family's house in Stockholm. Originally, the Swedish police considered it as a case of suicide. Soon after, the father of the dead girl was arrested on suspicion of killing his own daughter, who "reportedly planned to marry against his wishes". Three months later the father was released due to a so-called "insufficiency of evidence".

Brutal treatment and violence against immigrant women among the immigrant and refugee populations of the so-called Islamic culture had been evident long before these murders in Sweden occurred. For instance, between February 1996 and March 1997 eight immigrant women were murdered by stabbing, throttling or other forms of violence at the hands of their husbands or other family members. Long before, in June 1994, a girl had been killed by her own father (Khayati 1998). Other cases implicated close relatives in so-called "honor killings".

More recently, the Swedish media have paid a great deal of attention to the case of Du'a Khalil, a 17-year-old Kurdish *Yezidi*¹⁹ girl who was dragged into a crowd in a headlock with police looking on, and kicked and stoned to death in a district of the northern Iraqi city of Mosul in April 2007. As it was said, she was killed in such an inhuman way for being in love with a Sunni Muslim man. The Swedish daily paper *Aftonbladet* publicized the case of Dua and associated it with previous cases of “honor killing” (*Aftonbladet*, 18 May 2007).

However, according to Hassanpoor and Mojab the short and tragic life of Fadime has turned into a site of struggle over patriarchal violence and beyond. In Sweden and elsewhere, there was widespread protest against “honor killing” in general and Fadime’s killing in particular. On the Kurdish side, widespread condemnation was prominent (Hassanpoor & Mojab 2002).

These criminal atrocities have attracted much popular attention. The Swedish media have shown an enormous interest in the murder cases. Hundreds of articles and news items have been written on the subject, and a great number of radio and TV programs have debated the subject from various angles. For instance, the case of Fadime has been discussed in several sessions of the Swedish Parliament (Hellgren & Hobson 2007: 2). The phenomenon of “honor killing” created a favorable opportunity for those who wanted to analyze these murder cases from a culturalist perspective, claiming that immigrant Moslems in general and Kurds in particular cannot tolerate female members of their families having relations with non-Muslims. From this perspective, Islam appears as a “universal reference that generates a world where the oppression of and patriarchal violence against women do not leave any place for female ambition”. This form of interpretation considers these assassinations as “honor”- related cases, which are produced purely and simply by cultural norms that “are not compatible with Swedish culture” (Khayati 1998).

The mainstream Swedish political parties have similarly played the racial–ethnic card and more precisely the issue of “honor killing”, which according to Zenia Hellgren and Barbara Hobson provides “legitimacy for proposals to limit immigration or introduce new conditions for citizenship, such as language requirements or tests of values”. In this respect, the Swedish Liberal Party (*Folkpartiet*) was one distinguished political organization that included in its integrationist rhetoric language tests for those non-natives who wanted to acquire Swedish citizenship. (Hellgren & Hobson 2007: 2) Moreover, there has been a strong tendency in Sweden to connect criminality among foreign-born individuals to their cultural backgrounds. For instance, in a report of

¹⁹ For detailed information about the *Yezidi* Kurds and their religion, see Ackermann (2004).

the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (*BRÅ*) published in 2005, it was claimed that individuals from certain ethnic groups born outside Sweden and the children of immigrants had higher levels of registered crime than persons born within the country (*Brå-Rapport 2005: 17*). M. Rojas, the former spokesman of the Swedish Liberal Party on integration-related issues, has referred to the report and said that the “over-representation” of certain immigrant groups in criminal registers (in this case Chileans and North Africans) “can be explained neither by socioeconomic factors nor by racism”. The variation in the “criminal deeds” among various immigrant groups should therefore be “interpreted in terms of the variety of socio-cultural heritages among immigrants” (Rojas 2005).

However, a further discourse rejected categorically the arguments of the partisans of the culturalist perspective in the debate on “honor killing”, Long before the assassination of Fadime Shahindal, more precisely during the 1990s, there was a debate on “honor killing” in which a number of scholars appeared in the Swedish media on different occasions and claimed that “honor”-related assassinations had nothing to do with the concept of honor, Islam, or Kurdish culture. Accordingly, they reduced the “honor murders” to purely individual acts and subsequently to an issue for justice and the law. This group strengthened its case by stressing that violence against women occurred all the time and everywhere (see Hammar 1997; Lundgren & Eldén 1997).

It is worth noting that publicly ascribing the practice of “honor killing” to the Kurds and perceiving it as an inherent cultural feature of these people has considerably dampened the internal debate emerging among the Kurds. Rather than more open and transparent, many Kurds in the Swedish diaspora became more reactive, introverted and defensive. In this regard, a Kurdish man from Uppsala says:

Wherever I go, I feel that I am one of those people who, for reasons of “honor”, kill their sisters, wives or daughters. Even so, I am not a woman oppressor. I wonder why the Swedish media see it as a Kurdish phenomenon. They know very well that such atrocities happens everywhere in the world, in Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, Italy and in all Arab countries. I am unhappy and I feel I am betrayed.

However, a number of Kurdish scholars and intellectuals have started a widespread debate at the global level and criticized those Kurds whom they perceive as “reluctant to recognize” the practice of “honor killing” among Kurds. This group of Kurdish debaters did not hesitate to ascribe to Kurdish culture and tradition powerful elements of violence

against women. They claim that patriarchal norms and values are strong in Kurdish society, including honor killing (Hassanpoor & Mojab 2002).

At a conference on honor killing and violence against Kurdish women organized by the Kurdish Women Action against Honor Killings Campaign in July 2000 in London, Nazand Begikhani, one of the active members of the campaign, strongly denounced the widespread violence against Kurdish women, and asserted that “honor killing is a daily occurrence in Kurdistan” as well as in many other traditional patriarchal societies. She deplored the high number of honor killing cases in Iraqi Kurdistan since Kurdish political organizations seized political power in the protected zone. According to Bagikhani, more than 4,000 women have been killed in this part of Kurdistan since 1991 (Morgan 2000). Hassanpoor and Mojab share Bagikhani’s opinion on the subject, and say “killing for reasons of ‘honor’ is of ancient origins, but has occurred more frequently in recent years in the Middle East and in parts of Kurdistan devastated by war”. The authors stress that violence against women for reasons of “honor” also happens among refugee and immigrant groups in Western societies. “It is not a uniquely Kurdish phenomenon; it has been practiced in both the West and the East” (Hassanpoor & Mojab 2002).

However, the murder of Fadime Shahindal touched a raw nerve in Sweden, even bringing into question the country’s ability to integrate its ethnic minorities. Issues such as forced marriages and the clash between Swedish values and those of immigrants have quickly moved up the political agenda. After Fadime’s death, the Swedish government announced that it would give more money to crisis centers and support groups of young women seeking to avoid arranged marriages or to escape from violent parents. In addition, the authorities foreshadowed that they would close a legal loophole that allowed girls of foreign origin to marry at an age below the 18 years threshold that applied to everyone else (*The Economist*, January 2002). On several occasions Mona Sahlin, the Swedish Integration Minister at that time, expressed her deep sympathy for victims of forced marriages and those Kurdish girls who had been subjected to mental or physical violence.

One reaction to the killings was an initiative on the part of a number of Kurdish personalities (mostly women) in Sweden to create a number of organizations. The most important was founded in 2001 in Stockholm under the name “*Glöm Aldrig Pela*”, but it changed to its current name “*Glöm Aldrig Pela and Fadime*” (Never forget Pela and Fadime) soon after the murder of Fadime Sahindal in 2002. The main objective of the organization is to make women and girls of immigrant backgrounds aware of their rights and of where they can find help in Sweden. The organization generally works to prevent violence against

women mainly through seminars, discussions and TV debates. It also operates in Kurdistan (mostly in Iraqi Kurdistan) with the objective of influencing the political processes and decisions there in favor of women. In this respect, the organization is largely involved in the practice of transborder citizenship.

The widespread aversion and strong reaction of both Kurdish and non-Kurdish personalities against “honor killing” finally led to a new law being proposed by the Kurdish regional government in northern Iraq. This law, which was ratified in 2001 by the Kurdish parliament, treats “honor”-related killing as an ordinary crime; the connection with “honor” is not regarded as a mitigating circumstance (*Expressen* 24 August 2002). Many Kurdish interviewees have clearly displayed their happiness about the new law, while showing a strong preoccupation about the negative Kurdish “image” that was produced in the Swedish media. A Kurdish female journalist in Stockholm admitted:

Such a perception of Kurds is deeply rooted in the images that Swedes invent about themselves and other people. This image is made on the basis of prejudices, stereotypes and of course racist considerations. But, whatever they say about Kurds or don't say, violence against women is very common among Kurds, above all in Kurdistan, and we must fight against it.

Many Kurdish refugees and immigrants have claimed that they are suffering not only from the existing general exclusionary and discriminatory mechanisms in Swedish society, for instance in the form of housing segregation and unemployment, but also from the negative image of them prevalent in this society.

The social exclusion of immigrants and the way in which the natives perceive them are intimately correlated. For instance, the image of the Kurdish man as a “potential women oppressor” that is projected in the Swedish media is to a certain extent a practice of stigmatization that has real consequences in the society. In such a culturalized climate, the *stigmatized* Kurd cannot have equal opportunities with the native Swede, and so cannot transgress the cultural boundaries if she or he wishes to take a place in the country's public spaces, as the condition of entry into these spaces is defined and set up by the majority and as the “Kurd”¹⁴ is unable to conform to those standards the society calls normal (Goffman 1990).

Subsequently, a real “us and them” structure is created discursively as well as materially. This is the indication of a specific power system, arising, according to Aleksandra Ålund, from a Western one-sided ethnocentric view of culture (Ålund 1994). As for the

diasporan Kurds in Sweden, “honor killing” has become a prominent “cultural feature” which in the global era after the 11 September 2001 and with the increasing Islamophobia in the country (Larsson 2005) serves to define the boundaries between “Swedes” and “Kurds”.

Being both here and there: simultaneous political and institutional practices

The political effects of transnational connections surrounding contemporary migration also have far-reaching consequences for the Kurds. As indicated in Chapter 2, millions of Kurds have been on the move, voluntarily or otherwise, both in the Kurdish areas and in Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey. There has also been a considerable movement of Kurds from the Middle East toward Western Europe, North America, Australia and other parts of the globe (van Bruinessen 1999). In diaspora, Kurds sustain transnational connections that have considerable economic, social, cultural and political effects on their collective lives and on the multiple localities in which they reside. In this respect, Sweden plays a considerable role.

In Sweden, Kurds try through associational activities, radio and TV broadcasting, literature and music production, arrangement of festivals, and so forth to preserve and develop their ethnic and diasporic identity. Transnational activities among Kurds are more conspicuous in Sweden than in other European countries, not only because of the presence of a relatively large and relatively highly educated Kurdish refugee community in this country but also because the Swedish context has so far been especially favorable toward the Kurdish diaspora. At present, after Iraqi Kurdistan Sweden is the country where the most advanced Kurdish cultural activities take place. A significant number of authors, novelists, poets, politicians, political leaders, intellectuals, scholars, artists, musicians, singers and journalists have successively arrived in Sweden since the 1970s. Accordingly, the number of Kurdish writers in Sweden has clearly surpassed the number who remain in Kurdistan (Tayfun 1998, quoted in Ahmadzadeh 2003). According to Hjertén, the presence of such a Kurdish intelligentsia has created a specific situation where Sweden willy-nilly is now an extended Kurdistan (Hjertén 1994). Today, there are clear indications that the number of Kurds who interact between their former and new societies continues to increase.

For instance, in a supplement from 27 April–3 May 2006, the prominent Swedish paper *Dagens Nyheter* devoted many pages to introducing a number of Kurdish celebrities and personalities who appear

on TV and radio programs, in the theatre, in artistic and musical shows and also in newspapers and political life in Sweden. “Kurd in the City” was the front-page title of this supplement, in which the reporter Anders Forsström lined up many Kurdish personalities such as Nalin Peggul, Evin Rubar, Esref Okumus, Öz Nujen, Shan Atci, Zanyar Adami, Darin Zanyar, Sukran Kavak, Zian Zandi, Gulan Avci, Kurdo Baksi, Jabar Amin, Dilba Demirbag, Dilsa Demirbag, Lawen Mohtadi, Khalid Saleh, Mustafa Can, and many others, while posing the question of why so many Kurds were in the limelight of the city. According to the journalist, the Kurdish background of these personalities and their memory and experience of oppression play a considerable role in the “successes they achieved in Sweden”. The reporter repeatedly used the appellation *svenskkurd* (“Swede-Kurd”): perhaps a way to express the joint identity and the translocational positionality (Anthias 2002) of these personalities. It is worth noting that the greater part of them arrived in Sweden at very young age, many years ago, together with their asylum- or job-seeking parents. By referring to the notion of transborder citizenship one can recognize that the performances of these Kurdish–Swedish elites occur within the frame of sophisticated transnational social fields (Glick Schiller *et al.* 1999) where their adoption of a double or multiple allegiance beyond the boundaries of a single nation-state enables them to permanently define and redefine their position in Swedish society at the same time as they participate in the general politics of Kurdistan.

The linguistic and cultural activities of diasporan Kurds are considered as a compensatory alternative to the literary and cultural deprivation that result from the policy of denial and the majority censorship that are inflicted on the Kurds in their countries of origin. Thus, the Kurdish cultural revival in Sweden largely follows the dialectical relationship of exclusion–inclusion in the world of broadcasting relating to the “distribution and exercise of linguistic, political and cultural power” prevailing in Turkey, Iran, Syria and Iraq prior to the establishment of the autonomous Kurdish administration in 1992 (Hassanpour 1998). Accordingly, the development of Kurdish broadcasting in diaspora is a reaction to majority censorship in the countries of origin (Hassanpour 1998). In other words, the emergence of the first Kurdish satellite television in Europe in 1995 and its struggle for survival against Turkish pressure is an indication of such a dialectical relationship of denial and resistance (Vali 1998) that comes into view far from the Kurdish homeland in the diaspora. The compensatory attitude of diasporan Kurds toward the Kurdish language and literature can be seen as a part of the process of the ethnicization of political life of diasporan populations in post-industrial societies, appearing mostly within the

framework of the so-called practice of long-distance nationalism (Anderson 1998).

Giving shelter to a number of Kurdish TV channels (Rojhelat-TV, Newroz TV and Mezopotamya-TV), several local radios, three major umbrella organizations for cultural activities, three publication centers and a large number of web users, Sweden plays a considerable role in the crystallization of the Kurdish diaspora.

Kurdish associations in Sweden: prospects and challenges

As indicated above, Sweden accommodates a significant proportion of immigrants organized in associations. Currently, there are more than 50 national immigrant organizations and more than 1,000 local associations throughout the country which benefit from a relatively liberal immigrant policy. The principal objectives of Swedish policy with regard to immigrant associations are said to be preserving immigrants' culture and identity, organizing educational courses and activities for refugees and immigrants and encouraging them to take part in the process of integration and political decision-making (Khayati 1998; Berruti *et al.* 2002).

Over the years Sweden has built up an allowance system that has made it possible for immigrants and refugees to develop a significant associational life in the country. The immigrant associations that are created on cultural and ethnic lines receive various subsidies from the state and municipalities. Alongside cultural and ethnic associations, a range of religious institutions obtain their share of allowances directly from the state. In addition to official aid, the Islamic associations finance some of their activities from the support that they receive not only from diverse donors but also some Islamic states in the Middle East. Financial support for these associations is estimated to exceed 15 million Swedish kronor a year (Berruti *et al.* 2002: 170).

The tradition of helping immigrant associations stems from the popular movements (*folkrörelser*) that characterized most of Sweden's history in the 20th century. As an important and inherent feature of the nation-making process in Sweden, the popular movements contributed much to the construction of the Swedish "home of the people" (*folkhemmet*). The standard social movement was the trade union movement, which was inspired by the ideology of Swedish social democracy. During the construction of the welfare state these movements were an effective means for achieving ideological integration, political socialization and popular mobilization. Since 1975 they have been

considered as useful tools for integrating immigrants into the society (see Ålund & Schierup 1991; Mulinari & Neergaard 2004).

As far as the Kurds are concerned, they found a favorable environment for creating and developing their social, ethno-cultural and professional associations. In this respect, groups of Kurdish youth, women, handicapped, writers, musicians, teachers, and so on have since the 1980s made use of this advantageous milieu for promoting their particular interests.

At the national level, there are three important Kurdish umbrella organizations. The Federation of Kurdish Associations in Sweden (*Kurdiska Riksförbundet i Sverige*), with its 42 affiliated associations, was created on the initiative of a number of associations and representatives of Kurdish political parties in 1981. It is the oldest and probably the largest Kurdish organization in the country, and sees itself as religiously and politically independent. Moreover, it considers itself unique, claiming to have 8,500 members representing different political standpoints from all parts of Kurdistan. Another major Kurdish umbrella institution is the Council of Kurdish Associations in Sweden (*Kurdiska Rådet i Sverige*), which was founded in 1994. This institution has more than 20 affiliated associations. The Kurdish Union in Sweden (*Kurdiska Unionen i Sverige*) is a newly constituted organization, which also operates at the national level; it has 25 affiliated associations in different Swedish municipalities (Berruti *et al.* 2002; Emanuelsson 2005).

The common characteristic of these associations is that they operate simultaneously on two different but correlated activity fields. In the first place, they follow the course of events in different part of Kurdistan and endeavor to reach a level of political mobilization that enables them to promote the so-called “politics of homeland”. For instance, celebrating *Newroz*²⁰ and other Kurdish cultural events, promoting Kurdish publishing and broadcasting, organizing political demonstrations, creating mixed (Swedish–Kurdish) political and social networks and platforms, carrying out diplomatic visits, attracting the attention of national and local media, and so forth, are among those activities that constitute the performance domains of the Kurdish associations in Sweden. Simultaneously, they claim that they participate also in the political and social processes of the host country: a claim that they try to legitimize more often than not through maintaining an anti-racist and integrationist discourse and working for the good of the Kurdish people in Sweden. This “dual agenda” (Østergaard-Nielsen 2000) is a manifestation of the far-reaching transborder performances that

²⁰ *Newroz* is the Kurdish New Year, which is celebrated on 21 March. More than a simple cultural event, it has been used by Kurds as a political manifestation over the years.

the Kurdish population undertakes in Sweden. Many diasporan Kurds consider the practice of “long distance nationalism” (Anderson 1998) and participation in the receiving country’s political and social processes as necessary practices for creating a sense of togetherness and a diasporic identity. In this regard, a Kurdish woman from Stockholm has the following to say:

When we arrived in Sweden we had no idea about how to manage this challenge. As a result of those enormous sufferings that were inflicted to us by the Iranian authorities in Kurdistan, we thought that we would never be able to look back. Upon our arrival to Sweden, we had a feeling that we could forget about everything we had left behind. But we very soon realized that this was wrong. Today, I participate in Kurdish festivals and political demonstrations. I am a member of a Kurdish association and I follow its activities at the local level. At the same time, I want to say that I am a member of a Swedish political party, which I consider as very important. My children go to school and I have a job to take care of in this society. We are both Swedes and Kurds. This is our new reality.

As for the inconveniences that Kurdish associations experience in Sweden, it is important to stress that Kurdish social and cultural institutions suffer to a large extent from a lack of conformity and coordination, and from distance and division. For example, the Federation of the Kurdish Associations in Sweden has traditionally been supported by Kurds affiliated to Kurdistan’s Socialist Party and some other small political organizations in Turkey. This group of people has been known for their anti-PKK attitude, which was perhaps a good reason for them to ensure Kurdistan’s Democratic Party of Massoud Barzani continues to influence the organization. Almost on the opposite side, the Council of Kurdish Associations in Sweden is for the most part dominated by the followers of the Kurdistan Worker Party (PKK), while the Kurdish Union in Sweden is almost exclusively constituted of members of the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (KDP-I). The Kurdish associations in Sweden usually encounter difficulties when it comes to cooperating and arranging mutual festivals. That each political party or association holds its own *Newroz* celebration (van Bruinessen 2000: 9) is the indication of the associational dispersion that diasporan Kurds experience in Sweden. It is only major Kurdish events with a global reach that can bring all Kurds together; a prominent example is the widespread Kurdish uprising in diaspora protesting the capture of the PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan in 1999. A Kurdish local politician in Stockholm formulates his criticisms thus:

Many Kurds suffer severely from the political divisions between the Kurdish associations in Sweden. They consider these kinds of division as a troublesome obstruction, which negatively affects their integration in Swedish society as well as their national struggle. The lack of solidarity and cooperation between them has prevented Kurdish electors in Sweden from developing a common strategy to elect an MP. For example, we could not send a single Kurd out of a total of 22 candidates to the Swedish Parliament as a representative for the mandate period of 2002–6.

Moreover, the Kurdish associations in Sweden have been criticized for their lack of transparency and of gender equality. Although the Federation of Kurdish Associations in Sweden claims to be the mouthpiece of the Kurds in Sweden, the majority of the Kurdish immigrants and refugees remain unaffiliated to it. In certain cases, unaffiliated people do not hesitate to turn to alternative organizations. However, the institutional division among diasporan Kurds in Sweden largely reflects the political landscape of the Kurdish homeland, which according to Vali has been highly fragmented during most of the post-war Kurdish national struggle (Vali 1998). Today, the establishment of the autonomous Kurdish political entity in northern Iraq has had a positive effect, more and more diasporan Kurds perceive it as the only “liberated” part of the Kurdish homeland. As a result the institutional tensions among Kurds have been gradually reduced and replaced by a so-called “common sentiment” of togetherness.

A further challenge for the Kurdish associations in Sweden has been the issue of the integration of Kurds in the Swedish society. It has not been easy for them to champion integration. In a highly “ethnicized” and “politicized” (Wahlbeck 1999) associative environment, it is much easier for the Kurdish associations to carry out activities oriented toward their homeland of origin, while their chances of becoming genuine agencies of integration are considerably limited. Concretely, they are not in the position to frame substantial projects on issues, such as unemployment, segregation, and participation in the political processes, discrimination and racism, which affect the daily lives of Kurds in Swedish society. This inconsistency largely arises from the economic control that the Swedish state exercises over the immigrant associations and their activities. In this context, the associations become captive to a kind of “patron–client” relationship, which is inherent the Swedish subsidy system (*cf.* Ålund 1985; Ålund & Schierup 1991; Khayati 1998).

Moreover, these associations have been blamed for excluding younger people from their leading structures. In response to this inadequacy, younger Kurds have created their own organizations in order

to, as they put it, “solve the problem of representation and manage their part of societal duties in their own ways”. The Kurdistan Student Federation in Sweden (KSF) was created in 2004 on the initiative of a number of students, almost exclusively from Iraqi Kurdistan. Currently, the KSF, together with the Social Democratic Students of Sweden (SSF), is working on a project called *Baba Gurgur* to build a youth center in Iraqi Kurdistan. *WeKurd* is another organization that has been created mainly by second-generation Kurdish youths in Sweden from all parts of Kurdistan. This association paid special attention to the Swedish elections of 17 September 2006, particularly by establishing a sort of electoral roll of all Kurdish candidates who stood in the Swedish local, regional and national elections. Moreover, within the frame of its election project *WeKurd* has sent questionnaires to all Swedish political parties, asking them how they perceive the Kurdish question and its various aspects. These youth associations have included an anti-racist and integrationist discourse in their programs, urging both Kurds and Swedes to work for integration.

Furthermore, the Association of Kurdish Students and Academics, the Association of Children’s Friends of Kurdistan, the Association for Kurdistan’s Environment and the Association of Kurdistan’s Hope are examples of other Kurdish formations that also operate within the frame of a “transnational social field” and give expression to the practice of transborder citizenship in various forms.

The above discussion shows that the Kurdish associational experience is not limited to the single act of attracting external attention to the Kurdish problem. It is also a manifestation of the practice of transborder citizenship that Kurds from both first and second generations maintain at the intersection between Sweden and Kurdistan.

New modes of political participation and the patterns of transborder citizenship

As members of one of the most politicized diasporas in Sweden, Kurds have long displayed a high degree of interest in participating in Sweden’s political processes in. Even though it is impossible to establish reliable statistics on this activity, the presence of a relatively high number of Kurds in the country’s 2006 general elections, both as voters and candidates, is suggestive. There were about 33 Kurdish candidates for the Swedish Parliament (*Riksdag*), as many for the county councils, and more than 70 for the municipal councils.

Another Kurdish specificity discernible in these elections was that for the first time the Kurdish candidates at all three levels did not all

belong to leftist political parties. This is in sharp contrast to the organizational discourses and ideological convictions that the Kurdish electoral core has displayed in the country's previous elections. The emergence of Kurdish candidates from non-leftist political formations has less to do with the so-called "end of ideology" (Nikolaev 1990) than with the discovery of various social, political and economic interests arising from daily life in Sweden. The political events in the Middle East and the interventions of the United States that many diasporan Kurds in Sweden have observed as beneficial for the Kurdish people and its political movement partly explains the dispersion of interest across various Swedish political parties. Swedish leftist political organizations have shown that they were not very enchanted with the American-led occupation of Iraq. However, the Liberal Party (*Folkpartiet*) was one of the Swedish political formations that took considerable advantage of this Kurdish "ideological mutation". In this connection, a Kurdish candidate in Stockholm has the following to say:

The presence of a significant number of the Kurdish candidates for the Swedish Parliament, county and municipal council elections can above all be seen as a clear sign of integration. Secondly, this high level of political participation that Kurds display in comparison with other ethnic groups arises most likely from the political commitment of many Kurdish refugees prior to their arrival in Sweden. Here, being Kurd is not an obstacle but an opportunity because we can make use of a sort of double political orientation. I hope that Swedish society becomes aware of it.

A sort of gender equality and generational shift was also noticeable among the Kurdish candidates. The Kurdish candidates, who consisted largely of women and young people, during election campaigns have made use of various Kurdish communication platforms such as radio and satellite TV stations, websites and chat rooms. Days before the election, the Kurdish satellite TV station Roj arranged an animated debate between three Kurdish candidates from Sweden, where each participant outlined her or his political agenda for Sweden along the lines of their respective political parties while all of them maintained a similar political discourse on Kurdish politics. Generally speaking, the candidates have notably managed to include both a Swedish integrationist and a Kurdish nationalist discourse in their election strategies.

It is worth noting that even in Iraqi Kurdistan ballot boxes were put at the disposal of those Kurdish visitors from Sweden who wanted to vote in the Swedish general elections.

Apart from in national elections, the Kurds exhibit other forms of political mobilization in Sweden. For instance, the massive

participation of diasporan Kurds in the Iraqi elections, which took place in the end of 2005, is a further indication of how they “politicize” the transnational social fields between several Western societies when it was time to vote for their preferred political platform, the Kurdistan Alliance. On election day thousands of Kurds who had settled in several Western societies rushed to the polling stations in order, as many voters put it, “to enjoy their democratic rights in the European countries in order to exert influence on their own political destiny in Iraq”.

The preliminary unofficial results, which were communicated by the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq, showed that the Kurdistan Alliance in Sweden had obtained more than 10,000 votes of a total of 18,000 Iraqi voters. The figure for the German Kurds was 19,640, which was the equivalent of 71 percent of the entire vote of all Iraqis. Similar scores were reported from the Netherlands, where the presence of a strong Kurdish community was a clear guarantee for the Kurdistan Alliance to receive 70 percent of the votes. Participation among the diasporan Kurds in the Iraqi elections can be perceived as particularly strong given that the polling stations were set up in only a few countries and localities. This did not deter the Kurds, who wanted to go to the ballots en masse and by all means of transport means from neighboring countries or other remote areas in the Scandinavian countries. In Scandinavia, Sweden was the only host country, with voters coming in from all neighboring countries (Khayati 2006).

The establishment of a Swedish Parliamentary Network for Kurdistan on 24 March 2006 by members of parliament from five Swedish political parties (the Green Party, the Social Democrats, the Liberals, the Christian Democrats and the Left Party) is a further indication of Kurds’ practice of transborder citizenship in Sweden. At the network’s inaugural meeting, the Swedish MPs made a statement of intent declaring their commitment to Kurdistan’s progress and development. The network declared its intention to support democratic and pluralistic development in Kurdistan, work for closer ties between Sweden and Kurdistan, and promote dialogue, mutual understanding and exchange between Swedish politicians and democratic organizations and individuals from Kurdistan.

The network also declared its political neutrality and its openness to all members of the Swedish Parliament. Moreover, the Swedish Parliamentary Network for Kurdistan stressed that the ties between Sweden and Kurdistan were becoming ever closer. The Nordic Representation of the Kurdistan Regional Government expressed its appreciation of Swedish politicians’ efforts to strengthen these bonds.

Summary

This chapter shows that diasporan Kurds in Sweden conceive of their diasporic discourse mostly in positive terms and practice a more developed form of transborder citizenship than the Sarhadi Kurds in France. The existence of this positive discourse does not, however, imply the absence of negative experiences. The negative experiences of diasporan Kurds in Sweden arise not only from the memory of oppression in the homeland of origin but also from social exclusion, discrimination and racism in Swedish society. In this respect, the case of the Kurdish taxi drivers as an indication of an ethnically divided Swedish labor market and the Kurds' experience of housing segregation have been illustrative.

Moreover, the negative image of Kurds derived from the assassination of the Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme in 1986, which was connected among others to the PKK, and also particularly from the sensitive issue of so-called "honor killings" are further elements that constitute the framework of victim diaspora discourse among diasporan Kurds in Sweden.

As for positive experiences and the developing practice of transborder citizenship among diasporan Kurds in Sweden, two major factors have been cited: the socially and politically diversified Kurdish population in Sweden and the advantageous Swedish political climate, which promotes diasporic institutions and transnational networks among the Kurds.

It has been shown that the multicultural Swedish climate plays a considerable part in assisting the Kurds to build up their diasporic organizations and develop their culture and language. Moreover, as was shown, the strong practice of "long-distance nationalism" and transnational activities among Swedish Kurds reflects the presence of a relatively large educated Kurdish refugee population in Sweden, among whom the highest cultural activities take place (van Bruinessen 2000). This chapter has also discussed the fact that the Kurdish intelligentsia in Sweden has by means of proper diasporic structures facilitated the partial deterritorialization and transnationalization of the Kurdish nationalist movement (*cf.* Wahlbeck 1999; van Bruinessen 1999; 2000; Emanuelsson 2005). We have also seen that Sweden has been a place in diaspora where many Kurdish cultural personalities have emerged.

This chapter likewise focuses on the notion of *assabiyya* and its significance for diasporan Kurds in Sweden. In this respect, we have seen that different Kurdish *assabiyyas* signify a strong sense of togetherness, social organization, internal solidarity and group feeling in various Swedish localities. As was shown, in the Swedish context

assabiyya accounts for a set of positive experiences as these maintain a flexible attitude, develop a varying strategy and enjoy relative mobility, which makes them better able to accumulate resources.

As for the presence of diasporan Kurds in Swedish political life, in the 2006 Swedish general elections about 33 Kurdish candidates stood for the Swedish Parliament, as many for the county councils and more than 70 for municipal councils. In this respect, Sweden differs drastically from France.

Certain scholars (van Bruinessen 1999; 2000; Ahmadzadeh 2003) consider Sweden as a center of gravity for Kurdish culture and Kurdish politics. In Sweden, diasporan Kurds maintain a highly developed practice of transborder citizenship as they simultaneously participate in both Kurdish and Swedish political processes. Transnational connections between Iraqi Kurdistan and the Kurdish diaspora appear to be more developed in Sweden than in any other west European country.

Conclusion

Comparing the formation of the Kurdish diaspora in France and Sweden

This study addresses the process of change from a mono-dimensional “victim-related” diaspora discourse into a more modulated, dynamic and active diaspora discourse. The study has gone beyond the experience of pain and trauma and depicted not only recent political changes in Kurdistan but also other diasporic trajectories that have formed the experiences of diasporan Kurds in Sweden and France. Through a comparative analysis of the Kurdish diaspora in Sweden and France, it has been shown that at both the empirical and theoretical levels the process of change varies in different contexts. The study shows that the experience of living across the borders of two or more nation-states among diasporan Kurds in France (Marseille region) and Sweden (Stockholm region) takes different negative and positive forms.

The Kurdish diaspora in France and Sweden appears as an experience of dual loyalties or as Eva Østergaard-Nielsen puts it a “dual political agenda” (Østergaard-Nielsen 2000). At the spatial level, the Kurdish diaspora in the two countries is a multi-local (Appadurai 1995) experience, taking place in a specific transnational social space (Pries 1999) that accounts for plural social arrangements and sites for political engagement (Vertovec & Cohen 1999). Here diasporan Kurds maintain the practice of long-distance nationalism (Anderson 1992; 1998) and also practice transborder citizenship by means of Kurdish claim-making for participating in the normative regime, legal and institutional system and political practices (Glick Schiller 2005). This accounts for both similar and dissimilar experiences in Sweden and France. In this regard, it has been shown how the intersection and the interaction of the bodies politic of the sending and receiving societies give birth to different transnational social fields (Glick Schiller 2005) where the growing disjuncture between national territories brings about the emergence of new places or localities, new cultural spaces and new institutional arrangements.

The Kurdish diaspora in France and Sweden has not only served as a relevant study field, showing how transnational social spaces may question and go far beyond the boundaries of the nation-state and its cultural and political institutions, but also shows that diaspora is an independent specific analytical category, encompassing a certain semantic field that facilitates transnational research, comparison and understanding (Baumann 2000; Brubaker 2005).

In accordance with Baumann (2000) and Badie and Hermet (1990), as well as in accordance with the comparative approach, this study has treated the process of diaspora formation among Kurds in France and Sweden, comprising a range of related topics such as state–society relations, identity politics, ethnic relations, social movements, institutional analysis and political economy. Comparing the processes of diaspora formation and the development of the practice of transborder citizenship among the Kurds in France and Sweden has been relevant as it has shown how a variety of features, such as the experience of repression and trauma in the country of origin, social background and skills, *assabiyya* networks, cyberspace activities, TV and radio broadcasting activities, cultural performances, political mobilization and transnational relations and experience of racism and social exclusion occur differently in the two national contexts and consequently affect the cultural, social, political and philanthropic performances of Kurds in different ways. In this respect, there is a range of tangible differences between Sweden and France.

Comparing the process of diaspora formation among the Kurdish populations of these two countries was a pertinent method not only to show how transnational networks of political activism cross the borders of nation-states but also how these networks, depending on the contexts in which they operate and the social composition of the concerned diasporan population, assume various forms and also address in different ways a wide range of issues that influence the politics of both the country of origin and of the country of residence. In other words, the political, cultural and social orientations of diasporan Kurds towards both their societies of origin and their countries of settlement, the diasporic structures they develop and also the diaspora discourse that they maintain are affected not only by their experience of forced migration from Kurdistan but also by their own social composition and the national contexts in which they reside.

Contextualizing the Kurdish diaspora in France and Sweden: differences and similarities

This study shows that considering the Kurdish diasporic experiences in negative and positive terms implies neither a practical nor a chronological separation of two sets of opposing features. The objective is to go beyond the “victimization” and the “idealization” of the notion of homeland and to discern other positive and dynamic dimensions of the Kurdish diaspora in various contexts. The result shows that the negatively conceived and reductionist mono-dimensional victim diaspora discourse is unable to render the complicated and heterogeneous Kurdish diaspora intelligible, as the presence of the Kurds in Sweden and France implies a multitude of both convergent and contradictory manifestations of historical, socio-economic, cultural, political, and gender- and class-related practices and connections.

Thus, many different institutional and transnational arrangements, *assabiyya* networks, “on air” and “online” involvements, political performances and cultural and literary activities among diasporan Kurds have been explored. A homeland context, an in-between context and a host country context have been distinguished. This contextualization, which has both temporal and spatial aspects, has been made further intelligible by the theoretical approaches adopted by this study to the theory of diaspora and its three constitutive elements, namely, dispersion, homeland orientation and boundary maintenance. This contextualization corresponds also to what Faist describes as “triadic relationships”, that is, relationships between groups and institutions in the host states, the sending states and the migrant and/or refugee groups, denoting dynamic notions of ties and positions in which cultural, political and economic processes involve the accumulation of economic capital, human capital and social capital. In such transnational social spaces combinations of social and symbolic ties, positions in networks and organizations and networks of organizations can be found in at least two geographically and internationally distinct places (Faist 1999). As for the Kurds and their tragic experiences of the refugee trajectories, the in-between context, that is, the trajectory between the sending country and the host country, has played an essential role.

This study sheds light not only on the contemporary Kurdish nationalist movement and the repressive policy of the states of Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria, the Kurdish diasporic dispersion and the Kurdish refugee trajectories resulting from forced migration from Kurdistan, but also on recent political developments there, mostly the emergence of the *de facto* Kurdish state in northern Iraq, which has had a considerable

impact on the formation of diaspora and the practice of transborder citizenship among diasporan Kurds. Moreover, this study shows that the process of globalization, modern communication technologies and well-developed transnational networks have created appropriate opportunities for many Kurds who in one way or another find themselves engaged in a process of migration. Furthermore, the study has shown that forced displacement and population movement in Kurdish societies have brought about the partial transformation of Kurdish political identity as part of the Kurdish nationalist movement became deterritorialized and transnational (van Bruinessen 1999; 2000).

Contextualization of the Kurdish diasporic trajectories is a way of seeing how different political and social contexts have dissimilar impacts on the formation of the diaspora and the development of the practice of transborder citizenship. Accordingly, we have seen that diasporan Kurds in Sweden, owing to a more socially, politically and culturally diversified population structure, and also owing to a relatively flexible Swedish national model, have developed not only more adequate diasporic structures but also experienced a more developed practice of transborder citizenship than have diasporan Kurds in France. Comparatively speaking, the outcome for Sarhadi Kurds in the French Bouches-du-Rhône is different from that for diasporan Kurds in Sweden. As the Sarhadi Kurds exhibit less political and cultural diversity, and as the national and regional contexts of France offer less scope for their diasporic projects, they retain a stronger sense of negative experiences in their daily lives, mostly in the form of trauma, pain and exclusion. Moreover, the Sarhadi Kurds have significantly less opportunity for self-realization, *assabiyya* mobility, visibility in public spheres and practice of transborder citizenship than their fellow Kurds in Sweden. In other words, due to the dissimilarity between the French and Swedish contexts, diasporan Kurds in France and Sweden adopt different action modes and develop different transnational structures and diasporic strategies in spite of a range of similar experiences. Moreover, the impact of political, economic and cultural developments in Iraqi Kurdistan has been different on the two Kurdish diasporan populations.

In order to render the complexity of the Kurdish diaspora in Sweden and France more intelligible, this study has contributed to the development of already existing theoretical approaches to diaspora and transborder citizenship. The contextualization of the study has shown that the theoretical framework of this study is now more relevant as has become redirected and, in a sense, more balanced as a result of the study's empirical findings.

Conceiving the discourse of victim diaspora around the experience of forced migration in Kurdistan

In a manner comparable to the diasporic experiences of the Jews, who regularly evoke their initial dispersion from historical Palestine and above all the tragic memory of the Holocaust (Safran 1991), and of the Armenians, who have developed a collective memory around the genocide of 1914–15 in Turkey (Ter Minassian 1995; Hovanessian 1995), diasporan Kurds conceive of their diaspora in terms of a number of negative experiences, rooted not only in the belief that “Kurds are an oppressed people” but also in the fact that many diasporan Kurds bear the experience of real trauma (*azar*) and oppression (*sitam*), reflecting the general social and political conditions that have prevailed in all parts of Kurdistan since the emergence of dominant states where Kurdish identity and culture have been excluded from the project of the state-building. This study gives an account of a number of salient utterances, relating to experiences of discrimination, politics of denial, assimilation, persecution, maltreatment, massacre and destruction, which are inherent in the contemporary Kurdish nationalist movement that has been gaining ground in Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria since the end of the First World War. As indicated above, insistence on the victim diaspora discourse is justified by these tragic events, which are etched on the memories of those Kurds who were forced to leave Kurdistan. The genocidal campaigns of the *Anfal* and the gas attacks of Halabja carried out by the Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein against civilian Kurds in 1987–88 are crucial to the narratives of diasporan Kurds in Sweden and France.

In accordance with the first component of the theory of diaspora (Brubaker 2005), one can conclude that the experience of forced dispersion constitutes a significant common characteristic of the diasporic narratives among the Kurds in Sweden and France, an experience which also affects the formation of diaspora and the constitution of diasporic structures. The involuntary Kurdish dispersion illustrates change of spatial location (Brubaker 2005) as a highly differentiated and politicized social phenomenon (Mani 1992). Moreover, the experience of forced migration among the Kurds actualizes particular historical conditions and specific migration trajectories through which actual social subjects become both different *and* similar (Ang 1993).

As has been shown, alongside the experience of forced migration (Castles 2003) and the memory of repression from Kurdistan (*cf.* Wahlbeck 1999; Berruti *et al.* 2002; Alinia 2004), the popular Kurdish diaspora discourse embodies negatively conceived experiences. The Kurdish migratory movements and refugee trajectories, the condition

of being asylum seekers, the state of refugeehood, the sentiment of homesickness and nostalgia (Brah 1996; Alinia 2004) and the everyday racism and social exclusion that diasporan Kurds experience in their new societies are regularly evoked, even though these negative experiences may turn into positive experiences as they become essential driving forces for diasporic consciousness and the practice of long-distance nationalism.

Kurds as the “Others”: two different experiences in two different contexts

In order to elucidate the experience of social exclusion among diasporan Kurds in Sweden and France, this study has actualized the lives of the Kurds as asylum seekers and refugees, their social position in the housing and labor markets of the two countries, and the stigmatic “image” of them in popular representations and media.

In the first place, the Kurds suffer in both countries from a so-called “statistical invisibility”. This is because Kurdish refugees and immigrants, upon to their arrival in Western societies, are registered as Iranians, Turks, Iraqis or Syrians.

Waves of Kurdish refugees began to arrive in Western Europe without official documents when war broke out between Iran and Iraq in 1980. According to unofficial sources, more than 200,000 Kurdish refugees have reached Western Europe since then (Berruti *et al.* 2002). A large number of them have obtained refugee status but many (mainly Iraqi Kurds) who entered western Europe in the 21st century have been denied residence permits. Accordingly, a number of western European governments have taken action against Kurds whose applications for asylum have been rejected. For instance, at the beginning of 2007 the British government decided to forcibly deport some 8,000 Kurds, while the Danish government was also considering sending Kurds back to Kurdistan. Similarly, in March 2007 the Swedish National Migration Board announced the expulsion of 1,400 Iraqi Kurds who had previously been given temporary residence permits. The deportation decision was legitimized by reference to the “relative calmness and stability” prevailing in northern Iraq. The majority of Kurdish asylum seekers who arrived in Sweden in the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s actually faced a harsh asylum policy. However, conditions for Kurdish refugees in France were much tougher.

In this respect, the examples of the Sangatte refugee camp and the “refugee boat” *East Sea* are particularly illustrative. Specially, the Sangatte refugee camp was the site of painful experiences for hundreds of Kurdish refugees, indicating the failure of the French government to set up proper structures for refugee reception. This study also shows that many Kurdish refugees consider France not as a country of asylum (*terre d’asile*) but rather as a country of transition (*terre de transition*), even though the Sarhadi Kurds, as one of the most important refugee groups in Bouches-du-Rhône, have chosen to settle there for many reasons that have been elucidated by this study.

We have seen how the Sarhadi Kurds in Bouches-du-Rhône have developed a distinctive discourse to portray their difficult situation as asylum seekers. In their diasporic narratives, Sarhadi Kurds blame the French asylum procedures for being complicated and inflexible toward asylum seekers. As long-standing asylum seekers, Sarhadi Kurds experience harsh exclusion in this part of France, as they are kept outside French institutional life. In the absence of appropriate integration structures, the Sarhadi Kurds are obliged to have recourse to their own diasporic organizations and *assabiyya* and to a lesser extent to the NGOs that work with refugees (Lloyd 2003).

The condition of Kurdish asylum seekers in Sweden and France indicates that both countries have widespread informal sectors within their labor markets. In Sweden, the informal labor market recruits a large number of rejected Kurdish asylum seekers, most often through subcontracting. Most of the jobs are available within cleaning services. However, Kurdish asylum seekers work together with thousands of other “invisible” laborers within what Schierup, Hansen and Castles call a “grey zone”, an emerging racialized informal sector bearing witness not only to a restrictive Swedish refugee policy but also to a new form of exploitation in a kind of hidden economy (Schierup, Hansen & Castles 2006). The experience of social exclusion among Kurdish asylum seekers in Sweden is significant as many rejected Kurdish refugees claim that they are in Sweden only to work and pay taxes, without being protected by the juridical and political institutions of the country. This is a reference to those Kurdish asylum seekers who continue to keep their “white” jobs even after the closure of their asylum dossiers.

In France, the tradition of an informal labor market is of much longer standing than in Sweden, with constant references to the presence of a large number of hidden (*clandestins*) and undocumented (*sans papiers*) workers. Diasporic narratives of the Sarhadi Kurds provide evidence that they have been exploited over several years in various building sites in the department of Bouches-du-Rhône, while remaining totally “invisible”. Their status as “eternal” asylum seekers gives them no

other choice than to remain in their current activity areas almost permanently. This can be seen as a kind of “house arrest”, as the way in which they live detaches them from mainstream society and its institutions. However, this study shows that the vulnerable position that the Sarhadi Kurds occupy in the building sectors of the Provence embodies not only substantial social exclusion, ethnic discrimination and racism but also an increasingly fragmented and polarized employment market that is to a certain extent a consequence of globalization and industrial restructuring (Castles & Miller 1998). In any case, Sarhadi Kurds experience much harsher conditions of life than their fellow Kurds in Sweden.

Even though Kurdish refugees and immigrants in Sweden do not define their identity in opposition to that of the Swedes (Alinia 2004), there is considerable distrust toward Swedish integration policy and the social position that the Kurds occupy in Swedish society. This distrust is much more openly expressed among second-generation diasporan Kurds as, in contrast to their parents, they conceive of their “Kurdishness” differently and also define their “positionality” vis-à-vis Swedish society differently.

It has been shown that the experience of social exclusion, housing segregation and discrimination is discernable among diasporan Kurds in Sweden. For instance, we have observed that the rate of unemployment among those Kurdish refugees who obtained residence permits in the 1990s was much higher than the national average. The Swedish labor and housing markets, which largely reflect ethnic and cultural divisions, did not appear to be advantageous to the Kurds. Moreover, even though the case of the Kurdish taxi drivers was far from fully explained by economic poverty and exploitation, the presence of a large number of diasporan Kurds in this domain of services illustrates the ethnic divisions in the Swedish labor market (Schierup & Paulsson 1994). As a result, we have discerned “Kurdish jobs” in the taxi service sector and restaurant and pizzeria business for Kurdish males, and likewise in the domains of childcare, care for the elderly, shop assistance and home help services for Kurdish females. As for the housing position of diasporan Kurds, this study has found that the greater part of them live in ethnically segregated suburban areas of Stockholm and Gothenburg.

The ascription of so-called “honor killings” to diasporan Kurds in Sweden was a further negative experience portrayed by this study. There has been allusion to some specific cases, where Kurdish girls were brutally killed by male members of their families. For instance, the murder of Pela Atroschi in 1999 and Fedime Shahindal in 2002 triggered a widespread debate in Sweden (Berruti *et al.* 2002). Consequently, a negative image of Kurds and Kurdish culture was

projected in the Swedish media. Moreover, the assassination of the former Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme in 1986 was connected to the PKK. As a result, several Kurds became the subject of police interrogations and judicial inquiries, and a number were placed under “municipality arrest”.

The experience of social exclusion and ethnic discrimination among diasporan Kurds in France is, however, more shocking than that in Sweden, not least when one cites the conditions of life in the *banlieues* (suburbs). Unlike in the Swedish suburbs in many respects, the French *banlieues* have since the end of the so-called “thirty years of economic prosperity” (*trente glorieuses*) and the following economic breakdown experienced unprecedented social degradation and ethnic segregation. Numerous riots and clashes have been the most visible form of the protest mounted continuously by the youths in the *banlieues*. For instance, the *banlieue* uprising of November 2005 was not only one of the most extensive and the most impressive among the perpetual suburban conflicts in France but was also the source of new reflections and new angles of approach that questioned the entire French national model of integration (Murray 2006). French *banlieues* are a striking example of a concrete link not only between economic recession and housing decay but also between the “racialization” and “ethnicization” of political power and the rejection of “Other” identities in public spheres. The *banlieue* riots of 2005 showed the way in which France, determined as it is to suppress the identity, culture and religion of its ethnic populations, has inadvertently and unwittingly created communities that have become united in their misery and now in resistance (Murray 2006). In this respect, diasporan Kurds in France are directly concerned as they form one of the major resident populations of the *Cité des 3,000* and as Kurdish youth of the *cité* participated actively in the *banlieue* riots of 2005. In the case of the French *banlieues*, ethnic segregation and social degradation largely coincide, while the Swedish suburbs, no matter how ethnically segregated they are, manifest a level of social and economic dynamism.

As far as Swedish national identity is concerned, it is assumed, both explicitly and implicitly, that Sweden for a long time was perceived as an ethnically “homogeneous” country (Johansson 1999). The consequence of such a perception has been that the social and political relationship between native Swedes and non-nationals – above all non-nationals from culturally and ethnically distant regions and countries – has become largely ethnicized. The rise of Islamophobia in the country as a consequence of global conflicts and the “anti-terrorist” war that broke out after 11 September 2001 (Larsson 2005) and the publication of Mohammad cartoons in the Danish paper *Jyllands-Posten*

has further aggravated circumstances for non-natives and consequently reinforced racial and ethnic boundaries in the society.

Despite its international reputation for promoting human rights and democratic values, Sweden bears witness to increasing racism, xenophobic attitudes and discrimination. We have also seen that ideas about “Swedishness” and who is to be a Swede or, conversely, “not” a Swede persist in post-*folkhem* Swedish society (Mattsson 2005). Today, however, it is generally accepted that more than one million of the country’s population have other identities than the traditional Swedish one. But this acceptance is not adequate to hold back the dichotomized perception of the “Other” and “Self” and thus persuade the mainstream nationalist discourse to conceive of the notion of “Swedishness” in more comprehensive and inclusive ways. In this sense, Sweden is not perceived as a homogeneous whole but as a country inhabited by two different populations that live, not necessarily together, but side by side. There are, as Rune Johansson has put it, a “homogeneous Swedish native population” on the one hand and immigrant groups on the other (Johansson 1999). However, despite its obvious limitations, Swedish “minorities policy” is more favorable to the Kurds than the French integration policy, as it generally makes it possible for non-native ethnic populations to preserve their identity of “origin”.

This study has also shown that many critical voices have been raised against the way France perceives its national identity and consequently conceives of its national model of integration. For instance, the French nation-state has been criticized for being rhetorical as it promotes its republican, secular, individualist, universalist and egalitarian characteristics, which in reality are mono-cultural (Khosrokhavar 2001) and paradoxical and exclusionary toward non-native nationals. We have discussed how France’s modern politics of citizenship is rooted in the country’s racialized colonial legacy. We have seen that, in such an assimilationist context there is no room for claims to the “right of dissimilarity” (*droit à la différence*) in the country’s public spheres. As one of the most important areas for the formation of national citizens, French schools continue to resist so-called ethnic challenges (Lorcerie 2003) and cultural diversity.

Moreover, the study has shown that in France the differentialist perspective on immigration yields successively to assimilation in a very subtle and sophisticated way (Brubaker 2001); while the false perception of “color-blindness” obscures the historical realities of ethnic and racial identity in terms of colonial constructions of “otherness” (Jugé & Perez 2006). Likewise, it has been seen how in France non-native and non-white subjects have always been perceived as *étrangers* (foreigners) and as the source of continuous societal

“problems”; problems which should be solved through the interventions of public institutions and actors (Grillo 1985). Moreover, we have seen how the xenophobic National Front has occupied a large section of the country’s social and political field (Schain 1988) and how the ethnic youths of the *banlieues* have struggled by means of their violent riots to manifest their dissatisfaction against racism, discrimination and Islamophobia (Murray 2006). We have also seen how the Sarhadi Kurds in the French context were given very limited cultural and material resources, which left them unable to overcome their inferior position in the society’s social hierarchy.

As has been shown, there are numerous dimensions of discrimination and stigmatization of ethnic groups in Sweden and France. In France, racialized practices are transferred from the country’s colonial past to its state institutions, while in Sweden racist tendencies are rooted in Swedish democracy and Swedish state institutions (Dahlstedt 2005). In both nations the notion of “Otherness” is determined by the native power holders, in a “grey zone” created on the demarcation line between natives and non-natives.

Maintaining racism and discrimination against certain ethnic groups is a way for the dominant ethnic groups in the host societies to sustain and reinforce their self-perception and identity. Immigrant and refugees are placed in a special situation, where there is, according to Zigmund Bauman, a steady interplay between two forms of behavior, or two strategies, which are set up by the majority population. The first is an *anthropophagic* strategy, which aims at absorbing, swallowing, or in other words including or assimilating, the foreigner in the society. The second is an *anthropoemic* strategy, which stands for banishing, throwing out and denying, or in other words excluding, the foreigner from the society. The outcome of the interaction between these two divergent strategies is the emergence of a social space whose conditions and frameworks are determined by the dominant ethnic group in order to mark the boundaries between “us” and “them” (Bauman 1990; Havemann 2005).

There is an unequal division of political, social and economic resources in Swedish society. Even so, the general conditions of Swedish society have been more favorable to the creation of diasporic and transnational structures, *assabiyya* networks and the materialization of the practice of transborder citizenship among diasporan Kurds than has the French mono-cultural national context, which denies ethnic and cultural diversity in the public domain.

Comparatively speaking, the discourse of victim diaspora among diasporan Kurds in Sweden is less tangible as they account for the existence of a highly diversified Kurdish population, the presence of a

Kurdish intelligentsia, an emerging second-generation elite, and the flexibility of the Swedish system vis-à-vis the cultural activities of non-native Swedes.

Persistence of victim diaspora among the Sarhadi Kurds in France

As said above, the victim diaspora discourse among the Sarhadi Kurds appears to be stronger than that among diasporan Kurds in Sweden, owing to a less diversified social composition and a more exclusive political context in France. In this connection, three explanatory factors have been identified.

First, the persistence of the victim diaspora discourse must be seen against the background of the experience of oppression that the Sarhadi Kurds retain in their collective memory. One can argue that the politics of denial and assimilation implemented by the Turkish state has left a deep impression on the way i they perceive themselves. Removing their Kurdish identity and history obliges them publicly to be something else, while their real identity was confined to the domain of silence. In this regard, the persistent victim diaspora discourse among the Sarhadi Kurds in France largely corresponds to what Vali designates as the strategy of suppression–silence and absence imposed to the Kurds by the dominant states. The author refers specifically to the case of the Kurds in Turkey and cites the past and the history of the Kurds, which has been “stolen” from them by force. Vali maintains that the Kurds contest the denial, suppression and also the silence that power has imposed on their history to represent the suppression of the Kurds, as if they were absent from history. According to Vali, the modern Turkish historical discourse deprives the Kurds of their subjectivity and confines them to a political void with no voice in their history (Vali 2007).

Second, the social composition of the Sarhadi Kurds in southern France is another constituent factor that slows down the process of change from a negatively conceived victim diaspora into a positively conceived active diaspora (Sheffer 2002). We have seen in earlier chapter that the rural background of the Sarhadi Kurds, together with their low level of education, constitutes a considerable obstacle to their practice of transborder citizenship.

Third, as was shown by this study, the integration context of France does not make things easier for the Sarhadi Kurds. This context, which since the beginning of the 1990s has sought to attain “*immigration zéro*” (Hollifield 1997; Berruti *et al.* 2002), set up a so-called “threshold of tolerance” (*seuil de tolérance*), and to exclude the identity of the non-

native ethnic groups from the public sphere, has not been very propitious for the Sarhadi Kurds and their practice of transborder citizenship.

Assabiyya networks among diasporan Kurds, social mobility in Sweden and the strategy of survival in France

A further contribution of this study is the use of the Ibn-Khaldounian concept of *assabiyya* in a specific Kurdish diasporic context. In its original form, *assabiyya* was a sociological theory of change that considered the difference and hostility between desert-settled tribes (*assabiyya*) and city-settled populations (*umran*) as the motor of history (Spickard 2001; Mirawdeli 2006). *Assabiyya* has been perceived as the manifestation of internal solidarity and “group-feeling” (Spickard 2001) among particular social groups and network allegiances of various sizes, and it appears in the form of tribes, clans, personal relationship, extended families, religious sects, brotherhood formations, and inhabitants of certain places (Roy 1996).

This study claims that the concept of *assabiyya* retains a high level of relevance not only for the Kurds in Kurdistan but also for those in diaspora. As discussed (Chapter 2), Kurdish society is concerned with the persistence of different forms of “group feeling” or *assabiyya*. We have also seen that tribes still are the prominent expression of *assabiyya* in Kurdish society, while certain religious *assabiyya* and Kurdish brotherhood Sufi groups (*taraiqat*) continue to play a role in society (Roy 1996; van Bruinessen 2002). Moreover, this study shows that Kurdish *assabiyya* has, throughout the entire post-war history of the Kurdish nationalist resistance, been the subject of various acts of interference in Iran, Turkey, Syria and Iraq. At the same time as a number of Kurdish tribes, clans and socio-confessional groups were engaged in the Kurdish nationalist movement, one could find other *assabiyya* who rallied regularly to the dominant states (Wimmer 1998).

As has been indicated in this study, part of Kurdish *assabiyya* moved to Western societies when the process of global migration generated the partial deterritorialization and the diasporization of the Kurdish nationalist movement. It has been shown that the arrival of several Kurdish *assabiyya* formations in west European metropolitan areas has not led to their disappearance but rather to their recomposition and reshaping. The emerging Kurdish transnational *assabiyya* endeavors to preserve its social organization and its *doxa*, habitually through sustaining specific economic and political activities and the use of internal genealogical connections or the practice of endogamy.

As for the presence of Kurdish *assabiyya* in France and Sweden, we have seen how several Kurdish solidarity groups have settled in these two countries, used various action modes and developed a number of political and economic strategies. This study has also shown that the Kurdish *assabiyya* formations appear as important political actors as, through their commitment to the Kurdish nationalist movement and to maintaining the practices of long-distance nationalism (Anderson 1992; 1998), they transcend the boundaries of several European nation-states in the diaspora. The comparison conducted in this study has, however, revealed that Sweden and France represent two different contexts when it comes to the social position of Kurdish *assabiyya*.

For instance, we have seen that various Kurdish *assabiyya* formations in Sweden enjoy a relative mobility as they gain access to considerable internal resources in Sweden. Various Kurdish *assabiyyas* in Sweden, be it *Gremîrî* and *Hermessî* in the Swedish town of Borlänge, *Aznawirî* in Västerås or Konya Kurds in Fittja (a Stockholm suburb), have well-developed business networks, mostly in the catering trade in several Swedish localities. The favorable Swedish context has transformed these *assabiyyas* into transnational actors as their economic activities are not limited to Sweden but are extended to the towns or villages in the Kurdish region of Turkey where they originated. On the other hand, the *assabiyyas* of Sarhadi Kurds in the French Bouches-du-Rhône, hampered by the lack of refugee rights and the constraints of a rigid labor market structure, have had to diminish their room for maneuver and to remain confined to the informal building trade of the region in almost total invisibility. The strategy of Sarhadi *assabiyya* is more or less a project of survival.

The practice of transborder citizenship and long-distance nationalism among diasporan Kurds in France and Sweden: Sweden as a center of gravity

The most obvious example of the practice of transborder citizenship in France that has been presented in this study is the Kurdish Institute of Paris. Effectively, the presence of the Kurdish Institute of Paris, with a widespread transnational field, indicates the strong involvement of this organization in the practice of transborder citizenship in France. As a politically unaffiliated institution, the Kurdish Institute of Paris has, since its foundation in 1983, been a meeting place for Kurdish intellectuals and artists who have worked to promote the Kurdish language, history, literature and cultural heritage, mostly through undertaking scientific studies on Kurdish matters and organizing international conferences. It

has also been an agency for dialogue and partnership with a number of west European states and several French and non-French NGOs. Currently, the Kurdish Institute of Paris works as a link between the Kurdish diaspora in the West and Iraqi Kurdistan. However, the practice of transborder citizenship undertaken by the Kurdish Institute of Paris is far from being representative.

As a result of the inflexible nature of France's mono-cultural national model, the practice of "multicultural citizenship" in general and of transborder citizenship among diasporan Kurds in this country is considerably restricted. Comparatively speaking, diasporan Kurds in France are, as this study has shown, less visible in the country's public spheres than is the case in Sweden, and consequently their action modes differ largely from the actions of those Kurds who reside in Sweden. As for the case of Sarhadi Kurds in Bouches-du-Rhône, it has been shown that their institutional activities were rather a result of the PKK's desire for political mobilization in favor of its imprisoned leader Abdullah Öcalan, and also of the politics of "homeland" than of a desire to participate in the political processes of the host country. Apart from a limited number of common actions in support of asylum seekers, the Kurdish umbrella organization Fédération des Associations Kurdes en France and its affiliated La Maison du Peuple Kurde in Marseille have been mostly involved in activities directed at the homeland politics.

As was outlined the long-standing status of Sarhadi Kurds as asylum seeker and the uniform social composition of this population has, together with the constraints of the regional labor market, in effect reduced their professional mobility and thereby their chance to achieve a more active practice of transborder citizenship. Moreover, we have seen that Sarhadi Kurds make use of their *assabiyya* networks largely in reaction to the inadequate integration structures, whereas the Kurdish *assabiyya* in Sweden, making the most of their mobility, appears to act more proactively and to develop comparatively broader social, economic and political strategies.

This study has shown that the political performances of the diasporan Kurds in Sweden displayed the experience of living across the borders of several nation-states. Diasporan Kurds in Sweden have created several umbrella organizations for their many affiliated associations, and established access to a number of satellite TV and radio stations and hundreds of internet sites and chat rooms. Moreover, Sweden has been the place not only for the production of a significant quantity of Kurdish literature but also for the revival of Kurdish culture and the Kurdish language (above all the Kurmanji dialect) (van Bruinessen 1999; 2000). Over their more than two decades in Sweden, Kurds have engaged in an abundance of diverse social, political and cultural activities. Along with

Kurdish access to the cyberspace, these activities have been used as platforms for identity-making and nation-building, which have enabled the Kurds to challenge the existing geographic, political and cultural constraints in Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria. Furthermore, diasporan Kurds in Sweden sustain a range of other activities, such as diplomatic contacts, political demonstrations, electoral campaigns, commemoration and celebration of specific national days, arrangement of festivals, music production, publication of newspapers and reviews, money remittances, and so forth, which create considerable opportunities for preserving and developing the Kurdish identity. It is through such civilian performances – even if they are to a certain extent elitist – that diasporan Kurds in Sweden demonstrate that transborder citizenship is a strong social force across several state borders. As was demonstrated previously, many Kurdish cultural and political personalities in Sweden effectively make use of the available transnational social fields in order to endorse not only their own agendas but also to demonstrate that the social, cultural and political intersection between Sweden and Kurdistan is more of a reality now than ever before.

As has been shown, the Kurdish practice of “long-distance nationalism” and transnational activities in Sweden is more developed than in France on account of a relatively favorable social and political climate and the presence of a relatively large Kurdish intelligentsia in Sweden (van Bruinessen 2000).

In order to make a conceptual distinction between the ways in which diasporan Kurds are involved in the practice of long-distance nationalism in the two countries, it is important to stress that the Kurds in France manifest a form of trans-state long-distance nationalism, which is almost exclusively oriented toward the politics of the homeland, whereas the Kurds in Sweden stand for so-called dual nationalism as they participate more or less in both forms of nationalism (Fitzgerald 2004, quoted in Fox 2005).

However, the involvement of the diasporan Kurds in the practice of long-distance nationalism is largely compatible with the analysis of Zlatko Skrbiš (2001), who argues that as the nationalism of today is partly de-territorialized, as it is also determined by the politics of homeland, diaspora and cyberspace: determinants that are equally valid locations of long-distance nationalism. In Skrbiš’ view, long-distance nationalism involves not only ethnic conflicts in the homeland but also diaspora settings, migrant policies of host societies and new cultural technologies.

The favorable Swedish political climate toward non-native ethno-cultural populations may be partly connected to the fact that Sweden has long been considered as a country with a worldwide

reputation for its generous and progressive refugee and immigrant politics and for its generous welfare state. In contrast to France, in Sweden non-native identities are tolerated in the public spheres, and ethno-cultural associations are economically supported. The emerging second-generation Kurdish elite, which has assumed an important position in the cultural, social and political institutions of the country, does not hesitate to proclaim its dual political agenda. For instance, the presence of 33 Kurdish candidates for the Swedish Parliament in the country's 2006 general elections displayed a high level of interest in participation in Swedish political processes. In the course of the electoral campaigns, the candidates included both a Swedish integrationist and a Kurdish nationalist discourse in their elections strategies. The difference between Sweden and France in this area is striking. Accordingly, diasporan Kurds benefit from more visibility in the Swedish public spaces that they are accorded in France.

This study has also shown that the practice of transborder citizenship and transnational exchanges among diasporan Kurds in Sweden has been further accelerated by the establishment of a Kurdish autonomous political administration in northern Iraq. With its power of attraction and capacity of absorption, this emerging political entity has often called on diasporan Kurds to actively take part in the process of the reconstruction of Iraqi Kurdistan. Between Iraqi Kurdistan and Sweden there is a range of various transnational exchanges that vary from significant political and cultural performances to regular social and economic activities. The establishment of a direct flight-connection between Stockholm and Irbil has further facilitated the practice of transborder citizenship between the two socio-geographic entities.

Final words

This study can be seen not only as a criticism of the current Kurdish nationalist discourse and its essentialist/historicist outlook but also as an alternative approach to considering the struggle of the Kurds against the politics of denial not as a matter of history but as an issue of power relations and human rights. It also can be seen also as a voice of those diasporan Kurds who want to see democratic change in Kurdish politics. Moreover, this study is a way to claim that contemporary diasporas are not uniquely about the experience of oppression and trauma in the "homeland of origin" but also about concrete and tangible network formations and institutional activities that take place in both time and space. The struggle of an excluded ethnic group to achieve its national

rights can be transferred through its diasporan population not only to other physical places but also to the world “on air” and “online”.

By reference to the questions of this study, we have seen the Kurds in France and Sweden conceive their diasporic discourse differently at the same time as they choose different modes of action. Due to their uniform social background and the exclusionary French political environment, the Sarhadi Kurds in the region of Marseille maintain a tangible victim diaspora discourse at the same time as the practice of transborder citizenship remains limited among them. As the Kurds in Sweden are socially and politically diversified, and as they live in the more favorable Swedish political environment, they maintain not only a flexible diaspora discourse but also a more highly developed practice of transborder citizenship than the Sarhadi Kurds in France. Accordingly, one can conclude that even though many diasporan populations in west European countries experience in one way or another discrimination and social exclusion, regardless of which kind of integration model the countries of residence apply, a “multicultural” integration model appears to be more advantageous to the development of diasporic structures than an “assimilationist” model”.

It has been shown that each diaspora is partly unique and has its specific characteristics as well as similarities with other diasporas. This is why each ethnographic investigation may lead to new theoretical developments in the domain of diaspora. This was a reason to compare France and Sweden, in order to see how the processes of diaspora formation and the practice of transborder citizenship vary from context to context. As the Swedish context appeared to be more favorable to the creation of diasporic structures among the Kurds, it can be accordingly used as a relevant example concerning the further promotion of the concept of transborder citizenship.

Through referring to the practice of transborder citizenship, this study has shown how various Kurdish personalities, networks, associations and affiliations to political parties act both beyond and within Sweden and Kurdistan where they constantly define and redefine their positions and attitudes through adopting a device of multiple allegiances. Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that a significant number of Kurdish personalities in Sweden effectively use the transnational social zones which are constituted at the intersection of the two political and geographical entities in order to promote their own agendas: agendas that are automatically integrated parts of a larger Kurdish transnational performance. This was a way to understand that this kind of Kurdish twofold agenda is not fully compatible with the “traditional” understanding of national belongingness; it involves instead a set of sophisticated political, social and cultural performances beyond

the legal and juridical boundaries of citizenship and even beyond the notion of dual citizenship. This study has also outlined that the idea of return is one-sided and consequently less compatible with the complex notion of transborder citizenship, which claims the presence of refugees and immigrants both here and there and their right to be social and cultural citizens of multiple states. Moreover, it has been shown that the establishment of a Kurdish autonomous administration in northern Iraq contributes substantially to the promotion of the practice of transborder citizenship among diasporan Kurds.

Up to the present, the concept of transborder citizenship has been a theory of participation. Now it is time to make it a theory of representation, too. Achieving transborder citizenship is not possible unless the transborder citizen is fully accepted as an equal social, political, economic, cultural and juridical subject in Western societies. For instance, in Sweden non-native ethnic populations benefit from the kind of “minority rights” that are helpful in creating and promoting diasporic structures but far from a guarantee for achieving full representation in the society’s public spheres. Even though one can on certain occasions find new figures in the state institutions (TV included), this “phenotypical promotion” will remain superficial unless the cultures and identities of non-native populations are included in the mainstream identity and culture of the nation. It is only in such a situation that the conditions for the new form of citizenship will be established; because it will, as A. Vali maintains, promote the representation of the “marginal” and her or his excluded identity in the political and legal processes of the country. The conditions of citizenship are not genuinely changed unless the “ethnic” identity of the sovereign state as well as the ethnic identity of political power in the democratic polity has changed (Vali 2003). The new conditions of citizenship transform the sovereign state from a mono-ethnic institution into a civic institution where all identities of the democratic polity are represented.

As for France, this country continues to resist every claim to “the right to be different” (*droit à la différence*) and in such a social climate Sarhadi Kurds continue to remain as always on the society’s periphery of peripheries.

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