Turun yliopisto
University of Turku

NEGOTIATING HOME AND BELONGING

Young Kurds in Finland

Mari Toivanen

TURUN YLIOPISTON JULKAISUJA – ANNALES UNIVERSITATIS TURKUENSIS
Sarja - ser. B osa - tom. 389 | Humaniora | Turku 2014

University of Turku

Faculty of Social Sciences
Department of Social Research
Division of Sociology

Supervised by

Suvi Keskinen, Ph.D
Associate Professor
Department of Social Research
University of Turku
Finland

Elina Oinas, Ph.D
Associate Professor
Department of Political and Economic Studies
University of Helsinki
Finland

Seppo Pöntinen, Ph.D
Emeritus Professor
Department of Social Research
University of Turku
Finland

Reviewed by

Floya Anthias, Ph.D
Professor
Department of Sociology
University of East London
United Kingdom

Khalid Khayati, Ph.D.
Researcher
Department of Social and Welfare Studies
Linköping University
Sweden

Opponent

Garbi Schmidt, Ph.D
Professor
Department of Culture and Identity
University of Roskilde
Denmark

The originality of this thesis has been checked in accordance with the University of Turku quality assurance system using the Turnitin OriginalityCheck service.

ISBN 978-951-29-5808-5 (PRINT)
ISBN 978-951-29-5809-2 (PDF)
ISSN 0082-6987
Painosalama Oy - Turku, Finland 2014

ABSTRACT

Toivanen, Mari
Negotiating home and belonging: Young Kurds in Finland
Turku, Finland: University of Turku, 2014

This study looks at negotiation of belonging and understandings of home among a generation of young Kurdish adults who were born in Iraq, Iran, and Turkey and who reached adulthood in Finland. The young Kurds taking part in the study belong to the generation of migrants who moved to Finland in their childhood and early teenage years from the region of Kurdistan and elsewhere in the Middle East, then grew to adulthood in Finland.

In theoretical terms, the study draws broadly from three approaches: transnationalism, intersectionality, and narrativity. Transnationalism refers to individuals' cross-border ties and interaction extending beyond nation-states' borders. Young people of migrant background, it has been suggested, are raised in a transnational space that entails cross-border contacts, ties, and visits to the societies of departure. How identities and feelings of belonging become formed in relation to the transnational space is approached with an intersectional frame, for examination of individuals' positionings in terms of their intersecting attributes of gender, age/generation, and ethnicity, among others. Focus on the narrative approach allows untangling how individuals make sense of their place in the social world and how they narrate their belonging in terms of various mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion, including institutional arrangements and discursive categorisation schemes.

The empirical data for this qualitative study come from 25 semi-structured thematic interviews that were conducted with 23 young Kurdish adults living in Turku and Helsinki between 2009 and 2011. The interviewees were aged between 19 and 28 years at the time of interviewing. Interview themes involved topics such as school and working life, family relations and language-learning, political activism and citizenship, transnational ties and attachments, belonging and identification, and plans for the future and aspirations. Furthermore, data were collected from observations during political demonstrations and meetings, along with cultural get-togethers. The data were analysed via thematic analysis.

The findings from the study suggest that young Kurds express a strong sense of 'Kurdishness' that is based partially on knowing the Kurdish language and is informed by a sense of cultural continuity in the diaspora setting. Collective Kurdish identity narratives, particularly related to the consciousness of being a marginalised 'other' in the context of the Middle East, are resonant in young interviewees' narrations of 'Kurdishness'. Thus, a sense of 'Kurdishness' is drawn from lived experiences indexed to a particular politico-historical context of the Kurdish diaspora movements but also from the current situation of Kurdish minorities in the Middle East.

On the other hand, young Kurds construct a sense of belonging in terms of the discursive constructions of 'Finnishness' and 'otherness' in the Finnish context. The racialised boundaries of 'Finnishness' are echoed in young Kurds' narrations and position them as the 'other' – namely, the 'immigrant', 'refugee', or 'foreigner' – on the basis of embodied signifiers (specifically, their darker complexions). This study also indicates that young Kurds navigate between gendered expectations and norms at home and outside the home environment. They negotiate their positionings through linguistic repertoires – for instance, through mastery of the Finnish language – and by adjusting their behaviour in light of the context. This suggests that young Kurds adopt various forms of agency to display and enact their belonging in a transnational diaspora space.

Young Kurds' narrations display both territorially-bounded and non-territorially-bounded elements with regard to the relationship between identity and locality. 'Home' is located in Finland, and the future and aspirations are planned in relation to it. In contrast, the region of Kurdistan is viewed as 'homeland' and as the place of origins and roots, where temporary stays and visits are a possibility. The emotional attachments are forged in relation to the country (Finland) and not so much relative to 'Finnishness', which the interviewees considered an exclusionary identity category. Furthermore, identification with one's immediate place of residence (city) or, in some cases, with a religious identity as 'Muslim' provides a more flexible venue for identification than does identifying oneself with the (Finnish) nation.

Keywords: belonging, home, identity, Kurdish, young adults, transnationalism, intersectionality, narrativity

TIIVISTELMÄ (ABSTRACT IN FINNISH)

Toivanen, Mari
Neuvottelua kuulumisesta ja kodista – kurdinuoret Suomessa
Turku: Turun yliopisto, 2014

Tämä tutkimus tarkastelee Irakin, Iranin ja Turkin alueelta lähtöisin olevien kurditaustaisten nuorten neuvotteluja kodista ja kuulumisesta sekä niiden ylirajaisesta rakentumisesta suhteessa niin suomalaiseen yhteiskuntaan, heidän asuinympäristöönsä kuin lähtömaihinsa. Tutkimukseen osallistuneet nuoret ovat muuttaneet Kurdistanin ja Lähi-idän alueelta Suomeen lapsuusvuosina tai varhaisessa teini-iässä ja saavuttaneet aikuisiän Suomessa asuessaan.

Tutkimuksen teoreettinen viitekehys kiinnittyy laajasti transnationalismin, intersektionaalisuuden ja narratiivisuuden käsitteelliselle kentälle. Transnationalismi tai ylirajaisuus viittaa yksilöiden kansallisvaltioiden rajat ylittäviin suhteisiin ja toimintaan. Transnationaalissa tutkimuksessa maahanmuuttajataustaisten nuorten on nähty toimivan ylirajaisessa tilassa, jonka muodostavat valtion rajat ylittävät kontaktit, tunnesiteet ja säännölliset vierailut lähtömaahan. Nuorten toimijuutta transnationaalissa tilassa lähestytään intersektionaalisuuden kehyksellä. Tämä tarkoittaa sitä, että yksilön identiteetin nähdään muodostuvan suhteessa muun muassa hänen sukupuoleensa, etniseen taustaansa ja ikäänsä/sukupolveensa sekä näiden tekijöiden yhteisvaikutukseen. Narratiivinen lähestymistapa valottaa niitä merkityksiä, joita yksilöt liittävät heidän toimintaansa ja sitä, miten eksklusiiviset ja inklusiiviset mekanismit kuten toiseuttavat diskurssit ja institutionaaliset järjestelyt mahdollisesti vaikuttavat näihin merkityksenantoprosesseihin.

Tutkimuksen empiirinen aineisto koostuu kahdestakymmenestäviidestä puolistrukturoidusta teemahaastattelusta, joita varten haastattelin kahtakymmentäkolmea kurditaustaista nuorta Turussa ja Helsingissä vuosien 2009 ja 2011 välisenä aikana. Tutkimukseen osallistuneet olivat haastatteluhetkellä iältään 19–28-vuotiaita nuoria aikuisia. Haastatteluteemoihin kuuluivat koulutus ja työelämä; perhesuhteet ja kieli; poliittinen aktivismi ja kansalaisuus; ylirajaiset suhteet ja toiminta; kuuluminen ja identiteetti; tulevaisuuden suunnitelmat ja toiveet. Tämän lisäksi aineistoon sisältyy havainnointimateriaalia, joka on kerätty poliittisista mielenosoituksista ja kokouksista sekä kulttuuritapahtumista. Aineisto on analysoitu teema-analyysimenetelmää käyttäen.

Tutkimustulokset osoittavat, että “kurdilaisuus” muodostaa keskeisen osan tutkimukseen osallistuneiden nuorten identiteettiä. “Kurdilaisuutta” ammennetaan kurdikielen osaamisesta ja kulttuurisen jatkuvuuden tunteesta osana kurdidiasporayhteisöä. Kollektiiviset kertomukset kurdi-identiteetistä toistuvat nuorten identiteettipuheessa, varsinkin suhteessa kurdivähemmistöjen asemaan kansallisena “toisena” lähtömaissa. “Kurdilaisuuden” tunne rakentuu myös suhteessa Lähi-idän alueella asuvien kurdivähemmistöjen tämänhetkiseen tilanteeseen sekä omiin kokemuksiin, jotka ankkuroituvat kurdidiasporan poliittis-historialliseen kehykseen.

Toisaalta kuulumisen tunne rakentuu nuorten kertomuksissa suhteessa ”suomalaisuuden” sekä “toiseuden” diskursiivisiin konstruktioihin. Nuorten puheessa kaikuvat “suomalaisuuden” rodullistetut reunaehdot, jotka asemoivat heidät “toisiksi” ja “suomalaisuuteen” kuulumattomaksi fyysisten piirteiden perusteella. “Suomalaisuuden” toiseksi näyttävät asemoituvan “maahanmuuttaja”-, “pakolainen”- ja “ulkomaalainen”-kategoriat, joihin kurdinuoret sijoitetaan jokapäiväisessä kanssakäymisessä. Tämä tutkimus osoittaa myös, että kurdinuoret navigoivat eri sosiaalisten tilanteiden edellyttämien (sukupuolitettujen) normien ja käyttäytymissääntöjen mukaan kodin sisä- ja ulkopuolella. Kurdinuoret käyttävät kielitaitoaan ja tuntemusta “kulttuurillisista koodeista” sopeutuakseen eri sosiaalisten tilanteiden vaatimiin edellytyksiin, ja näin ollen omaksuvat toimijuuden erilaisia muotoja toimiessaan transnationaalissa tilassa.

Paikka ja eritoten välitön asuinympäristö näyttäytyvät merkittävänä nuorten identiteettineuvotteluissa. Tässä mielessä kodiksi mielletään Suomi, ja esimerkiksi tulevaisuuden suunnitelmat laaditaan suhteessa Suomeen. Kotimaata edustaa Kurdistan, jossa sijaitsevat juuret ja oma alkuperä, ja jonne lyhytkestoiset vierailut ovat mahdollisia. Kuuluvuutta rakennetaan tässä suhteessa pikemminkin “suomalaisuuden” sijaan Suomeen paikkana, sillä edellisen koetaan olevan poissulkeva kategoria. Tämän lisäksi osa kurdinuorista tuntee kuuluvuutta välittömään asuinympäristöönsä eli kaupunkiinsa ja jossain tapauksissa myös uskonnollisiin yhteisöihin. Nämä vaihtoehtoiset identifioitumisen kohteet näyttäytyvät joustavampina verrattuna kansallisiin identiteetteihin kuten “suomalaisuuteen”.

Avainsanat: kuuluminen, koti, identiteetti, kurdi, diaspora, nuoret aikuiset, ylirajaisuus, intersektionaalisuus, narratiivisuus

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT 3
TIIVISTELMÄ (ABSTRACT IN FINNISH) 4
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 7
LIST OF ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS 8
ABBREVIATIONS 9

1. Introduction 11
  1.1. Background of the study 11
  1.2. The main objectives and the research questions 14

PART I: THEORY AND METHODOLOGY 19

2. Theorising belonging and home – the generational dynamics 21
  2.1. Transnational, national, and local foci – framing the theoretical stepping stones 21
    2.1.1. Transnational space, generation, and translocationality 23
    2.1.2. Diaspora, the diaspora space, and the Kurds 25
  2.2. On the intersectional approach 28
    2.2.1. Narrations of belonging and non-belonging 30
    2.2.2. Belonging and the politics of belonging 32
  2.3. Belonging, home, and identity – clarification of concepts 34
    2.3.1. Home, homeland, and locality 35
    2.3.2. Negotiation of identities and the boundaries of belonging 37

3. The research process and the methodological premises 41
  3.1. Research into belonging and identity – the constructionist approach 41
    3.1.1. On language and narrativity 43
  3.2. The methods, data, and research process 45
    3.2.1. Description of the data and the interviewees 46
    3.2.2. The process of data collection and analysis 48
  3.3. Sensitivity and reflexivity 52
    3.3.1. Ethics considerations 52
    3.3.2. Positionalities – intersectional reflections 54

PART II: THE SOCIO-HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXTS 59

4. The Kurdish people and the formation of Kurdish identities 61
  4.1. An introduction to the Kurdish people and the land amidst nation-states 61
    4.1.1. On naming 61
    4.1.2. Kurdistan and the Kurds 62
  4.2. ‘Kurdishness’ as the internal ‘otherness’ in the Middle East 66
    4.2.1. Turkish/Northern Kurdistan 67
    4.2.2. Iraqi/Southern Kurdistan 70
    4.2.3. Iranian/Eastern Kurdistan 72
    4.2.4. Conclusion 75

5. The Kurdish diaspora and the migration of Kurds to Finland 77
  5.1. From Kurdistan to Europe 77
    5.1.1. The Kurdish diaspora in numbers 78
    5.1.2. The departure and journey in historical context – stories behind the figures 79

5.1.3. The transnational dimension of the Kurdish diaspora 84
5.2. Immigration and the context of the Finnish welfare state 86
5.2.1. Immigration waves, policies, and the migration of Kurds to Finland 86
5.2.2. Integration policies – settling, resettling, and learning the language 90
5.2.3. Niches of familiarity – the Kurdish organisations/associations 92
5.3. Societal and discursive setting 94
5.3.1. On national belonging – what ‘Finnishness’? 95
5.3.2. The construction of the ‘immigrant other’ 98

PART III: RESEARCH RESULTS 103
Diasporic consciousness, contested identities, and multiple faces of belonging 103

6. The Kurdish diaspora space 105
6.1. The Kurdish language, ‘Kurdishness’, and cultural continuity 106
6.2. Diaspora associations as platforms for construction of feelings of belonging 108
6.3. Diasporic consciousness 111

7. Positionings and contested belongingness 115
7.1. Racialised identities and terrains of belonging 115
7.2. Gendered negotiations 123

8. Locality, home(land), and networks in a transnational setting 129
8.1. Nation and nation-state in makings of home(s) 129
8.2. Layers of belonging 134

Final words 141

REFERENCES 145
APPENDIXES 157

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation would never have seen daylight without support and motivation from numerous colleagues, friends, and family members. Unfortunately, I cannot list all of these wonderful people, both those I have had the fortune of coming across in the course of the last five years and those with whom I have been acquainted for a longer time. Nevertheless, I would like to thank some of you here, however briefly.

I am greatly indebted to two persons in particular, who, to my good fortune, ended up as my supervisors, Suvi Keskinen and Elina Oinas. They have been not only an integral part of the preparation of this thesis but also the targets of trivial questions and sporadic enquiries on my behalf pertaining to article drafts, funding applications, research proposals, publication procedures, and all the other stuff that makes up the academic jungle. I would like to thank Suvi for her patience, analytical comments, and moral integrity, and Elina for her kindness, enthusiasm, and encouraging words. I also wish to extend my gratitude to Emeritus Professor Seppo Pöntinen, who was my supervisor in the earlier stages of my doctoral studies. A big ‘thank you’ is due also to the two referees of this dissertation, Professor Floya Anthias and Lecturer Khalid Khayati, for very insightful comments on the manuscript.

The Department of Social Research/Sociology at the University of Turku has been a wonderful place to conduct research, not least because of the people working there. I especially would like to thank Jaana Tähti and Marja Andersson for their assistance with all matters administrative, and for their smiles and laughter that often echoed in the corridors of the faculty and made you want to smile yourself. Special thanks go to Paul Jonker-Hoffrén for the numerous lunches after which it felt that the world had become a slightly better place. And for the endless discussions about food and wine – which must have contributed to the latter. I have had the pleasure to get to know great people, both past and current colleagues, including Olli Pyyhtinen, Jukka Vuorinen, Carita Lockmer, Päivi Naumanen, Antti Kouvo, Suvi Salmeniemi, Liisa Lähteenmäki, Johanna Nurmi, Hannu Ruonavaara, Jani Erola, Zeki Kütük, Vanja Lavecchia-Mikkola, Östen Wahlbeck, Tuomas Martikainen, Peter Kivisto, Johanna Leinonen, Benita Heiskanen, and several others. Thank you for the insightful discussions, professionally oriented and otherwise. Over the last five years, I have also had the pleasure of working alongside and learning from Emeritus Professor Auvo Kostiainen, in the FiDiPro project ‘Multiculturalism As a New Pathway to Incorporation’ and two networks: Generations, Multiculturalism and Nordic Identity and the Network for Research on Multiculturalism and Societal Interaction. I would also like to thank the Kurdish Institute of Paris, the Department of Sociology at Istanbul’s Galatasaray University, the City of Turku, Turku University Foundation, the Cultural Foundation, and the Kurdish Cultural Center in Helsinki, all of which offered either funding or facilities for conducting my doctoral research.

Most importantly of all, this dissertation would never have been written without the participation of the enthusiastic and motivated young people who graciously told me about their lives and lived experiences – even about memories that were sometimes visibly painful – but also about their feelings, hopes, and dreams for the future. *Zor supas*. I would also like to thank Barzan Nassery for all of his help.

My very best friends, Markku Pikkarainen and Minna Muikku, deserve a big ‘thank you’ for bearing with me during this process and supporting me in many ways, whether by offering accommodation on journeys involving transit or simply by listening and being there.

Finally but by no means least, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my parents and sisters, Antti, Liisa, Elina and Riitta-Liisa Toivanen: *Kiitän teitä kaikesta siitä tuesta ja kyseenalaistamattomuudesta, jota olette osoittaneet joskus jopa järjettömiltä vaikuttaneiden päätöksieni ja valintojeni kohdalla. Olette myöskin opettaneet minulle sen, mitä ”koti” voi kauneimmillaan tarkoittaa. Kiitokset siitä. Omistan tämän väitöskirjan teille.*

Junassa matkalla Lieksaan, heinäkuussa 2014

LIST OF ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS

I Toivanen, Mari (2013) Language and negotiation of identities among young Kurds in Finland. *Nordic Journal of Migration Research* 1, 27–35.

II Toivanen, Mari (2014a) ‘Adjusting frequencies’ – negotiating belonging among Kurdish youth in Finland. In Martina Topic & Srdjan Sremac (eds) *Europe As a Multiple Modernity: Multiplicity of Religious Identities and Belongings.* Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars’ Publishing.

III Toivanen, Mari (2014b) Political transnationalism as a matter of belongings: Young Kurds in Finland. In Pirkkoliisa Ahponen, Päivi Harinen, & Ville-Samuli Haverinen (eds) *Dislocations – Methodological Nationalism, Transnational Realities and Cosmopolitan Dreams*. Dordrecht, Germany: Springer.

IV Toivanen, Mari & Kivisto, Peter (2014c) Homing desire at the juncture of place and transnational spaces: The case of young Kurds in Finland. *Nordic Journal of Migration Research* 2, 65–72.

The original publications have been reproduced in the Appendix of this thesis with the permission of the copyright holders. All rights reserved.

ABBREVIATIONS

BDP	Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi (Peace and Democracy Party)
ISIS	The Islamic State in Iraq and Syria
KDP	Kurdistan Democratic Party
KDPI	Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan / Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran
KNOLS ry	Kurdistanin Nuorten ja Opiskelijoiden Liitto (Kurdistan Youth and Students' Union)
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government
MIPEX	Migrant Integration Policy Index
PJAK	Partiya Jiyana Azad a Kurdistanê (Party of Free Life of Kurdistan)
PKK	Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan (Kurdistan Workers' Party)
PUK	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
TIES	The Integration of the European Second Generation
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the study

> ***Anecdote 1:***
> *A month after the Parliamentary elections in April 2011, in which the Finns Party* (perussuomalaiset) *enjoyed a landslide victory, Finland won the Men's World Ice Hockey Championships for the second time in its history. The streets of larger Finnish cities were quickly filled with people celebrating the successful match against the Swedish team in what is often referred to as the national sport. There is no doubt that this was a historic event in the minds of the ice-hockey fans in Finland, but it struck another chord too, by sparking a debate in relation to (perceived) migrants, immigration, and multiculturalism in Finland, which had formed one of the central themes of the pre-election debates (Maasilta 2012[1]). For instance, news of migrants (or people of migrant background) celebrating the world championships appeared via certain media outlets[2].*
>
> ***Anecdote 2:***
> *A couple of days after the gold-medal celebration, a friend of mine posted a YouTube clip on Facebook in which young Kurds were celebrating the world championships in front of the railway station in Helsinki. They had parked their car in the car park in front of the station, put on Kurdish music, and started dancing one of the traditional Kurdish dances. Soon they were joined by a couple of young girls, who seemed to be of ethnic Finnish background. The dance consisted of holding hands and dancing that followed a semi-circular path. The first dancer, as is typical in this sort of Kurdish dance, usually holds a cloth in his or her hand and waves it in time with the music as the others follow his or her steps. The leading dancer in the video clip was holding the flag of Finland as others followed his dance moves.*

---

[1] During the elections, however, the immigration-related topics received less attention than had been predicted (Maasilta 2012: 160).

[2] See http://www.iltasanomat.fi/mmkiekko/art-1288389442720.html ('Sinivalkoisissa juhlineet maahanmuuttajat iloitsivat MM-kultayönä', or 'Migrants in blue and white were rejoicing on the night of the world championship').

> ***Excerpt from an interview with Awar[3], a young male interviewee of Kurdish background:***
> *Awar: Well, I am not saying that I am not proud, like proud in the same way [...]. I consider myself as much Finnish as Kurdish [...]. I consider Finland home; I mean I consider it a home at the moment. So I have two homelands, and that's it.*
> *MT[4]: So, they don't exclude each other?*
> *Awar: No. I am pretty proud of Finland; I consider it my homeland. For instance, when there's a game on TV, I'm like really excited [...].*
> *MT: So you support…*
> *Awar: Yes, I support Finland. I go to a pub and watch the game on a big screen and support [the team] with Finns. So I have this in me as well.*
> *MT: Have you been watching the ice-hockey games that are going on now?*
> *Awar: Yes, I have been. Wait a sec; now there was the game where Finland lost 6–1 to the US. It was quite…*
> *MT: Yes, how did it feel then? Quite a loss…*
> *Awar: Well, I had this friend, a Kurd, visiting from Italy. He came to visit me, and he has Italian citizenship. Then he was telling me that Finland had lost. He wanted— knowing how proud I am of Finland and I have shown it to Kurds here as well that I consider myself Finnish and Finland is my home country, so he wanted to tease me because Finland lost [laughs]. So I told him that we have been winning as well, and sometimes you lose. If you don't lose sometimes, you cannot win either.*

Together with the account from Awar – one of the participants in my research – the two anecdotes outline the central themes that cut through the following 200 pages: the question of belonging and home among young people of Kurdish parentage living in Finland. Simultaneously, the excerpts bear evidence of the demographic transformations that have taken place in early 21st-century Finnish society. The number of foreign-language speakers has risen considerably over the last three decades. In late 2013, 5.4% of the total population living in Finland either had migrant parentage or had migrated in the last few decades, whereas the corresponding proportion of 'persons of foreign background'[5] in 1990 stood at 0.7%. This phenomenon very much features a generational dimension, in that the younger generations of migrant parentage (aged 0–30) are considerably over-represented in national statistics on foreign-language speakers (Statistics of Finland 2013a). A growing generation of young adults of diverse backgrounds in Iraq, Iran, Somalia, Russia, Estonia, Sweden, Turkey, and several other geographic locations currently reside in Finland on account of their or their parents' migration experiences. The so-called 'second generation[6]' are coming of age in the

---

[3] The respondents' names have been anonymised, and they have been provided with Kurdish pseudonyms.

[4] Mari Toivanen.

[5] Statistics Finland employs the category 'persons of foreign background' to refer to individuals of migrant parentage who were born outside Finland, although it is highly debatable whether this term can or should be applied for individuals born in Finland of migrant parents or individuals who arrived in Finland during their childhood or teen years.

[6] I have chosen to employ the somewhat disputed notion 'second generation' here to refer to individuals of migrant parentage who were born in the country where their parents have settled.

2010s, and those who arrived as children in the 1990s and early 2000s are now 20–30 years old (Statistics Finland 2013b).

The diversification of the population structure in Finland is reflected in the ways in which migration-related topics are presented in the media debates and various Internet forums, in scholarly studies and publications, and (not least) in politics. Following similar tendencies in other European nations, immigration-related issues such as integration, refugees' reception, and racism have become politicised and fiercely debated in politics, various media, and public discussion in recent years. Some have concluded that, to some extent, 2008, with Finland's municipal elections imminent and the European Parliament elections coming in the following year, marked a qualitative change in migration-related debates, which became highly politicised (Keskinen 2009a). I began my doctoral research in early 2009, and its process largely coincided with the increased 'politicisation' of immigration-related topics in Finland. Most discussion seemed to focus on more recent migration (especially reception of refugees) and the integration of the newly arrived migrants into Finnish society. However, younger generations of migrant parentage have become of increased interest in recent years, with topics such as how they fare in the labour market and in education and the risks of marginalisation underlying several of the discussions (Martikainen & Haikkola 2010).

I consider a number of debates on migration and migrant generations to address directly, though sometimes implicitly, questions of national identity, 'Finnishness', and belonging to the imagined community of 'Finns'. Such constatation sparked the motivation to conduct this study in the first place – to examine how the categories 'us' and 'them' become constructed and how the boundaries related to them become understood. My aim is to explore how such positions of belonging and non-belonging are understood, reformulated, and possibly contested by the individuals, who may have become designated as not belonging to 'the Finnish nation'. The participants in the study I report on here migrated to Finland during their childhood years or in their early teen years in the 1990s and early 2000s. Hence, they have experienced multiple migration trajectories, speak Kurdish and in most cases also the national language(s) of the countries of departure (Arabic, Farsi, and Turkish), are – to varying degrees – politically and religiously affiliated, and in most cases carry childhood memories from the Kurdistan region of the Middle East. This study approaches issues that quite often are spoken of in terms of culture, ethnicity, and identity from the perspective of home and belonging as understood by the research participants themselves

Whilst this study is methodologically situated in the Finnish context, the main aim behind it is to explore how the younger generation belonging to a diaspora community make sense of their lived experiences that are not limited to within the borders of the Finnish nation-state and instead take place in the transnational diaspora space in which they are embedded. Hence, this study also tells of how the younger generation of Kurds in Finland make sense of ‘Kurdishness’ and how they in their articulations (re)formulate the boundaries of both the Finnish and the Kurdish nation.

With this brief introduction complete, I shall now present the main research questions and objectives and sketch out the major theoretical and methodological choices made for the study.

1.2. The main objectives and the research questions

In this work, I examine how young Kurds **narrate** matters related to the themes of home and belonging. This means looking at how the research participants position themselves in terms of various identity categories and how these categories become constructed, contested, and reformulated in their narrations. I have been interested mostly in exploring what meanings young Kurds attach to notions of home and belonging, what home means to them, and how they understand questions related to belonging and non-belonging. The main research questions to be addressed are, therefore, these:

1. *How do young Kurds negotiate, construct, perform, and contest belongingness?*
2. *How do they understand their position within Finnish society and in the Kurdish community/communities?*
3. *What meanings do they attach to the notions of home and homeland?*

Presenting this research in the form of a dissertation structured around various research articles enables focusing on young Kurds’ narrations from several perspectives. The main research questions presented above have been broken down into sub-questions, each of which is tackled in one of the sub-studies covered in the articles. These are henceforth referred to as articles I, II, III, and IV:

Article I How do young Kurds position themselves with and through languages to negotiate belonging between communities and generations? How do they construct identities via linguistic means and repertoires, and how do emotional attachments intertwine with the situational use of linguistic repertoires?[7]

Article II How are the perceived constructions of ‘otherness’ reflected in negotiation and enactments of belonging among young Kurds? What role do religious/ethnic identifications play in this process? Is the rhetoric of nation-state identity politics and immigration discourse echoed in their articulations of belonging?[8]

---

[7] Article I: Toivanen, Mari (2013) Language and negotiation of identities among young Kurds in Finland. *Nordic Journal of Migration Research* 1, 27–35.

Article III What meanings in terms of belonging do transnational political activities entail for the younger generation of Kurds with their origins in diasporic movements? How do states' regulatory powers and transnational actors' memberships in various polities affect transnational political ties and also feelings of belonging?[9]

Article IV What sort(s) of transnational connections do young Kurds encourage? How are their narrations on themes of mobility and identity characterised in relation to both transnational ties and the localities in which they are active?[10]

Young people with migrant background seem to be considered often as being 'trapped' between two cultures – namely, that of their parents and that of the receiving society – and in many cases such juxtaposition weighs on attempts to analyse their identity formation (see Eliassi 2010: 17–18). This is not to say that there exists no pressure for 'assimilation' into the so-called 'mainstream society' on the part of the receiving society or no pressure to maintain certain characteristics that are perceived as elements of 'culture' by members of migrant communities. Nonetheless, such a 'culturalist' approach is problematic and reductionist, as it seems to assume 'cultures' (and ethnicities) to be coherent and static entities with fixed boundaries, with young people of migrant background presumed to cultivate emotional attachments to one of two cultures. Central to the logic underlying a 'culturalist' view of this sort is to consider 'culture' a characteristic possessed by a particular people who reside in a particular territory. With this logic, the relationship between a cultural identity and a locality can become viewed as fixed in a specific time and indexed to a territorially defined reference frame, such as the nation-state. However, closer examination of individual-level experiences of migration, including displacement, settlement, and resettlement, tends to entail problematising this essentialising view of static relationships within the triad of identity, locality, and culture.

Young Kurds' experiences and their articulations of those experiences call into question such 'culturalist' approaches. The social settings in which they have grown up have been largely multilingual and, one could argue, even multi-national. Their past and present experiences are shaped and constituted by multiple travel trajectories; memories of varied places; and cross-border attachments and social relations that, rather than being confined to the contours of one nation-state, geographically, socially, and psychologically extend far beyond nation-states' borders. At the same time, it should be taken into consideration that their experiences may well differ from those of their parents (and most likely do). Indeed, Minoo Alinia and Barzoo Eliassi (2014) argue that the generational and temporal aspects of diaspora communities need to be included in the theoretical and analytical conceptualisations of home(land) and belonging. *How, then, can one **conceptually** approach the lived experiences of young Kurds in such a way as to provide a comprehensive and representative understanding of how they make sense of questions related to home and belonging?*

---

[8] Article II: Toivanen, Mari (2014a) 'Adjusting frequencies' – negotiating belonging among Kurdish youth in Finland, in Martina Topic & Srdjan Sremac (eds) *Europe As a Multiple Modernity: Multiplicity of Religious Identities and Belongings.* Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars' Publishing.

[9] Article III: Toivanen, Mari (2014b) Political transnationalism as a matter of belongings: Young Kurds in Finland, in Pirkko-Liisa Ahponen, Päivi Harinen, & Ville-Samuli Haverinen (eds) *Dislocations – Methodological Nationalism, Transnational Realities and Cosmopolitan Dreams*. Dordrecht, Germany: Springer.

[10] Article IV: Toivanen, Mari & Kivisto, Peter (2014c) Homing desire at the juncture of place and transnational spaces: The case of young Kurds in Finland. *Nordic Journal of Migration Research* 2, 65–72.

I find the transnational frame a useful starting point in this regard. Since the 1990s, migrants' experiences have been increasingly approached and conceptualised within the transnationalist frame, which emphasises the economic, socio-cultural, and political networks that individuals and groups foster across nation-states' borders (Vertovec 2009). More importantly, the transnationalist paradigm shift seems to have opened doors to alternative theorisations schemata for studying the dynamics of social relations, memberships, and identities as experienced by migrants' children (see Levitt 2009). For instance, scholars of transnational studies have examined the scope of migrant children's transnational ties and connections oriented to their or their parents' societies of departure (Portes & Rumbaut 2001; Levitt & Glick Schiller 2004), along with the implications of growing up in a transnational environment with respect to questions of home and belonging (Levitt 2009).

On the other hand, 'transnationalism' has constituted 'an awkward dance partner' with 'diaspora' (Bauböck & Faist 2010: 9–10). More commonly employing theory to do with national or religious groups and their relationships to the homeland (*ibid.*), academic studies that examine the forming of identity among the 'second generation' in diaspora communities (see Cressey 2006; King & Christou 2008) have raised the question of the extent to which subsequent generations in diaspora movements can be treated – and, in extension, conceptualised – as diasporic. In other words, to what extent are the forcible expulsion, the experience of dispersion, and aspirations of return central to the understandings of diaspora? In contrast to more traditional conceptualisations of diaspora (Safran 1991), theoretical frameworks that approach 'diaspora' as a socio-cultural condition and a form of consciousness (Brah 1996; Anthias 1998) have found resonance in studies dealing with the 'second generation'.

My own study's approach to diaspora follows Avtar Brah's (1996: 194) conceptualisation of it as signalling 'multilocationality across geographical, cultural and psychic boundaries'. I feel that a theoretical dialogue with such literature allows one to understand different constructions of ‘otherness’ in the context both of the Middle East and of Europe/Finland, thereby enabling a multilocal approach to ‘diaspora’ without overemphasizing the significance of the homeland or one locality over another. From this follows a methodological question that simultaneously touches upon the theoretical choices. *How can we gain insights into the lived experiences of individuals who have taken part in diaspora movements at a relatively young age? Secondly, how can we take into account the heterogeneity of such lived experiences and the divergent positions that shape young Kurds’ accounts of home and belonging?*

For this purpose, my study draws from the frames of intersectionality and narrativity both, which together form a broader, cross-cutting methodological and theoretical approach to the phenomenon under study. The intersectional frame is employed to shed light on the various social positionings from which (and in relation to which) articulations of home and belonging are made. The feminist literature on intersectionality, especially the theory of Floya Anthias, constitutes the central conceptual lens through which I examine the intersecting attributes of gender, ethnicity, and age/generation in the analysis of young Kurds’ narrations. Furthermore, intersectionality is employed as a methodological tool for discussion and reflection upon researcher positionality.

The question of how these intersecting social categories and individuals’ belonging of whatever sort interrelate with their lived experiences and how they give meaning to who they are and where they ‘belong to’ is approached with the narrative frame. Narrativity is understood as a concept of social epistemology (Somers & Gibson 1994) and constitutive to the ways individuals make sense of and construct their identities through language and narratives. The data feature biographical elements in the form of young Kurds’ life stories related to departure, arrival, and settlement, which are illustrated with excerpts in the contextualisation material but also addressed more thoroughly in the analysis. In addition, these narratives are considered to be ways for young Kurds to make sense of their position in the social world, and they are approached as positionings, acts of participation, and articulations of identity that are enunciated in a particular historical and socio-political setting. In this sense, the analysis of young Kurds’ narrations is interwoven with an overview of the socio-political and historical settings in which their displacement occurred just as much as where their narrations were articulated.

As for its contribution to the international migration research dealing with younger generations of migrant background, this study is designed to add to the theory for examination of the ways in which home and belonging are conceptualised in the case of young people who have grown up in a transnational diaspora context. For this purpose, the theoretical and methodological frames adopted draw from transnational and diaspora studies and also from the intersectional and narrative approaches. Empirically, this qualitative study's findings point toward the significance of national contexts, the discursive spaces involved, collective identities, and forms of inclusion/exclusion, along with more globally constructed social hierarchies betwixt which young Kurds in Finland make sense of their lived experiences and at the same time negotiate their (non-)belongingness and formulate understandings of home(land).

Furthermore, this research is aimed at contributing to the growing body of literature on identity formation among young people with migrant backgrounds in Finland (see Alitolppa-Niitamo 2004; Hautaniemi 2004; Rastas 2005; Martikainen & Haikkola 2010; Haikkola 2012), along with the field of Kurdish studies and, more specifically, the growing body of work on the Kurdish diaspora conducted in the Nordic context. In Sweden, mainly because of the Kurdish community there with its longer history and large size, research on Kurds has been quite abundant (Alinia 2004; Emanuelsson 2005; Khayati 2008; Eliassi 2010). Eliassi's study (2010) of young Kurds' identity formation in Sweden deals with issues especially similar to those tackled in my study. Doctoral-level research conducted on Kurds in Finland, however, has remained largely limited to Östen Wahlbeck's (1999) comparative work on Kurdish refugee communities in Finland and England. Apart from master's theses that have dealt with young Kurds' identity formation and the Kurdish diaspora in Finland[11], this is the first doctoral-level study (to my knowledge) to consider the generation of young Kurds in the Finnish context.

The next 140-odd pages of this work are structured in the following way: the first part presents the theoretical and methodological premises underlying this study, while the second part outlines the socio-historical and political frames within which the Kurdish diaspora and the settlement of Kurds in Finland may be placed. In the third part, the results of the research conducted for the four articles are organised appropriately for this dissertation and discussed in further detail. Finally, I consider their relevance in a larger societal frame.

---

[11] Lehtonen, Elina (2004) *Kurdit Turussa. Yhteisöllisyyden rakentuminen diasporassa* ['Kurds in Turku. The construction of community in diaspora']. Tampere, Finland: Department of Sociology and Social Psychology, University of Tampere; Salovaara, Ulla (2004) *Kahden vaiheilla. Kurdinuorten elämää diasporassa* ['In between the two: The life of young Kurds in diaspora']. Jyväskylä, Finland: Department of Social Sciences and Philosophy, University of Jyväskylä.

PART I: THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

2. Theorising belonging and home – the generational dynamics

2.1. Transnational, national, and local foci – framing the theoretical stepping stones

In the first section of this chapter, I provide a brief overview of the transnational theorisation and a discussion of how the younger generations with migrant background are approached with the paradigm (Levitt 2009). On the other hand, it examines at the same time the role of nation-states and national contexts in terms of individuals' transnational connections, practices, and emotional attachments, along with how they are positioned in different social hierarchies at the global, (trans)national, and local levels. Against these transnational, national, and local dynamics, I will discuss the concepts of (trans)localitionality as outlined by Anthias (2012) and of diaspora space as understood by Brah (1996). The frames of intersectionality and narrativity (see Somers & Gibson 1994; Anthias 2002; Yuval-Davis 2006a) are employed as broad theoretical (and methodological) approaches to the phenomenon studied, and they are explored at greater length in the second section of the chapter. Then, the final section extends the theoretical discussion to the interrelated concepts of home, identity, and belonging and the relevance of these in studies considering the younger generations with a migrant background.

The need for a new theoretical framework for study of international migration prompted the emergence of the transnationalist paradigm in the early 1990s (Vertovec 2009). The classical and rather general definition of transnationalism as 'processes by which immigrants build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement' was articulated first by Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch, and Christina Szanton Blanc (1992: 1). They conceptualised 'transmigrants' as individuals who 'develop and maintain multiple relations – familial, economic, social, organizational, religious, and political that span borders' but also as actors who 'make decisions, and feel concerns, and develop identities within social networks that connect them to two or more societies simultaneously' (*ibid.*). Linked to processes of globalisation, theorisation on migrant transnationalism has emphasised the cross-border contacts that migrants maintain even after migration processes (see Glick Schiller *et al.* 1992).

Notably, transnational theorisation has been considered a counter-current of methodological nationalism, referring to the tendency of researchers to adopt nation/state/society as the primary unit of analysis. Andreas Wimmer and Nina Glick Schiller argue in their famous piece on methodological nationalism (2002) that there exist parallels between the nationalist thinking and the conceptualisation of migration in the social sciences in the post-world-war era and that, consequently, the studies of transnational migration have been coloured by a nation-state-centred mode of thinking. The plethora of transnationalist theorisation seen nowadays is overwhelming, especially in its focus on migrants' economic, political, socio-cultural, and other types of transnational orientations across nation-states' borders (Vertovec 2009). I will focus mostly on migrant transnationalism as it has been discussed in relation to individual migrant generations and how the transnational paradigm has problematised the relationship between locality and identity formation.

The transnationalist turn is often associated with globalisation processes and in conjunction with technological developments that have been credited with having enhanced transnational migrant connectivities via the introduction of ICT tools and new communication technologies (*ibid.*; Dahinden 2012). For instance, it has been suggested that the technological developments introduce settings in which younger generations of migrant background may maintain and create transnational ties to their and their parents' societies of departure and with members of migrant communities in other countries (see Nikunen 2011). However, a growing body of research suggests that nation-state and locality (place) continue to play an important role in migrants' transnational practices (see Kivisto 2001; Harney & Baldassar 2007). Anthias (2009b: 5) has argued for adoption of a theoretical frame that takes into account the local, national, and transnational: 'a truly transnational perspective needs to locate relations between nations and nationally based social hierarchies as well as those on the global level, and then begin to think about how these are transformed when transnational processes are at work'. Indeed, she aims to include a focus on multiple hierarchical structures and on the interconnectedness of multiple identities by suggesting a translocational approach.

I have employed the transnational frame to apply a broader approach in the four articles. The articles on political transnational activities (III) and transnational ties (IV) among young Kurds provide examples of the kind of transnational connections they foster and of meanings attached to such transnational practices. Article I focuses on the use of languages and how different positions are adopted through the strategic use of languages (and dialects), thus indicating that the scope of analysis cannot be limited to either (trans)national or local contexts. In contrast, the local, national, and transnational lenses need to be incorporated into the analysis. Furthermore, Article II, on religious and ethnic identifications, and Article III, on political activism, highlight the significance of local, national, and transnational contexts in the constitution of gendered and ethnicised subject positions and identity categories.

Within the broader transnational frame, two theoretical questions have underpinned the empirical foci of the four articles. The first is of how the ‘transnational element’ infuses and manifests itself in the everyday lives of young Kurds and particularly in relation to their feelings of belonging. The second is this: how can one take into consideration the role of physical localities, including the local, national, and transnational contexts, in which young Kurds are differently positioned and adopt different positionings? In the following subsections, these questions are examined and elaborated upon in relation to generation, diaspora and translocationality.

2.1.1. Transnational space, generation, and translocationality

One of the most pertinent questions in transnational studies from the generational perspective seems to be whether transnational ties and loyalties still matter beyond the first generation, the actual migrants. There is quite a lot of debate on the importance of transnationalism across generations, particularly with respect to whether transnational ties continue to be significant for migrants’ children. Some researchers consider migrants’ children to express fading interest in transnational attachments (Portes & Rumbaut 2001; Kasinitz *et al*. 2002; Rumbaut 2002), whilst others argue that the cross-border connections persist beyond the first generation (see Glick Schiller *et al*. 1995; Levitt & Glick Schiller 2004).

What is common among these studies is their approach to generation from the perspective of migration experience and in addition to belonging to the same age cohort. Indeed, migration literature is replete with references to the ‘first’, ‘second’, and ‘third’ generation (of migrants), with the first term referring to individuals who migrated as adults, the second to individuals born to migrant parents in the society of settlement, and the third to their descendants (see Rumbaut 2004). However, the self-contradictory term ‘second-generation migrant’ needs to be approached critically on account of its implicit assumptions as to (national) origins, ‘nativeness’, and relations of (non-)belonging. In my own terminology, I occasionally employ the term ‘generation in-between’, which is also used by Alitolppa-Niitamo (2004) in her research on young Somalis in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. The term refers to individuals who share the experience of migration having taken place in their childhood and early teenage years. Generation is, therefore, understood as making reference to individuals who belong to the same age cohort and who migrated in roughly the same stages in life (in this case, in one's childhood and early teen years) and whose migration experiences have taken place in one particular socio-historical context (in this case, the Kurdish diaspora of the 1990s and early 2000s).

Considering transnational theorisation and generations, Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004) argue that primary emphasis should be on how the 'second generation' (and the **generation in-between** in this case) are reared in a transnational space that entails embeddedness in multiple sets of interconnected networks of social relationships. More specifically, Levitt (2009: 1231) suggests that the 'second generation' are often raised in settings in which the homeland is referenced daily – ideologically, materially, and affectively. She also considers the members of the 'second generation' to be 'socialized directly and indirectly into the asymmetries and disjunctures inherent in the transnational social field and […] part of the cast of characters who resolve them'. One can argue that, besides the 'second generation', also the members of the generation in-between – born in the society of departure and raised in the society of settlement – have grown up in a transnational space that might include affective references and social networks oriented toward the society of departure.

Similar arguments are presented by Anthias (2012: 104), who suggests that for migrants 'who are embedded within two social milieus with different and at times competing normative systems, there are two sets of social relations, such as arrangements and expectations (say around gender, sexuality and behavioural norms, particularly for migrant women and younger migrants) that impact […] their lives'. My study is in line with Anthias's understanding of 'generation' as being fragmented by various social differences, including gender, class, and racialisation, instead of taking it as a unitary category. The concept of generation in-between is understood in these terms without the construction of binary generational relationships with either the 'first' or the 'second generation'. At the same time, this approach narrows the focus to individuals raised in a transnational space who arrived in the country of settlement at a fairly young age but acknowledges that, regardless of belonging to a particular generation, their life experiences and transnational engagements are not unitary and reflect diverse outcomes.

Furthermore, various opportunity structures, mechanisms of inclusion/exclusion, and hierarchies that intertwine at the international, national, and local levels shape the way individuals and various collectivities are positioned, alongside how they take up positionings. Anthias (*ibid.*) argues for adopting a new imaginary to study the complexity of mobilities, and she suggests doing this through the translocational frame to examine how identities are formed within particular social spaces that are hierarchically organised. Such spaces, defined by boundaries and hierarchies, present individuals with forms of inclusion and exclusion, and these should be approached from beyond the national and transnational lenses – hence, she introduces the translocational frame. She warns against polarisation between national and transnational perspectives by suggesting that the transnational perspective ought to move past a focus on the relations between nations and nationally based social hierarchies and take into consideration social hierarchies on a global level. However, for Anthias (2009b: 2) this does not entail ruling out the national lens, 'since it possesses important affective, discursive, experiential and political relations within a global context'.

All four articles employ an analytical approach proceeding from the translocational frame. For instance, Article III, on young Kurds' political transnational activities, most explicitly discusses outcomes of having overlapping memberships in several layers of polities at both local and national levels, the implications of which transcend the confines of the nation-state. Article II focuses on the various identity categories as manifested in young Kurds' narrations that resonate with both national and transnational discursive constructions of 'otherness' and 'Kurdishness'. Article IV, which looks at young Kurds' transnational ties, simultaneously examines what sort of national and local attachments they foster and how this is related to them being embedded in a transnational space. Accordingly, this study is consistent with the assumption that young Kurds are raised in a transnational space in which the homeland is referenced materially and affectively on a daily basis (see Levitt 2009: 1231). Furthermore, it holds that young Kurds' constructions and enactments of belonging, just as much as their transnational practices, are formulated in relation to the transnational, national, and local settings, including political/economic and socio-cultural structures and also the discursive constructions of otherness. Young Kurds' articulations are, therefore, contextualised through the discursive and political spaces of the nation-state(s), but simultaneously the work takes into account their embeddedness in a transnational diaspora space encompassing cross-border sets of social networks, multiple layers of polities, formal and informal institutions alike, and a global discursive frame.

2.1.2. Diaspora, the diaspora space, and the Kurds

Wahlbeck's study (1999) deals with the Kurdish refugee communities formed by 'first-generation' Kurds in Finland and England. He employs diaspora as an analytical tool to examine to what extent it can be argued that the Kurdish communities in these two countries constitute a diaspora. Leaning on William Safran's classical definition of the term (1991: 83–84, 179–180), which entails a sense of forced migration (displacement), a level of consciousness of the homeland and expressed collective memory, feelings of alienation in the society of settlement, feelings of longing, and eventually return to the imagined homeland and commitment to the restoration of the original homeland, Wahlbeck concludes that the Kurdish communities in exile can, indeed, be considered to constitute a diaspora. However, he expresses hesitance as to whether this is going to remain the case for subsequent generations of Kurds.

Whether subsequent generations (including both the 'second generation' and the generation in-between) can be considered and even conceptualised with the diaspora lens as understood by Safran is highly debatable. What is considered relevant for this study, however, is to take into account the transnational space of diaspora communities in which the younger generations are embedded. Wahlbeck (1999: 180) discusses the social organisation of the diaspora community, characterised by transnational social relations. This social and transnational space in the context of diaspora movements can offer, assign value to, and devalue collective narratives for the younger generations and possibly inform them about linguistic and cultural matters related to the societies of departure. On the other hand, the members of diaspora communities can forge and maintain ties between diasporans living in different localities while also fostering a common sense of belonging to the diaspora community/communities.

Brah (1996: 196) argues that diaspora should be considered a conceptual mapping that defies the search for origins or authentic manifestations of stable identity and that it should be approached as 'a matrix of economic, political and cultural inter-relationships which construct the commonality between the various components of a dispersed group'. Her theorisation surrounding 'diaspora space' (*ibid*.: 208–209)[12] is adopted as a narrower analytical frame for addressing of the intersectionality of 'diaspora, border and dis/location'. In other words, 'diaspora space' emphasises the socio-cultural dimension of diaspora movements by moving the focus beyond territoriality, ideology of return, and diasporans' sense of rootlessness as present in earlier theorisation[13]. The diaspora space provides a suitable analytical approach to the phenomenon studied. It follows Brah's understanding of diaspora (*ibid*.: 190–195), which includes a sub-text of 'home' and belonging that she views as integral to the diasporic condition. According to her (*ibid*.), the diaspora space is as much about the migrants and their descendants as it is about those who are constructed as indigenous, native, mainstream, or majority. The diaspora space is, therefore, about the borders and boundaries of belonging and our struggles to feel at home just as much as about the significance of location with regard to the socio-economic, political, and cultural conditions of displacement, settlement, and resettlement.

Applying similar reasoning, Alinia (2004: 28, 97–103) suggests in her study of Kurdish migrants in Sweden that the notions of territoriality, return, and nationalistic consciousness are characteristics central to more classical understandings of diaspora and that the latter tend to overemphasise the territorial nature of diasporic identities. An alternative approach to understanding the concept of diaspora, which is focused upon by both Alinia and Brah, considers diasporas to be de-territorial, socio-cultural processes in the sense that the notion approaches home(land) as being both symbolic and territorial and that it takes the identity formation of diasporans as situated responses to displacement and exclusion. Furthermore, it has been argued that diasporas should not be considered dependent on displacement as such but approached as imagined communities that reinvent themselves at the intersections of connectivity and cultural reconstruction (Tsagarousianou 2004). In a departure from the more classical notions of diaspora, the understanding of diaspora communities as providing shifting collective narratives and significant (transnational) social spaces underpins this study.

---

[12] See also Alinia (2004).

[13] See Safran (1991) and Brubaker (2005).

The young Kurds who took part in this study have been raised in several geographic locations (see Subsection 3.2.2, 'Description of the data and the interviewees'). They have experienced numerous, often criss-crossing migration routes that have included both trajectories and temporary destinations within the Middle East and within the confines of the Finnish nation-state. To some extent, their articulations of belonging reflect the multiplicity of their lived experiences shaped by several geographical locations (see Section 8.2, 'Layers of belonging'). On the other hand, young Kurds' migration routes are traceable to a particular historical and social context in the societies of departure, which has led to the emergence of the Kurdish diaspora movements toward Europe and North America. In addition to having been raised in a transnational setting, young Kurds have been embedded in the socio-historical setting of the Kurdish diaspora. The understanding of the diaspora space as outlined by Alinia and Brah allows both analysing young Kurds' narrations in relation to the transnational space of the Kurdish diaspora and approaching the Kurdish diaspora as de-territorial and consisting of a complex matrix of socio-cultural processes. For instance, Article IV is very explicit in uncovering the centrality of social relationships and networks as they unfold in the diaspora space. The social context of Kurdish diaspora communities that provide certain social organisation and means of connecting within the diaspora community, with respect to diaspora communities elsewhere and the societies of departure, is delved into further in later chapters[14].

The experiences related to migration from the Middle East region to Finland at a fairly young age and in the context of the Kurdish diaspora are a common denominator for the participants in my research, who belong to the generation in-between as described earlier in the chapter[15]. The notion of the generation in-between can be useful, provided that the internal heterogeneity and individual life courses of members of a given generation are taken into account. This study acknowledges that individuals' world views, experiences, and life trajectories are shaped by other factors, such as gender, age, and education. Therefore, generation is not taken or used as a homogenous category. On the contrary, I find that an intersectional approach can shed light on internal divergences and the heterogeneity of life experiences in the narrations of young Kurds.

---

[14] Subsection 5.1.3, 'The transnational dimension of the Kurdish diaspora', discusses this in greater detail.

[15] The second part of the dissertation discusses the socio-historical context of Kurds' migration to Finland.

2.2. On the intersectional approach

A concept introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, **intersectionality**[16] can be argued to be the most significant theoretical contribution of women's studies (McCall 2005; Yuval-Davis 2011)[17]. Intersectional analysis gained its initial momentum in studies of women and their multiple positionings as black, lesbian, working-class, or even colonial subjects (see Brah & Phoenix 2004). It is rooted in the understanding that individuals consider the world from particular social positionings – in other words, through a situated gaze (Stoetzler & Yuval-Davis 2002). The intersectional approach accentuates the significance of intersecting attributes of gender, ethnicity, age, social class, etc., in order to bypass straightforward, correlative-type analyses of relationships between ethnic background and related attitudes, behaviour, and attachments. More importantly, it is argued that individuals' constructions of belonging take place in the interplay between their intersecting social and economic locations and in how they and others value those locations (see Anthias 2002; Yuval-Davis 2011). The theorisation of intersectionality, which has also been defined as 'multidimensionality of marginalized subjects' lived experiences' (Crenshaw 1989: 139), is deeply rooted in unravelling of social divisions.

However, the approach has been criticised for being limited to only those who are at the margins of the society instead of including all members of the society (Yuval-Davis 2006b). In consideration of this, some scholars have attempted to create exhaustive lists of social divisions, although it can be argued that the various social categories are differently valued in different contexts[18]. It has been suggested that the intersectional frame, developed within feminist theoretical frames, relies overtly on the combination of three specific social locations ('race', social class, and gender). Therefore, as Nira Yuval-Davis (2011: 9) puts it, 'this is a case where recognition – of the social power axes, not of social identities – is of vital political importance’. The intersectional frame is also criticised as vague and overly inclusive (see Nash 2008), although a certain ambiguity and open-endedness have also been suggested to be a merit of it (see Davis 2008). The most fundamental question has been whether to treat it as a paradigm (Hill Collins 2000) or as a generalised theory[19] while employing intersectional methodology in a concrete manner (Nash 2008; Lykke 2010). The use of the intersectional frame as a methodological tool is discussed in the following chapter[20].

---

[16] There exists a large amount of debate on how it should be conceptualised, which includes suggestions such as crossroads (Crenshaw 1991), axes of difference (Yuval-Davis 2006b), and a dynamic process (Staunaes 2003).

[17] Without delving further into the historical background of intersectional analysis (for discussion of historical debates, see Brah & Phoenix 2004; Yuval-Davis 2006b; Nash 2008), suffice it to say that the analytical strength of the approach has been convincingly demonstrated in numerous studies.

[18] The most well-known take on this is Judith Butler's critique of the 'etc.' that is often used to encompass all social divisions but fails to do so (Butler 2007: 196). Also, Ludvig (2006) presents criticism of the intersectional frame.

The intersectional frame can offer a valid starting point as long as individuals’ marginalised positions and intersecting social categories are not considered to have a systematic and reductionist correlation. Distinguishing between individual levels of analysis and dealing with categories of significance from the constructionist perspective (see Yuval-Davis 2011) can contribute to accounting for some level of coherence between individuals’ lived experiences and multiple identities. Lived experiences shape the feelings individuals cultivate in themselves as to where they belong or do not belong (see Anthias 2002). Perceptions of who they are shift with the time and situation, depending also on how they are positioned within the collectivities of which they are members or in terms of the social categories that are used to define them. The attempt to grasp the heterogeneity of lived experiences moves us beyond employing ‘ethnicity’ as a starting point for explanation of group or individuals’ behaviour. This study is consistent with the understanding of an individual’s sense of belonging as constructed through multiple positionings that are shaped in everyday life. Furthermore, these positionings are embedded in complex power relations, hence the utility of the intersectional approach.

Intersectionality forms a larger theoretical framework for this study. Individuals are not reduced to belonging to merely one category, such as their ethnicity, generation, or gender; instead, social categories that individuals are considered to belong to are treated as relational. This approach also renders visible the multiple positionings and power relations within which they are embedded. Rather than listing categories and identity options, the approach takes into account the intersecting structures of power and hierarchy. The core question that remains is this: how are these intersecting social categories and individuals’ belonging to them interrelated with their lived experiences, and how do they interact with how the individuals perceive themselves? How do people give meaning to who they are and where they belong? The narrative approach can shed light on this.

---

[19] In addition, it is debated whether intersectionality should be considered to be a generalised theory of identity or, instead, a theory of marginalised subjectivity (see Nash 2008).

[20] See Subsection 3.3.2 (‘Positionalities – intersectional reflections’).

2.2.1. Narrations of belonging and non-belonging

This study is situated within the realm of the constructionist research tradition and considers language a constitutive element of social life and social identities. Such epistemological positioning has implications for the theoretical frame to be adopted, particularly in terms of narrativity, which is understood as a concept of social epistemology[21] (Somers & Gibson 1994). This touches upon the methodological approach adopted for my study, and I will discuss it further in the coming chapters. However, I shall note here that, within the theoretical framing of this study, identities are considered to be constructed through language and narratives. People are understood, accordingly, as making sense of the social world through narrations, as being located and locating themselves in social narrating (*ibid.*). At the same time, narratives are stories told by people of themselves about who they are and who they are not (Martin 1995; Yuval-Davis 2010) – language and identities are, therefore, viewed as mutually constitutive.

On the other hand, Yuval-Davis (2010: 267) points out that identity narratives are not only verbal but also constructed around specific **practices** that foster common belonging to a collectivity. One can argue that, in that sense, feelings of belonging are produced and maintained through cultural practices that reference common histories, experiences, and places and that, consequently, through the performance of collective practices, create 'terrains of belonging', as conceptualised by Anne-Marie Fortier (2000). Individual identity narratives are understood as having repetitive and performative dimensions, and they are structured around specific practices through which individuals produce, affirm, and contest their belonging or non-belonging to collectivities.

Margaret Somers (1994: 625) calls for a vocabulary that allows us to 'locate actors' social narratives in temporal and spatial configurations of relationships and cultural practices (institutions and discourses)'. This is exactly what Anthias aims to accomplish with a conceptual package that can aid in understanding issues related to collective identification. Anthias's theoretical frame draws from the intersectional frame and focuses on individuals' narrations of location. She argues that the concept of identity is of limited heuristic/analytical value and that **narrations of location** and **positionality** are more useful concepts in the study of individuals' claims as to where they belong and of the social relations that are the stuff of this process[22]. However, Anthias does not suggest disregarding the concept of identity altogether, as it is an empirically valid concept and employed by individuals to make sense of the categories in relation to which they feel membership or belonging. She considers it essential instead to expand on the analytical devices that can enable researchers to address issues related to collective identity (Anthias 2002).

---

[21] This is further explored in the methodology chapter – specifically, in Subsection 3.1.1, 'On language and narrativity'.

[22] For criticism of 'identity', see the more lengthy debate covered by Brubaker and Cooper (2000).

In her empirical research[23], Anthias aims to explore the relationship between the experiences of exclusion and constructions of identity and focuses upon the narrations of her research participants. Along the same lines, I consider narratives to be stories and the narrations of location to be accounts that tell of how individuals place themselves in terms of social categories such as gender, ethnicity, class, and generation at a specific point in time and space. However, Anthias treats narrational accounts not merely as representational of who and what individuals identify with but also as stories of our practices and the practices of the 'other' in a wider social context. As she convincingly argues, these narratives have a strong conventional and intersubjective component, since they are derived from discourses, representations, normative systems, and collective stories around us. Simultaneously, individuals employ these stories to organise their experiences in accordance with the conventional rules and norms that surround them (*ibid.*). According to her (*ibid.*: 499), narratives are not only identities being performed; they also feature a dimension of social agency – they are forms of social action that involve certain intentionality in terms of 'for what' and 'for whom' the narrative is intended. Narratives of location can, therefore, be considered as sites of contestation and claim-making too.

This study considers **locations** not only in terms of geography but also as cross-cutting time, space, and the social. First of all, in this study they are taken to refer to the social locations (also referred to as social categories) of gender, class, ethnicity, and so forth (Anthias 2009a). Secondly, locations also refer to interrelated social spaces that are delimited by boundaries and hierarchies (*ibid.*). As a matter of fact, Anthias (2002) points out that the **narrations of dislocation** (in other words, what one is not, rather than what one is) are more central to understanding how belongingness is constructed. This, according to her, is not merely a question of identities being relational. It also illuminates the boundaries of belonging and how they are constructed and, even more importantly, contested by individuals. Elaborating on this particular point, Anthias introduces the concept of **translocational positionality**, which approaches individuals' narrations of location and dislocation in terms of the context and pays attention to how claims and attributions are situated in various locales. By 'positionality' she refers to the 'placement within a set of relations and practices that implicate identification and "performativity" or action' (*ibid.*: 501). In other words, it is the space at the intersection of agency (social positioning / meaning and practice) and structure (social position / social effects) (Anthias 2009a). This approach considers identities to be embedded within power relations and various sets of hierarchies, all the while regarding them as being discursively constructed through narratives, both collective and personal.

---

[23] Her initial research explores the constructions of belonging among British-born young persons of Greek Cypriot background (Anthias 1992).

The above-mentioned theoretical frame is extensively employed in Article II, which explores how young Kurds construct ethnic and religious identifications and position themselves in terms of various constructions of 'otherness'. All four articles focus primarily on micro-level negotiation of belonging among young Kurds. However, Article III, examining the meanings attributed to political transnational activities among young Kurds, discusses at greater length the constructions of belonging at the meta level – in other words, how the collective (political) projects of belonging intertwine with the individuals' makings of belonging.

2.2.2. Belonging and the politics of belonging

The topic of collective projects of belonging ties in with the discussion on 'diaspora space' above, wherein the social (and political) dimension of diaspora movements was given focus. Yuval-Davis (2011: 14) states that identity narratives can be either individual or collective, with the latter often serving as a resource for the former. Shifting in time and context, collective identity narratives vary between (and also within) individual generations and are related to past, present, and future in the form of origin myths or as a projection of how the community's future should look. In this connection, the emotional and the political dimension, along with individual and collective aspects, need to be considered in the conceptualisation of belonging. This seems particularly significant in relation to diaspora movements and to the possibly politicised dimension of the diaspora space.

Yuval-Davis differentiates between a sense of belonging and the politics of belonging. The former refers to emotional attachments at individual level and to feelings of being at home, and it entails several levels of analysis. The latter stems from the abstract form of community[24] and refer to specific political projects that construct the boundaries for the political community of belonging (Yuval-Davis 2006a). As a matter of fact, Yuval-Davis argues that the intersectional analysis ought to distinguish between individual levels of analysis in the study of belonging, to which end she distinguishes among three major facets of analysis to aid in understanding of constructions of belonging. The first one has to do with social locations, the second with people's identifications and emotional attachments to various collectivities, and the last with political and ethical value systems within and toward which people position themselves (Yuval-Davis 2011). The social and economic locations to which individuals belong position them differently in the society on the basis of its internal power grids and the contextual meanings that the intersecting locations carry (*ibid.*). For instance, certain embodied signifiers, such as skin colour, accent, gender, clothing, and mode of behaviour, are valued differently within the grids of power relations operating in one's society. These bear an influence on the positioning of individuals, and their effects are experienced differently by individuals between varied everyday interactions.

---

[24] Referring to the understanding of community put forth by Benedict Anderson (1991), who employs nation as an example of 'imagined community', constructed through individuals' imagined belonging to such a collectivity.

Individuals' identifications and emotional attachments have been discussed above from narrative and performative premises. Yuval-Davis (2010: 271) pays attention to the dialogical dimension of identity constructions, stating that the identity construction here is both reflective and constitutive, in that it encompasses both individual and collective 'in an in-between perpetual state of "becoming"'. Closely linked to the relationship between individual and collective identity narratives is how the boundaries of belonging to collectivities are drawn, thus assigning belonging to a collectivity with specific political and ethical values. This moves the focus toward political projects of belonging and how the boundaries of belonging are made to include certain people and groups and to exclude others. As Yuval-Davis points out, the three distinct facets of belonging can be employed in diverse projects of belonging to delimit the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, in light of one's ethnicity, 'race', language (social locations), and the ways in which these are valued in various contexts (in terms of ethical and political values).

The context of diaspora space and the collective identity narratives produced within such spaces are relevant in this regard. Brah (1996: 193) approaches diasporas as contested spaces that entail several distinctive and even contradicting narratives. She further contends (*ibid.*: 196) that 'the concept of diaspora delineates a field of identifications where "imagined communities" are forged within and out of a confluence of narratives from annals of collective memory and re-memory'. Individuals' articulations of belonging should, therefore, be located in the larger framework and analysed in relation to collective identity narratives that are produced in the diaspora space (but not limited to it) and that are available to individuals embedded in such space (see Alinia 2004: 114–117)[25].

The four articles employ the analytical frameworks of **narrations of (dis)location** and **positionality** (Anthias 2002), **belonging and politics of belonging** (Yuval-Davis 2006a), and **positionings in multilingual contexts** (Pavlenko & Blackledge 2004), all the while considering young Kurds to be embedded in **transnational social fields** (Levitt 2009). Even though the primary focus is on how young Kurds narrate their belonging at the intersections of various social locations

---

[25] The collective narratives of the Kurdish diaspora are discussed at greater length in Subsection 5.1.3, 'The transnational dimension of the Kurdish diaspora'.

(gender, ethnicity, and generation), these individual narrations need to be analysed in the context of interrelated collective identity narratives. For instance, the theoretical frame of belonging and politics of belonging is employed in Article III, which deals with the political transnational ties among young Kurds and how collective identity narratives of 'Kurdishness' intertwine in their articulations of belonging. However, it is essential to note that the political projects of belonging constructed around ethnicity are always situated and multi-layered. They also differ in their effects on individuals who supposedly belong to these collectivities, who can be politically, socially, and culturally located in various ways (Yuval-Davis 2011). Last, but not least, political projects of belonging and collective identity narratives have a bearing on the meanings that individuals attach to understandings of home and homeland.

2.3. Belonging, home, and identity – clarification of concepts

International studies that focus on the identity formation of young people of migrant background are fairly abundant[26]. There is a simultaneous increase in the number of studies dealing with life experiences among the younger generations of migrant background in Finland (Martikainen 2009). These studies highlight the multiplicity of theoretical registers employed, from integration and assimilation (or acculturation) paradigms (see Portes & Zhou 1993; Jasinskaja-Lahti 2000) to theories of hybridity (Noble *et al.* 1999) and, more recently, the transnational frame (Levitt 2009). The present study employs the transnational frame as its theoretical starting point, not least because it problematises the classical understanding of how individuals' sense of belonging and feelings of home are conceptualised in relation to locality. Furthermore, the transnational frame has been credited with problematising ideas of treating ethnic identity as a primary social marker and a source of belonging that underpins much of the research on migration and the so-called 'second generation' (Anthias 2012: 104). I conclude that, although the transnational frame provides a valuable jumping-off point for tackling the lived experiences of members of the generation in-between, a focus on 'belonging' can offer greater analytical purchase for making sense of the articulations related to identity and home among the participants in this study. The notion of belonging is often equated to – and readily conflated with – the concepts of identity and home. My objective in this part of the work is to outline how those concepts are understood and conceptualised within the scope for this study. I will also reflect on their analytical value with respect to the phenomenon being studied.

---

[26] International studies include works by Crul and Vermeulen (2003), Levitt and Waters (2006), Portes and Rumbaut (2001), and Somerville (2008).

2.3.1. Home, homeland, and locality

Locality or place is often considered central to individuals' constructions of belonging. It also occupies a central role in those of collectivities' and individuals' identity narratives that evoke loyalty to a place and reference a place of common origin or homeland, be it real or fictive (Lovell 1998). Home is no longer considered to be located necessarily in one place; instead, multi-scalarity of belonging characterises the current theorisations of 'home' (see Blunt & Dowling 2006: 257). Indeed, it seems that the notion of locality and its association with that of belonging/home has become problematised in the context of globalisation. What role do localities and places inhabited by individuals play in their constructions of belonging? And, of more direct relevance for this study, how are territoriality and belonging related to each other, particularly in the case of individuals who have experienced displacement and resettlement?

Poignantly asking 'where is home?', Brah (1996: 192) argues that the concept of diaspora entails a notion of home and that an idea of displacement and dislocation from that home is at its core; however, she elaborates that 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".' On the other hand, she considers home to be also 'the lived experience of a locality. Its sounds and smells, its heat and dust […] all this, as mediated by the historically specific everyday of social relations'. Thus, home seems to have at least two meanings for Brah – it can be an imagined, mythic place located at a distance, yet at the same time feeling at home in a place can stem from lived experiences in that particular place. The latter suggests that a feeling of home can be constructed around experiencing a certain locality, around being familiar with its materiality and physicality – for instance, its landscapes and roads. Brah also refers to social relations as constituting a sense of home in a locality. This takes the focus beyond merely considering the materiality of localities and emphasises the social dimension of home-making, such as the social networks, including family and friendship ties, that contribute to feeling at home in a particular locality.

Brah's approach to home as a 'mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination' suggests that feelings of home can be sustained through collective narratives derived from memories (or trans-generational transmission of memories); past experiences; and a common sense of origin, which can be territorialised rather loosely – and not necessarily even in terms of the society of departure. Alinia (2004: 330), in her research on Kurdish diasporans in Sweden, concludes that 'their transnational networks and communities, social relations and activities regarding the politics of location have in this process become their "home"'. The fact that Kurdistan does not exist as a state can lead to feelings of ambivalence toward the societies of departure, geographically located within the states of Iraq, Iran, and Turkey (*ibid*.: 211–212)[27]. This can lead to several distinctions within the notion of homeland, as indicated by the interviewees in Alinia's study. The society of departure may also be one's birthplace and referred to as Iraq, Iran, or Turkey, as much as the homeland in a more political sense – in other words, Kurdistan. The political notion of homeland and home are associated with different political discourses (*ibid*.: 329) but also with politicised narratives of belonging that are produced in the diaspora space. Therefore, understandings of homeland can differ greatly, depending on several factors, among them the diaspora's historical context, the current state of the perceived homeland, and individuals' personal experiences.

Home, in this sense, is understood not as something fixed and necessarily rooted in territories or localities but, instead, as constituting a continuous process across time and space that involves a task of actively constructing a sense of home. One of the most intriguing questions, accordingly, is how home comes to be associated with a particular place, specifically for those who migrated in childhood or when otherwise young. The relationship of the 'first generation' to the society of departure can be very different from their children's corresponding relationship – these may varyingly foster memories or physical contact in the form of travel involving the society of departure while the subjects live in a transnational space that entails lived experiences in the society of settlement (see Blunt & Dowling 2006: 217–219). Furthermore, the relationship with the society of departure can differ tremendously from one member of a given generation to the next. For instance, the experiences of specific individuals are shaped by their specific social locations and the value accorded to these at a given time. In this connection, Brah (1996: 193) ponders a relevant question in this regard: 'What is the difference between "feeling at home" and staking claim to a place as one's own?'. She differentiates between the homing desire and the desire for a 'homeland' (as not all diasporans aspire to return to the homeland) and offers a distinction between 'feeling at home' and declaring a place to be home (*ibid*.: 197). In a similar fashion, Alinia (2004) argues that homeland in the diaspora context is not necessarily territorially based. It rather evokes 'the desire and longing for homeland on an individual basis […] give expression to a need of belonging, and are a response to exclusion and subordination' (*ibid*.: 328). Indeed, home is intrinsically linked to the processes of inclusion and exclusion and to subjective experiences of them. In other words, feeling at home is directly linked to our struggles to belong.

---

[27] See chapters 4 and 5 for more in-depth discussion of the division of Kurdistan and its historical background.

2.3.2. Negotiation of identities and the boundaries of belonging

This study approaches the notion of belonging as a dynamic set of processes (see Skrbiš *et al*. 2007: 261–262), departing from a fixed and essentialised understanding of belonging that would be traceable to one and only one locality in which the individual feels at home. Belonging can mean having multiple homes, not necessarily in one particular geographical locality – or even any geographical locality, for that matter. The question of belonging naturally brings in the question 'Do/can you belong?', which emerges from the intersubjective relations of individuals' surroundings and the reactions to the individual's perceived positioning that such surroundings produce. Hence, when asking about someone's belonging here, we simultaneously enquire about the 'can' aspect of belonging, which entails underlying aspects of inclusion and exclusion. Anthias suggests that the notion of identity is not able to capture the structural elements and how they are interwoven with the ways in which individuals position themselves and are positioned by others:

> Identity involves individual and collective narratives of self and other, presentation and labelling, myths of origin and myths of destiny with associated strategies and identifications. Belonging on the other hand is more about experiences of being part of the social fabric and the ways in which social bonds and ties are manifested in practices, experiences and emotions of inclusion. (Anthias 2009a: 8)

When one is identifying oneself, the emphasis seems to be on 'who are you / how you identify yourself' – i.e., on the collective narratives of self and other that are associated with identifications (*ibid*.). It has been argued that a feeling of belonging presupposes access, whereas an individual can identify with collectivities without necessarily being considered part of them (see Anthias 2009a; 2006). Therefore, a sense of belonging is considered to emerge from and become activated in situations of denied membership, with exclusionary boundaries to identity categories, and especially from subjective experience of mechanisms of difference. Feelings of belonging are based on notions of exclusion, inclusion, access, and participation to a greater degree than identity (Anthias 2009a). Belonging is approached, accordingly, as a process of negotiation that involves boundaries.

One's belonging to certain identity categories can become contested on the basis of marginalising categorisation schemes that are attributed to an individual (see Huttunen 2004). In this sense, the narrations of dislocation are as significant as (if not even more revealing of) individuals' feelings of belonging. For instance, members of the younger generation of migrant background are navigating and positioning themselves in terms of various discourses and identity categories, including various constructions of 'otherness'. The boundaries of belonging and identity categories are considered to be not fixed but shifting and 'negotiable' in view of the value that particular intersecting social locations are accorded in various spatio-temporal contexts. Furthermore, these locations are marked by various embodied signifiers, including physical appearance, accent, and mode of behaviour, on the basis on which individuals can be positioned differently and associated with different identity categories. Various positionings and identity categories, whether ascribed by self or by others, have different contextualised meanings, and they tend to be differently positioned and valued in the set of power relations that shift on the basis of societal and political contexts.

To enable grasping the underlying power relations and social hierarchies from the translocational perspective, the notion of belonging has been analytically employed in the four articles' examination of how young Kurds handle narration related to themes associated with identity and questions about various boundaries of belonging. Article I, which focuses on language identities among young Kurds and on the relationship between identity and language, draws largely from an approach sketched out by Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004)[28], who outline a theoretical framework for identity formation that combines elements from the social constructionist frame in its focus on the discursive construction of identities and from the post-structuralist frame for examination of the role of power relations. Indeed, they differentiate between 'the ongoing construction and performance of identities in multilingual contexts and the negotiation of identities which takes place only when certain identities are contested' (*ibid*.: 13, 20). These authors position such negotiation of identities in relation to larger socio-economic, socio-historic, and socio-political processes, and they treat languages not only as markers of identities but also as sites of resistance, empowerment, solidarity, and discrimination. The theoretical frame was employed for examination of how the young Kurds were positioning themselves through their linguistic repertoires in various interaction situations and how several distinct ways of performing belonging were narrated by them. Article II employs Anthias's theoretical frame to take a closer look at young Kurds' narrations of (dis)location and how various identity politics and mechanisms of exclusion are intertwined with the micro-level negotiation of (non-)belonging. Article III focuses more on the political projects of belonging and examines young Kurds' narrations of belonging in the context of collective identifications and their boundaries of belonging. Article IV explores young Kurds' narrations of belonging in the transnational context and in relation to their understandings of home.

For the purposes of this study, the phenomenon of belonging is analytically approached via examination of young Kurds' narrations of location and dislocation (gender, ethnicity, age/generation, and 'race') and through their analysis in relation to the diverse, intertwined spaces in which they are embedded. These spaces comprise social networks, several layers of polities, formal and informal institutions, and discourse settings that operate or function at transnational, national, and local levels. Hence, the notion of belonging is argued to capture the political, negotiative dimension of how young Kurds construct feelings of home and contest identity categories’ boundaries, at both individual and collective levels.

---

[28] In *Negotiation of Identities in Multilingual Contexts*, the authors draw largely from the **positioning theory** presented by Bronwyn Davies and Rom Harre (1990), which combines the view of identities as situated in discourses and in narratives.

3. The research process and the methodological premises

3.1. Research into belonging and identity – the constructionist approach

This chapter outlines the ontological and epistemological premises underlying the overall study. In this research, knowledge and the understanding of reality are approached from constructionist premises. ‘Social constructionism’ often seems to function as an umbrella term referring to one of the dominant approaches in the social sciences. The main tenet and allure of social constructionist approaches are found in their attempts to replace more static and universalistic notions of reality and knowledge with more flexible, particularistic, and socio-historically localised understandings of how we make sense of and produce reality (Weinberg 2008: 14–15). The social constructionist approach seems particularly appropriate for this study, dealing as it does with identity and belonging, since it pays particular attention to the ways in which humans make sense of the world, how they situate themselves in the social order of things, and how such understandings of their positions are formed in interaction situations.

Now widely reviled, the paradigms that consider identities to have a stable core are often characterised as essentialising. The philosophical approach of essentialism approaches subjects as having an immutable, fixed essence that determines their thoughts, beliefs, and identity, along with their actions. In this respect, essentialism has been contrasted against both social constructionism and postmodernism (including post-structuralism), which are alleged to emphasise the deconstruction of essentialised understandings of identities and approach them as being socially constructed and/or free-floating and fragmented (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2009: 38, 194–198). Indeed, Alvesson (2002) presents one of the main characteristics of postmodernist thinking as being to consider identities to be fragmented and to take into account the variations within groups instead of merely those between them. Such views, according to him, tend to emphasise that subjectivity is a processual and discourse-linked production, supplanting the essentialist understanding of identities. This is particularly relevant with respect to understandings of identity in relation to ‘culture’, ‘ethnicity,’ and ‘race’, which have undergone a considerable shift, from being understood as essentialised categories to which individuals are allocated at birth toward being viewed as socially constructed categories whose meanings shift on the basis of historical contexts and the associated political arrangements (see Hall 1999). What are the methodological implications of such shifts in the understandings of identity and the related considerations? How should the notions of identity and belonging that are discussed in relation to 'culture' and 'ethnicity' be approached from a methodological perspective?

Anthias (2002: 494) argues that the notion of identity is of little heuristic value and that when conducting a social analysis, one must examine the social ontologies employed by researchers. Indeed, she views the concept of 'identity' as ambiguous and as one that 'reintroduces essentialism through the back door'. Even among researchers who concern themselves with multiple and fragmented identities, she suggests that identity can be more easily considered a characteristic possessed by individuals than viewed as a process. However, this does not mean that individuals would not employ the term 'identity' when describing their belonging to collectivities and narrating their identifications. In this connection, Brubaker and Cooper (2000: 2) argue that identity is 'too ambiguous, too torn between "hard" and "soft" meanings, essentialist connotations and constructivist qualifiers, to serve well the demands of social analysis'. They suggest instead differentiating between categories of practice referring to lay, everyday use of categories (such as identity) and categories of analysis that would aid researchers in understanding and explaining processes and mechanisms related to identity without reinforcing essentialist views of identity formation and, relatedly, of 'ethnicity' and 'culture'. My study's approach to identity resembles Brubaker and Cooper's definitions of categories of practice as distinguished from categories of analysis. The participants themselves interchangeably referred to questions of identity, identification, home, and belonging when speaking of their positions in the social fabric in which they are embedded. Such 'identity talk' is treated in terms of categories of practice, while belonging and home are applied as analytical concepts or as categories of analysis.

Young Kurds' 'identity talk' is examined partially with a narrative approach, understood as a methodological tool to gain insight into the phenomena that are studied. In methodological terms, this study focuses on the centrality of language to social interaction and the formation of social relations, along with its role as a 'conveyor' of meaning in such social processes. For this reason, I consider certain proper methods of qualitative research, interviews and observation, suitable techniques for gaining insight into how young Kurds navigate their positionings and how they understand questions related to belonging and identity. I consider such methods also able to yield more theoretical insights into the social phenomena of belonging, including its complex dynamics and mechanisms of inclusion/exclusion as experienced and narrated by the subjects themselves.

Hence, I will first briefly discuss the narrative approach undertaken in this study. The latter sections of the chapter expand on the choice of methods (interviews and observation), introduce the data collected, and discuss the data-collection process, then move on to reflections on the ethics questions and issues related to researcher positionality.

3.1.1. On language and narrativity

Knowledge is considered to be produced through language in everyday interactions, with such interactions simultaneously producing social realities (see Kvale 1996). The realist paradigm conceives of language as a reflection of the world and considers a certain version of reality able to be extracted through language, which carries the truth. The constructionist paradigm, deviating from this vision, understands language as not mirroring life but 'doing' life itself. Gergen (1999: 48) contends that language is central to re-construction and maintaining of individuals' relationships and that it, therefore, reflects the meanings that emerge from co-ordination between persons and in their mutual agreement, negotiations, and affirmations. One of the main pillars of social constructionist approaches is the role of language in the formation of social reality and how such social reality becomes produced in interaction situations. Therefore, it is not surprising that in the vast field of social constructionism some scholars pay attention to the narrative elements of individuals' accounts of how they make sense of the social world and of their positions within it (see Somers 1994; Somers & Gibson 1994; Anthias 2002). For instance, Somers and Gibson (1994: 2) suggest that human life is ontologically narrative and that social life is itself storied. This means that, even though an individual lives his or her life as a biological being, his or her way of constructing meanings is through language, by the very act of locating him- or herself in a repertoire of emplotted stories – in other words, in narratives. Experience is constituted through these narratives as people make sense of what they have experienced through narration of their stories (*ibid.*).

The epistemological and ontological premises of this study are well aligned with the views of most constructionists – reality is considered to exist outside the human mind, but the knowledge about that reality is socially constructed. Hence, social phenomena, such as belonging, are understood as being created and sustained by humans through their social practices and interaction. Young Kurds' articulations of belonging are approached in terms of this understanding, and the interview situations are understood as situations of interaction wherein meanings become constructed. This is not to suggest that references to identity categories cannot be naturalised and essentialised by the research participants themselves and by their surroundings.

In fact, their narrations of belonging are treated as social and discursive constructions that have real-life consequences and that reflect their positions in the societies in which they live. For this reason, individuals' constructions of belonging need to be located and analysed in the discourse-based and politico-historical contexts in which they are articulated. Doing so can shed light on varied identity options and categories that are available to individuals and on how they might be valued in a certain period of time.

Narrativity is understood, accordingly, as a concept of social ontology and epistemology; as Somers (1994: 606) reminds us, 'it is through narrativity that we come to know, understand, and make sense of the social world, and it is through narratives and narrativity that we constitute our social identities'. Narrative research looks at how individuals make sense of their experiences and identities in relation to the discourses and collective narratives that are available to them in a particular socio-historical context (see Riessman 1993). For instance, individuals can employ certain discourses and repertoires in their accounts as resources; they can shape them or even contest discourses that are considered more hegemonic than others. As Anthias (2009a) shows, narratives that include references to identity talk can employ the available repertoires and discourses for political mobilisation. On the other hand, there is a certain relationality in the identity narratives. For instance, Davies and Harré (1990) argue that identity options are offered through the discourses available to individuals in specific spatial-temporal contexts and that individuals position themselves in terms of discourses (reflexive positioning) and how they perceive others as positioning them (interactive positioning). In the analysis chapter, I refer to various identity categories that resonate in young Kurds' narrations of belonging and non-belonging, among them 'Muslim', 'refugee', 'immigrant', 'Kurdish', and 'Finnish'. Such identity categories are approached as constructions whose assigned value depends on context and whose embedding in the local and global relations of power varies.

The study's approach to narrativity in methodology terms is two-pronged: The data are to some extent structured along narrative lines, in relation to biographical elements, certain episodes, and a loosely structured plot. The interviewees' life stories are traced from the moment of departure to the time of the interview, and – thanks to talk of future trajectories – even beyond. However, narratives are dealt with also as participatory acts in the interviewees' forging of subject positions – they are, in a way, a form of social action that tells a story of how individuals articulate questions related to identity and belonging at a particular moment in time (see Anthias 2002).

3.2. The methods, data, and research process

> If you want to know how people understand their world and their lives, why not talk with them? (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009: xvii)

This qualitative research employs research methods that are common to an ethnographic approach: interviewing and observation. The choice of methods that are commonplace among qualitative studies was rooted in the ontological and epistemological premises of this study, discussed above, that draw from the narrative approach. Knowledge of reality is understood as socially constructed and the social phenomena between humans as created in the interaction processes and social practices in which individuals actively engage. It seems quite natural, then, to employ interview-based and observational methods to gain an understanding of how individuals make sense of the social world and how they perceive their position in the social order of things.

The basic idea of interviewing as a method is that the information is best acquired in an interactive situation in which the individual explains his or her experiences. In this study, interviews are understood as 'forms of conversations' (Kvale 1996) or 'conversations with a purpose' (Burgess 1984: 102). The study approaches interview situations as construction sites, where research participants assign varied meanings to their lived experiences through utterances (or narratives). The interview situation is considered to be a site of knowledge production, a process in which both the interviewee and the interviewer take part (see Kvale & Brinkmann 2009). It is believed that, in fact, both interviewer and interviewee construct new and common meanings in the interview situation (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2008). Consequently, interviewing becomes a way to conduct research **with** people, not so much **on** them. This makes interviewing a rather flexible method (see Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009), particularly when semi-structured or open-ended interview strategies are employed.

The topics discussed in interviews can be focused partially on themes that have been pre-established, and this can be achieved by means of a thematic or semi-structured interview structure. The selection of themes naturally guides the focus of the interview and ultimately the emphasis, on certain topics more than others. With the level of flexibility it provides, the semi-structured thematic interview is considered to respect and best capture the diversity of interviewees' experiences. The thematic interview provides space for reformulation of questions in the course of the interview, an opportunity for the researcher to verify his or her understanding of what was said, and a chance for the interviewee to offer further insights and even challenge dominant discourses. Similarly, the interviewer can encourage the interviewee to approach the topic from another angle, thereby deconstructing dominant discourses and conventions for expression (see Alvesson 2002).

Observation is part of any research, although there are differences in its use as a method within and between academic disciplines. It has often been argued that employing interviews and observation as methods together can produce quite rich material (Grönfors 2001). Observation data in this research are used for a complementary dataset, with the interview data forming the main corpus. Notes from the fieldwork and participant observation at various cultural and political events, along with video and photo material obtained during these, have enriched the dataset and assisted in contextualisation of the phenomenon studied. The form of observation utilised can be characterised as 'partial participant observation', meaning that I have taken active part in certain social interaction situations and remained outside others. Field notes on these interaction situations have, beyond doubt, enriched the data by providing perspectives that are unreachable with interviews. Nonetheless, it remains essential to bear in mind that they also reflect my underlying assumptions and interpretations of the situations I have witnessed. Accordingly, browsing through my field notes has increased my awareness of my personal assumptions and subjectivity in interpretation and of ethics issues and the researcher's positionality within the research setting[29]. It is likely that long periods of fieldwork and more observation would have yielded greater insight into how young Kurds give meaning to issues brought up in the course of the interviews. Nevertheless, it needs to be pointed out that I have remained in contact with the members of the Kurdish community since the data-collection stage. I am certain that this has enabled me to gain fuller insight into the phenomenon being studied.

The following discussion provides a description of the dataset, along with information on the research participants and the research settings. After this, the processes employed in the data collection and analysis are reflected upon.

3.2.1. Description of the data and the interviewees

The data for this study come from thematic interviews conducted between 2009 and 2011, alongside observation data from Kurdish parties' political meetings, demonstrations, and Kurdish cultural events. In total, I conducted 25 interviews, with 23 research participants. One interview situation featured two participants, while the rest of the interviews were conducted in a one-on-one setting. I interviewed two persons twice, the first time with a more general interview structure[30] and the second time with interview themes focusing on their political activities, for provision of additional data for Article III. The interviews generally lasted between an hour and a half and two hours, with the duration of the shortest one being 30 minutes and the longest lasting nearly three hours. Most interviews were conducted in private cabinets of a local cafeteria in Turku. Three interviews took place at the Kurdish cultural centre in Helsinki, two in the interviewees' homes, one in the participant's workplace, and one at my office at the university.

---

[29] I discuss this in more depth in the last part of the chapter – specifically, in Section 3.3, 'Sensitivity and reflexivity'.

[30] The main themes of the interviews included background and experiences in school, work, and public space; transnational contacts and ties; language use and meanings attached to it; citizenship; belonging and home; and plans for the future. See appendices 2 and 3.

At the time of the interviews, the interviewees were between 19 and 28 years of age. None of them were born in Finland, although they had arrived in the country at various ages in their childhood and early teen years[31]. All but one had spent more than 10 years in Finland and entered the Finnish education system after arrival. Most also considered Finnish their mother tongue, so the interviews were conducted in Finnish. The majority of the interviewees were male – of the 23 interviewees, nine were female. Twelve interviewees identified themselves as Muslims and the remainder as atheist or religious without any particular affiliation specified. They took part in activities organised by the Kurdish communities in varying extent. On occasion, I refer to the interviewees as 'generation-in-between Kurds' or similar, thereby distinguishing them their parents, who arrived in Finland at a significantly different stage in life. For instance, the informants often had siblings born in Finland, and some informants had no memories of the migration experience, on account of their age upon arrival. Common to all of the informants, however, was that they had migrated from the Kurdistan region to Finland in the 1990s and early 2000s at crucial stages in their lives' development and grown to adulthood while permanently living in Finland.

The theme of political activism emerged in the course of the first interviews, which is why I decided to incorporate the theme of political activism into the study. I collected interview data to that end with a separate interview structure that was incorporated into the main interview structure whenever needed. For that reason, the data for Article III come from 11 interviews with politically active young Kurds and observations made at three, quite different political demonstrations in Helsinki, which were organised to protest the executions of political party members in Iran, against the annual celebration of the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran (in 1979), and for Abdullah Öcalan's release from prison. I also participated in political associations' meetings in Turku. The bus trips back and forth from Turku to Helsinki provided opportunities to speak with young Kurds who took part in the demonstrations and to discuss what sort of meaning political activism carried for them. Observations from the demonstration provided additional data, documented in notes, video footage, and photographic material. The latter data provided clarification of the role of young Kurds during demonstrations and of how information on the events was distributed internationally after the demonstration. The interviews for Article III were conducted with young adults who were members of Iranian or Turkish Kurdish parties in Finland (the Democratic Youth Union of Iranian Kurdistan, PJAK, and PKK) and who identified themselves as Kurdish.

---

[31] The interviewees' median age upon arrival in Finland was 11.

The three other articles base their conclusions on interviews and observation data from Kurdish cultural events. I participated in two Newroz parties[32] and in other multicultural celebrations that had Kurdish participants. The 23 interviewees were young Kurds, most of whom had originally moved to Finland with their families in the 1990s and early 2000s from the region of Kurdistan, in Iraq, Iran, and Turkey. Three interviewees were born in a refugee camp on the Iraqi–Jordanian border, in a mainly Arabic-speaking region, so had not been living in the area of Kurdistan. Thirteen interviewees were from an Iranian Kurdish family, eight from Iraqi Kurdish families, and two from Turkish Kurdish families. Some interviewees from Iranian Kurdish families were born in Iraq's Kurdish and Arab regions and had also resided in Turkey before moving to Finland. At the time of the interviews, 19 of them lived in Turku and four in Helsinki, although in most cases their families had been settled in other cities, across Finland. All interviewees identified themselves as 'Kurdish', before specifying which part of Kurdistan they originally came from[33]. For the most part, the interviewees spoke Kurdish as a 'home language' with parents and siblings but also with friends of Kurdish background. Finnish was most often spoken outside the home environment. As for the dialects of Kurdish used, 20 interviewees spoke in the Sorani dialect and came variously from Iranian and Iraqi Kurdistan, two used the Kurmanji dialect and came from Turkish Kurdistan, and one was a Badini-speaker from Iraqi Kurdistan.

3.2.2. The process of data collection and analysis

Qualitative research is characterised as cyclical on account of its overlapping stages of analysis in which the researcher moves among stages repeatedly, often iteratively. These include formulating the research questions, choosing a data-collection method and collecting the data, familiarising oneself with the dataset collected, thematising/categorising the data, analysing the themes and phenomena discovered, regrouping the results and situating them in relation to the larger dataset, formulating the theoretical dialogue, and outlining possible practical contributions (Ruusuvuori *et al*. 2010: 12). Furthermore, the data-collection procedure associated with interviewing is said to consist of seven distinct stages, including thematising; designing; interviewing; transcribing; and, finally, analysing, verifying, and reporting (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009: 99). The analysis roughly follows these steps. I will now reflect on the separate stages that were involved in the data-collection process and the analysis that followed it in the course of the research process.

---

[32] Kurdish and Persian New Year's festivities held in late March.

[33] I employ the terms 'Iraqi', 'Iranian', and 'Turkish Kurdistan', whereas also geographical indicators of Southern (Iraq), Eastern (Iran), and Northern (Turkey) Kurdistan were employed by the respondents. This is discussed at more length in Section 4.1, 'An introduction to the Kurdish people and the land amidst nation-states'.

I began this research in early 2009 with an extensive literature review and background studies that aided in formulation of more precise and thoroughly constructed research questions. This was followed by the choice of methods, interviews and later also observation, as the opportunity for the latter presented itself. The formation of interview themes took place gradually. At the first stage, I ended up with certain themes after having studied the Kurdish diaspora in Europe, the historical and political background of the 'Kurdish issue'[34], literature on generations with a migrant background in Finland and in Europe more generally, relevant theorisation on identity/belonging, and methodology-related literature on qualitative research methods. After this stage, I developed the initial interview structure (see Appendix II), with the following themes in mind: background information, experiences at school and work, language use, religion, identifications, transnational ties and connections, belonging/home, citizenship, and plans for the future.

After some interviews that spring, I decided to incorporate the theme of political participation into the general set of interview themes, as this topic had emerged from the first interviews. For this purpose, I drafted a separate interview structure (see Appendix III), and in two cases, I interviewed the same individuals twice, once with the first structure and the second time with the focused interview structure that included questions about political activism. The sub-themes for the second interview structure included participation in activities organised by political parties, transnational connections, citizenship and belonging/home, and other sub-themes. Pre-selected themes gave a certain structure to the interview situation and narrowed the focus on the topics discussed. On the other hand, the semi-structured interview format allowed a certain level of flexibility since the interview themes were dealt with in a loose order that depended on the interviewee and his or her life experiences (see Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2008).

The task of finding people to interview took off rather slowly, as I had just moved to Turku and had no existing networks or contacts in that city. I found my first potential interviewee through a Kurdish-speaker whom I had met at a seminar held at the University of Turku. She introduced me to several key persons, who would eventually help me to find potential interviewees. As for the criteria, I had initially decided to concentrate on young Kurds from Iraq who had migrated to

---

[34] For this purpose, I conducted a three-week-long 'field trip' to the Kurdish Institute in Paris (or Institut kurde de Paris), which holds a considerable collection of literature related to the Kurdish diaspora and to Kurdish minorities in the Middle East region. This trip provided me with an opportunity to become familiar with the related literature, as not all of the relevant literature is available in electronic form.

Finland as children and grown up here, but quite soon I noticed that such criteria were too narrow to allow me to find enough participants. Nor were they necessary for my research purposes. I then included young Kurds from Iran in the study, finally adding young Kurds from Turkey. However, I still attempted to limit my selection to those who had grown up in Finland yet not been born in the country. With one exception, all of the interviewees met this criterion: they had migrated to Finland during their childhood or teen years and grown up here. One interviewee had migrated to Finland after his teenage years, but I at the end decided to include him in the study nevertheless. The snowballing method, also referred to as chain referral sampling, proved to be quite an efficient way to get in touch with the eventual research participants. I also contacted the local Kurdish political parties and attended various meetings and events with the aim of not biasing the search for research participants. Partially on account of this, the interviewees have rather heterogeneous backgrounds with respect to their country of departure, how long they had been in Finland, citizenship status, educational background, religious and political affiliation, and so forth. Regardless of the interviewees' diverse backgrounds and life experiences, similar responses and themes began to circulate as the final interviews neared. In that sense, it can be said that a certain 'saturation point' was reached.

The interview situations differed, sometimes quite significantly. For instance, once I was invited to a participant's home to conduct the interview. While the interview was still in progress, the interviewee started to prepare a Kurdish meal for both of us. In general, the atmosphere of the interviews seemed quite relaxed and resembled a conversation more than a research interview in feel. I began each interview by presenting my study and asked whether the participant had any questions or concerns related to it. All of the interviews were audio-recorded, with the permission of the participant(s); I emphasised that the recordings of the interviews were merely to be listened to by me. The transcription stage was conducted partially in parallel with conducting of the interviews.

Ruusuvuori, Nikander, and Hyvärinen (2010: 11–29) distinguish among several phases in the process of data analysis, including steps to classify, analyse, and interpret the data collected. Once the research questions, the choice of data-collection methods, and the data collection have been completed, one has to become familiar with the data, perform classification or categorisation by themes or phenomena, analyse the themes/phenomena extracted, and gather the results and situate them in relation to the overall dataset. The process of data analysis for this study followed loosely the work steps presented above. The full set of transcripts of the interviews comes to 675 pages, with the shortest transcript being around 10 pages long and the longest coming in at 50 pages. I used the NVivo software application to process the interview data and to sort the transcribed data on the basis of the interview themes and research questions set for each article (see Section 1.2, 'The main objectives and the research questions'). The transcription stage and breaking down of datasets into parts allowed the data to be handled in a more 'manageable' form and afforded greater familiarity with them. After this 'technical' and more empirically oriented thematisation, I proceeded with a thematic analysis of each part. I did not limit the thematic analysis strictly to particular subsets of the data, since overlapping themes emerged between them. Even though this study draws from the narrative approach, I have decided to employ thematic analysis as the analysis method. The data do include narrative elements, but I nevertheless considered thematic analysis to be a more suitable method, for the data feature many elements that cannot necessarily be grasped with a narrative analysis. A reading of the data informed by thematic analysis enabled adoption of more holistic and comprehensive analysis in this regard.

In the above-mentioned preliminary stage of analysis, I relied partially on the theoretical conceptualisations but at the same time avoided overtly reading the empirical data through the theoretical apparatus. The interviewees' accounts were treated as stories of how they positioned themselves – in other words, as narrations of location (see Anthias 2002). I focused on the storied qualities of data – that is, 'how social actors produce, represent and contextualize experience and personal knowledge through narratives and other genres' (Coffey & Atkinson 1996: 54). The narrative focus is understood, therefore, as enabling grasping of the lived experiences that the interviewees reflected upon via narrations. The research participants employed narrative means to make sense of their positioning in the social fabric they belonged to. Accordingly, I organised the themes and subsidiary research questions into a thematic map that helped me to grasp the intertwined and overlapping features of individual parts of the map. At the final stage of analysis, the (partially overlapping) themes of each article were situated in relation to the entire data corpus and reorganised to form the three chapters that constitute Part III.

I obtained data also from observation notes made during cultural and political events in which young Kurds took part. I employed the field notes on observations as a complementary source of data, which helped to 'contextualise' the meanings young Kurds attached, for instance, to political participation. The reporting of results has been an ongoing process, one begun already in the course of numerous doctoral seminars, conferences, and workshops. The four articles have all been made public in international publications – two as book chapters and two in an academic journal (see Appendix I).

3.3. Sensitivity and reflexivity

The data collection, analysis, and reporting take place in a specific historical and political context, which necessitate reflexivity on the researcher's part. Alvesson and Sköldberg (2000) refer to **reflexive methodology** – in other words, to the efforts of the researcher to reflect on his or her location within a particular political, linguistic, and social setting. They consider it essential for researchers to consider 'the way different linguistics, social, political and theoretical elements are woven together in the knowledge-development process, during which empirical material is constructed, interpreted and written' (*ibid.*: 5–6). Furthermore, Eliassi (2012b: 85) states that 'reflexivity is indeed a question of power relations, disputes over representation, the thorny terrain of meaning-makings and the effects of the researcher's framework of interpretation on our understanding of the research participants' life-stories'. Informed in part by such understandings of reflexivity, the following questions guided the data-collection, analysis, and reporting stages of the study:

Are the interviewees' accounts represented and analysed in the way that would do the most justice to the way the interviewees meant them? How do my (scientific and other) background – in other words, my positionality during the research process – and how I understand societal phenomena influence the various stages of this process? Lastly, though not least, how should one take into account central ethical questions when collecting data through interviews and observation with individuals of refugee background? I consider one of the key aspects of any research process to have to do with the ethics dimension and reflections about researcher positionality. Hence, this chapter is designed to provide critical introspection on my interpretations and presumptions, most notably with respect to questions of sensitivity and reflexivity.

3.3.1. Ethics considerations

According to Steinar Kvale (1996), ethics is not restricted to fieldwork; it refers to all stages in the research process, including that of analysis. It is also suggested by Ryen (2004) that autobiographical field experiences should prompt analytical reflections. Therefore, I will draw partially from my field notes, which include reflections on the non-textual interpretation of interview situations. The most pertinent ethics questions that I encountered in the course of this research involved sensitive topics and traumatic experiences of interviewees that required reflection on how to make the interview situation as comfortable and respectful as possible for the participants. Other issues related to ethics were more technical, although of no less significance, including informed consent and the issue of confidentiality. As I have noted above, the interviewees' accounts were treated as narrations. From the methodology point of view, this means that the interviewees reflected upon their experiences during the interview, in which they told their life stories in a loosely structured manner. The narrative elements emerged in the course of the interviews, though not following any strict chronological order. At the beginning of the interview encounter, I asked the interviewee to tell his or her story 'from the beginning', starting with where he or she was born, proceeding to how he or she had arrived in Finland, and continuing from there. I probed some parts of the narrations by asking for more precision and, as the interviews progressed, also about the emotions these situations entailed.

Semi-structured interviewing is credited with providing a setting in which in-depth answers and sensitive experiences can be discussed (see Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2008). On a similar note, Riessman (1993) argues that narratives and storying can be an effective approach to the study of sensitive topics and events. This is particularly relevant in qualitative studies wherein subjective experiences and meanings are at the core of the methodological enquiries and when the interviewees may have memories of traumatic experiences of war, as was the case in this study. Conducting research with individuals who had arrived in Finland as refugee children raises the ethical question of how to conduct the interviews. Which question strategies should be employed in asking about sensitive issues, all the while respecting the intimacy of the interviewee? Brannen (1988: 553) suggests four points as items that ought to be taken into consideration when one is conducting research on sensitive topics: approaching the topic; dealing with the contradictions, complexities, and emotions inherent to the interview situation; considering the operation of power and control in the interview situation; and addressing the conditions under which the interviewing takes place. I will discuss these strategies in the following paragraphs.

Several topics emerged in the interviews that can be classified as sensitive. These included both personal experiences and accounts of witnessed wartime events (gas attacks by Saddam Hussein, relocation, and abuse by authorities), experiences in refugee camps (poverty and violence), living in fear of being deported from Turkey back to Iran/Iraq while waiting for asylum, discrimination and racist violence in Finland and the Kurdistan area, bullying at school, physical disciplinary actions in school (in Kurdistan), and forced/arranged marriages and testimony on honour-related violence. However, these topics emerged gradually in the course of the interview situations and were not part of the interview questions or themes as such. I would assume that a certain level of trust (see Lincoln & Guba 1985: 256) was achieved during the interview process (also thanks to the promise of anonymity) that allowed addressing of such sensitive issues. It needs to be pointed out that the emotionality in discussion of sensitive topics affects both the interviewee and the interviewer. Sensitive topics arising in the interview situation can produce distress for both (Lee 1995), and I tried to resolve this issue by stating on several occasions that the interviewee did not need to answer questions that he or she felt uncomfortable with. This also meant that I needed some time to ‘digest’ certain interviews that displayed particularly tragic memories, so whenever this was possible, I avoided booking several interviews for the same day.

The physical context of the interview situation is also of importance. When agreeing on the meeting for an interview, I suggested that the participant choose the location where he or she would feel most comfortable. This resulted in some interviews being conducted at interviewees’ homes, in the work-place, or on Kurdish associations’ premises but most being done in a cafeteria’s private cabinet. The neutrality of such cabinets as ‘nobody’s turf’ may have offered an ideal place to conduct interviews. I reflected on the interview situations in personal notes that formed a research diary of sorts. It provided means to reflect on personal emotions that arose during and after the interview situation but also in the transcription phase. The notes also provided some ‘contextualisation’ for the interviews.

As I have mentioned above, I stated at the beginning of the interview and when I first contacted the participant that the interview would be entirely anonymous and checked again whether he or she wished to consent to being interviewed. Most interviewees still stated that they did not object to me using their names, but I decided to assign all of the interviewees pseudonyms and indicate only approximate details of their city of residence, age, and other potentially identifying characteristics in cases wherein such details were necessary[35]. Naturally, the wish to remain anonymous depended on the interviewee and interview theme. For instance, during the process of collection of data for Article III, on young Kurds’ political involvement, all participants wished to remain anonymous, to avoid any consequences when visiting Iran or when dealing with the Iranian embassy in Finland.

3.3.2. Positionalities – intersectional reflections

Both the researcher’s and the research participants’ social locations, along with the value accorded them, are seen as influencing the research process and interaction situations; therefore, they need to be reflected upon. Lykke’s (2010: 50) broad definition of intersectionality expresses the view that intersectionality, besides being a theoretical approach, can also be employed as:

> […] a methodological tool to analyze how different kinds of power differentials and/or constraining normativities, based on discursively, institutionally and/or structurally

---

[35] For instance, for Article I, which deals with the relationship between language and identity among young Kurds, I decided to indicate the interviewees’ approximate age and their rough age upon arrival in Finland both.

> constructed socio-cultural categorizations such as gender, ethnicity, race, class, sexuality, age/generation, dis/ability, nationality, mother tongue and so on, interact, and in doing so produce different kinds of societal inequalities and unjust social relations.

Following this line of thought, the intersectional approach allows reflecting upon the researcher's and interviewee's positionalities on the basis of their intersecting social locations and in terms of the spatial-temporal context in which they are embedded. In the following paragraphs, I will discuss the interviews as sites of interaction, by focusing on positionalities – both of the researcher and of the research participant. Positionality is understood as involving intersecting social locations of the gender, ethnicity, and age/generation of both the researcher and the research participants.

The interviews were conducted in the Finnish language since the interviewees had lived in Finland for at least 10 years. Most of them stated that Finnish is their second mother tongue and described themselves as more fluent in Finnish. However, in some cases, there seemed to be a certain level of discomfort among the interviewees at the very beginning of the interviews – some interviewees explicitly expressed shame at the level of their Finnish language skills and felt a need to justify the lack of language skills or having a noticeable accent. The situation might have been different had I been a Kurdish-speaker myself, not representing 'mainstream Finns', whose mother tongue is Finnish and nothing else[36]. My background as a 'white' Finnish person who can self-evidently claim to belong to 'the Finnish nation' most likely influenced how the interviewees explained their experiences and provided background on certain events to somebody considered 'an outsider' to the Kurdish community. In some instances, I was clearly positioned as 'one of the Finns':

> *H: Well, the behaviour is different; the culture is completely different for us…*
> *M: In what sense? Do you have some examples?*
> *H: The Finns,* ***you people***[37]*, are cold. Really. I want to speak directly, so that you understand. Finns are cold people, really cold. They only visit each other if it's Christmas or something happens […].*
> Heresh (emphasis added)

Later, however, when asked about my personal experiences, I spoke of having lived abroad and spent some time in Turkey, which seemed to position me in a different way in comparison to 'mainstream Finns'. I would imagine that belonging to the same generation as the interviewees and being also a student rendered the interview situation more relaxed and informal. On the other hand, it is likely that I was not fully capable of interpreting the interviewees' experiences in the proper frames of reference. In some cases, the interviewees transposed their views into what they may have considered to be more familiar frames of reference for me. For instance, one interviewee criticised the division of Kurdistan into separate nation-states and compared it to hypothetical division of Finland's land area between Sweden and Russia and the consequence of geographical references to Russian Finland and Swedish Finland, counterparts to Iraqi Kurdistan and Iranian Kurdistan. Therefore, it seems that the interviewees employed dual frames of reference to 'translate' their experiences for a researcher who was not a member of the Kurdish community, thus rendering visible the different positionalities perceived to exist in the course of the interview process.

---

[36] Similar research has been conducted in Sweden, on young Kurds and their identity formation, by Barzoo Eliassi, a researcher with Kurdish origins. He discusses research positionality in his PhD dissertation and mentions that he asked the participants at the end of the interview how him having a similar background had influenced the interview (Eliassi 2010: 61–62; see also Eliassi 2012b).

[37] This is a translation of the Finnish word 'teikäläiset'.

Growing consciousness of the embedded power relations, political undertones, and both my positionality and that of the interviewees in the interview situations led me to pay increasing attention to the aftermath of some situations that arose during the interviews and observation. For instance, the following excerpt from my field notes describes one such instance of an interviewee seeming to display positioning that depended on the situation and interlocutor(s):

> *Yesterday I conducted an interview with a Kurdish woman, originally from the Kurdistan region in south-eastern Turkey. She had migrated to Finland in her teens, and her father had been a political refugee. I had just spent the previous summer studying Turkish in Izmir, Turkey, and asked her in Turkish whether she knows how to speak Turkish. Naïvely, I expected her to be positively surprised, but she replied in Finnish that she knows how to speak Turkish but that she doesn't like speaking it. Later on in the interview, she explained that she was forced to speak Turkish at school in Turkey and punished for speaking in Kurdish. So it seemed that she positioned herself differently toward the Turkish and the Kurdish language, and Finnish seemed to be a more neutral language site for our communication, in terms of power relations. However, in later instances, I noticed that she occasionally used some Turkish words, mostly interjections, with others.*
> Field notes from a Kurdish cultural event, autumn 2011

In this incident, it seemed that she was voicing a political statement about her belonging and, more significantly, non-belonging to the Turkish nation and 'Turkishness', which was then reflected in her choice of language[38]. It is also possible that she wanted to position herself more clearly as 'Kurdish' as opposed to being mistaken for being 'Turkish', particularly when interacting with somebody among 'mainstream Finns', who might not be able to detect the difference. In any case, she chose to speak in Finnish, which seemed to represent a more neutral language site, to communicate in the particular context at hand.

---

[38] See Section 4.2, '"Kurdishness" as the internal "otherness" in the Middle East', particularly Subsection 4.2.1 ('Turkish/Northern Kurdistan'), for more contextual background on the issue of language, identity, and nationalism in Turkey.

Furthermore, the gender angle was relevant. I found myself pondering on several occasions how male and female interviewees handled narration on certain topics, such as marriage and family (see Eliassi 2010), honour-related violence, and arranged and forced marriage. I had the impression that it might have been easier for some research participants to talk to somebody outside the community about sensitive issues tied in with gender relations and the gendered norms of behaviour. On the other hand, the question that was most frequently asked of me during the data-collection process (and even after that) was related to my reasons for conducting research on Kurds when I did not have a Kurdish background myself. For instance, once when I rang an eventual interviewee, among the first questions I was asked was whether I was married to a Kurd or, alternatively, dating one. It seemed that this would have explained my interest in the Kurdish diaspora since I was not of Kurdish background myself. Nearly all interviewees expressed curiosity (in a friendly manner) as to why I had selected such a topic. This question, as innocent as it seems here, written and detached as it is from the politico-historical context, was at other times accompanied with what seemed to be stronger political undertones. Sometimes it seemed that the person asking sought my **real** reason to conduct research on Kurds and often simultaneously questioned my positioning with respect to the 'Kurdish issue', which is a highly politicised matter. In these cases, I had the sense that I was subtly being asked about my underlying political agenda in having embarked upon such research.

In general, the research participants were pleased to find that somebody was interested in Kurds and the 'Kurdish issue', with some explaining that the Kurds have a long history of being ignored, due to the fact that the Kurdish people cannot be linked to one particular nation-state. This was probably one of the reasons I encountered no tiredness or indications of being over-studied on the part of the interviewees; instead, I detected motivation (and even sometimes a sense of obligation) to speak in Kurds' favour. It seemed that some participants might even have been pressured to be participants in my research by other members of the community. This would definitely present an ethical issue in terms of informed consent and could raise the questions of what constitutes informed consent. Another issue that surprised me was the continuous interaction with some interviewees. A distinction between the professional self as a researcher and the personal self was not evident at all, and in many cases I have become friends with people who volunteered to be interviewed for the research project.

The challenges involved in positioning oneself as an active/passive researcher became tangible during the interviews but were particularly evident during the cultural and political events in which I participated. I was always warmly welcome at these events and often accompanied by key persons who were already rather well-known within the community. When it came to taking part in the activities at political demonstrations, I declined in a friendly manner, because I felt that I needed to maintain a certain distance as a researcher and also that supporting any specific political agenda could have led to me being labelled within the community, whether I agreed with the label or not. For this reason, I took part in cultural events, such as dancing but attempted to adopt a more neutral stance at political gatherings, where I limited my participation to documenting the event with video footage or a still camera. One particular situation in which I needed to reflect upon my participation arose when I was observing a political demonstration in Helsinki. I was requested at one point to deliver a speech in Finnish, and I politely declined the request.

The intersectional approach to positionality, which is understood as involving intersections of social categories that include age/generation, education, ethnicity, and gender, has provided methodologically relevant insights. It has meant paying attention to the intersecting social attributes of the researcher and the research participant in the interview context, along with how certain themes have left me and the interviewee positioned. I have reflected on the intersecting social categories in interview situations and written extensive notes on this matter. This has afforded a reflexive approach on my part to the underlying positionalities between the researcher and the research participants and to the eventual implications that such positionalities have for the interaction situations, for the analysis, and for the way of reporting on the research results.

PART II: THE SOCIO-HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXTS

4. The Kurdish people and the formation of Kurdish identities

4.1. An introduction to the Kurdish people and the land amidst nation-states

This part of the dissertation consists of a brief overview and contextualisation of the historical background of Kurdistan and the Kurds in the Middle East. I will discuss the formation of collective Kurdish identities and the sense of 'Kurdishness' in the region, with particular reference to how these notions have been shaped in respect of the political spaces of Turkey, Iraq, and Iran. Collectively constructed Kurdish identities take on new meanings and understandings, which depend on the context, where these identities include one linked to the Kurdish diaspora communities in Europe. Hence, this part of the work also provides brief contextualisation of the formation of the Kurdish diaspora in Europe, which is expanded upon in the next chapter.

4.1.1. On naming

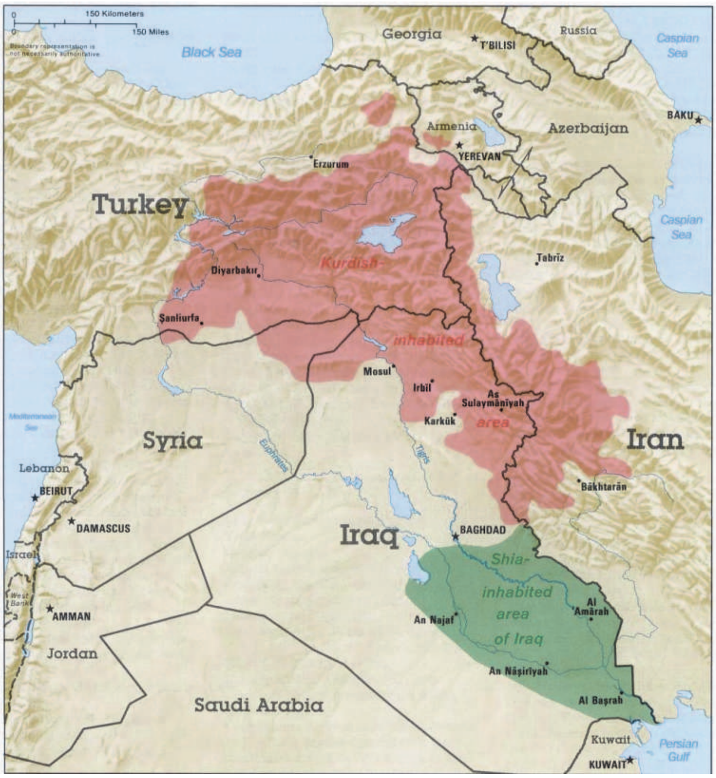
Defining the region of Kurdistan and delineating who the Kurds are is rendered a politically controversial issue by the complex geopolitics of the regions inhabited by Kurdish-speaking populations. Naming is in no way innocent, for it attaches social meaning to geographical entities and peoples. Bearing this in mind, I have nevertheless chosen to employ the term 'Kurdistan' to refer to the geographical region that covers the main areas inhabited by Kurdish-speakers and refer to its specific parts within individual nation-states as 'Iraqi Kurdistan', 'Iranian Kurdistan', and 'Turkish Kurdistan'. Although this seems to be a common practice among scholars conducting research related to Kurds and Kurdistan (see Wahlbeck 1999: 7; Alinia 2004; Natali 2005; Khayati 2008: 48), I will briefly mention here that the research participants also referred to these particular regions as Northern Kurdistan (for Turkish Kurdistan), Southern Kurdistan (for Iraqi Kurdistan), and Eastern Kurdistan (for Iranian Kurdistan), questioning the states' sovereignty explicitly when doing so[39]. Currently, the part of northern Iraq where the *de facto* state of Iraqi Kurdistan has emerged seems to be referred to mainly as Iraqi Kurdistan, while, in contrast, the most commonly used term for Turkey's Kurdish-inhabited regions tends to be 'south-east Turkey'[40]. Common appellations for Kurds as a people refer to Kurds from Turkey, Iran, and Iraq, but, as Wahlbeck (1999: 7) mentions, 'Turkish Kurd' and 'Iraqi Kurd' can be considered offensive. The label 'Iranian Kurd', however, seems to be employed by Kurds from Iran themselves (*ibid*.).

---

[39] This is analysed at greater length in Section 6.3, 'Diasporic consciousness'.

4.1.2. Kurdistan and the Kurds

Descriptions of Kurdistan and the Kurds quite often begin with the observation that the Kurds are the world's biggest nation without a state. To date, no state of Kurdistan with internationally recognised borders has existed. The region of Kurdistan, which comprises approximately 518,000 square kilometres (roughly the area of Spain), consists of portions of Iraq, Iran, Turkey, and Syria, along with smaller territories in western and central Asia. The Kurdish-speaking populations reside in quite extensive areas of eastern Turkey, northern Iraq, western Iran, and northern Syria (see Map 1). The Kurds form the fourth largest ethnic group in the region after Arabs, Persians, and Turks, consequently constituting rather sizeable ethnic and linguistic minorities within these four states. The estimated number of Kurds varies between 25 and 30 million (Hassanpour & Mojab


150 Kilometers
150 Miles
Boundary representation is not necessarily authoritative
Black Sea
Georgia
T'BILISI
Russia
Caspian Sea
Armenia
YEREVAN
Azerbaijan
BAKU
Erzurum
Turkey
Caspian Sea
Tabriz
Diyarbakır
Kurdish-inhabited area
Şanlıurfa
Mosul
Irbil
As Sulaymāniyah
Karkūk
Syria
Euphrates
Tigris
Iran
Mediterranean Sea
Lebanon
BEIRUT
DAMASCUS
Bākhtarān
Iraq
BAGHDAD
Shia-inhabited area of Iraq
Israel
West Bank
AMMAN
An Najaf
Al 'Amārah
Jordan
An Nāşiriyah
Al Başrah
Saudi Arabia
Kuwait
KUWAIT
Persian Gulf

Map 1. The Kurdish-inhabited area.
Source: Institut kurde de Paris (Kurdish Institute of Paris)

---

[40] See the various maps of Kurdistan at http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/kurdistan-maps.htm.

2005: 214[41]), and the numbers are unequally divided, with Turkey having the largest Kurdish-speaking population, followed by Iran, Iraq, and Syria. I will focus mostly on the situation of Kurds in Iraq, Iran, and Turkey, as the research participants' origins lie in these regions and also since at least 90% of the Kurdish population in the Middle East live in these three countries (Wahlbeck 1999: 39).

Tracing the history of the Kurds is a fairly complex matter. It is suggested that the majority of Kurds are most likely descended from heterogeneous Indo-European tribes that moved westward across Iran around the middle of the second millennium BC (McDowall 1996: 8). The first historical references to 'Kurdistan' as a geographical term date back to the twelfth century (*ibid*.: 6, 13). During the Ottoman period, 'Kurdistan' was used to name the province of Diyarbakir, in today's eastern Turkey, and a province called Kordestan still exists in today's Iran (van Bruinessen 1992: 11). Kurdistan, 'the land of the Kurds', nowadays refers to a land area of mountainous and plateau regions that consists of the north-west Zagros and the eastern Taurus mountain ranges.

Who, then, are the Kurdish people? Today Kurds form a rather heterogeneous group in terms of language, religion, political affiliation, residence in urban or rural settings, and place of living – in the Kurdistan region or in diaspora communities. The Kurdish language belongs to the Indo-Iranian group of Indo-European languages and is related to neither Arabic nor Turkish. In all, it has four dialect groups (Kurmanji, Sorani, Zaza/Dimili, and Hawrami/Gorani), which sometimes show considerable differences. As is the case with most nation-states, there exist no clear language boundaries that follow state borders[42]. The two most commonly used dialects of Kurdish are Kurmanji and Sorani, in that order. These are spoken in Turkish Kurdistan (Kurmanji, with Zaza too being spoken in this region) and in Iraqi/Iranian Kurdistan (Sorani, where the Gorani dialect too is spoken). The two main dialects also differ in their alphabets, Kurmanji using Latin script and Sorani Arabic script, with minor modifications. It has been said that Kurmanji and Sorani are as different grammatically as the English and German languages are and that the differences in vocabulary are comparable to those between Dutch and German (McDowall 1996: 9). To make matters more complex, the Kurds living in the four above-mentioned nation-states in the Middle East tend to be at least bilingual, speaking Kurdish and the official language of the country they live in. This is most noticeable in Turkey, where, because of strict assimilation policies and the prohibition of the Kurdish language until the 1990s, many Kurds nowadays speak mostly Turkish. In Iran, the official language Farsi is used in public, whilst Kurdish seems to be spoken mostly in the private sphere. In contrast, in the currently autonomous region of Iraqi Kurdistan, there is lively debate on the standardisation of Kurdish and whether the official version of Kurdish should be the Sorani or instead the Kurmanji dialect (see Hassanpour 2012)[43]. Since 1991, the Kurds in Iraq have had administrative control of their area's language education; prior to that, all education was in Arabic (Skutnabb-Kangas & Fernandes 2008: 50).

---

[41] This estimate does not include the members of the Kurdish diaspora who have settled outside the Kurdish-speaking regions of the Middle East. Large numbers of Kurdish-speakers live outside the Kurdish-speaking regions, most notably in Istanbul, which hosts approximately three million Kurds and therefore can be deemed 'the biggest Kurdish city' (see http://www.institutkurde.org/en/kurdorama/).

[42] Description of the linguistic breakdown of Kurdistan can be found at http://www.institutkurde.org/images/cartes_and_maps/linguistic_composition.jpg.

Religion is another element that highlights Kurds' heterogeneity. It has been estimated that the great majority of Kurds, approximately 75%, are affiliated with Sunni Islam, while about 15% are Shi'a Kurds and the remainder belong to other religious groups (McDowall 1996: 10; Gunter 2011: 143). Sunni Kurds live mainly in Iraqi and Turkish Kurdistan, whereas Shi'a Kurds can be found in Iranian Kurdistan's province of Kirmanshah and in some districts in Iraq. For instance, the Fayli Kurds, who form a Shi'a community in Baghdad, have not been recognised as Iraqi citizens, because of their alleged Iranian descent. More interestingly, they are Arabic-speakers but have come to identify themselves as Kurds. Other religious minorities among Kurds include Yezidi, Jewish, Christian, and Alevi Kurds. Religion has almost never been a common denominator for identification as Kurds, and a collective sense of 'Kurdishness' does not seem to have its basis in shared religion. Nonetheless, Martin van Bruinessen (1999a) has argued that Islam has greatly influenced the Kurdish societies and that it has a distinctive character in Kurdistan. Islam in the region of Kurdistan is said to have taken on particular features wherein varied Islamic traditions and practices may collide with the approaches of the Muslim states that include parts of Kurdistan. Such tension between heterodoxy and orthodoxy is particularly remarkable in the Kurdistan region, according to van Bruinessen (*ibid.*). He also argues that, at the same time, Kurdish politics and societies have become more Islamic, although simultaneously the ethno-national sentiments have brought about distinctive Kurdish identities within the Islamic movements. The role of religion (and ethnicity) in forging of political spaces for Kurdish-speaking minorities in Turkey, Iran, and Iraq will be discussed in the following sections of this chapter.

Being a sizeable ethno-national group within four separate nation-states introduces particular dynamics in terms of Kurds' political affiliations and movements – at diverse points on the left–right spectrum. The best-known Kurdish political movement is the leftist PKK (or Kurdistan Workers' Party), which has been engaged in an ongoing armed battle with the Turkish state since 1984. It seems that the PKK functions as an umbrella organisation of a sort and has gained support from a large number of Kurds, particularly among the diasporans in Germany[44]. Another major pro-Kurdish party in Turkey, a legally recognised one, is the social democratic BDP (Peace and Democracy Party), which has called on the PKK to lay down its arms[45]. The political divisions in Iraqi Kurdistan have long been characterised by divisions between the KDP (Kurdish Democratic Party) of Massoud Barzani, the current president of Iraqi Kurdistan, and the PUK (Patriotic Union of Kurdistan), headed by Jalal Talabani, who is currently the president of Iraq (as of 2014). These two parties even engaged in a civil war in 1994–1995 (Yildiz 2007: 28–49). More recently, in 2009, the Gorran Party ('Movement for Change') has challenged the dominant position of these two political parties. In Iranian Kurdistan, the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI) is the most influential party and stands in favour of Kurdish national rights within the Iranian federal system. The other Kurdish party is the radical Marxist party Komalah ('The Association'), which is the Kurdish branch of the Communist Party of Iran. Furthermore, there is a smaller political actor, the PJAK (Party of Free Life of Kurdistan), a militant Iranian counterpart of the PKK, which operates in Turkey. Such a fragmented landscape of Kurdish political parties is also visible in the diaspora. In the following sections of the chapter, the language policies and political/religious diversity of Kurds within each nation-state will be further explored in detail and in relation to each state's minority policies.

---

[43] Hassanpour (2012) discusses the dialectical fragmentation of the Kurdish language, along with the conflict over the adoption of Sorani and Kurmanji as the official standard languages of Iraq.

After discussing the heterogeneous features of the Kurdish people, sociologist Östen Wahlbeck (1999: 40) pondered a relevant question related to who is a Kurd and who is not. When he has been conducting research related to Kurdish communities, his informants have been very clear about their identity and its ethnic boundaries. In my study, the collective ethnic identity as Kurdish seems to be a rather salient category of identification for the younger members of the Kurdish communities in Finland, although it focuses on the generation-in-between Kurds and not on the first generation Kurds. Prior studies involving Kurds have demonstrated that, regardless of the nation-states' frontiers, Kurdish identities remain constructed on foundations of such features as the Kurdish language (see Kreyenbroek 1991), shared ancestry and myths of origin, the common land of Kurdistan (McDowall 1996: 4–5), and also mutual experiences of 'otherness' within various nation-states (Vali 1998: 84). Furthermore, the construction of Kurdish identities is said to reflect the transnational or cross-border nature of Kurdistan:

> There is no single Kurdish identity, but there are Kurdish identities that defy or transcend borders. Pan-regional relations between the Kurds have always been complex

---

[44] See 'TE-SAT 2012 EU terrorism situation and trend report', a document at https://www.europol.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/europoltsat.pdf. This report briefly discusses the PKK and their recruiting of diaspora Kurds in Europe (Europol 2012: 24). See also Bahar Baser's dissertation (2012) on the 'second generation' of the Turkish and Kurdish diaspora in Sweden and Germany.

[45] See 'BDP chairman calls on PKK to lay down arms', from 19 June 2012, at http://www.todayszaman.com/news-283975-bdp-chairman-calls-on-pkk-to-lay-down-arms.html.

> and intimate. The mountain ranges that mark frontiers between nations do not mark breaks in linguistic, cultural or familial continuity. (Yildiz 2007: 82)

On the other hand, there are quite considerable divergences in the idea of a pan-Kurdish nation and clear differences in attachments to tribal, national, and religious identities above one's ethnic identity as Kurdish (*ibid*.: 1[46]). To understand the historical background of the Kurdish diaspora and the formation of collective identities within its context, we need to take into account the geopolitical location of Kurdistan in the Middle East and, in relation thereto, how Kurdish ethnic identities and a sense of 'Kurdishness' have been formed in relation to various nation-states' political spaces. In the following part of the work, I will look at the historical constructions of 'Kurdishness' and the position of Kurdish minorities within the politico-social context of Turkey, Iraq, and Iran. Such contextualisation is necessary within the scope of this study because the 'Kurdish issue' has since the very beginning of the 20th century been a cross-border issue, and it remains so. The cross-border character of the 'Kurdish issue' and the formation of Kurdish identities both *en lieu* and in diaspora continue to be informed by the 'state of statelessness' of Kurdistan. Meanwhile, the *de facto* state of Iraqi Kurdistan is introducing new dynamics to the construction of Kurdish identities. Such collective notions of Kurdish identities, the historical and present-day situation in Kurdistan, and particularly the geopolitical divisions resonate in the accounts of Kurdish diaspora communities' younger members.

4.2. 'Kurdishness' as the internal 'otherness' in the Middle East

Nowadays, the unofficial borders of Kurdistan cut through the middle of geopolitical power centres, where the borders of the current nation-states of Iraq, Iran, Turkey, and Syria meet (McDowall 1996: 5–6). The borders between Iran and Turkey (and Iraq) are roughly consistent with the 1639 treaty between the Ottoman and Persian empires, which divided Kurdistan into Ottoman and Iranian zones. The region of Kurdistan was situated between the Ottoman and the Persian empires from the 17th century until the early 20th century, when it, alongside Armenia, was the empires' battlefield until the First World War (Hassanpour & Mojab 2005: 215–216). However, this border that had lain between the two empires became officially fixed only in the early 20th century, when modernist Western ideas of 'territorial integrity' and colonial desires swooped over the region. Until then, the subjects of pre-modern states, including the Kurds, had remained attached to the land and tribal affiliations (*ibid*.). In the wake of the downfall of the Ottoman Empire and in consequence of the treaties signed by colonial powers, Kurdistan was allocated to the political spaces of Turkey, Iraq,

---

[46] See also Martin van Bruinessen's piece 'The ethnic identity of the Kurds in Turkey', at http://www.hum.uu.nl/medewerkers/m.vanbruinessen/publications/Bruinessen_Ethnic_identity_Kurds.pdf.

Iran, and Syria. Thus, the formation of Kurdish identities has since the very beginning of the 20th century been informed by multiple political spaces and the related forms of inclusion/exclusion that have been formulated within those spaces.

In the course of the 20th century, Turkey, Iraq, and Iran adopted political projects of belonging, accompanied by nation-state-building strategies. Such approaches to minority relations varied from diverse assimilation policies to genocidal measures. These nationalist projects created different notions of exclusion and inclusion and consequently shaped the constructions of collective Kurdish identities, or *Kurdayetî* (Natali 2005: xviii). Indeed, it has been argued that the sense of ethnic 'Kurdish-ness' was forged in the course of the early 20th century as a response to the nation-state-building strategies of Turkey, Iraq, and Iran and in consequence of their efforts to 'Turkify', 'Arabicise', and 'Persianise' the Kurdish minorities (McDowall 1996: 4; Hassanpour & Mojab 2005: 216). Furthermore, such political developments and upheavals have profoundly transformed the Kurdish societies and led, therefore, to mass migration of Kurds within the Middle East and beyond, and to the formation of the Kurdish diaspora across the world. Arguably, they have affected the notions of what it means to be 'Kurdish', both in various parts of Kurdistan and in the diaspora (see Alinia 2004). Indeed, Denise Natali (2005: xviii) suggests that being 'Kurdish' ought to be considered in relation to what it means to be a citizen of Iraq, Turkey, or Iran. Hence, the political spaces and the position of Kurdish subjects within them from the early 20th century to today deserve a brief overview.

4.2.1. Turkish/Northern Kurdistan

The Turkish provinces of the Ottoman Empire became independent in 1923 and formed the independent Turkish state. The political space in the late Ottoman period before the First World War allowed expressions of Kurdish ethnic identity, yet Islam was still considered the primary component of Turkish national identity (Ergil: 2007: 265–269). This was also partially the case during the transition era in Turkey's journey toward becoming a modern state. In the republican period, the Kemalist project of nation-building, led by Mustafa Kemal (or Atatürk, as he became known in 1934), aimed to centralise power and to unify various provinces by bringing the diverse populations together through secularised, modern, and unified state nationalism (Insel 2007). The political space of the Kemalist Turkey did not accommodate ethnic minority identities or the expression of them, and the republican state had clear boundaries of ethnic belonging based on common 'Turkishness'. The Kurdish regions were militarised, the Kurdish language prohibited, Kurdish cultural activities banned, and Kurdish activists arrested and deported, and several Kurdish deputies were replaced (Natali 2005: 82–83). These drastic nation-state-building measures resulted in the ethnicisation of the political space and in growth of Kurdish national movements in the decades to follow. Atatürk's harsh policies of secularisation of Turkish society led to a construction of otherness that was based on both ethnicity and religion[47], and, consequently, some Kurdish nationalists resorted to forms of ethno-religious nationalism (*ibid.*).

As the 1970s were ushered in, the emergence of legal left-wing organisations affected the 'leftisation' of *Kurdayetî*, but toward the end of the decade, Kurds started to move away from the Turkish leftist parties and join (illegal) nationalist Kurdish groups. The coup d'état in 1980 by Turkish military officers brought Turkish nationalists into power and closed the political space to opposition groups (Ergil 2007: 270). The Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which was established in 1974, destabilised the border regions, and the state embarked on scorch-and-burn tactics that left Kurdish villages and populations seriously harmed (Human Rights Watch 1991). Since 1984, the PKK and the Turkish state have raged a bloody civil war that has taken the lives of around 30,000 people (UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia[48]). The political space and Turkish nationalism were re-Islamised, thus providing more political space to Sunni communities. Nonetheless, the understanding of 'Turkishness' still had its foundations in ethnic premises. For instance, questions related to the Kurdish regions were discussed as the 'eastern problem' and Kurds referred to as the 'mountain Turks'. As a matter of fact, Welat Zeydanlıoğlu (2008; 2012) has argued that the Kemalist project aimed at linguistically and culturally 'civilising' and unifying the various minorities by decreasing the influence of religion and primordial identities. He aptly calls this the Turkish version of the 'white man's burden'. The suppression of the Kurdish language has played a key role in this process of 'turkification' of those perceived as 'backward, tribal Kurds' (*ibid.*).

Kurdayetî had become salient in the wake of the government's refusal to grant the Kurds linguistic and cultural rights. Written and spoken Kurdish was banned, and Kurdish cultural activities were prohibited as early as in 1924. The new Constitution in 1982 reinforced the ban on minority languages and prohibited giving one's children Kurdish names. The ban on the Kurdish language was lifted in 1991, but on the same day the Anti-Terror Law (Law 3713) was introduced. That law defined 'terrorism' rather vaguely, thereby allowing the prosecution of individuals who engaged in 'verbal and written propaganda [that] aims to destroy the national unity and the indivisibility of the

---

[47] The relationship of the Kemalist philosophy to religion is somewhat more complex. It did incorporate religion (Sunni Islam) into the notions of national identity and employed it at times to forge a sense of national unity. A good example of identities' basis in religion can be found in the population exchanges of Greek Orthodox citizens of Turkey and Muslim citizens of Greece in the 1920s, which were based on religion and not so much on language or the people's ethnic identities (see Insel 2007).

[48] For Turkey, see http://www.ucdp.uu.se/gpdatabase/gpcountry.php?id=158&regionSelect=10-Middle_East#.

Turkish Republic' (Zeydanlıoğlu 2012: 112). With this, alongside the penal code, which criminalises 'the denigration of Turkishness' (in Article 301), both legal definitions have been employed against (Kurdish) politicians, journalists, authors, researchers, and political activists (Freedomhouse 2008: 16–18). Gradually, minor changes have taken place with regard to Kurdish cultural and linguistic rights, most importantly including the withdrawal of the language rule that had prohibited the use of Kurdish in public. Although in 2004 the Turkish Parliament passed a law that permitted limited Kurdish-language broadcasts, it was still illegal to give babies Kurdish names (see Aslan 2009) and highly controversial to speak Kurdish in a political context[49].

Now, in the 2010s, the Turkish political sphere remains partially limited to Kurdish political actors, although there are signs of developments taking place in the realm of Kurdish minorities' cultural and linguistic rights. For instance, it has been argued that Turkey continues to commit linguistic and cultural genocide[50], since Kurdish-medium schools are not allowed in Turkey and Kurdish children do not have the right to study in Kurdish at school (Skutnabb-Kangas & Fernandes 2008: 44–45[51]). On the other hand, the most recent development is the initiation of Kurdish-language studies at schools, along with studies in English, German, French, and other languages, although accompanied by much criticism of the status of Kurdish as a 'foreign language' (Al Jazeera[52]). Since early 2013, the use of Kurdish in court sessions has been possible, and peace negotiations have been opened between the government and Abdullah Öcalan for resolution of the decades-long conflict. Simultaneously, it seems that the situation for journalists, academics, and political activists continues to be precarious, in the era characterised as 'Kurdish opening'[53]. These and other political developments in Turkey are reflected in Kurdish diaspora communities' activities across Europe.

---

[49] Nesrin Uçarlar (2009: 143–151) discusses Turkish language policies and Kurdish linguistic rights in detail. As a matter of fact, the rejection of her PhD dissertation by Istanbul's Marmara University on account of the topic chosen suggests the extent to which academics, especially those dealing with minority rights and the Kurdish issue, can come under pressure and censorship. See http://www.theglobalmail.org/feature/turkey-the-powerful-and-the-paranoid/152/.

[50] The definitions follow Articles 2, items b and e, of the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

[51] For more information on Kurdish linguistic rights in Turkey, see the work of Uçarlar (2009) and Zeydanlıoğlu (2012).

[52] See 'Turkey to allow Kurdish lessons at schools', from 12 June 2012, at http://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2012/06/2012612133656956705.html.

[53] Michael Gunter discusses 'the closing of Turkey's Kurdish opening' since 2009, referring to the prime minister's and the president's announcement on resolving of the Kurdish issue. See http://jia.sipa.columbia.edu/closing-turkey%E2%80%99s-kurdish-opening. On freedom of the press in Turkey, see http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2012/turkey.

4.2.2. Iraqi/Southern Kurdistan

During the First World War, Syria and Iraq, holding extensive oil deposits, were separated from the Ottoman Empire by the British and French forces (McDowall 1996: 13). Iraq was established by the British from three *vilayets* (provinces) – Basra, Baghdad, and Mosul – putting the Kurdish populations in a state inhabited mainly by Arabic-speakers. The treaty of Sevres, in 1920, which was signed by the Allied Powers and the Ottoman government, was supposed to grant Kurdistan statehood after the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, but this never actually materialised[54]. The British did give Kurdistan semi-legal political status, and the provisional 1921 Iraqi Constitution stated that two ethnic groups, the Arabs and the Kurds, constituted the state of Iraq (Natali 2005: 27). After 1925, the British attempted to unite the various Iraqi populations (Shi'a Arabs, Sunni Arabs, Sunni Kurds, Shi'a Kurds, Shi'a Persians, Jews, Turkomans, and Christians) by constructing a national Iraqi identity based on secular values and a sense of unity. However, they enforced ethnic and religious cleavages by favouring and giving key positions to Sunni Arabs, who made up only 20% of the total population, in contrast to the 51% accounted for by Shi'a Arabs. One's status was based on affiliations with tribal and nontribal communities, with various religious communities, with land ownership/non-ownership, and with various urban groups (van Bruinessen 1992: 40–41).

Formal British rule came to an end when Iraq gained quasi-independence from the British crown in 1932. Arab nationalism emerged, with promotion of ethnicised pan-Arab identity and Iraqi patriotism. Most members of the Iraq Renaissance Socialist Party (Ba'athists) aligned themselves with the notion of ethnicised nationalism that diminished the political space for Kurds (Natali 2005: 34–36). From the 1950s onward, there existed competing forms of Arab nationalism. The inclusionary discourses of Iraqi identity that were based on the Arab–Kurd relationship provided Kurds with more political space to claim ethno-cultural rights. However, in the midst of the Cold War and the fear of communists, Arab nationalists gained more power and began to plan new projects of assimilation and control of Kurdish populations. The Iraqi identity thereby became entirely 'Arabised'. In 1963, the Ba'athists staged a coup and took power. Once firmly in place, their policies were directed at Sunni-Arabising, militarising, and Ba'athicising the state of Iraq. In tandem with the petrolisation of Iraq, the state elite began a project to 're-ethnicise' the Kurdish regions through major population relocations of Arabic-speakers. The Kurdish areas, which were rich in oil, most notably the city of Kirkuk, became subject to disputes that continue today (Yildiz 2007: 17).

---

[54] Instead, it was replaced by the Treaty of Lausanne in 1942, after Mustafa Kemal Atatürk gained power in Turkey, thus guaranteeing Turkey national integrity.

The Iraqi army grew rapidly in the late 1980s[55], thus enabling increased control of Kurdish populations. In part of the Anfal[56] campaigns of 1987–1988, Hassan al-Majid (Saddam Hussein's cousin, also known as 'Chemical Ali') organised systematic chemical attacks on Kurdish villages located in Northern Iraq. The eight military offensives physically destroyed 3,000 villages, killing approximately 150,000–180,000 people and leaving more than 180,000 missing (Middle East Watch 1993; McDowall 1996: 359; Yildiz 2007: 25). The city of Halabja, where approximately 7,000–8,000 people perished in a single day in 1988, has become a memorial site, and the historical event that is referenced as significant by many Kurds (see Khayati 2008: 243). In 1991, a popular uprising began in the Shi'a south and the Kurdish north. However, that uprising, although encouraged by the Unites States and its allies, was not militarily backed by the international forces[57], and it was quickly crushed by Saddam Hussein's forces. The end result was 20,000 being killed and a vast mass migration toward Turkey and Iran taking place, with, in all, a million people on the move (McDowall 1996: 372; Yildiz 2007: 36). Also, many people fled to the mountains, in a sad echo of the well-known Kurdish saying 'Kurds have no friends but the mountains'.

After the Gulf War, in 1991, an autonomous safe haven was created in the north of Iraq by the coalition forces. Simultaneously, the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) was established, thereby fostering a distinct sense of Kurdish identity and facilitating the creation of a developing civil society. The opportunities for Iraqi Kurds further expanded in the aftermath of Saddam Hussein's defeat in 2003 by Anglo-American forces. These developments have encouraged the development of more localised and territorial Kurdish identity, separate from Baghdad (Bengio 2005: 176–179). The current situation of Iraqi Kurdistan still presents challenges, particularly due to regional pressures and cross-border activities of the PKK, radical Islamic parties, and Iranian Kurdistan opposition groups and because the Kurdish nationalism in Iraqi Kurdistan still seems to be dictated by two identities and parties in power (the KDP and PUK) (*ibid.*: 179–181). On the other hand, the rise of the Gorran Party[58] (or 'Movement for Change') in more recent elections suggests that the power of the two major parties is being contested.

---

[55] See 'Iraqi army' at http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/iraq/army.htm.

[56] *Anfal* refers to the 'spoils of war' and has its origin in one of the suras.

[57] 'There is another way for the bloodshed to stop, and that is for the Iraqi military and Iraqi people to take matters into their own hands, and force Saddam Hussein, the dictator, to step aside; and then comply with the United Nations' resolution and rejoin the family of peace-loving nations,' said George H.W. Bush on 15 February 1991. The international community's unwillingness to sanction the Iraqi state was linked to the ongoing Iran–Iraq peace talks and massive post-war reconstruction projects, which would have been jeopardised (McDowall 1996: 362–363).

[58] See 'Reformist gains in Kurdish vote shake Iraq's quiet north', at http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/reformist-gains-in-kurdish-vote-shake-iraqs-quiet-north-1762060.html.

The (diplomatic) relations between Iraqi Kurdistan and Turkey produce yet another set of dynamics to consider. Iraqi–Turkish cross-border conflicts between members of the PKK and the Turkish army have been an ongoing issue for several years now. However, in 2013, with the opening of peace negotiations, the PKK has begun to withdraw from Turkey[59]. On the other hand, the relationship between the Turkish government and Iraqi Kurdistan has warmed in recent years, and the economic and diplomatic relations, provided that the situation of Kurds in Turkey is not touched upon, seem likely to prosper[60]. For instance, the burgeoning autonomous region of Iraqi Kurdistan has recently attracted foreign, mainly Turkish, investments and made progress in several sectors of the society, although developments in civil society have occurred only slowly (see Gunter 2007). The developments in Iraqi Kurdistan have a direct influence on the potential aspect of return among diaspora Kurds (see Emanuelsson 2008; Article IV) and also on aspirations to take part in the related nation-making projects[61]. In spring 2014, the war being waged in Syria is starting to show spill-over effects on Iraq, particularly with the ISIS terrorist organisation's recent take-over of Iraqi cities. This situation could shake the societal stability of the *de facto* Kurdish state in northern Iraq, or, alternatively, provide the KRG with an opportunity to gain independence from the rest of Iraq, which is currently witnessing political turmoil.

4.2.3. Iranian/Eastern Kurdistan

Simultaneously with the demise of the Ottoman Empire, in the early 20th century, the Qajar imperial system failed and the constitutional monarchy of Iran emerged from its ashes. In 1919, the Anglo-Iranian Agreement was signed, making Iran a semi-colony of Britain. Reza Shah rose to power through a military coup in 1921. What differentiated Iran from Iraq and Turkey with regard to the states' minority relations to Kurds was that, in the beginning, Reza Shah did not stir up Kurdish nationalism with a struggle over the Kurdish territories of northern Iran. Instead, the Kurds were treated as a tribal community and an integral part of the Iranian state (Natali 2005: 118–120).

---

[59] See 'The PKK's withdrawal: An historic step', from 20 April 2013, at http://www.economist.com/blogs/charlemagne/2013/04/pkks-withdrawal.

[60] See 'Northern Iraq: Peace, harmony and oil', from 20 April 2013, at http://www.economist.com/news/middle-east-and-africa/21576394-despite-assertions-contrary-iraqs-kurds-are-inching-towards-outright. See also 'Kurdistan − have it your way or the Turkish way?', from 29 April 2013, at http://www.yourmiddleeast.com/features/kurdistan-have-it-your-way-or-the-turkish-way_10376.

[61] For instance, the 2nd World Kurdish Congress, which was held by the KRG in 2012 in the Kurdish city of Erbil ('Hawler' in Kurdish), in Iraqi Kurdistan, put great emphasis on the importance of diaspora Kurds in the process of nation-making in Kurdistan. The more than 600 participants consisted of local politicians, researchers, practitioners, and experts, including many diaspora returnees and members of the Kurdish diaspora communities living in Europe and North America.

In a similarity to the Ottoman period, the primary identification in Qajar Persia and also in the later Iran was based on Islam (*ibid*.: 14, 16). Nonetheless, Persian identity was understood mainly as being Muslim, instead of in terms of ethnic nationalism as seen in Kemalist Turkey (see Insel 2007). After the demise of the imperial system, however, the political space too shifted, and the boundaries of belonging were ethnicised. In 1925, the nation-state-building process of Iran took off with Reza Shah, who aimed to construct a unified nation with a secularised, ethnicised Iranian identity. Particular elements employed to this end were the introduction of national conscription and universal primary education in the Persian language, coupled with suppression of the Kurdish language and expressions of ethnic identities (Vali 2011: 17–18).

Consequently, the tools that were used in construction of the Iranian identity, including myths of shared origins, were more inclusive with respect to Kurds in comparison to the Turkish and Iraqi cases (Natali 2005: 121). On the other hand, it has been argued by Abbas Vali (2011: 19) that it was the Kurdish resistance to such imposed identity that prompted the rise of Kurdish nationalism in Iranian Kurdistan. The conditions for such a development were influenced by the Iraqi Kurdish nationalist movement and an ethnicised political space that favoured Shi'a Persian-speaking groups (Natali 2005: 125). Amidst the turmoil of the Second World War, the political space opened up and created opportunities for manifestations of nationalist tendencies. For instance, the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI), established in 1945, declared its commitment to the autonomy project of Kurdistan (Vali 2011: 25–28). The following year, the short-lived Kurdish Republic of Mahabad, the only independent Kurdish republic to date, saw the light of day. A year later, the Iranian army entered the Republic of Mahabad, arrested its leaders, and executed them. The situation gradually grew worse as the Iranian government started to crack down on political movements in Iran (Yildiz & Taysi 2007: 23). However, the short-lived republic and the crackdown that followed can be said to have been significant for Kurdish nationalism in Iranian Kurdistan. For instance, according to the leader of the KDPI who was assassinated in Vienna in 1989 by Iranian state security forces, many seeds related to Kurds' language rights and national consciousness were sown at that stage (*ibid*.: 16).

After WWII, the parliamentary rule continued with Reza Shah's son, Muhammed Reza Shah, who stayed in power until the Islamic Revolution, in 1979. In the course of the 1960s and 1970s, the Iranian state became militarised and dominated by right-wing factions of the government, which led to gradual closing of the political space. The 'Persianisation' programmes of the 1970s further accentuated the ethnic divisions and reinforced Kurds' sense of 'otherness' (Natali 2005: 130, 134). However, it has been argued that the time of the constitutional Iran saw *Kurdayetî* develop in a less repressive political context than that of Turkey and Iraq. Therefore, it did not take on violent ethno-nationalist elements as in Turkey; instead, it developed into a culturally adaptive Kurdish identity (*ibid*.: 138–139). In 1979, the Islamic Revolution swept across Iranian society. It had been born out of the increased discontent felt by Iranians toward the Shah's repressive policies. Ayatollah Khomeini, who became the spiritual leader of the provisional government, imposed religion on the political space instead of valorising ethnic diversity and accused the Iranian Kurds of aspiring for independence. In the following years, the Iranian military engaged in bloody battles with the organised Kurdish groups (most notably, the KDPI and Komalah). This resulted in executions and imprisonment of Kurdish activities, along with an 'ideological cleansing' within the universities and other educational institutions. Furthermore, the Iraqi military bombarded the Iranian Kurdish villages in the course of the Iraq–Iran war (Yildiz 2007: 22–28), which resulted in numerous casualties and population movements.

The political context fostered a sense of ethnicised Kurdish identity, and, in a contrast against the transition period, Kurdish nationalism in Iran came to be largely based on secularised and leftist ethno-national ideology, although the processes of urbanisation and socio-economic transformations also influenced the understandings of *Kurdayetî* (Natali 2005: 150–151). The relationship between the Kurdish nationalists and the Islamic state shifted between compromise and hostility, though always allowing limited tolerance of Kurdish identity to be expressed. After Khomeini passed away, the leader of the reformist movements, Khatami, implemented measures to open the political space for Kurds that included the creation of Kurdish-language publications, associated media outlets, and Kurdish cultural centres. However, after the 2004 elections, the conservative Shi'a factions were strengthened, and compromise between the central government and the Kurdish nationalists became rather unforeseeable (*ibid*.: 158). In the same year, the PJAK (The Party of Free Life of Kurdistan) emerged. It is currently the only armed Kurdish opposition group in Iran. The Iranian Revolutionary Guards engage in sporadic fights with members of the PJAK (Amnesty International 2008: 6).

The presidential elections of 2005 brought Ahmadinejad to power, and the political space for (Sunni) Kurds contracted again. Recent years' human-rights abuses of Kurds in Iran amount to discrimination in employment, housing, and education on the basis of ethnicity (Kurdish) and/or religion (Sunni Islam); a ban on Kurdish-language education[62]; cases of arbitrary imprisonment; and executions of individuals deemed politically active in Kurdish parties (most notably in the

---

[62] See the 2012 special issue of *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* entitled 'The Kurdish Linguistic Landscape: Vitality, Linguicide and Resistance', edited by A. Hassanpour, J. Sheyholislami, and T. Skutnabb-Kangas (No. 217, pp. 1–218).

PJAK), along with suppression of female Kurdish activists on the basis of both ethnicity and gender[63] (Amnesty International 2008). The situation of Kurdish political prisoners in Iran, the continuous state censorship, and aspirations for greater cultural and linguistic rights among Kurds are resonant themes among the Kurds in diaspora. Such events in the societies of departure inform, for instance, the political activities that are undertaken in the diaspora communities and by members of political diaspora parties (see Article III).

4.2.4. Conclusion

The discussion above has provided contextualisation with respect to how the Kurdish minorities have been positioned within individual nation-states and how the notions of collective Kurdish identities and forms of Kurdish nationalism have been shaped differently within the political spaces of Turkey, Iraq, and Iran. However, several elements of commonality in understandings of Kurdish identities and nationalism obtain. Vali (1998: 82) has convincingly argued that Kurdish nationalism is strongly rooted in the 'dialectic of denial and resistance' – in other words, in opposing the denial of Kurdish identities and resisting the dominant national identities in the nation-states in which Kurdish minorities reside. Such national identities have at times been drawn from religious and/or ethnic premises, depending on the political spaces and notions of inclusion and exclusion of such spaces in each of the above-mentioned nation-states.

It has also been argued that the 'Kurdish national identity' is based on living in a common territory – in other words, that Kurdish national identity draws from a 'sense of place' and 'homeland' rather than from a 'sense of tribe and blood' (Aziz 2011: 45–46). In the case of ethno-national minorities, the understanding of territory may accentuate nationalist feelings of belonging and draw from the very 'state of statelessness' of the ethno-national group. On the other hand, the large-scale displacement of Kurds and the formation of diaspora communities have created conditions for the spread of Kurdish nationalism, of whatever sort(s), and shaped the ways in which 'Kurdishness' and Kurdish identities are understood (see Alinia 2004; Khayati 2008; Eliassi 2010). Indeed, van Bruinessen (2000) has examined the relationship between exile and Kurdish nationalism and stated that 'it was exile that transformed Kurdistan from a vaguely defined geographical entity into a political idea'.

---

[63] One gender-biased practice is *zena*, or *zina*, as defined by the Penal Code. It refers to adultery, forbidden intercourse between a man and a woman, which can lead to severe punishment. See the material on Iran in Amnesty International Index MDE 13/001/2008 ('End executions by stoning').

In a consequence of the Kurdish diaspora, the ‘Kurdish issue’ has become both internationalised and de-territorialised (Hassanpour 1998; van Bruinessen 1999b). Hence, van Bruinessen (2000) suggests that Kurdish nationalism has greatly benefited from the Kurdish diaspora and the emergence of Kurdish institutions, associations, lobbying groups, media, and networks in said diaspora. Furthermore, such collective identity narratives produced in the realm of Kurdish nationalist movements can shape micro-level articulations of belonging and understandings of (home)land among individuals who are embedded in the diaspora space. For instance, Alinia’s study (2004) demonstrates how diaspora Kurds’ longing for ‘homeland’ at the level of the individual can become politicised and tied to political projects of belonging oriented toward Kurdistan. The continuing division of Kurdistan and how various notions of ‘Kurdishness’ have developed in relation to the political spaces of these three individual nation-states resonate in young Kurds’ narrations of belonging and non-belonging, not least because they have first-hand experiences of the socio-political conditions that led to their families seeking refuge.

5. The Kurdish diaspora and the migration of Kurds to Finland

5.1. From Kurdistan to Europe

Hassanpour and Mojab (2005: 218) outline two major developments that led to the resettlement of Kurds in diaspora communities around the globe in the 20th century. Firstly, the economic boom witnessed by Western Europe since the 1960s attracted ‘guest workers’ to migrate from Turkey in significant numbers, mainly to Germany but also to other European countries. Accordingly, by the 1990s, the largest Kurdish population lived in Germany, accounting for roughly half a million Kurds, most of whom had migrated from Turkey. Secondly, the unstable political situation in the Kurdistan region led to the formation of Kurdish diaspora communities across Europe, including some in Northern Europe. Various state policies, including assimilation measures constituting part of the nation-state-building strategies described in the previous chapter, led to increased tensions between the Kurdish populations and the state. Armed conflicts that occasionally involved international forces were a frequent characteristic of the interethnic relations in Iraq (1961–2003), Iran (1967 to 1968 and 1979 to today), and Turkey (1984 to the present) (*ibid.*: 218). These events together led to internal and international displacement of Kurds and to the formation of Kurdish diaspora communities around the globe. The forming of Kurdish diaspora communities in Northern Europe was informed mostly by the political developments in the Middle East and, to a lesser degree, by the economically motivated migration waves (Wahlbeck 2005).

This part of the dissertation features a descriptive overview of the displacement of Kurds in the Middle East, the refugee experiences of young Kurds who took part in this study, and the formation of the transnational Kurdish diaspora in Europe. Without going into too much detail, this section of the chapter contextualises and historicises the narratives of research participants by exploring the political contexts in the societies of departure that led their families to seek refuge outside the region. For this purpose, I have chosen to include brief excerpts from the data collected that reference experiences and memories of the departure and the journey. This is done with the aim of situating the narrations of young Kurds' refugee experiences within the related politico-historical contexts that preceded their families' departure from Iraq, Iran, and Turkey.

5.1.1. The Kurdish diaspora in numbers

It is difficult to cite accurate figures with respect to the numbers of Kurds living in Europe, because data-collection procedures differ between national censuses. Estimates of the Kurdish population in Europe variously place the number of Kurdish-speakers between roughly 800,000 and 1.3 million, with the great majority of Kurds being from Turkey and residing in Germany (European Commission 2006; Institut kurde de Paris[64]). Furthermore, there are sizeable Kurdish populations in France, the United Kingdom, Sweden, the Netherlands, and Belgium, ranging from tens of thousands of Kurds in Sweden to over a hundred thousand Kurds in France (see Table 1).

The Kurdish populations from Turkey constitute the vast majority of Kurds in Europe, with some estimates as high as 85%[68]. In Germany, the statistics are collected on the basis of citizenship or the country of birth, for which reason the Kurdish-speaking migrants with Turkish citizenship tend to be invisible in the official figures and registered as Turkish, Iraqi, Iranian, and Syrian citizens. This also seems to be the case in several other countries that collect population data related to such variables as citizenship and country of birth instead of ethnicity or language. There too, individuals with a Kurdish background are invisible in the statistics. Furthermore, it is likely that thousands of undocumented Kurdish migrants not visible in national statistics reside in Europe (Baser 2011: 8).

The size of the Kurdish diaspora in Europe[65]

Country	**Number**
Germany	700,000–800,000
France	120,000–150,000
United Kingdom	80,000–100,000
Sweden	80,000–100,000[66]
The Netherlands	70,000–80,000
Belgium	10,000–15,000
Finland	10,000–10,500[67]
Denmark	8,000–10,000

Table 1: The size of the Kurdish diaspora in Europe (Sources: Kurdish Institute of Paris; European Commission 2006; Alinia 2004; Khayati 2008).

---

[64] See http://www.institutkurde.org/en/kurdorama/. Currently, the proportion of Kurds in Germany might be a little lower than the corresponding figures elsewhere, as is indicated by the table above.

[65] These data are abstracted from the Web site of the European Commission (2006). See http://www.assembly.coe.int/ASP/Doc/XrefViewHTML.asp?FileID=11316&Language=EN.

[66] However, several studies of the Kurdish diaspora in Sweden place the total population of Kurds at around 20,000−50,000 (Alinia 2004; Khayati 2008).

[67] This estimate is based on numbers extracted from the data of Statistics Finland (2013a) and from Östen Wahlbeck's study (2005: 1005).

[68] Institut kurde de Paris (Kurdish Institute of Paris). See http://www.institutkurde.org/kurdorama/.

Where Northern Europe is concerned, the Kurdish community in Sweden is noticeable in many respects. Estimates of the number of Kurds in Sweden stand as high as 20,000–50,000 (Alinia 2004; Emanuelsson 2005: 83; Khayati 2008: 204). It is worth noting that the Kurdish diaspora in Sweden has been argued to be particularly active. One of the clearest examples of this is the role Kurds in Sweden have played in the creation of standardised, written Kurmanji. Indeed, it is argued by van Bruinessen (1999b: 10) that the Kurdish diaspora in Sweden features a relatively high number of educated Kurds, including writers, journalists, and other intellectuals[69]. As for the present study, it became more and more evident that the Kurdish diaspora communities in Finland foster close ties with individuals of Kurdish background who live in Sweden. Such transnational ties were maintained through networks of close family members and other relatives, affiliations with political parties, or participation in cultural activities.

5.1.2. The departure and journey in historical context – stories behind the figures

This part of the dissertation describes young Kurds' journey from the Middle East to Northern Europe by historicising and contextualising their migration experiences with respect to the political developments in the Middle East from the late 1980s to the late 1990s.

In the case of the Kurdish diaspora from Iraq, the forced displacement since the 1970s has taken place in several stages: The first stage was mainly regional, with 200,000 Iraqi Kurds crossing the border to Iran. The second wave of forced migration took place under the Ba'athist government in the 1980s. It too was mainly regional, but thousands of Kurds migrated through Turkey to Europe. The third wave of migration occurred after the Kurdish uprising in 1991, with nearly 1.5 million Kurds crossing the border to Turkey and Iran. Then, the fourth major Kurdish exodus took place in the course of the 1990s in response to political instabilities in the region (Human Rights Watch 2004; Hassanpour & Mojab 2005: 217–219). For instance, most Iraqi Kurds arrived in Finland from the early 1990s onward (Statistics Finland 2013a). Those participants in this study who originally came from Iraqi Kurdistan migrated to Finland during the political turmoil of the 1990s.

When one examines particular political events, it is noticeable that the Kurdish diaspora movements toward Europe were fuelled particularly by the Iraqi state's destruction of thousands of Kurdish villages between 1975 and 1991. These included Saddam Hussein's notorious Anfal campaign, with gas bombings specifically targeting Kurdish villages. In 1991, the failed revolt against the Iraqi state in the aftermath of the Gulf War resulted in two million Kurds fleeing to the mountains and toward Iran and Turkey. The High Commissioner of the United Nations has described this as the 'highest rate of influx' in the 40-year history of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Also, the 1994–1997 civil war between the Kurdish parties created instability in the region, and by the late 1990s thousands of refugees from Iraqi Kurdistan had migrated to the neighbouring countries and Europe (McDowall 1996: 372–373, 387–388).

---

[69] For instance, the Third World Kurdish Congress was held in Stockholm on 11–13 October 2013. The previous two such congresses were held in Amsterdam (2011) and Erbil, Iraq (2012).

In those years, numerous families left Iraqi Kurdistan for Turkey and later, after having lived there for some years and with the assistance of the UNHCR, received asylum in European countries, including Finland. Among these families was that of Runahi[70], then five years old, who recalls the departure of her family from Iraqi Kurdistan in the following way:

> *M: So, how much can you remember of the time when you were living in Kurdistan? You were so young too…*
> *H: I have wondered about it from time to time, what I actually remember. I just remember that one time we were having breakfast, when Saddam attacked. We didn't even finish breakfast, and I remember my mother packing […]. She packed a few slices of bread in a tiny cloth and then we just left on foot. We walked, and there were lots of things on the way. We walked for days, following the cars toward Turkey.*
> Runahi (F)[71]

The family stayed in Turkey for two years before being granted asylum under the Finnish annual refugee quota. Several other participants had migrated from Iraq to Finland by passing through Turkey, including the families who were originally from Iranian Kurdistan. Hence, the research subjects' migration trajectories included internal displacement in Iraq but also cross-border movement between Iraq, Iran, and Turkey.

After 1979, the armed conflict between the Kurds and the Iranian state sent flows of migrants from Iranian Kurdistan to Iraq, especially to refugee camps on the Iraqi side. Several thousand Iranian Kurdish families and members of Iranian Kurdish political groups fled to Iraq in the aftermath of 1979's Islamic Revolution, and they were settled in the Al-Tash refugee camp, in Al-Rumadi, a town next to the Iraqi–Jordanian border. After having spent several years in the camp, some families were relocated to Northern European countries by means of the UNHCR settlement measures, with most ending up in Sweden and Norway but some being sent to Finland (see Khayati 2008: 215). After the fall of Saddam Hussein, in 2003, the security situation grew more unstable, and refugees who had spent up to two decades in the refugee camp left for Iraqi Kurdistan. Several participants in this study recounted that their migration trajectories had passed through the Al-Tash refugee camp before arrival in Finland. One participant estimated there to be dozens of, if not more than a hundred, young Kurds in Finland who had lived in the Al-Tash refugee camp. Gavan was one of them. He was born in the refugee camp to an Iranian Kurdish family, after which his family were granted asylum in Finland:

---

[70] Research participants' names have been anonymised, and Kurdish pseudonyms are used. Some details of personal information (such as age or their city of birth) have been altered to guarantee their anonymity.

[71] I have indicated the gender of respondents with '(M)' for male or '(F)' for female.

> *H: Yes, I was eight when I came to Finland through UNICEF*[72] *from Iraq, Rumadi [...]. Al-Tash, so it's like a refugee camp where Iranian Kurds fled to safety to Iraq, and Iraqi Kurds fled to safety to Iran [...]. So the war between Iran and Iraq started in 1980, and we were forced to flee. My parents fled to Iraq, since there were bombings in Iran, and that's why they left for the camp. I was born there in 1990*[73]*, and from there we arrived in Finland (some years later) through UNICEF.*
> Gavan (M)

Between 1979 and the 1990s, Iranian Kurds were fleeing the Iranian government, heading for Iraq, while the Iraqi government aimed to destabilise the political situation in Iran by providing funding to Iranian Kurds. In the meantime, Kurds in northern Iraq found refuge in Iran, which welcomed approximately one and a half million Iraqi Kurdish refugees in 1991 after the uprising in northern Iraq (Yildiz 2007: 36). In contrast, Iraqi Kurdish refugees fleeing to Turkey were less well received and at first not admitted at all. This put pressure on the coalition forces to establish a no-fly zone for safety in northern Iraq, and many refugees were resettled in that region, thanks to the efforts of the UNHCR (*ibid*.: 41). The internal displacement of Kurds in Iraq and Iran led to migration trajectories of Kurdish refugees passing through Turkey, Jordan, and other countries before some of the families ended up migrating to Northern Europe. This was also the case with Rangin, who was born to an Iraqi Kurdish family, and Armanji, part of an Iranian Kurdish family. In fact, before leaving for Turkey, Rangin and Armanji had exactly the opposite migration trajectories between Iraqi and Iranian Kurdistan:

> *H: So I come from Kurdistan. I was born on the Iranian side, when there was the war [in Iraq]. When Saddam Hussein attacked the Kurdish region, we left for the Iranian side, and I was born there. We were there for a month, two months, and then we returned to the Iraqi side, where I spent a year, and then we left for Turkey, where we lived for a year or two, and then we came to Finland.*
> Rangin (F)

> *H: I think it was in 1993 when my mother, my little brother, and I left for Kurdistan of Northern Iraq, because our father was there [...]. We moved after him, because he couldn't come back to Iran, for political reasons. Then we spent some years in Iraq [...] and decided – or, actually, my parents decided – that it would be wise to leave Kurdistan and go to Europe, since we already had relatives there, in Sweden and so forth. At least, my father said that we, the children, would have a better future if we left, and then we decided to leave for Turkey, where through the UN we could go to Europe and apply for asylum. So we left for Turkey, and we had a passport, which allowed us to*

---

[72] The respondent most likely meant to refer to the UNHCR instead of UNICEF. The former managed the refugee resettlement processes with respect to Finland.

[73] Certain characteristics have been modified slightly in the description to prevent identification of the respondent.

> *stay in Turkey for only two weeks. After that, we had the interview at the UN, and then we were basically undocumented migrants in Turkey. We had to hide so that the police wouldn't have returned us to Northern Iraq [...]. Then Finland said that they would take us with the asylum quota, because my father had a strong political background. So actually we stayed for almost two years in Turkey before we got out of there [...]. We arrived in northern Finland in the late 1990s.*
> Armanji (M)

Besides Iraqi and Iranian Kurds who passed through Turkey to Europe in the late 1980s, there was an increase in the number of Kurds migrating from Turkey to Europe. This was partially due to the violent conflict between the PKK and the Turkish state. Furthermore, the state's 'forced urbanisation' programmes implemented in eastern Turkey destroyed thousands of Kurdish villages. Estimates of the internally displaced populations vary, depending on the sources. The number of internal displacements of individuals resulting from 'terrorism' and from conflict-induced displacement alongside forced urbanisation amounts to between 353,000 (by government authorities' estimates) and 2.5 to 3 million (according to various NGOs)[74]. Eastern Turkey, which is inhabited mainly by Kurdish populations, has been said to have become a sort of concentration camp by the late 1980s, 'where every citizen is treated as a suspect and where oppression, torture and insult by the military are the rule rather than the exception' (van Bruinessen 1988[75]). In practice, for the local populations this meant living at a pressure point between the PKK and the state in their ongoing fights and also in fear of arbitrary abduction, imprisonment, killing, or other violent methods to 'settle the eastern issue'.

This atmosphere of fear and sense of insecurity are described in Runak and her sister Sharmin's narrations. Their origins lie in the mainly Kurdish-inhabited region of north-east Turkey. Their father migrated to Finland for political reasons in the early 2000s after his accidental release from the Turkish prison where he had been confined for years (according to his daughters). The rest of the family followed him to Finland some years later, but prior to their departure they were subjected to interrogation and threats by the Turkish authorities looking for their father:

> *S: They came to see if he would be at home; every holiday we had the police visiting us.*
> *R: They were really messy; they came in the middle of the night...*
> *S: On the day of id[76], you probably know what it is...*
> *M: Yes.*

---

[74] From the database of the Norwegian Refugee Council (2005), 'IDP: Profile of internal displacement: Turkey', 50–51. Accessed from http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/(httpInfoFiles)/A0D784C014878D59802570BA00568E64/$file/Turkey%20-October%202005.pdf.

[75] Van Bruinessen refers to the Turkish daily *Cumhuriyet*, which on 12 February 1986 reported the findings from the opposition party's fact-finding mission to eastern Turkey.

[76] Eid al-Fitr, also called the Feast of Breaking the Fast, marks the end of Ramadan, the Islamic holy month of fasting.

> *S: The final day of Ramazan*[77] *and we were like sleeping at our mom's sister's and it was around one o'clock at night and then the police – you know, the special police; they have the things on their heads—*
> *R: Masks.*
> *S: Yes, and very big men, they kicked our door, almost broke it down. We were just one woman and two little girls.*
> *R: How old were we then, like 10?*
> *S: I was eight at the time. Then they came in [...] and soiled our clothes. Mum had just cleaned up, you know, for the holiday [...]. Then they messed everything up, mattresses and everything [...] and finally insulted us and left. So it was like that every day; they came to our door and stopped us: 'Where is your dad? Where is your husband?' [...]. It was always like that; they came to threaten us and Mum and said that they would take her to the prison and beat her up and kill her if she didn't ask her husband to come [...]. Take her children, that's how they threatened. They probably would have taken [us]; nobody can stop it when so many children, people, women have been taken, so many men without any explanation, and nobody knows where they are now. Thousands of them [...].*
> Runak and Sharmin (F)

Runak and Sharmin's account makes reference to people who went missing in the 1990s and 2000s in police custody in eastern Turkey[78]. For instance, the Diyarbakir Military Prison, in that region of Turkey, was known for torture cases in the 1980s (Zeydanlıoğlu 2009). Between 1994 and 2003, there were 800–900 cases reported of enforced disappearances in Turkey (Human Rights Watch 2012)[79]. Since 2009, excavation of mass graves has been under way in eastern Turkey, with the purpose of locating some of the individuals who went missing in the 1980s and 1990s[80].

Not all of the research participants were willing to discuss their memories from before their departure from the Kurdistan area. This evidently may stir up traumatic memories, and it imposes considerable ethical issues from a methodological point of view (see Subsection 3.3.1, 'Ethics considerations'). However, most participants narrated some childhood memories and recollections of their journey to Finland, provided that they were old enough to have formed such memories. Participants who did so linked them intrinsically to historical events and political upheaval that had led their families to seek refuge. Furthermore, they seemed to be rather well informed as to the current situation in Kurdistan and of the events that had taken place after their departure for Finland. This can be explained by some having visited the region and being in contact with relatives and friends in Kurdistan but also by their parents fostering an environment that references

---

[77] The month of fasting in the Islamic calendar. It is called Ramazan in Turkey and, for the most part, Ramadan elsewhere.

[78] Since 1995, some family members of the missing persons have gathered in Istanbul for a silent protest of the fate of their relatives. This protest movement, called Saturday Mothers, displays mostly female family members holding pictures of their missing relatives (Ayyildiz 2007: 333–334).

[79] See 'Some 800 victims of enforced disappearance remembered', from 22 May 2008, at http://www.ediec.org/news/newsitem/article/turkey-some-800-victims-of-enforced-disappearance-remembered/.

[80] See the 9 March 2009 piece 'Kurdish "grave site" digs begin', at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7932792.stm.

Kurdistan as the society of departure and, in many cases, as 'home(land)' when they were being raised. Indeed, they seemed to be embedded in the transnational diaspora space that involves cross-border relations and networks constituting the social and political fabric of Kurdish diaspora communities.

5.1.3. The transnational dimension of the Kurdish diaspora

The transnational contacts between the diaspora Kurds and between residents in the societies of departure constitute extensive networks that transcend the nation-states' boundaries. Organised diaspora communities have enabled the creation of non-territory-based networks and contacts, creation of publications, and political organisations and institutions – of which the Kurdish Parliament in Exile and the Kurdish National Congress are exemplary cases (van Bruinessen 2000). Furthermore, the transnational space of Kurdish diaspora communities shows particular dynamics in terms of exile, the historical background of Kurdish nationalism, and the sense of 'otherness' that continue to be informed by the ongoing situation of Kurdish minorities in the Kurdistan region.

The transnational space has in this sense provided a platform for expressions of Kurdish identities and more political freedom in construction of political projects of belonging. One particularly noteworthy example of this is the large number of Kurdish-language periodicals published in diaspora, relative to the number of such publications in Turkey (*ibid.*). Another is the first Kurdish satellite television station, launched in 1994 by diaspora Kurds in Britain instead of in Kurdish regions of the Middle East. Turkey did attempt to silence the channel and accused it of being a mouthpiece for the PKK (Hassanpour 1998; Hassanpour *et al.* 2012). Failing in its attempts, Ankara established its own channel in 2009, after which the major powers in the Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraq began satellite broadcasting. In 2010, there were around 15 channels broadcasting in Kurdish (Sheyholislami 2011). Indeed, as discussed by Sheyholislami (2010), the continuous political developments in the Middle East are lived among the diaspora Kurds, who stay connected to Kurdistan through satellite channels, ICT tools, social-networking sites, and long-distance telephone calls[81]. This is visible in the immediate reactions to significant political events in Turkey, Iraq, and Iran, which prompt demonstrations, lobbying, distribution of petitions, and other political activities in diaspora.

---

[81] Articles III and IV deal with such intersections of connectivity and transnational (political) activities among the younger generation of Kurds.

In conjunction with the virtualisation of the ‘Kurdish issue’, another remarkable development has been its internationalisation thanks to increased media coverage of Kurdish-related news and the emergence of cross-border Kurdish institutions. The ‘Kurdish issue’ has received particular international attention in the aftermath of events such as the atrocities committed by Saddam Hussein against Iraq’s Kurdish populations and the 1999 arrest of the leading figure of the PKK, Abdullah Öcalan. Whilst the ‘Kurdish issue’ has, thus, become both internationalised and de-territorialised (van Bruinessen 2000), it has been suggested that the Kurds are positioned differently in certain media and various states that have close diplomatic relations with those nation-states that have Kurdish minorities. For instance, Kevin McKiernan[82] has argued that the US State Department draws a distinction between ‘good Kurds’ and ‘bad Kurds’. The ‘good Kurds’ are the Kurds of Iraq, who suffered under the regime of Saddam Hussein and have fought for themselves for years to have an autonomous region in northern Iraq, while the ‘bad Kurds’ are Kurds in Turkey, who seek cultural and linguistic rights and even autonomy within the Turkish state, thereby possibly threatening the territorial integrity of the Turkish state. Indeed, international media refer to the PKK/Turkey conflict varyingly as a fight between terrorists / guerrillas / freedom-fighters / insurgents and the Turkish state. Such discourses should be understood in the context of larger discursive frames and politics of governmentality, particularly in relation to discourses on the securitisation of borders and the ‘war against terrorism’. These discourses construct international migration and asylum-seekers as major security risks, consequently affecting the way in which individuals are positioned in the global matrix of power (see Squire 2009; Yuval-Davis 2011: 40–43).

Furthermore, such global discourses are worth not being dismissed since they affect the ongoing constructions of ‘Kurdishness’ in the Middle East region as much as the construction of Kurdish identities in the diaspora. Diaspora communities provide particular, transnational settings for constructing identities and fostering feelings of belonging. Firstly, the transnational diaspora space offers means to manage feelings of marginalisation and exclusion in the societies of settlement. As is argued by Alinia (2004), such a diaspora space provides means and a symbolic location to construct a sense of belonging, continuity, and recognition. Furthermore, diaspora space entails collective narratives of identification in the form of political projects of belonging. For instance, Khalid Khayati (2008: 3) argues that the ‘victim diaspora discourse’ employed by Kurdish diasporans in Sweden draws on traumatic events in the history of the Kurdish people (Halabja, denial, assimilation, and forced displacement) and is employed as a way of legitimising escape from such events. Instead, he suggests that attention should be paid instead to positive diaspora experiences within the Kurdish diaspora.

---

[82] Documentary on Roj *Good Kurds, Bad Kurds*, by Kevin McKiernan. Accessed via YouTube, at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x33grBe_wjQ.

In Section 5.1, I have discussed the collective constructions of identities in the Kurdistan region from the politico-historical perspective and within the transnational setting of the Kurdish diaspora. The following sections of the chapter narrow the focus to the migration of Kurds to Finland and explore the formation of Kurdish diaspora communities in Finland. I also briefly discuss the welfare-state structures and discourses that touch or have touched the lives of younger members of the diaspora.

5.2. Immigration and the context of the Finnish welfare state

National-level politics in Finland, which have followed the Nordic welfare model and the egalitarian tradition, have had a profound impact on the economic and the education system, not just distribution of income. The country's development into a welfare state took place within a rather short time and, in comparison to the other Nordic countries, quite late. Finland's welfare structures have been significant for immigration, which flowed increasingly toward Finland in the 1990s – in both the policies on migrants' entry and welfare policies (in particular, integration policies) related to migrants living in Finland. It has been argued, in fact, that Finnish immigration policies on immigrants' admittance have been quite strict, whilst the integration policies have been rated as rather inclusive and comprehensive (Huddleston *et al.* 2011; Saukkonen 2013a). Whereas the previous chapter provided contextualisation of the Kurdish diaspora and discussed its transnational dimension, the discussion that follows looks more specifically at Kurdish migration to Finland in the context of a welfare state and its policies. The young Kurds who participated in this study migrated as either quota refugees or asylum-seekers, and henceforth they have been concerned with both immigration and integration policies of the Finnish state. Also, the emergence of Kurdish associations and other organisations will be discussed in brief, as these are considered to provide transnational diaspora space to the younger members of diaspora communities.

5.2.1. Immigration waves, policies, and the migration of Kurds to Finland

The immigration waves of the 20th and early 21st centuries within and to Western and Northern Europe have been considered in terms of three phases that differ from each other in terms of the structure of immigration (Saukkonen 2013b: 29–40). The first phase of immigration extended from the post-WWII years until the oil crisis in the 1970s and in large part involved labour migrants and their children arriving in Western European countries from former colonies. The second wave of immigration is considered to have started in the 1970s. With the oil crisis and the deteriorating economic situation, the need for labour migrants decreased, and instead the number of refugees and asylum-seekers grew rapidly in the following decades. The third wave is characterised by European Union countries attracting highly skilled labour migrants from the developing countries (*ibid.*). The waves of migration toward Finland took off at the end of the second phase, and in the course of the 1990s the country gradually transformed from a country of emigration into a country of immigration (Korkiasaari & Söderling 2003) – a development accompanied by changes in immigration policies.

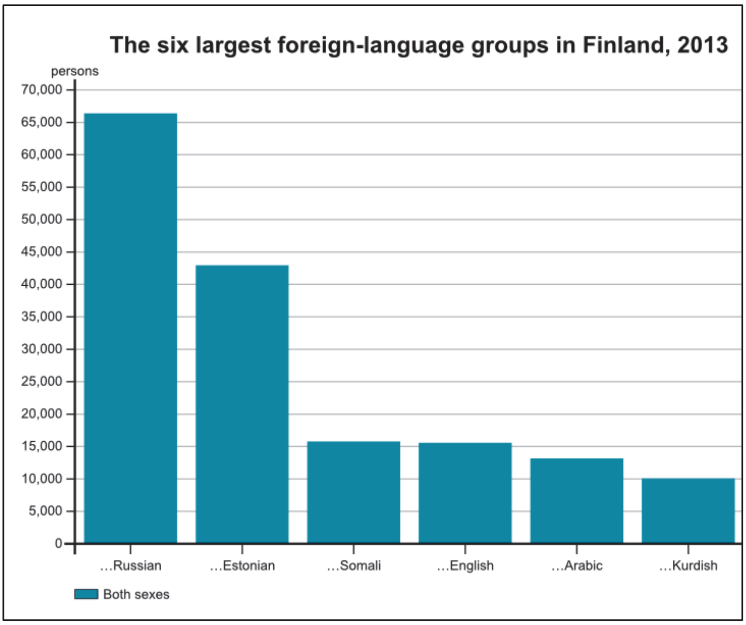
The collapse of the Soviet Union, in 1991, had a significant impact on Finnish domestic and foreign policies, including immigration policies – indeed, it opened the Eastern border for immigration (Lepola 2000: 46). However, the Finnish case is distinctive in that the country had not experienced labour-migration characteristics similar to those of other Northern and Western European countries in the decades prior to the 1990s. The migration in the 1990s involved arrivals from the former Yugoslavia, Somalia, and the former Soviet Union but also from Iraq, Turkey, and Iran (Statistics Finland 2001). The number of migrants who between 1987 and 1997 gained a residence permit as asylum-seekers, refugees or in the related family-reunification processes was only 14,742, while the equivalent figures in the other Nordic countries were higher, most notably in Norway (37,272), Denmark (61,689), and Sweden (200,766) (Lepola 2000: 49). These numbers can be placed in the larger context of immigration toward Finland thus: between 1990 and 2000, most migrants[83] arrived for family reasons (60–65%) either by marriage to a Finnish citizen or through the family-reunification legislation. Only 15% of migrants arrived as refugees or asylum-seekers, and 10–20% migrated for work or to pursue studies[84].

Similarly, family formation and arrival of migrants in line with family-reunification procedures were a significant factor for immigration to Finland in the early 2000s, although labour-related immigration became further emphasised in the course of the decade (Saukkonen 2013b: 55). With the expansion of the European Union in 2004–2007, immigration from Estonia has been steadily increasing. Russian-speakers form the largest group of migrants and foreign-language-speakers in Finland, followed by Estonian-speakers. The next largest foreign-language groups are Somali-, English-, Arabic-, and Kurdish-speakers, in that order (see Graph 1). The order for foreign citizens is a bit different, featuring Estonians as the largest group, followed by Russians, Swedes[85], Chinese, and Iraqi citizens (Statistics Finland 2013b). In 2013, the figure for those with a migrant background (first-generation migrants and their children) in Finland stood at approximately five per cent of the population[86], comparably low relative to other Nordic countries – compare with Sweden (21%[87]), Denmark (12%[88]), and Norway (14%[89]) (*ibid.*; Statistics Sweden 2013; Statistics Denmark 2013; Statistics Norway 2013).

---

[83] The category encompasses refugees, asylum-seekers, people migrating for work reasons, those migrating for marriage, returnees, and so forth.

[84] See 'Maahanmuuton perusteet' (meaning 'The basics of immigration'). <http://www.vaestoliitto.fi/tieto_ja_tutkimus/vaestontutkimuslaitos/tilastoja-ja-linkkeja/tilastotietoa/maahanmuuttajat/maahanmuuton-perusteet/>. [Last visited June 2014].



Graph 1: The six largest foreign-language groups in Finland (Statistics Finland 2013a).

The national census of Finland in 2013 points to the number of Kurdish-speakers in Finland as being 10,075. Kurdish-speakers formed the sixth largest group of foreign-language-speakers in Finland after Russian-, Estonian-, English-, Somali-, and Arabic-speakers (Statistics Finland 2013a). As a matter of fact, Finland seems to be one of the few countries – if not the only one – to conduct national censuses in terms of mother tongue (*ibid.*; Wahlbeck 2005: 1005), thereby rendering Kurdish-speakers, who are usually invisible in other countries' statistics, visible. It has been estimated that the number of Kurds might be even larger, because some newly arrived refugees, particularly from Turkey, speak Turkish as their main language or did not realise that they could declare Kurdish as their mother tongue. Furthermore, others might have listed the Sorani or Kurmanji dialect as their native language (Wahlbeck 2005: 1005). In statistics based on nationality,

---

[85] The Swedish-speakers are 'invisible' in the language-based statistics, since Swedish is the second official language of Finland and, therefore, 'Swedish Finns' are not listed as foreign-language speakers.

[86] This percentage includes individuals categorised under the rubric 'Total of foreign origin: first-generation foreigner, second-generation foreigner'.

[87] This percentage includes individuals categorised under the rubric 'Foreign background: foreign-born or Swedish-born with two foreign-born parents'. When individuals categorised as 'Swedish-born with one Swedish-born parent and one foreign-born parent' are included, the percentage is 28% of the total population.

[88] This percentage includes individuals categorised under the rubric 'Ancestry: immigrants, descendant'.

[89] This percentage includes individuals categorised under the rubric 'Immigrants and Norwegian born to immigrant parents'.

Kurdish-speakers are classified as Iraqi, Iranian, or Turkish citizens. Furthermore, many Kurdish-speakers have acquired Finnish citizenship.

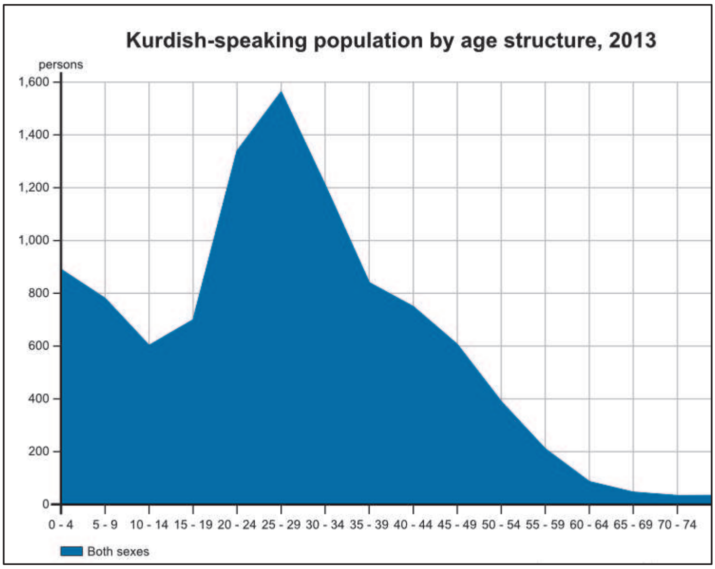
Kurds from Iraq constitute the largest group of Kurdish-speakers in Finland, although sizeable communities of Kurds from Iran and Turkey also reside in the country. In the 1990s, significant numbers of Iraqi and Iranian Kurds arrived through the organised resettlement of Iraqi refugees under the auspices of the UNHCR (*ibid.*: 1004–1005). Under the refugee quota, Finland has been receiving 750 individuals per year since 2001[90]. The Kurds arriving with quota-refugee status have received asylum in accordance with the UN convention, although it must be noted that Kurds with other legal statuses too resided in Finland in the 1990s. Besides the quota refugees, asylum-seekers from Iraq, Iran, and Turkey, assumedly most of them Kurds, arrived in the course of that decade. The fact that most of the Kurds from Iran and Iraq who migrated to Finland did so as quota refugees is argued to give a special character to the Kurdish community in Finland (Wahlbeck 1999: 83–85): The individuals who gained refuge through the quota system had not necessarily intended to migrate to Finland or had the possibility of migrating elsewhere in Europe, and, on account of the humanitarian orientation of the selection criteria, these refugees include many families and children. Many families arrived as part of the Finnish annual refugee quota from the UNHCR refugee camps in Turkey, Pakistan, and northern Iraq (Wahlbeck 2005: 1004–1005). It is plausible that, accordingly, Kurdish-speakers form one of the largest refugee-originated foreign-language groups in Finland.

One element that is noticeable among the Kurdish-speaking population of Finland is the distribution by generation. Younger generations, of ages 20–29, are clearly over-represented, whereas the age cohort of children born to Kurdish parents in Finland (the so-called second generation) consists mainly of children who are under 10 years old (see Graph 2). Naturally, there are individuals of Kurdish background of all ages, who have arrived throughout the 1990s, in the 2000s and in the 2010s. Though Kurdish-speakers constitute the sixth largest foreign-language group in Finland, they account for the fourth largest of the major foreign-language groups among those aged 20–29.

The generation of young Kurds who arrived in Finland in the 1990s and early 2000s are now roughly between 20 and 30 years old (Statistics Finland 2013a). A generational ‘peak’ is noticeable in the graph above, which presents the Kurdish-speaking population in Finland (both sexes) according to age group in 2013. The peak generation represents a variety of young Kurds, ranging from those who have arrived in Finland in the 1990s to people arriving more recently. Furthermore, the Kurdish-speaking population differs slightly in age structure between the provinces of Varsinais-Suomi and Uusimaa, where the major Kurdish-speaking populations reside. In Uusimaa (which includes Helsinki), the 30–34 age band is still quite large in comparison to what can be seen in Varsinais-Suomi (which includes Turku), where the 30–34 age group is smaller than the younger age cohorts. This might be partially explained by more recently arrived Kurdish migrants having settled mainly in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area.

---

[90] According to the Finnish Immigration Service. See http://www.migri.fi/asylum_in_finland/quota_refugees. In 2014, Finland will receive 1,050 quota refugees on account of the Syrian conflict.



Graph 2: The population of Kurdish-language-speakers in Finland, by age bracket (Statistics Finland 2013a).

The young Kurds who took part in this study arrived in Finland in consequence of forced displacements in their societies of departure. The Finnish welfare policies that address issues related to immigration, such as the reception of refugees, integration measures, and resettlement policies, have informed the first experiences characterising their life in Finland. Furthermore, Kurdish diaspora organisations emerged rapidly after the first settlement and were financially supported by integration policies that considered such organisations to be tools for successful migrant integration. Perhaps more importantly for the younger generations of Kurds, however, is that these have provided opportunities to engage with civil society and with other members of the Kurdish-speaking communities, in Finland and elsewhere.

5.2.2. Integration policies – settling, resettling, and learning the language

The 1990s were a decade of major economic, technological, and societal transformations in Finnish society. At the beginning of that decade, the country experienced a harsh recession, followed by economic restructuring and development into an information society. Accession to the European Union, in 1995, opened the frontiers and brought some loosening of the strict immigration policies. It became considered imperative to integrate the newly arrived migrants into the social, economic, and cultural fabric of Finnish society – in fact, Finland had no official integration legislation prior to 1999. The national integration policies were drafted then, and the Integration Act came into effect in the same year. Here, the main emphasis was placed on finding employment and on language instruction, which would preferably allow elimination of migrants' dependence on state-allocated allowances. The main target groups of integration measures have been refugees, asylum-seekers, and Ingrian returnees (Vilkama & Yousfi 2010: 233).

Integration policies, particularly those concerning refugees and asylum-seekers in relation to reception and resettlement, can be said to reflect the particularities of the Nordic welfare system. Finnish integration policies have been characterised as pluralistic (*ibid.*: 232) and, therefore, have received rather positive assessments (see MIPEX[91]). However, it has also been suggested that the integration policies and practices have assimilationist features (Wahlbeck 1999: 81; Kerkkänen 2008) and that there are tendencies among authorities and welfare practitioners to use 'culture speech' to produce ethnic and racial categorisations when working with families of migrant background (Keskinen 2011a). The former seems to be particularly true of resettlement and spatial dispersal policies, including, for Kurdish refugees, goals of preventing ethnic concentration and the emergence of ethnic niches in certain cities or neighbourhoods. All participants in this study had arrived in Finland with their parents and other family members as refugees (either asylum-seekers or quota refugees). Most of the young Kurds had arrived through the quota-refugee system and recounted their experiences of reception and resettlement by the Finnish authorities and municipal actors who were in charge of refugee-resettlement-related measures. Hence, the very first experiences in many cases have involved the reception of their families and resettlement across Finland.

As Wahlbeck (1999) describes in his comparative study of Kurdish refugee communities in Finland and England, the refugees in Finland receive health services, social benefits, and housing, if necessary. There exist also quite extensive resettlement programmes for refugees within the framework of the welfare state. The refugees are also settled in different municipalities, all over the country. In many cases, the Kurdish families were originally dispersed across Finland's municipalities in line with the resettlement policies. This policy of dispersal led to many Kurdish families being settled in northern Finnish cities, from which, after some years, they moved toward cities in southern Finland. Nowadays, the largest concentrations of Kurdish-speakers can be found in southern and western Finland. This is at least partially due to a certain level of internal migration, toward the provinces of Uusimaa and Varsinais-Suomi (Yousfi & Vilkama 2010: 241–244). In 2013, approximately half of the Kurds in Finland resided in the country's capital city and in its region, Uusimaa. The second largest concentration, with around 20% of Finland's Kurds, was in the Varsinais-Suomi region, whose largest city is Turku (Statistics Finland 2013a). Therefore, it is worth noting that, besides the international migration routes from Kurdistan to Finland – often traversing other countries (such as Turkey and Jordan) – young Kurds have also in many cases experienced internal migration within Finland[92]. The trend seems to have been of a move from smaller cities in northern Finland toward larger cities in southern and western Finland. Kinship ties, establishment of Kurdish communities, and the search for work have arguably influenced such migration trajectories.

---

[91] See the Migrant Integration Policy Index, at http://www.mipex.eu/sites/default/files/downloads/suomi_abridged_migrant_integration_policy_index_mipexiii_2011_fi.pdf.

Another aspect of integration involves policies that personally touched the younger generation of Kurds, besides resettlement, is that of language learning and education. Under Finnish integration policies, minority-language pupils are eligible to receive up to two hours of education in their mother tongue per week[93]. Courses in Finnish as a second language are provided for migrants' children, if deemed necessary. Accordingly, it seems that the integration legislation concerns refugee children first and foremost in terms of education and language instruction, with respect to Finnish and possibly also the native language spoken by one's parents. The integration of migrant children is assumed to take place through participation in school or day-care activities (see Vilkama & Yousfi 2010: 233). In some cases, migrant children participate in preparatory classes before joining mainstream education. Such preparatory classes, which may last anywhere from a few months to several years, are aimed at teaching sufficient language skills for participation in the following classes, which are taught in the Finnish language.

5.2.3. Niches of familiarity – the Kurdish organisations/associations

Since 1989, foreign citizens have had the same rights as Finnish citizens to be part of associations. As a matter of fact, the political and social environment in Finland has been rather favourable for the establishment of migrant associations, so it is not surprising that from the late 1980s to the middle of the last decade foreign-born citizens established approximately 700 associations in Finland (Pyykkönen 2005[94]). Also noteworthy is that most migrant associations are founded primarily by people who arrived in Finland as refugees. The most commonly represented countries of origin in associations are Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, the former Yugoslavia, and Vietnam. This has been explained in terms of difficulties in creating social networks in the receiving society and by the fact that refugees may have been quite active in associations and politics in the societies of departure when compared to, for instance, those who migrate for work (Pyykkönen 2007a: 72). This observation is supported by Sanna Saksela-Bergholm's study (2009: 127–128), for which she collected information on 32 migrant associations that operate in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. In her research, the Kurdish associations formed the second largest group, with six associations and 740 members, right after Somali associations. In the context of this research, I was in touch with the Kurdish Organization in Turku and Helsinki (*Turun ja Helsingin kurdiyhdistykset*).

---

[92] Internal migration routes in Finland some years after resettlement were quite common among participants in this study (see Subsection 3.2.2, 'Description of the data and the interviewees').

[93] See 'Maahanmuuttajien opetus' ('Education for immigrants'), from the City of Helsinki and the Ministry of Education, especially the material on education for immigrants, at http://www.hel.fi/hki/opev/fi/Peruskoulut/Maahanmuuttajien_opetus.

[94] The number includes both registered and non-registered associations.

On the other hand, Wahlbeck's study (1999) of Kurdish communities in Finland suggests that the problems in establishing Kurdish associations that were seen in the early stages were linked to the spatial dispersal of Kurds all over the country. Also, receiving funding seemed to be problematic. It is noteworthy that the registration status of migrant associations allows them to apply for and receive state and municipal support (Saksela-Bergholm 2009: 122). Indeed, the establishment of migrant associations has been encouraged and favoured by the state – the immigration authorities and administration have emphasised associations' role as an important tool of integration. As a matter of fact, Pyykkönen (2007b: 197) has argued that migrant associations form a tool of governmentality for Finnish authorities, for their integrative purposes. On the other hand, Wahlbeck's study (1999: 154) also shows that most Kurdish associations in Finland concentrate on cultural and social activities, instead of, as was the case in England in his comparative study, guiding or assisting the newly arrived refugees. He suggests that this is because Finnish authorities provide such services as the latter to newly arrived migrants under the auspices of the integration legislation.

Though the latter role is minor among the Kurdish associations, they have been quite numerous in Finland. The Kurdish community in Finland has been argued to be, rather, quite politicised in terms of homeland politics, which has led to establishment of numerous diaspora associations, with various political agendas (Wahlbeck 2005: 1007)[95]. Article III deals with young Kurds' political participation in Kurdish diaspora associations in Finland and included members of the PJAK, the PKK, and the youth arm of the Democratic Union of Kurdistan. The migrant associations do specifically aim to attract members of the younger generations. The motivation here seems to stem from the wish to preserve and transmit certain cultural features and the minority language to the following generations (Article III; see also Pyykkönen 2007a: 85). The organised activities of political associations wherein observation for this study was conducted were political demonstrations, most of them held in Helsinki during significant events in the societies of departure or, for instance, on memorial days for deceased Kurdish figures. The other type of event was the cultural events that targeted the younger generations of Kurds with activities that included sports, language learning, and social gatherings. The Kurdish political parties attract only a certain subset of young Kurds, mainly those who are politically active, whereas the social activities they and the non-political Kurdish associations arrange attract quite a large number of young Kurds. In the case of the Kurdish communities in Finland, it seems that the main social event of the year is celebration of the Kurdish New Year, Newroz, which takes place in late March. Kurdish communities and various political parties organise Newroz celebrations in larger Finnish cities. It has been suggested that, in fact, the celebration of Newroz is a political manifestation to show support for the 'Kurdish cause' and to celebrate Kurdish identity (Wahlbeck 1999: 170–171). Activities of Kurdish associations and other organisations, which are in many cases cultural events, provide a diaspora space in which the younger members can become more familiar with the Kurdish language and with the cultural practices of the society of departure. In that sense, the diaspora organisations can function as platforms for transnational involvement and practices.

---

[95] Wahlbeck's study (1999) deals with the so-called first-generation Kurds and their participation in diaspora associations in terms of community work (including integration) and diaspora politics.

While this section discussed the more institutional and demographic dimensions of immigration to Finland, the following one focuses on the societal and discursive setting of post-migration Finland. In other words, it sheds light on the politics of belonging in the Finnish welfare state context.

5.3. Societal and discursive setting

Until the 1990s, the Nordic welfare states, with Finland chief among them, were considered to be culturally rather homogeneous and uniform (see Saukkonen 2013b: 22–25). More recently, such views of Finnish society have been largely refuted as a myth that was constructed in the course of the 19th and 20th centuries to serve the purposes of the young republic, which has clearly been culturally diverse since its very founding (see Leitzinger 2008). In relation to this, Saukkonen (2013b: 113–114) makes an interesting observation, stating that there seems to exist a gap between the symbolic and juridical nations in Finland. He suggests that if we look simply at minority rights and legislation, Finland seems quite generous with regard to its minorities – both national and migrant-originated. The symbolic notion of who belongs to the nation appears to be more limited, to certain kinds of members of the society who are considered to be more 'authentic' Finns than others. In fact, he suggests that the gap between the two is quite wide and refers to this phenomenon as 'the Finnish paradox'. Although Saukkonen refers mainly to the case of Swedish-speaking Finns as located outside the symbolic dimension of Finnish national identity that encompasses Finnish-speakers (*ibid.*: 103), his observations on the symbolic boundaries of 'Finnishness' are just as relevant in the study of other minority groups.

Furthermore, Keskinen *et al.* (2009) examine the constructions of the 'other' in the Nordic welfare state context, particularly in relation to the discourses of gender equality and notions of 'race' and ethnicity. The authors consider the understanding of national belonging and its 'other' to entail a racialised, gendered, and ethnicised dimensions that draw from the colonial legacies embedded in the (Orientalist) imaginaries of the 'other' (*ibid.*). The welfare context can be understood in relation to state nationalism and viewed as producing certain discourses of belonging and positionings for its members. Such an understanding of (national and ethnic) belonging and non-belonging that produces an ethnicised, racialised, and gendered 'other' stems from the discourse constructions of welfare nationalism and potentially produces positions for individuals of migrant background.

This section of the chapter deals with the symbolic understandings of the nation and 'Finnishness' (Saukkonen 2013b), along with how the notions of 'race', ethnicity, and gender are embedded in the understandings of national belonging (Keskinen *et al.* 2009). These can value and enable certain identity categories and options for young people with a migrant background and possibly de-value or disable the adoption of others. The first subsection explores the notions of (national) belonging, non-belonging, the theme of cultural uniformity, and how these have been and are continuously constructed as part of the welfare state's national projects. Secondly, I will discuss (post-)colonial imaginaries that circulate in the constructions of the 'other', particularly their gendered and racialised dimensions.

5.3.1. On national belonging – what 'Finnishness'?

As has been discussed above, the geopolitical position of Finland between Russia and Sweden, between East and West, has had an impact on the unfolding of the country's immigration history. Furthermore, it has affected perceptions of national identities, including constructions of 'Finnishness' (Harle & Moisio 2000: 56–57). The geopolitical position between the East and the West highlights questions related to Finland's positioning in Europe and of its 'Europeanness'. It has been argued that the national identity project in Finland has been constructed largely on foundations of the distinction between Finns and Russians, and in terms of who the Finns are not – Russian (*ibid.*: 56). Without going into a historical overview of Finnish nationalism(s), we can simply say at this point that the decades that followed the declaration of independence from Russia, in 1917, saw the country formulate a notion of national identity that was based largely on the perceived cultural and linguistic uniformity of the populations living within its borders. The myth of cultural homogeneity evokes a sense of being untouched or 'unspoiled' by external cultural influences, including immigration, and its roots can be traced back to the political projects of belonging of the early 20th century[96]. Not surprisingly, the discourse on cultural and ethnic homogeneity has become contrasted to (and possibly reinforced by) the waves of migration that grew in volume in the 1990s. Simultaneously, the myth has been contested with evidence that the country has been ‘multicultural’ since the early days of the republic (Leitzinger 2008).

As with other nation-state-building projects, the main building blocks denoting the boundaries of belonging between ‘us’ and ‘them’ seem most often to involve common origin and ancestry, culture, language, or religion – or other such characteristics. In the case of Finland, language has played a significant role in forging distinctions from the neighbouring countries and has, in so doing, had a central role in national identity projects. From such perspectives, national identity projects have been constructed not merely in relation to external ‘others’ but also internally, before the frontiers of the Finnish nation-state. In that regard, the states’ minority relations have been quite revealing of the racialised boundaries of ‘Finnishness’, particularly in the case of the Sami national minority (see Harle & Moisio 2000: 127–133) and the Roma people. On the other hand, Outi Lepola (2000: 334–340) suggests that in some cases Swedish-speaking Finns are differentiated from Finnish-speaking Finns and not included in the ‘inner circle of Finnishness’, deemed to consist only of Finnish-speaking Finns (see also Saukkonen 2013b: 103).

In her research, Lepola (2000) refers directly to a ‘circle of Finnishness’ and illustrates how such a ‘circle’ has become constructed in the process of drafting a piece of legislation related to immigration and the status of foreigners in Finland. In her data, the category ‘we the Finns’ is contrasted against categories such as ‘immigrants’, ‘foreigners’, and ‘refugees’. Furthermore, it seems that ‘Finnishness’ as a category takes on several levels of meaning. One is political belonging to Finland on the part of those ‘Finns’ who were born in Finland or have biological roots in Finland; this encompasses national minorities such as the Roma people, Swedish-speaking Finns, and Ingrian Finns. The other is belonging in terms of ethnic ‘Finnishness’; here, the ethnically and culturally defined Finnish-speaking Finns are assumed to belong (*ibid.*). Indeed, Lepola’s research (*ibid.*: 385) suggests that, to some extent, foreign-born persons, with the exception of Ingrian Finns, return migrants, and individuals with ‘Finnish parents’, were not deemed to belong to either category in the discussions that preceded the drafting of immigration legislation in the 1990s.

In the last two decades or so, the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the opening of Finland’s borders to increased immigration, and accession to the European Union have all introduced new dynamics to the constructions of ‘Finnishness’ and the debates on the role of the ‘Finnish nation’ as part of

---

[96] Paradoxically, the local national projects of belonging in Finland, as elsewhere, drew from the rise and pre-eminence of nationalism, which was very much a global phenomenon.

‘European nations’. Indeed, Tuomas Martikainen (2011: 88–89) writes that, whereas in the 1990s post-communist phase the relationship of Finland to the European Union and Europe was very much given focus, today it seems that the discussions revolve around the globalisation of economic systems and the increase in immigration. In that sense, debates on migrants’ cultures and multiculturalism have offered a way to speak about the ‘Finnish identity’ and the ‘Finnish culture’ (Wahlbeck 2003: 24). Furthermore, multiculturalism and the related debates in Finland seem to be in large part equated with the waves of increased immigration that took off in the 1990s. For instance, it seems that multiculturalism and values attached to it in terms of cultural diversity are less often associated with debates regarding the national minorities, such as the Sami and Roma peoples. As a matter of fact, it has been pointed out that multiculturalism is portrayed as an import from outside Finnish society and, as such, not considered an element of Finnish society (Clarke 1999: 36).

On the other hand, Laura Huttunen (2002: 13–14) has argued that there exist two distinct discourses related to immigration and globalisation in Finland: one that focuses on the nation’s need to open up to the surrounding world and to become international and one that portrays immigration as a phenomenon that needs to be controlled and tamed, demanding that the incoming migrants be incorporated into mainstream society. In some cases, immigration and, consequently, migrants seem to be portrayed not in terms of the more positively viewed, increased internationalisation of Finland but instead as a necessary side effect of Finland opening up to the ever-globalising world. Particularly toward the end of the last decade, topics related to immigration, refugees’ reception, and ‘multiculturalism’ came to be fiercely debated in the media and increasingly by politicians and other decision-makers (see Maasilta 2012). Such debates on multiculturalism and, intertwined with it, on immigration (both terms remaining undefined on many occasions) have become highly value-laden and politicised in Finnish society (Keskinen 2009a). This trend is by no means peculiar to Finnish society, and it is reminiscent of debates taking place in several other European societies, where immigration-related topics seem to provide tools through which various political actors can discuss identity politics and the questions related to national belonging.

Nation-states’ political and societal transformations shape the discursive settings wherein particular political projects of belonging become formulated, reformulated, and possibly contested. To discuss the Nordic welfare context, Keskinen (2011b: 158) employs the term ‘welfare state nationalism’ in order to pinpoint ‘nationalism, produced in welfare state policies and practices, that differentiates national belonging on the basis of “race” and ethnicity and thus leads to exclusions. It includes racializing processes that are shaped by the Nordic welfare state context’. Integration policies and, to some extent, also the immigration policies[97] have been argued to reflect the notions of belonging and of becoming 'one of us'. Pyykkönen (2007b: 201) suggests that integration refers to, among other things, 'individual and group level attachment to the societal center, the dominant culture. It consists of the ideas, beliefs and patterns that are thought to be typical for the Finnish population, especially its basic institutions such as work, language, and nuclear family'. Successful integration, more or less explicitly, refers to migrants adopting certain cultural values and the language spoken by the majority population to become more 'mainstream' and possibly less 'immigrant'. Migrants' integration entails not only an implicit understanding of (non-)belonging but also a political project of becoming that is manifested in the discourses and practices surrounding migrants' integration. This is not to say that integration, however measured, would automatically suggest inclusion in the nation's imagined community. I now pursue this line of argument, looking at how 'the immigrant other' has been constructed in the Finnish context, along with how certain labels ('foreigner' and 'refugee') have become ethnicised, racialised, and gendered particularly in relation to (post-)colonial imaginaries.

5.3.2. The construction of the 'immigrant other'

Magdalena Jaakkola's (2005; 2009) long-term studies of the attitudes of Finland's 'mainstream population' toward migrants and immigration show that the nation's attitude climate has indeed shifted toward being more positive since the recession years of the 1990s. However, there are considerable differences associated with which ethnic groups are being considered. The immigration of Arabs and Kurds amidst the recession in 1993 was strongly opposed by a third of the respondents, while in 2003 'only' a quarter strongly opposed the immigration of Arabs and Kurds. The groups viewed the most favourably in this context, according to Jaakkola's work (*ibid*.: 72), were the British, Norwegians, Danes, Swedes, Ingrian Finns, white Americans (as distinct from Afro-Americans), the Japanese, etc. At the other end of the ethnic continuum were Somalis, Arabs, Kurds, Russians, Moroccans, Turks, and Afro-Americans. Such observations on the 'ethnic hierarchy' reveal interesting undercurrents in terms of which migrant groups are considered 'culturally closer' and how referring to cultural difference and cultural distance can become a way of producing racialised 'others' (see Keskinen 2011a; 2012). The rhetoric on insurmountable 'cultural differences' between migrant groups and the mainstream populations resonates in current debates to do with migrants' integration and national belonging both in Finland and elsewhere. These discussions quite often concern Muslim communities and also individuals assumed to be of Middle-Eastern or African background.

---

[97] For instance, in the late 1980s it was considered more beneficial to attract returning Finns as migrants for labour purposes, since they were deemed 'culturally close'. On the other hand, the return migration of Ingrian Finns in the 1990s and the motivations under which it took place emphasised (assumed) knowledge of Finnish as much as 'Finnish origins' (Forsander 2004: 198–199).

Estimates put the number of Muslims in Finland at 50,000–60,000 individuals in 2010[98], of whom approximately 10,000–15,000 belong to the 'second generation' (Martikainen 2013: 112–113). As a matter of fact, Kurds constitute one of the largest sub-groups across the heterogeneous Muslim communities of Finland[99]. This is noteworthy, since religion and, more specifically, Islam have come to occupy the primary focus in debates related to immigration, migrants, and migrants' integration in Finland (Martikainen *et al*. 2008). Such debates follow the discursive trends of other European countries, and the role of Islam and the Muslim populations in Europe have for some time now occupied a central position in debates on 'European identity' (see AlSayyad & Castells 2002). Particularly after '9/11', it seems that the Muslim populations in various European countries are referred to as cultural, ethnic, and 'racial' minorities. Religious identities have turned into a central theme in migration debates – indeed, Martikainen (2011: 89; 2013) refers to the 'religionization' of immigration-related issues and considers the public image of certain ethnic groups, including Somalis, Kurds, and Arabs, to be impinged upon by understandings of Islam and Muslims (Martikainen *et al*. 2008: 67). Such approaches to Islam and 'Muslims' ought to be interpreted in relation to the history of colonialism and the (post-)colonial imaginaries of the 'other'. For instance, drawing from the (post-)colonial imaginary, Huttunen (2004: 145–146) takes a closer look at the 'Muslim figure'. She argues that it is highly ethnicised and gendered, and, according to her, it features the image of a submissive Muslim woman wearing a veil, which becomes contrasted against a Muslim man under whose dominion she remains[100]. In fact, one debate that is surfacing in relation to migrants in Finland and especially in relation to 'Muslims' is the issue of gendered violence in Muslim families (Keskinen 2012). On the other hand, there is a strong discourse in Finland, Sweden, and Norway of gender equality in nationalist projects of belonging to a Nordic welfare state (Bredström 2003; Keskinen *et al*. 2009). It is, therefore, not surprising that in the current political atmosphere gender equality has been suggested to form 'one of the cornerstones in discourses on multiculturalism' (Tuori 2009: 158). Salla Tuori (2007: 21–22) argues that multiculturalism is perceived as a threat coming from outside, whereas gender equality is considered inherently something 'Nordic' and characteristic of belonging to a Nordic nation. She proceeds with an analysis of 'how gender equality – as an ideology and as a set of practices – is deeply embedded in the production of otherness in the Finnish context'. Besides nationalist projects of belonging, adopting 'gender equality' discourse to construct a sense of 'Nordicness' or 'Finnishness' offers also means to portray the 'immigrant other' as not possessing such characteristics.

---

[98] This amounts to approximately one per cent of the total population living in Finland.

[99] However, there are great differences in terms of religiosity and the importance attached to religious observances among Kurds in Finland (Wahlbeck 2005).

[100] On the other hand, an immigrant woman (in her data from the Philippines, but this could also refer to the image of 'Asian women') is portrayed as a passive and inactive figure.

In fact, the categories 'immigrant', 'foreigner', and 'refugee' often surface in public debate in Finland with seemingly overlapping meanings. For instance, Huttunen (2004: 143, 145) considers these three categories to have become ethnicised, racialised, and gendered. Being labelled an immigrant or a foreigner produces an identity that is hierarchically juxtaposed with 'Finnishness' and associated with someone not leading the 'Finnish way of life'. Therefore, being labelled in terms of a certain identity category is not simply an act of naming – it comes down to the meanings attached to particular identity categories. Säävälä's (2008) study indicates that the groups that tend to be most readily identified as 'foreigners' are Somalis, Russians, individuals with refugee status, and Turks/Kurds. This suggests that, regardless of the significant growth of migrant groups in Finland such as Estonians or the English-speaking population[101] (similar in size to the Somali-speaking population), the category of 'foreigner' remains largely limited to those migrant groups that have come to be perceived as the 'other' on account of (post-)colonial imaginaries and the related racialisation processes. These include individuals from the African continent and the Middle East. Indeed, it has been suggested by Anna Rastas (2005) that in the Finnish context the categories 'immigrant', 'foreigner', and 'refugee' have become racialised and, therefore, are implicitly used to construct racial difference, since it has become politically incorrect to refer to 'race' in its own right. Rastas's research also suggests that categorisation in such terms is extended to individuals of migrant parentage who were born in or have grown up in Finland.

Categorisation of this type embodies a racialised logic in that it is often carried out on the basis of individuals' phenotypes and the ethnic group to which the relevant individual is assumed to belong on the basis of such observation (see Huttunen 2004: 145). Hence, the theme of 'physical visibility' can be very central in the constructions and understandings of 'otherness', particularly so in the Nordic context. It has been stated that the Nordic identities (and, related thereto, the national identities in the Nordic region) include an inherent understanding of 'whiteness', unquestionably embedded in the very notion of being 'Nordic' (Keskinen *et al.* 2009; Loftsdóttir & Jensen 2012; Leinonen & Toivanen 2014 forthcoming). Such constructions of the 'immigrant other' should not be considered separate and uniquely a Nordic phenomenon; rather, they are intertwined with, influenced by, and informed by the (post-)colonial imaginaries associated with migrants coming from the Middle East while also being fuelled by the politicised debates related to immigration and Muslims (or those perceived to be Muslim) taking place in other European countries.

---

[101] Johanna Leinonen's research (2012) focuses on North American migrants in Finland and shows how the notion of 'foreigner' involves a highly racialised and class-based category in Finland.

The various political projects of belonging and the related identity narratives, including those of the (transnational) migrant communities, alongside the societies of settlement, resonate in young Kurds' narrations of belonging, non-belonging, and home. These narrations are explored in more detail in Part III, on the research results.

PART III: RESEARCH RESULTS

Diasporic consciousness, contested identities, and multiple faces of belonging

This part of the dissertation presents the research results rooted in the work described in the four articles (see Appendix I). The key findings are unpacked in chapters 6, 7, and 8 and in relation to the main research questions outlined near the beginning of the work.

The sixth chapter draws together the findings from articles I and III. It looks at how young Kurds understand ‘Kurdishness’ and how they narrate their belonging to a transnational diaspora community. I will employ examples of young Kurds’ political participation in diaspora parties and discuss the meanings they attach to the Kurdish language to illustrate some of the ways in which young Kurds construct a sense of belonging to the Kurdish collectivity. The chapter ends with a discussion of the themes associated with ‘cultural continuity’ and what I have named the ‘diasporic consciousness’, which are both characterised and informed by intergenerational dynamics.

The seventh chapter discusses young Kurds’ understandings of ‘Finnishness’ and negotiation of belonging to Finland. Based largely on the findings presented in articles I and II, it examines the racialised and gendered dimensions of narrating ‘Finnishness’ and ‘Kurdishness’. On the one hand, the young Kurds’ narrations bear evidence of feelings of ‘otherness’ that echo (post-)colonial imaginaries. On the other hand, the narrations show that young Kurds engage in intergenerational negotiations that entail a gendered dimension. However, these accounts also point toward various (alternative) terrains of belonging and diverse forms of agency that young Kurds employ to manoeuvre in various situations.

The eighth chapter, grounded in large part in articles III and IV, discusses young Kurds’ understandings of home, homeland, and other frames of reference that have both territorial and non-territorial elements. More specifically, it examines the transnational attachments and connections maintained by young Kurds and the bearing of particular localities, such as the nation-state, region, city, or neighbourhood, in this regard. The latter part of the chapter lays out the multiplicity of ways in which young Kurds understand home and belonging, and it includes discussion of local forms of belonging such as belonging to the city, along with transnational, religious forms of belonging.

6. The Kurdish diaspora space

'I was born as a Kurd, and I will live my whole life as a Kurd'
Bijar

This is how Bijar, a young Kurdish interviewee, replied to my question on how he identified himself. The excerpt is part of a lengthy account wherein he articulated a sense of 'Kurdishness', which was paralleled by the accounts of most interviewees taking part in this study. First and foremost, being 'Kurdish' meant belonging to a family and a community of individuals who identified themselves as Kurds. To have a Kurdish background meant having roots in the region of Kurdistan[102], yet simultaneously the sense of 'Kurdishness' was related to a sense of cultural continuity in the post-diaspora context. Mastery of the Kurdish language played a central role in this regard. As a matter of fact, the generational convergences and divergences formed one of the central dynamics at play in young Kurds' understandings of what it means to be 'Kurdish'. This became visible in how the young Kurds positioned themselves relative to their parents' generation.

The older generation were deemed to have had dramatically different life experiences, arising from having grown up in the region of Kurdistan and having migrated to Finland in adulthood. It was suggested that the parents fostered stronger feelings of 'Kurdishness' and belonging to Kurdistan and were therefore more committed to homeland politics, for instance. On the other hand, the generational dimension was visible in accounts wherein the interviewees expressed a fear that their younger siblings who were born in Finland would 'feel less Kurdish and become more Finnish' than them. Hence, two interrelated themes emerged in the context of intergenerational negotiations – concern over cultural continuity in the post-diaspora context and a certain level of 'diasporic consciousness', which was viewed as different from their parents' attachment to Kurdistan. These are explored in more detail in the following sections of the chapter, which further explore the meanings young Kurds attached to language use and to political participation in diaspora associations.

---

[102] I employ the term 'Kurdistan' throughout this chapter, although, as is noted elsewhere in this work, the region of Kurdistan is divided mainly among four nation-states. The respondents referred variously to Iraqi, Iranian, or Turkish Kurdistan, and also the geographical indicators of Southern (Iraq), Eastern (Iran), and Northern (Turkey) Kurdistan were used.

6.1. The Kurdish language, ‘Kurdishness’, and cultural continuity

The heterogeneity of the Kurdish people, which can in part be explained by the transnational dispersion of Kurds over four nation-states, is particularly visible in terms of language. The Kurds in Finland speak mainly Sorani, but also the Kurmanji dialect of Kurdish is evident[103]. The younger generations speak these dialects to varying degrees, and, as became evident in the course of this study, young Kurds use Kurdish as their home language, while Finnish is more frequently used outside the home environment, though even in some cases with siblings or friends of Kurdish background. My observations in this respect are consistent with Wahlbeck’s remarks (2005: 1006) on the multilingual features of Kurds’ expression in Finland. Young Kurds who had migrated from Iranian Kurdistan were most often fluent in Farsi, besides having mastery of the Sorani dialect of Kurdish. However, the equivalent with respect to the Arabic language was less often the case with Iraqi Kurds. Finally, Kurds from Turkey spoke Turkish or Kurdish (Kurmanji) as their first language.

The findings indicate that the Kurdish language seemed to be employed at home with one’s parents and other relatives, though to a varying extent with siblings. Although the levels of Kurdish language skills reported by the interviewees varied, speaking Kurdish seemed to be, for them, a sign of cultural belonging. In other words, being ‘Kurdish’ meant speaking Kurdish, and vice versa:

> *I feel sad when people can’t, like children don’t speak any [Kurdish], and that’s not what Finland wants. It is not becoming Finnish if you forget your own mother tongue. I mean like ‘adopt the customs of the country where you live*[104]*’, but it has got limits as well, so you can have your own identity, you know […].*
> Shoresh (M)

In narrations such as Shoresh’s, Kurdish language maintenance (as well as learning Finnish) was associated with and spoken of in terms of migrants’ integration. Knowing the local language yet retaining the language of one’s parents was considered being successfully ‘integrated’ into the society; here, one hears echoes of the discursive setting of the Finnish welfare state in which the interviewees were embedded. On the other hand, language was tied to concerns over future generations’ ‘level of Kurdishness’ and the extent to which they will master the Kurdish language. In that sense, language loss was equated to a loss of cultural identity. Interviewees’ descriptions of their language use featured normative, strategic, and contextual elements, including language-switching and ‘one-language rules’ at home. Denoting, as it did, belonging to a cultural community, language use was implied to be highly value-laden. Criticism of young Kurds from other families for

---

[103] See Subsection 4.1.2, ‘Kurdistan and the Kurds’.

[104] ‘Maassa maan tavalla’ in Finnish.

‘becoming too Finnish’ or of Kurdish friends in Sweden for ‘wanting to be too European’ suggested a positioning of oneself relative to the norms and values that were attached to Kurdish language use.

Having been born and partially raised in the societies of departure meant that the young Kurds had mastered languages besides Kurdish, including Arabic, Farsi, and Turkish. Azad’s story was particularly remarkable, although not exceptional among the interviewees. He had begun his schooling at an Iraqi refugee camp in Farsi, because his parents planned to return to Iranian Kurdistan. After three years, his parents realised that they would probably never return to Iranian Kurdistan, and they transferred Azad to a Kurdish-speaking class. After then studying in Kurdish for three years, he was transferred to a junior high school in which education was provided only in Arabic. After two years of him learning in Arabic, the family migrated to Finland, where he participated in a preparatory Finnish-language course. The following year, he completed junior high school in Finnish. At that point, he had received education in four distinct languages.

The Kurdish language has been considered to constitute a central building block and indicator of ‘Kurdishness’ (see Kreyenbroek 1991). Language can become a significant marker of identity and employed to foster feelings of belonging and unity among members of ethno-national diaspora communities (as it can in more established national communities). Whilst the Kurdish language seemed to be a significant marker of identity as ‘Kurdish’, the background of being multilingual in other Middle Eastern languages too provided a source for identity construction and knowledge that the young Kurds wanted to transfer to their own children. The young Kurds’ narrations indicated that, besides fostering emotional attachments to the languages they have mastered, the fact of having grown up in multilingual environments and become accustomed to operating there seemed to constitute a part of their identities. As is shown in Article I, this multilingual background, a common feature among most interviewees[105], was regarded with pride. The attachment to one’s multilingual background was appreciated to the extent of wanting to transfer the cultural-linguistic heritage to subsequent generations. This indicated that multilingualism was a part of who the interviewees were, suggesting a sense of **multilingual identity** (see Clark 2009).

Language can also become intertwined with ideologies of cultural preservation and continuity in the post-diaspora setting. Young Kurds reported that the main motivations for taking part in Kurdish associations’ events were to remain in touch with one’s background and not to forget about one’s roots. Participation in associations’ activities also served the purpose of learning about Kurdish culture and the language. Involvement in cultural events was considered an intergenerational learning process, wherein cultural habits and customs were transmitted from the older generations to the younger ones (see Pyykkönen 2007a: 85). Not surprisingly, Kurdish language maintenance was considered a central feature in ensuring cultural preservation and continuity between generations.

---

[105] Many respondents’ families who had Iraqi or Iranian Kurdish background had migrated firstly to Turkey and then, after some years, been granted asylum in Finland. For this reason, the children had learnt Turkish in this ‘society of transition’.

Identifying oneself as 'Kurdish' explicitly meant having a diasporic past and being part of a transnational diaspora community, whence stemmed a motivation to engage in work for 'the Kurdish cause'. In this sense, feelings of 'diasporic consciousness' were translated into concrete actions, particularly among those who were politically active in diaspora organisations.

6.2. Diaspora associations as platforms for construction of feelings of belonging

This section of the chapter presents the results indicated by the findings described in Article III, dealing with the transnational political involvement of young Kurds in Finland[106]. The Kurdish diaspora in Finland has been organised around political diaspora parties since the 1990s. Furthermore, it has been argued that the Kurdish diaspora is particularly politicised (Wahlbeck 2005); accordingly, the younger generations may have grown up in families with a political background and with parents engaging in political activism. However, political involvement in diaspora parties may carry a different meaning for younger generations than it does for their parents, who, in contrast, might be more interested in homeland politics. On the other hand, studies conducted among so-called second-generation Kurds in other European countries show that members of the younger generations can be even more interested in the 'Kurdish identity' than their parents, because of feelings of marginalisation and of 'otherness' in the societies of settlement (van Bruinessen 2000; Curtis 2005).

Within the scope of this study, young Kurds' transnational political participation provided means to construct and enact belonging to the Kurdish collectivity through Kurdish diaspora associations in Finland. In several cases, interviewees' families had migrated to Finland on account of their parents' (real or alleged) political activities in the societies of departure. The younger members of the Kurdish community engaged in political activities, although the data suggest that their level of participation depended greatly on their parents' political affiliations and motivations. The transnational political activities that young Kurds engaged in included forming channels for information, circulating petitions, arranging political meetings and public demonstrations, visiting political actors in Iraqi Kurdistan, and lobbying Finnish decision-makers and political parties[107].

---

[106] The data came from 11 semi-structured interviews with young Kurds who were active in Kurdish diaspora parties in Finland and, additionally, from observations made during political demonstrations in Helsinki.

The young Kurds' political, linguistic, and religious background were all quite heterogeneous and to some extent reflected certain dividing lines that exist among the Kurdish communities in diaspora. Affiliations, values, and understanding of one's own 'Kurdishness' varied greatly. However, regardless of the strength of ethnic identification or transnational connections with Kurdistan, consciousness of one's diasporic and refugee background functioned, interestingly, as an impetus to most interviewees' feelings of responsibility and duty to act in support of the Kurdish people. As is suggested by Khayati (2008: 86), the creation of independent Kurdistan as a duty and a right of all Kurds remains a strong collective discourse among the Kurdish diaspora communities. This was also implied in Armanji's narration:

> *M: How much do you have the feeling, when you participate in this union, and all of the Kurdish events, how much do you have the feeling that you are 'Kurdish'? I mean: how much do you draw a sense of 'Kurdishness' from these, or do you at all?*
> *H: Pretty much… Do you mean whether I am proud of myself…?*
> *M: I mean: how important are they?*
> *H: It is really important to me. One question is really important to me: 'why am I here in Finland?'. And the answer is clear: because I am a Kurd, and in my homeland— My homeland has been taken by force, and I have a big political problem, and, therefore, I am here in Finland. If I have a political problem, it is of no use to me that I think that I live here like a Finn, so I don't answer that question. And I don't want to answer that question because even if I am here, far away from my land, I want to fight; I want to do something for my homeland and when I participate in these things, I feel like that. OK, I can't fight with my life, but still I have done something that I can do. I participate, and it is important to me.*
> Armanji (M)

The political parties provided a platform for enacting a sense of duty or responsibility in relation to the 'Kurdish cause' in the form of transnational political endeavours, though these were not necessarily projected toward the region of Kurdistan. Among the young Kurds who were politically active, transnationalism also meant being transnationally active in the Nordic region, mainly in relation to the Kurdish diaspora communities in Sweden[108]. The motivations for political participation were rooted in wanting to be involved with 'the Kurdish cause' and do something against the perceived oppression of the Kurdish people in the Middle East and in favour of greater self-determination or for the independence of Kurdistan. For instance, the ongoing construction of the *de facto* independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq functioned as terrain for planning of long-distance nationalist projects aimed at improving the living conditions of the local populations. Feelings of past and present injustice experienced by the Kurdish communities acted as an impetus to (transnational) political activities and were constituent elements of the narrative of 'diasporic consciousness'.

---

[107] Among these activities were organising a biking trip from Turku to Helsinki to submit a petition at Parliament House in which a demand was made for the Halabja bombings to be declared genocide. The petition was rendered to a Member of Parliament in Helsinki. A similar biking trip was then organised for Iraqi Kurdistan, for a visit to the memorial site of Halabja.

[108] Examples of activities of this sort include trips back and forth to meet political actors and distribution of information to those having the same political affiliation in Sweden.

Diaspora associations can, therefore, be considered to provide platforms that enable young Kurds to take part in cultural events and political endeavours, if they wish to do so, and in the process foster their sense of 'Kurdishness' through participation. However, young Kurds' level of participation in the activities offered by Kurdish associations varied quite a bit. According to the observation data just as much as the interviews, young Kurds were interested mostly in common cultural events, such as the celebration of Newroz. In Kurdish associations' agendas, there seemed to be a strong emphasis on cultural continuity, which stemmed from the older generations' concern over the younger generations' 'degree of Kurdishness'. Accordingly, taking part in the activities offered by the Kurdish communities provided ways to learn about 'Kurdishness'. On a related note, it should be mentioned that the Kurdistan Youth and Students' Union (KNOLS ry) was established in Finland in 2013. Politically unaffiliated, that union aims to bring together young people of Kurdish background who live in Finland. The emergence of such unions of young Kurds and for young Kurds follows similar developments that have taken place in such Kurdish communities as that in Sweden.

References to the forced displacement, to collective consciousness of being a marginalised group in the societies of departure; the social organisation of the diaspora community in the society of settlement; and politicised narratives of Kurdish identities suggest a variety of socio-cultural processes characteristic of diaspora communities that may witness differing degrees of transnational orientation. Diaspora associations form one part of the transnational diaspora space in which the younger generations of Kurds are embedded. In the case of younger generations, the findings of my study suggest that the focus needs to move beyond the territorial nature of diasporic identities that are linked mainly to the homeland and that one should consider the dimensions of connectivity and cultural reconstruction in the societies of settlement and possibly in relation to other diaspora communities.

6.3. Diasporic consciousness

Eliassi (2010) has studied identity formation among younger generation of Kurds in the Swedish context. His study indicates that his interviewees asserted a sense of 'Kurdishness' and Kurdish identity, although being 'Kurdish' was accorded various meanings. In a finding consistent with my own, young Kurds identified themselves quite strongly and primarily as 'Kurdish'[109]. This identification was often narrated in relation to knowing the Kurdish language, being part of the Kurdish community, and – most commonly – having roots traceable to the Kurdistan region (in Iraq, Iran, or Turkey). The interviewees' parents were of Kurdish background, and the families had migrated to Finland during the childhood and teenage years of their youngest members. Consequently, most young Kurds also had memories from the societies of departure and from the journey to Finland, which to some extent accentuated the (symbolic) construction of belonging to Kurdistan. However, some interviewees, who were born in an Iraqi refugee camp of Iranian Kurdish parents and then migrated to Finland as children, had never actually visited Kurdistan – hence the word 'symbolic' in brackets.

I argue that young Kurds expressed a sense of 'diasporic consciousness' that was rooted partially in their experiences and memories from the societies of departure. Their narrations echoed a consciousness of belonging to a diaspora community that had emerged as a result of specific historical and political developments in the Middle East. As a matter of fact, the Kurdish diaspora as a politico-historical event functioned as a significant point of reference to which one's life course became indexed. This meant that a sense of 'Kurdishness' was narrated by anchoring one's life trajectory in the historical context of the Kurdish diaspora, including references to Kurds' (continuous) state of statelessness, minority status in the Middle East region, and the transnationally dispersed Kurdish diaspora.

The distinction between stateless diasporas and state-linked diasporas (see Sheffer 2003) is relevant in this regard. The Kurdish diaspora is a stateless diaspora, and the continuous stateless nature of Kurdistan (Iraqi Kurdistan's autonomous region aside) was an emerging theme in the narrations. In fact, the division of Kurdistan among four nation-states and the continuous struggle for greater self-determination was nearly without exception the starting point in narration of what it means to be 'Kurdish' in the first place. Azad was no exception when asked about his background:

---

[109] It is important to acknowledge that the respondents were positioned with respect to the research frame but also in relation to the research setting (including the researcher's positionality) during the data-collection process, which affected their use of frames of reference. Various positionalities of the researcher and the participants are discussed in further detail in the methodology chapter, specifically Subsection 3.3.2, 'Positionalities – intersectional reflections'.

> *M: So has anybody asked you— Or let's ask it this way: how do you define or identify yourself?*
> *H: Well, it's always a problem for us Kurds here in Europe when somebody asks 'where do you come from?'. So I am from Kurdistan; I am a Kurd, I should say. But if I say that I am Kurdish, the other person is silent for a while and then asks again, so 'where are you from?'. I have to say 'from Iran'. I don't like saying that I come from Iran – I am a Kurd, and I have a land, where my parents come from. I would rather say, or I like to say, that I am from Kurdistan, but there are not many people who understand it, and, unfortunately, that's why I have to say that I am Iranian, an Iranian Kurd, blah blah blah. I should... It's a bit easier as a Finn: 'I come from Finland' and they get it right away.*
> Azad (M)

Young Kurds' narrations included references to historical (and more recent) events, including atrocities such as the Anfal campaign of Saddam Hussein (in particular, the Halabja massacre), assassinations of leading Kurdish political figures, and linguistic and cultural oppression by the Turkish state[110]. In this sense, 'Kurdishness' in the context of the Middle East was understood as a historically stigmatised identity. The larger-scale societal and political oppression targeting the Kurdish populations was considered a reason for one's family's refugee background. Therefore, the history of the Kurds did not, for the interviewees, consist merely of somewhat abstract compilations of collective narratives. In many cases, the historical references were narrated alongside personal memories and became intertwined with the family's first-hand experiences. I have addressed young Kurds' accounts of the departure and the journey in earlier chapters of this work, which discuss the historical formation of the Kurdish diaspora in Finland[111]. I chose to do so for illustrative purposes, as the narrations reflected awareness or diasporic consciousness of how these historical events intertwined with the participants' own life stories.

'Diasporic consciousness' was narrated in close connection with the historical background of the Kurdish diaspora movements and together with an awareness of the political implications of what it means to be 'Kurdish'. Some interviewees voiced opposition to what were considered the official narratives of other nation-states that depicted the Kurds as the internal 'other'. This was particularly visible in narrations – by not only young Kurds from Turkey but also participants from Iran and Iraq – who criticised the Turkish nation-state's cultural and language policies toward Kurds. A sense of 'Kurdishness' became narrated through historical references to the Kurdish populations of a sort that led to the formation of diaspora communities but also through references to the present-day situation in the Kurdistan region.

---

[110] See Section 4.2, '"Kurdishness" as the internal "otherness" in the Middle East'.

[111] See Subsection 5.1.2, 'The departure and journey in historical context – stories behind the figures'.

Alinia and Eliassi (2014) argue that there are significant differences between the older and younger generations of Kurdish extraction who live in Sweden in terms of their experiences, which therefore require adopting different kind of analytical conceptualisations. I consider the conceptual framework presented by Brah (1996) and Alinia (2004) with respect to diaspora space to be suitable for analysis of accounts that suggest a sense of 'diasporic consciousness' in young Kurds' narrations. Diaspora is approached as de-territorial, socio-cultural processes instead of merely being considered from the perspective of territoriality, return, and the diasporans' sense of rootlessness (see Brubaker 2005). This approach allows considering young Kurds as being embedded in a transnational diaspora space that includes frequent references to the homeland, possible memories of the departure and the journey, or intergenerational transmission of (collective) memories. It also includes embeddedness in the transnational diaspora community, in which collective projects of belonging are formulated and which provides a possibility of engaging in diaspora activities. This reading of diaspora enables analysing both symbolic and territorial dimensions of young Kurds' narrations of belonging. It sheds light both on the historical continuity of collective narratives and memories, along with their intergenerational transmission, and on how individuals' narrations of belonging are drawn from their personal experiences of displacement, settlement and resettlement.

Furthermore, I consider this approach suitable for the focus that the notion of 'diaspora space' affords on the borders and boundaries of belonging, and on individuals' struggles to feel at home – in the societies both of departure and of settlement. Previous studies have shown that the experiences of exclusion and racialised belonging in the societies of birth can lead to diasporic identities or alternative ways of belonging among the second-generation youth (Potter & Phillips 2006; Cressey 2006). Diaspora space can in this sense offer an alternative venue for construction of belonging and a sense of home, in cases wherein individuals face racialising categorisation and experiences of exclusion in their society of settlement (in the case of the generation in-between) or society of birth (in the case of the 'second generation'). Young Kurds' situatedness in a transnational yet locally situated diaspora community offers opportunities for political involvement and also for activities fostering cultural continuity, thereby creating conditions for feelings of 'diasporic consciousness'. On the other hand, this 'diasporic consciousness' is connected to young Kurds' lived experiences in the society of settlement and to the sorts of processes of inclusion and exclusion that they face.

7. Positionings and contested belongingness

This chapter discusses the themes of racialised identities and (alternative) terrains of belonging as they are manifested in young Kurds' narrations. More specifically, I explore their narrations on feelings of 'otherness' and contested belonging both at the level of the individual and at that of collective narratives. This is done by looking at how young Kurds in their narrations deal with their positionings in terms of their surroundings and how they narrate on being positioned by their surroundings in different situations. Tackled with an intersectional approach, young Kurds' narrations show evidence of adjustment and manoeuvring in terms of various gendered and ethnicised expectations and norms. However, their accounts display also various forms of agency and suggest that there are alternative spaces in which to negotiate (non-)belonging by employing a wide spectrum of linguistic and behavioural repertoires.

7.1. Racialised identities and terrains of belonging

Young Kurds' narrations on 'Finnishness' show that their belonging to the 'symbolic nation of Finns', to quote Saukkonen (2013b: 113–114), is contested firstly and mostly in relation to their darker complexion and differing phenotypes. Associated with them allegedly having 'migrant', 'foreign', or 'Muslim' background, the theme of 'being visibly different' emerged categorically in young Kurds' narrations on 'Finnishness' and more specifically in narrations of 'non-Finnishness'. 'Finnishness' was contrasted against identity labels that were considered 'more believable' in their surroundings on account of the meanings certain embodied markers, such as darker complexion, entailed (see Haikkola 2010: 227). This prompts the question of how the racialised boundaries of 'Finnishness' and of its embedded understanding of 'whiteness' (see Rastas 2005; Keskinen *et al.* 2009), particularly among younger people categorised as belonging to racialised groups, are understood. The young Kurds' narrations suggest that they do not seem to fit in with this idea of 'Finnishness' or, if one cites Huttunen, the 'white landscape of Finland' (2002: 130)[112].

---

[112] See Subsection 5.3.1, 'On national belonging – what "Finnishness"?'.

Previous research (Alitolppa-Niitamo 2004; Hautaniemi 2004; Rastas 2005; Iskanius 2006; Haikkola 2010) demonstrates that young people of migrant background in Finland construct identities and negotiate belonging, of whatever type(s), with regard to various mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. Although it is difficult to draw clear-cut conclusions as to how young people belonging to different ethnic groups are positioned by their surroundings, it seems that minority youth of Somali background or whose parents are from the Middle East are positioned differently in comparison to young people of Estonian or Russian background. For instance, Ruohio's research (2009: 36) on international adoptees from Asia, Africa, and Latin America in Finland shows that her interviewees' belonging to the category of 'Finnishness' is highly negotiated on account of their darker complexions, regardless of the fact that they are Finnish citizens, speak Finnish as their mother tongue, and have been raised in Finland. Rastas (2005) suggests that young people of migrant background are concomitantly constructed as different in Finland through racialising discourses and practices that affect their everyday life. The interviewees in her study were often positioned as 'non-Finnish' because they were 'visible'[113] in terms of their darker complexion (see Toivanen 2014 forthcoming).

Miles (1989: 76) refers to racialisation as a variety of processes that attribute meanings to 'particular biological features of human beings, as a result of which individuals may be assigned to a general category of persons'. Perceived belonging to a certain racialised/ethnicised group can become valued differently, varying with historical and political contexts, and seems quite often to rely on physically distinguishable attributes and biological features (along with cultural traits), such as the individual's skin colour and other elements of phenotype. In other words, racialisation refers to a categorisation and representation process that defines the 'other' in an embodied (but also in culturalist) manner and, as such, a part of a collectivity that is perceived to have certain general attributes in common (*ibid*.). In this sense, the processes of racialisation have a power dimension. How individuals position themselves in relation to racialised and ethnicised identity categories and, more importantly, how they contest the associated discursive categorisation can shed light on the ethnicised and racialised boundaries of belonging. Furthermore, it is imperative to consider the construction of these boundaries and the related notions of 'otherness' to be constantly shifting and interpret them within the specific historical and political contexts in which such identity categories have emerged[114].

---

[113] The theme of 'visibility' has been touched upon by Leinonen (2012) in her study of those migrating from North America to Finland.

[114] See Subsection 5.3.2, 'The construction of the "immigrant other"'.

It has been suggested that the categories of 'immigrant' and 'refugee' have become racialised notions in the Finnish context and explicitly employed to construct racial difference (Rastas 2005: 152). One such racialised categorisation involves the use of the 'n-word' (see Rastas 2012: 92), which seems to be applied equally readily to individuals who have a darker complexion but whose roots are not necessarily traceable to the African continent (Rastas 2005: 153). This was also reflected in young Kurds' experiences, although there seemed to be some room to contest the use of the 'n-word', as Rebuar's account implies:

> *I have heard such things too, somebody saying that 'look, the nigger is letting you in and out here'. I said that tomorrow you will go to the eye doctor and tell him that you are colour-blind; that's the first thing. You see me as black, and that's the thing.*
> Rebuar (M)
>
> *M: So, have you ever thought of applying for Finnish citizenship?*
> *H: Yes. I can apply and could have it too, but I still want to see and wait some years, because it could be that Iran changes in the years to come. It would be nice to have your own country's citizenship. Of course, I am really grateful for Finns and the Finnish state for giving us the opportunity, but I want to have the citizenship of my own country.*
> *M: Of course, I understand.*
> *H: And if I would have the Finnish citizenship documents, it would work anywhere in the world. I would show it, that I am a Finnish citizen, like 'I am a Finn', and they would see that* ***my face, from the colour of the hair****, that I am not a Finn. It's just a document, a paper, and for me the paper is not that important.*
> *M: Yes, so you have—*
> *H: Feelings, or I should have. If I say that I am Iranian, so anybody would believe it, because I look Iranian. But if I say that I am Finnish, okay then, 'you have had Finnish citizenship, that's all'. This is how they think. I can't be a Finn* ***with this type of body, face, and colour of hair****. I am not saying that Finns are bad, ugly, or that I am ugly. It's not that. We are just different.*
> Briar (M, boldface added)

On the other hand, Briar's narration demonstrates that phenotypical differences such as 'this type of body, face, and colour of hair' are employed to distinguish oneself from 'Finns'. Young Kurds negotiated their positionings toward various identity labels, instead of being merely positioned by them – indeed, the dynamics of **negotiating** belonging were central in young Kurds' narrations[115]. On one hand, this meant that their narrations showed evidence of racialising practices and discourses that had been employed by their surroundings to categorise them on the basis of their 'visible' phenotypical features. On the other hand, however, simultaneously they had 'taken over' certain identity labels and repurposed them in a reverse manner by furnishing them with more positive attributes. At the same time, it needs to be remembered that subjects who are racialised, ethnicised, and gendered differ in the resources at their disposal in negotiating their relationship to the perceived components of different cultures and also to the perceived identity categories (see Huttunen 2004: 149). However, individuals can find space for alternative ways of belonging and being or find ways to redefine the identity labels assigned to them.

---

[115] See Subsection 2.3.2, 'Negotiations of identities and the boundaries of belonging'.

The diversity of the meanings that young Kurds associated with the somewhat stigmatised category of ‘refugee’ illustrates one such example. ‘Refugee’ as an identity label was both contested and accorded more positive values among the interviewees. For some it seemed to be a source of ‘shame’ and to position them differently in relation to other individuals of migrant background, while for others the fact of having been born in a refugee camp and subsequently succeeded in Finland was narrated as a source of pride. On some occasions, having grown up in a refugee camp was itself interpreted in a more positive light:

> *M: If we talk of defining oneself, how would you define yourself? Who do you feel you are? So basically this is a question about your identity: if someone asks you who you are, what answers come to your mind?*
> *H: Well, if somebody asks me that, I have said that I am proud to be a Kurd and that nobody can say that you are not proud of your own [...] how you were born and raised, and that I am proud that I grew up in a camp*[116].
> Zagros (M)

With the aid of the UNHCR, Kurdish refugees at the Al-Tash refugee camp were resettled in considerable numbers in Northern Europe, especially in Sweden and Norway but also in Finland. Going into more detail, Khayati (2008: 215) describes how these refugee groups consisted of several clans and similar social groups, which fostered a common sense of belonging and unity due to specific historical events shared by those who had lived in the camp. Zagros’s narration needs to be read against such contextualisation. On the other hand, Malkki (1996) suggests that international media and humanitarian agencies produce images of ‘refugee’ as a homogenising abstract category that entails the image of a victim at its core and strips those placed in the category ‘refugee’ of various forms of agency. In this reading, a ‘refugee’ is considered to be not an active agent in charge of his or her own destiny but, instead, a victim of particular circumstances. Zagros’s narration about having survived the camp could be interpreted as claiming some agency within the category ‘refugee’. On a related matter of category, many interviewees chose to identify themselves firstly with the non-ethnic category ‘human’, particularly those involved in Kurdish political associations. This may also reflect the collective and politicised discourses of belonging among the Kurdish community. For instance, Emanuelsson’s study (2005: 212) demonstrates that the discourse on human rights has become central and an instrumental frame of reference in the activities and ideologies of Kurdish organisations in diaspora[117]. On the other hand, since 'Kurdishness' to some extent was a marginalised identity in the societies of departure, narrating 'Kurdish identity' in diaspora can become intertwined with the human-rights discourse and related to the individual's right to cultural identity.

---

[116] The respondent makes reference to a large refugee camp called Al-Tash (see Subsection 5.1.2, ‘The departure and journey in historical context – stories behind the figures’).

> *M: So, how do you define yourself? Like if we talk about identity, what's the first thing that comes to your mind – is it Kurdish or something else?*
> *H: No, first comes human. Yes, such identity comes first to my mind, but you can say that the second one is Kurdish.*
> *M: What about something like Finnish, from Helsinki, or something like this?*
> *H: Well, probably from Helsinki* [helsinkiläinen]*, but I don't know, because Finnish doesn't only mean that you live in Finland, but Finnish is somebody who is Finnish and (s)he belongs to the Finnish nation, not just the official citizenship – that's not what I mean. Not just the official papers but really what nation you are from.*
> Arsham (M)

Arsham's narration could be interpreted as a contestation of the existing identity categories and a form of counter-speech, or what Juhila calls 'the rhetoric of sameness' (2004: 30). Using such rhetoric can provide an individual with means to distinguish him- or herself from label-bearing identity categories based on difference and instead emphasise perceived similarities such as mutual belonging to humanity[118]. Other narrations indicated similar arguments of identifying oneself primarily as 'human' and only secondly with ethnic or national labels.

On the other hand, Arsham's narration can also be read as a counter-act to the racialised and exclusionary definition of national belonging that excludes individuals who may actually have acquired Finnish citizenship. This is reminiscent of one aspect of narrations among young Kurds who participated in Eliassi's study (2010: 136) and who were perceived as 'Swedish on paper' (a level of 'Swedishness' that has been gained through citizenship) but not as 'authentic Swedes', the latter being viewed as inherited membership involving ethnic belonging to the collectivity. Awareness of the gap that exists between legal membership recognised by the state and claiming belonging to the nation – or, to quote Saukkonen (2013b: 113–114), between 'the symbolic and juridical nations in Finland' – is evident from the majority of young Kurds' accounts. This raises the question of the boundaries of belonging to 'Finnishness', an identity label that seems to be only partially accessible to participants in my study. Indeed, young Kurds' narrations suggest that they had been positioned in a manner that excluded them from ethnic membership of the nation (although not from the legal membership recognised by the state).

---

[117] On the other hand, and in a related connection, such use of human-rights discourse can also be influenced by the political discourses of leftist movements to which some respondents belonged.

[118] The other strategy is to highlight differences within the perceived identity category in which the individual has been placed (such as 'immigrant', 'foreigner', or 'refugee').

In relation to this, young Kurds had been positioned as ‘foreigners’ in contrast to being ‘Finnish’, and that identity label was also employed by them, to distinguish them from ‘ethnic Finns’. Similar findings are suggested by Haikkola’s study (2010) of the younger generation of migrant background in Helsinki. Some of her interviewees actually referred to themselves as ‘foreigners’. Furthermore, being a ‘foreigner’ was associated with positive values such as being talkative, open, and courageous, in a contrast against ‘Finnishness’, which was understood as encompassing characteristics such as silence and shyness (*ibid*.: 229–233). Young Kurds drew similar distinctions with ‘Finnishness’ and ‘Kurdishness’, loading these identity categories with various values that resemble certain cultural stereotypes[119]. For instance, the positive values that were attached to the ‘Kurdish culture’ included respect for family, close relationships with relatives and friends, and persistence in the face of historical injustice, whereas the criticised aspects included racism against Arabs, excessive nationalism, and patriarchal features (related to notions of honour and reputation). The valued characteristics of the ‘Finnish culture’ encompassed a sense of certain sets of freedoms (of speech and of behaviour), institutional elements such as education, and a variety of opportunity structures, whereas the ‘coldness’ of Finns, excessive consumption of alcohol, and distance in family relations were negatively perceived features. As is discussed in Article II, this had led to some ‘pick-and-choose’-type strategies with respect to what sort of ‘Finnishness’ and ‘Kurdishness’ the interviewees wished to identify themselves with; the negotiation of one’s position meant downplaying or emphasising individual features that young Kurds associated with ‘Kurdishness’ or ‘Finnishness’. The manifestation of this depended very much on the context and the interlocutors – for instance, whether one was interacting with elderly Kurds, dealing with ‘Finns’, or socialising with young Kurds who had not been living in Finland for such a long time. Belonging to a particular collectivity was strategically enacted through linguistic means (by changing language) or by changing one’s behaviour, acting more ‘Finnish’ or ‘Kurdish’.

Fortier (1999: 42, 48) argues that identities are produced (and not vice versa) through acts of performance that consist of repetitive practices involving social categories and norms. In her words, such sites of repetition become terrains of cultural belonging. Even though Fortier approaches institutional discourses and practices as performative acts through which an Italian émigré culture is produced, it can be argued that her focus on the performative nature of acts that are lived as expressions of belonging is related also to how individuals produce belongingness through everyday interaction. Indeed, she approaches the construction of group identity as the simultaneous genderisation and ethnicisation of both bodies and space. Interaction situations that necessitated ‘acting more Kurdish’ seemed to invoke certain preconceived conventions and socially approved body movements or gestures displaying one’s belonging to the collectivity. For instance, the diversity of ways of greeting others and interacting in social situations was mentioned, this suggesting that the performing of belonging included a bodily dimension. Alongside cultural practices, language played a key role in this regard – terrains of belonging became constructed through linguistic repertoires and registers, as is indicated by Shilan’s narration:

---

[119] This will be discussed further in Section 7.2, ‘Gendered negotiations’.

> *M: That’s interesting – in what situation you use them [different languages] and when they are mixed [...]. You also said that you have gone to Southern Kurdistan or Iraqi Kurdistan several times. How often, like every year?*
> *H: No. As a matter of fact, we go there every second year. And when we go there, we spend a lot of time with our relatives and it cheers us up when, at times, when the environment is such that you understand better and you can speak more freely and when [...] you’re from a different culture, and then Finnish humour and our humour are very much on a different wavelength. When we go to Kurdistan, we speak with Finnish humour, and they look really surprised, and when we come back, we have Kurdish humour, so it gets mixed up again, but it comes back quite fast.*
> Shilan (F)

As was discussed in the previous chapter, Kurdish language maintenance was associated with feeling ‘Kurdish’ and the narration pertaining to it was related to cultural continuity in the post-diaspora setting. At the same time, knowing the Finnish language seemed to provide more space to claim belonging to Finland. Other such justifications that were employed to distinguish oneself from the category of ‘immigrant’ were knowledge of the system, long-time residence in the country, and Finnish citizenship. Article II highlights, such attributes had resulted in partial identifications as ‘Finnish’, including ‘new Finn’ (*uussuomalainen*), the jokingly suggested term ‘pirate Finn’ (*piraattisuomalainen*), and ‘Kurd of Finland’ (*Suomen kurdi*). Young Kurds also became positioned differently on the basis of knowing Finnish (being fluent in the language):

> *Finns don’t usually talk a lot, but when I start to speak Finnish, fluent Finnish, then they get it and start to talk. Hell yeah, he is one of us.*
> Shoresh (M)

Shoresh’s narration suggests that knowing the Finnish language and being able to speak it fluently had spurred a reaction from interlocutors. Such instances were quite frequent in young Kurds’ accounts and indicated that they had been positioned differently once they had started to speak fluent and flawless Finnish or even in dialectically. In a sense, one could say – to paraphrase Huttunen – that they had become part of the familiar ‘audible landscape of Finland’. Leinonen

(2012) shows how, in an opposite sort of transformation, American migrants who are physically invisible become audibly detectable as such when they speak American English or broken Finnish. She contrasts the situation of American migrants against that of Russian migrants, another set of people who in terms of physical features belong to an 'invisible' ethnic group: regardless of embodied 'invisibility', Russians seem to be more 'visible' in public discourses surrounding immigration (see Raittila 2004). Similarly, the debates on 'Muslims' and the role of Islam have become increasingly politicised, particularly in the wake of the events of 9/11. It can be argued that the public discourses on Islam and 'Muslims' have a bearing on how young Kurds are positioned, since, according to their narrations, they seem to be quite readily taken for 'Middle Eastern' and 'Muslim'. These discourses of 'Muslim' and 'Middle Eastern / Arab immigrants' are politically value-laden, as was discussed in previous chapters[120], and related closely to the (post-)colonial imaginaries of 'Muslims' and Islam.

Young Kurds' narrations of belonging echo such ethnicised and gendered imaginaries of the 'other'. Discourses on identity categorisation that resonated in young Kurds' narrations include those of 'immigrant', 'Finnish', 'Kurdish', 'Muslim', 'refugee', and 'foreigner', and they seemed to be associated with individual phenotypical features and constructed along racialised/ethnicised lines. Collective discourses and identity categorisation at national and global level also have an influence on how individuals make sense of their positionings and are positioned by their surroundings. Media images and portrayals of certain ethnic groups can produce powerful imaginaries of collectivities and individuals deemed to belong to such collectivities. For example, the 'Kurdish issue' has increased in visibility in the media in recent decades[121]. Some interviewees were following the developments in the domestic 'Kurdish issue' in Turkey, and labelling of politically active Kurds as 'terrorists' was strongly contested. This echoes the internal constructions of 'otherness' in the Turkish context as they become intertwined with global discourses on securitisation and terrorism. Discourses entailing ethnicised, racialised, and also gendered assumptions about members of various collectivities circulate in the (mediatised) transnational space. The individual-, micro-level narrations shed light on how racialised and ethnicised discourses become constructed and inform each other at the local, transnational, and global levels.

---

[120] See Subsection 5.3.2, 'The construction of the "immigrant other"'.

[121] See Subsection 5.1.3, 'The transnational dimension of the Kurdish diaspora'.

7.2. Gendered negotiations

Keskinen *et al.* (2009) argue against the idea that many of the Nordic countries have been historical bystanders with respect to the colonial processes and outsiders to colonial power relations. The authors suggest instead that the Nordic countries (specifically, Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Denmark) have been culturally and economically marked by colonial relations and have manifested 'colonial complicity'. They employ this notion to refer to 'processes in which (post-)colonial imaginaries, practices and products are made to be part of what is understood as the "national" and "traditional" culture of the Nordic countries' (*ibid.*: 1–2). One such (post-)colonial imaginary seems to be the discursive construction of 'bad patriarchies' that the mind situates in the Middle East and in 'Muslim' countries and that contrasts the 'patriarchal minorities' against Nordic countries' 'equal majorities'. The idea of 'bad patriarchies' is part of the post-colonial imaginaries and discourses that inform the debates on minority communities and members of such communities. This means that national identities in the Nordic region take as some of their material the ideologies of gender equality, which then become contrasted against patriarchies in distance countries (nowadays associated especially with Muslim nations)[122]. Such 'bad patriarchies' are mentally traced to and associated with particular geographical regions, such as the Middle East, in a process that affects how individuals deemed to have origins in such regions are positioned. This is related to the discussion of racialised identities in that individuals' phenotypes can become racially embodied signifiers of their assumed belonging to a collectivity. Attributing meaning to individuals' embodied signifiers reflects and draws from historical imaginaries that possess (post-)colonial and Orientalist features. In the Nordic context, this is particularly striking in gender relations and discourses on gender equality (see Keskinen 2009b: 268–269). Indeed, it has been argued that in the Nordic context the notion of gender equality forms the core of the discourse of nationhood and belonging (Bredström 2003[123]) and is, therefore, contrasted – not surprisingly – against the constructions of the perceived 'other'.

Tied in with this, another example that implies the gendered aspect of constructing the 'other' is the nationalist rhetoric of anti-immigration activists who employ the 'masculine-defender' discourse in the face of the threatening 'other' to protect Finnish women. The 'other' can, therefore, become a racialised articulation referring to individuals perceived as belonging to the collectivity 'Muslims' (see Keskinen 2012). In that sense, the constructions of the 'other' display both racialised and gendered dimensions. The young Kurds' narrations indicated gendered and racialised positionings on the part of their surroundings that seem to draw from such (post-)colonial imaginaries and that became tangible in encounters that the participants had with strangers in public space:

---

[122] For instance, discussions associated with 'honour-related violence' are argued to feature this sort of Orientalist structure (Keskinen 2009b: 268).

[123] See Subsection 5.3.2, 'The construction of the "immigrant other"'.

> *You can still see old men thinking like. Many times I have been with Finnish girls, and some old guy comes up next to me and says: 'Goddammit, boy, don't steal our girls.'*
> Shoresh (M)

Shoresh's account describes how he had been positioned by a randomly encountered elderly Finnish man on the bus as 'somebody who takes our girls'. He was riding the bus with his Finnish girlfriend, and the elderly man made an assumption as to his origins that was based on his phenotype. An intersectional approach allows analysing the situation from the perspective of intersecting social locations (ethnicity, gender, and age/generation) and how these are valued in this particular context. The social location of age or, more specifically, of generation is visible in Shoresh's narration as the elderly Finnish man tells the younger 'foreign' man to leave 'our girls' alone. This echoes the nationalist rhetoric discussed above, which draws on certain gendered relations, in who belongs to the nation and who does not. It seems that Shoresh's encounter with the elderly man reflects a 'masculine-defender' discourse that considers women perceived to belong to the nation as needing 'protection'. Indeed, Yuval-Davis (1997: 23) has suggested that nations are gendered constructions, with women holding particular roles within the nations as 'symbolic border guards and as embodiments of the collectivity'. At the same time, they are the nation's 'cultural reproducers'.

Yuval-Davis (*ibid*.: 43) considers gender relations 'the "essence" of cultures as ways of life to be passed from generation to generation'. This observation ties in also with family relations and expectations, which can equally well be gendered. The young Kurds' narrations included a component of (inter)generational negotiations. Rebuar's narration suggests that young Kurds are positioned in terms of gendered norms and expectations also on the part of their parents and the Kurdish community:

> *Well, I am like in between two. With my parents, I act older; I speak and kinda go into the culture. I sort of translate the culture with them, but then with foreigners, young foreigners, who have grown up here, I do 'the Finnish way'. I do say that there are certain limits. You can do stuff, but there are certain things that are too big to handle for our parents, so don't do them. And if you do, then don't tell them about it, because it's not being a hero if you say that I took a girl back home from the disco, fucked her, and she was a blonde. No, it doesn't make any sense. Don't do and tell, and if your conscience is fine with it, okay, but then don't go against your parents that you take some blonde girl home. Like I don't mean blonde like you but in general what comes to my mind… Like don't walk hand in hand with the blonde in front of your parents because you have a grudge against them. You will make it even worse.*
> Rebuar (M)

Rebuar's narration indicates a certain consciousness of transgressing the perceived boundaries of gendered and ethnicised relations that entail roles attributed to one on the basis of one's location in the matrix of ethnicity and gender. Bringing a 'blonde' girl home constitutes a transgression with respect to the behaviour Rebuar is expected to display with regard to his parents. 'Blonde' in this sense can be interpreted as referring to the 'whiteness' that is understood as part of being 'Finnish' but at the same time contrasted against his own 'non-whiteness' and constituting a transgression in terms of introducing somebody from outside the Kurdish community to one's parents or engaging in casual relationships. On the other hand, his narrations can be read against the constructions of the category 'blonde', which in Western popular culture has been attached to such values as hyper-sexuality, femininity, and promiscuity (see Dyer 1997).

An intergenerational element related to gender relations was prominent in the young Kurds' narrations on certain cultural values, norms, practices, and discourses that their parents may cherish, associated with such matters as contact with the opposite sex, alcohol use, partying, and choice of spouse. In some cases, though not all, the expectations and norms for young Kurdish women and Kurdish men were narrated as different. Where this occurred, young Kurdish men seemed to have more space to socialise with the opposite sex, particularly in terms of dating. For instance, Hemida reflected on the differences in expectations placed on boys and girls in relation to dating:

> *H: Well, girls and boys are often separate. But there is as well… You don't look approvingly at such a boy or a girl if (s)he… if the girl hangs around with boys a lot and if the boy is with a lot of girls, so it's not very flattering.*
> *M: Hang around, you mean like dating?*
> *H: Normally, yes, but also dating. It's not like approved of, but it's partially the religion, and also culture, but religion is significant in this way. In our religion, dating is not the same thing as in the Western world, like it's not allowed.*
> *M: Would you say then that the expectations for boys and for girls are different, or is it forbidden for both?*
> *H: Well, basically, dating is forbidden for both sexes, but I have got the idea, I have the impression that boys can do more than girls because girls hold the family's honour in a way. I have often heard it expressed like this: that if a girl does something, it ruins the family's reputation. That's why you try to protect the girl and guard her so that nothing happens that would make the family lose its reputation. So reputation is very significant in the Kurdish community.*
> Hemida (F)

Naturally, this distinction was not clear-cut in terms of gender and depended largely on the family. The narrations that brought out the gendered dimension of intergenerational negotiations featured the themes of 'honour' and 'reputation' associated with the community and family relations. The practice of gossip seemed to constitute a rather powerful form of social control (see Küçükcan 1999), and it was linked to the fear of losing one's reputation in the eyes of the community. The gender dimension became visible in talk about the religious and cultural guidelines for conduct.

Negotiations took place with parents' and the community's (gendered) norms, which were justified partially through cultural or religious guidelines associated with 'Kurdish culture'. Parents' differing interpretations of cultural traditions were considered in some cases 'old-fashioned'. The older generations' views on religious guidelines were also considered as being coloured by what the research participants termed 'the more traditional features of the Kurdish culture'.

In narrations on the cultural differences between 'Finnish culture' and 'Kurdish culture', the interviewees adopted various positionings in terms of which 'cultural' features they wished to identify with. On one hand, 'Finnish culture' was contrasted against 'Kurdish culture' with respect to issues related to alcohol use, dating, the nature of family relations, and differences in characteristics between 'Finns' and 'Kurds' as peoples. In such cases, the distinction between 'Finnish culture' and 'Kurdish culture' was commonly narrated through the dichotomy of liberal versus conservative. On the other hand, however, some interviewees narrated the clash between certain values (particularly with respect to gendered norms) as a clash between Kurdish cultural and Islamic traditions instead of setting two religious systems or two cultural traditions in opposition (for instance, 'Finnish' versus 'Kurdish'). Shilan's narration offers evidence of this:

> *M: Well, that was interesting what you just said, that it's culture and religion. So how do you see the boundaries of those two? What is common, what's culture, what is religion?*
> *H: Well, I could give you a concrete example, which makes everyone, even the Finns, surprised. In religion, after all, men and women are equal, but then it's the culture that has influenced it somehow so that the woman would be less worthy, and it manifests differently in different families. For instance, in our family we are like all equal and there is no difference between me and my little brothers, like I couldn't go out a lot or that he can go out more because he's a boy. None of us can be out late, and also, since I am older than my little brother, he needs to respect me, although in our country there can be families where even if the little brother is two years younger, he would be the biggest boy in the house and he should be respected. So there are these kinds of things in the culture, but if you think, religion says that both are equal and, in fact, it even demands men to take care of women. They have been described as a glass that breaks easily, kind of a vase that breaks easily, so that when you hurt a woman and it breaks, it will be hard to put it together again and you can see the fissures. So that's why you should take care of a woman, to protect her like that. But then only a few follow this, really few, and pretty many Muslims do things against Islam, in which you have more the bad influence of culture and old traditions and all things that have permeated the customs, and that's the only thing that's visible to outsiders, like that it's religion or something.*
> Shilan (F)

Shilan's narration introduces the dimension of gender when she refers to the perceptions of Islam and 'Muslims' in public discourses. The discursive positioning of people of Middle Eastern background and Muslims (or those perceived to be Muslim), particularly in terms of associating the collectivity with gender inequality[124], was contested in several narrations, including Shilan's. On the other hand, regardless of identifying themselves as 'Muslim', most interviewees distanced themselves from 'old-fashioned cultural customs' and defended Islam, which was considered to be a scapegoat for patriarchal cultural customs related to the ideas of honour, reputation, and gender inequality.

The rhetorical ways to construct 'otherness' and identity categories can be approached by looking at acts of 'counter-speech'. Juhila (2004: 29) defines 'counter-speech' as acts of resistance against an imposed identity and as involving individuals highlighting their identities as distinct from culturally dominant identity categorisations. This can mean negotiating and reversing the rhetorical content of designated identity categories, in this case those of 'Muslim' and 'refugee', as discussed above. Huttunen (2004: 134–154) refers to this phenomenon as the counter-strategies and actions of individuals who negotiate their belonging to marginalising categories such as 'immigrant' and 'foreigner'. For instance, the interviewees spoke against ethnicised, gendered, and racialised categorisation of the 'other'. Shilan's reference to what she termed 'Muslim men's obligation to take care of Muslim women' resembles counter-speech to that of 'bad patriarchies' in which 'Muslim women need to be protected from Muslim men'. However, at the same time, Shilan's narration has a part in reproducing the perception of (Muslim) women as easily breakable and in need of protection.

In this sense, it needs to be taken into consideration that the young Kurds were narrating their experiences in a particular research setting, wherein questions related to culture and religion were being asked by a researcher who belongs to the category 'mainstream Finns'[125]. Hence, it may be apparent that the interviewees were employing the discursive resources available for them in such a setting. Thus, the politicised meanings attached to media images of 'Muslims' and Islam, which are to some extent contrasted against the national imaginary of Nordic gender equality, might explain why the gender dimension surfaced in narrations on the themes of religion and culture.

---

[124] For instance, Laura Huttunen refers to the 'gendered meanings of the Muslim figure' (*muslimi-figuurin sukupuolittuneet merkitykset*) (2004: 146) as discussed in Subsection 5.3.2, 'The construction of the "immigrant other"'.

[125] See Subsection 3.3.2, 'Positionalities – intersectional reflections'.

8. Locality, home(land), and networks in a transnational setting

Individuals' cross-border networks and ties to multiple geographical localities have introduced new dynamics to consideration of the relationship between individuals' identity formation and place. As was discussed in the theory-oriented chapter, transnational studies have aimed to reconsider the more usual nation-state-centred thinking and pay greater attention to migrants' cross-border ties that are maintained and fostered in the societies of settlement and beyond the first generation. In this connection, it has been argued that migrants' children operate within a transnational space that entails embeddedness in sets of interconnected networks of social relationships (Levitt & Glick Schiller 2004; Levitt & Waters 2006). This is arguably true of the members of the generation in-between, who were born in the society of departure and raised in the society of settlement. In this chapter, I argue that, although young Kurds are embedded in a transnational (diaspora) space, they still operate within particular localities, such as the nation-state, region, city, and neighbourhood, which resonate in their negotiation of belonging and to some extent condition the formation of their transnational ties and attachments.

In the final chapter, I look at the dynamics of how young Kurds articulate their feelings of belonging and home, along with and the multiplicity of ways in which they do so. This discussion considers the significance of localities and networks in a transnational setting and looks at young Kurds' understandings of home and homeland in relation to the nation and the state. The latter section features discussion of the expressions of belonging that reflect both territorially-bound and non-territorially-bound elements.

8.1. Nation and nation-state in makings of home(s)

Young Kurds' involvement in transnational activities and practices is quite diverse. It may include short- or long-term visits to the Kurdistan region (especially often the *de facto* Kurdish state in northern Iraq), long-distance communication with friends and relatives, transnational political activities, and staying informed of what happens in the Kurdistan area by following news in

Kurdish and/or about Kurdistan. Furthermore, young Kurds take advantage of the variety of digital media and social-networking tools to stay in touch with close family members, other relatives, and friends in Kurdistan but also with people, especially family, who belong to Kurdish diaspora communities in such countries as Germany, Sweden, Norway, the United States, and Australia. The most commonly used social-networking tools included Windows Messenger, Facebook, and Skype. At the same time, many interviewees were also 'in touch with' Kurdistan through Middle Eastern satellite channels, online news sites, and Internet chat rooms. Naturally, the scope of these transnational activities varied among the interviewees. For instance, some had not visited Kurdistan since migration, while others had travelled there on several occasions:

> *M: So what kind of connections do you have toward Kurdistan? You said that you visited it a while ago for a month, right?*
> *H: Yes, for a month.*
> *M: Have you been there otherwise?*
> *H: No, it was my first time.*
> *M: First time, okay…*
> *H: First time that I went to Kurdistan. I went there without informing my aunt. She didn't recognise me until I started laughing. Then she did recognise me and said that I reminded her of my dad […]. You see, I went to knock on the door and she looked at me for a while like 'who is this?'. Then I laughed and she recognised me. Everyone liked it, and I had my uncle with me and he said 'go behind the door'[…]. I met my grandparents and everything, and they hadn't believed that they would ever see me again, and we cried.*
> *M: I can imagine, yes.*
> *H: Yes, it felt really good that I had […]. I didn't think of anything else; I didn't know. It was really good for me.*
> *M: So you have a lot of relatives back there, then?*
> *H: Yes, quite a lot of relatives, also in Iran. My father's mother and father live there, and my mother's father and mother live in Iraq.*
> *M: So, you went to Iraqi Kurdistan?*
> *H: Yes, I went to Iraqi Kurdistan, but I can't go to Iranian Kurdistan, for political reasons; they will capture me right away or something, because I have been in so many demonstrations, on TV, said things online against Iran…*
> Gavan (M)

These visits provided Gavan with an opportunity to renew relations with relatives after a long time and to meet some of his relatives for the first time. These networks connected young Kurds to the region of Kurdistan in a fuller way, although the local constraints prevented some visits to their relatives in Iranian Kurdistan, particularly in the case of interviewees such as Gavan, whose family had migrated to Finland for political reasons. Article III discusses in greater depth the constraints that being embedded within several overlapping polities entails in terms of young Kurds' transnational political activities, and Article IV explores the use of digital tools to maintain transnational ties. The findings described in these articles suggest that locality in the form of local opportunity structures, institutions, and polities but also the discursive fields and the embedded power relations remain significant where transnational activities and various facets of belonging are involved. In this sense, the contexts in which transnational activities and attachments occur are equally central, particularly in terms of the localities' constraints and opportunities. For instance, the developments taking place in the autonomous region of Kurdistan in northern Iraq have enabled some diaspora Kurds to return, particularly after 2003, which brought the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime.

Similarly to subjects in Emanuelsson's study (2008) of diaspora Kurds returning from Sweden to Northern Iraq, young Kurds in my study harboured positive feelings for developing relations with their family members in the region of Kurdistan and travelling there for holidays or for temporary jobs. Young Kurds projected future plans and narrated on mobility in relation to the existing networks in particular localities. In the case of eventual return to Kurdistan, which was a possibility seriously considered by only a few interviewees, the networks in Kurdistan were considered to enable the settlement process in addition to providing a reason to return in the first place. For instance, the pre-existing networks of relatives in certain Kurdish cities would influence the families' decision to return there, although parents' wish to return was not always supported by the younger generation. As a matter of fact, most interviewees reported a wish to stay in Finland, as they had networks of friends and family in the Finnish cities they were living in and in the Nordic region. Simultaneously, however, they considered temporary stays and frequent visits to relatives living in the region of Kurdistan a strong possibility. On the other hand, Ahmet Hamdi Akkaya (2012) argues that the members of the Kurdish diaspora communities have responded to the developments taking place in the region of Kurdistan through several forms of diasporic circulation instead of merely in the form of return migration. For instance, this tendency is witnessed among the younger generation of Kurds in Sweden (see Eliassi 2012a). Such alternative forms of diasporic circulation may include circulation of knowledge, capital, and people by means of temporary migration. This study finds similar evidence among the younger generation of Kurds in Finland, which is discussed at greater length in articles III and IV.

The question 'where do I belong?' usually presupposes a reply containing geographically identifiably indicators, whether these would be countries, regions, cities, or neighbourhoods. In this sense, the question of emotional attachments and feelings of belonging is often related to the understanding of home and its possible location(s) on a map. The spatial parameters aside, individuals who are embedded in a transnational space may have attachments to multiple localities, which take shape through lived experiences, through memories, or simply via continuous and frequent references to home or homeland (see Levitt 2009: 1231). The transnational reality means being embedded in multiple transnational sets of social networks, several layers of polities, institutions (formal and informal), discursive fields, and socio-political settings that shape individuals' transnational attachments and mobilities. Feelings of belonging and how they are narrated in relation to physical localities vary in relation to how individuals are positioned within such networks, polities, institutions, discursive fields, and political settings – both crossing the nation-states' borders and anchored in the local structures and institutional arrangements.

Young Kurds' understanding of home was multilocal in terms of nations but also with regard to particular regions in Kurdistan. 'Home' was viewed primarily and most often as a place where one lives and plans one's future. In other words, it was the physical location in which young Kurds operated and enacted various forms of agency. 'Homeland', on the other hand, referred to a place one originally came from and that one may visit. In other words, it was a place of diasporic imagination (see Brah 1996) that would include memories and a certain level of diasporic consciousness[126]. The young Kurds' narrations are consistent with the findings of Kanwal Mand's (2010) study of understandings of 'home' among British-born Bangladeshi children in London, who differentiated *desh* (homeland or home/nation) from *bidesh* (foreign country associated with being away). Her research indicates that these children form a sense of home in relation to the experience they have of different places and in accordance with 'different social relations, practices and material circumstances through which they experience these places' (*ibid.*: 273).

In the case of young Kurds, the former understanding of 'home' was employed for the most part when one was speaking of 'Finland' or physical locations within the borders of the Finnish nation-state. The sense of belonging to Finland was linked to certain locations' familiarity and to knowledge of how to 'survive' in a familiar setting. In other words, it was related to their lived experiences. The latter notion, of 'homeland', characterised narrations of 'Kurdistan', about either a particular region in the area of Kurdistan or the entity of Kurdistan. The social networks of friends, close family, and other relatives play a significant role in forging this sense of home(land). Fog-Olwig's study (2002: 215) of rituals in global networks of kin demonstrates that 'home' can be both abstract and concrete: 'In the first sense, home is a concrete locus of specific relations of social and economic rights and obligations […]. In the second sense, home is a more abstract entity of belonging expressed through various types of narratives and other forms of symbolic interchange. These two understandings and practices of home mutually reinforce and implicate one another.'

In a similar vein, a distinction between more abstract understandings of what constitutes 'home' and more concrete ways of home-making is characteristic of young Kurds' narrations. The latter is characterised by various forms of agency within a particular locality, whereas the former evokes a sense of 'homeland' understood as a place of symbolic value and constructed with personal memories and the collective narratives that circulate in the transnational diaspora space. On the other hand, home is not necessarily linked to physical localities, as has been discussed at length in the theory chapter[127]. The diaspora space can take on a sense of home, with all the transnational networks and social relations embedded in such a space (see Alinia 2004). The diasporic past and belonging to a stateless nation was central in this regard, as young Kurds could not attach their belonging to a particular Kurdish nation-state so much as to the Kurdish nation:

---

[126] As discussed in Section 6.3, 'Diasporic consciousness'.

> *M: Yes, where do you feel your home is […]?*
> *H: Well, I told you that if you don't have a country, then it's really difficult to say exactly where your home is. But always if somebody asks that – 'where, what country do you come from?'[128], like in Bulgaria they asked, and this is a joke, 'where do you come from?' and I said that I am Finnish, a pirate Finn, because it's true that I have lived only here so far, and it's hard if I say that I am Kurdish, well from where? From Iran. So where were you born? In Iraq. And where in Iraq? In a camp. Actually, home is no official place, I just say that I am Kurdish, Iranian Kurdish, but I haven't seen it[129], so we can say that I am Kurdish and that's enough.*
> Zagros (M)

The diasporic background as much as the feelings of 'otherness' that were associated with being 'Kurdish' resonated in young interviewees' narrations on home. Kurdistan was also referred to as *meidän maa*, denoting 'our land / our territory' in contrast to 'country' or 'state'[130], seemingly in a reference to the Kurdish nation and territory instead of a politically recognised state. Claims of membership of such a nation were made on the basis of emotional attachments in contrast to formal, internationally recognised membership of the Kurdish state – i.e., Kurdish citizenship. In such cases, belonging to the nation was narrated in relation to citizenship status and, more specifically, to the lack of it. Some interviewees emphasised the lack of 'own citizenship' (Kurdish) and the status of the Kurdish people as a stateless people; that made belonging to a 'citizenshipless' nation more tangible. This was contrasted against the possibility of gaining Finnish citizenship, which most interviewees had indeed done[131]. Meanings attached to Finnish citizenship ranged from highly emotional to more practically grounded ones. Finnish citizenship status evoked positive feelings, though it was mostly considered a matter of practicality, enabling greater international mobility. Feelings of belonging to a nation/nation-state were constructed betwixt cultural non-belonging to Finland and denied access to ‘own [Kurdish] citizenship’. Such voices intertwined with the awareness of Kurdistan’s current state of statelessness (as a sense of ‘diasporic consciousness’) and also with the political projects of belonging to Finland – either the ‘juridical nation’ or the ‘symbolic nation’ (see Saukkonen 2013b: 113–114).

---

[127] See Subsection 2.3.1, 'Home, homeland, and locality'.

[128] 'Minkä maalainen olet?'.

[129] Referring to Iranian Kurdistan.

[130] However, it is difficult to make this distinction in the Finnish language, as the word 'maa' can be used to refer either to 'country' or to 'land'.

[131] At the time of the interviews, 15 respondents reported having Finnish citizenship and eight had not received it yet or had not applied for it.

8.2. Layers of belonging

Feeling at home is a complex issue. Quite often, it is indexed to geographical locations, somewhat overlapping and multiple, and constructed in relation to both the past and the present. Constructing a sense of belonging reflects similarly complex spatio-temporal parameters. The previous section of this chapter has explored the features intertwining among national identities, nation-states, and the imagined communities of nations. One can feel belonging to several localities, and, as Section 8.1 suggests, such feelings of belonging toward a place stem partially from lived experiences and from the existing social relations and networks within said place. In this venue, it makes sense to look at various localities, such as cities or even neighbourhoods, to see how individuals make sense of their social worlds in their living environments, which, in many cases, tend to be urban areas. On the other hand, a sense of belonging can feature non-localised or non-territorially-bound elements – for instance, in the form of religious identities. This section of the chapter shifts the focus toward those diverse modes of belonging that encompass local (excluding national) and non-local components.

The city/neighbourhood

Results discussed in Article II point toward local attachments to the city of residence in young Kurds’ narrations. Feelings of home were narrated in relation not merely to the nation and in some cases the state but also to one’s actual living environment – the city (see Toivanen 2013). This was evident in Heresh’s account wherein he reflected upon his attachment to his city of residence, Turku:

> *M: So how about this kind of local identity? Where do you feel your home is at the moment?*
> *H: In Turku. I travel a lot and nowhere can I be at home like in Turku. When I see Turku, I feel rested right away. Rested, I don’t know why. I can’t imagine moving away. I have had a lot of job offers abroad…*
> *M: So it’s so local then: Turku, not Finland?*
> *H: No, it’s Turku, like even if you are in your own homeland, it’s still Turku. You know sometimes I have come down from the plane and people have been staring like ‘what…?’. But, as my friends know, I like Turku a lot, so the first thing I do is that I bow*

> *like Muslims when they pray, and then I kiss the asphalt, while everyone's watching, like: 'What is he doing? He probably just got out of prison.' [laughs]*
> Heresh (M)

Other interviewees described similar localised feelings of belonging to the city they were currently living in or that they had originally departed. Such emotional attachments to particular localities are visible in Awar's narration on the location of home and hometown, where both territorially-bound and non-territorially-bound elements feature in the ways he makes sense of his relationship to the city of departure, Kirkuk, and to the city of current residence. Eventually he concludes that home is where the family is, thus suggesting the relevance of existing social relations for feeling at home:

> *Yeah [...]. I can't say that it [home] is both [Finland and Kurdistan]. Kirkuk, only Kirkuk [...]. There are a lot of cities and quiet cities, Kurdish, so one could move there already, and it would be safe. But Kirkuk means more as a city, as a home city. Turku not that much, nor any other city I have lived in. It's because there you have all the relatives. So [...] as a country Finland is the home country, but as a city Kirkuk is my only home city [...]. Yes, I consider my parents' home*[132] *as my home. Home to me is actually like a family. It's not the house or the building. Family is home.*
> Awar (M)

Besides the social networks and relations, local or urban belonging can be constructed with more 'graspable' and material points of reference, in contrast to the nation and the members of its imagined community. In this sense, the construction of belonging to a physical locality becomes intertwined with the material side – in other words, how the physical space is experienced and lived. This includes a certain level of familiarity with the physical objects of that space, such as routes, landmarks, and landscapes, but also sensory familiarity, including sounds and smells. The familiarity of certain localities, be they neighbourhoods or cities, and their materiality in terms of physical points of reference (bus stops, roads, etc.) index one's belonging to a locality. For instance, Olga den Besten (2010: 181) argues in her study that a sense of local belonging and emotional attachment to one's neighbourhood are intrinsically connected in the case of 'second-generation' children in Berlin and Paris. Therefore, it would be beneficial to pay attention to localities where individuals operate and how those individuals use them as frames of reference in construction of belonging and become emotionally attached. Interestingly, although the extent of local attachments to particular cities or neighbourhoods varied among the interviewees, one could note nevertheless how the young Kurds narrated belonging and home in relation to the particular localities and settings that they were most familiar with. Furthermore, the emotional attachments linked to localities were in a few cases constructed transnationally and in relation to the extended social networks of such a transnational (diaspora) space. In some cases, particular neighbourhoods within cities were mentioned, although they did not reach a significance similar to that of attachments to cities.

---

[132] His parents' home was in Turku.

With very few exceptions, 'home' for the interviewees was located in Finland and, more specifically, in particular cities in Finland. This can be partially explained by existing social networks and by the familiarity of the immediate living environments that foster feelings of belonging to a city. On the other hand, local attachments to cities can become quite meaningful, particularly where other, more rigid identity categories – as in identifying with the nation-state or with the related cultural identities – are closed to one. The young Kurds' narrations indicate that identifications with a particular city are to some extent based on criteria different from those employed in claiming belonging to the category 'Finnish' or 'Kurdish', which involves justifications of one's roots and origins.

Such findings are similar to those of the EU-funded TIES (The Integration of the European Second Generation) research project, showing that feelings of belonging among migrants' children (aged 18–30 at the time of the survey) varied greatly, depending on the parents' country of origin and on notions of national belonging, which differ between the participants' countries (Crul *et al*. 2010)[133]. The above-mentioned study focused particularly on the significance of the local context in respect of how the 'second generation' cultivate their feelings of belonging – in relation to the local and national institutional arrangements and policies in their societies of residence (including those having to do with education, the labour market, and citizenship) as well as in terms of the discursive context (political discourse, the social discourse of everyday interaction, and media discourse) (*ibid*.: 32)[134].

One of the sub-studies in the TIES project examined the formation of identities in urban settings. That work was prompted by the observation that children and youth of migrant background constitute a rapidly growing proportion of European cities' urban populations (Schneider *et al*. 2012: 285–340). Indeed, the results of the TIES project show that feelings of local belonging among this group were stronger than respondents' feelings of national belonging toward the country of residence (*ibid*.: 312–316). Similarly, the project's findings (*ibid*.: 322) indicate that the 'second-generation' respondents considered the country in which they had been born and raised to be their

---

[133] The survey focused on second-generation individuals whose parents originally came from Morocco, the former Yugoslavia, and Turkey and who at the time of data collection were living in one of the 15 European cities chosen, in Germany, France, Spain, Austria, the Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland, and Sweden. The project focused on the 'second generation' in domains such as education, the labour market, social relations, religion, and identity formation.

[134] Regrettably, no Finnish cities were part of this study.

‘home’. However, their responses in the survey differed from those given by the respondents of ‘native-born parentage’. The ‘second generation’ were deemed to have ‘an “ethno-national” reference frame’ that manifested itself in the form of mastery of the language of their parents’ society of departure, childhood memories from summer travels to their parents’ societies of departure, and practices such as celebrating cultural and religious holidays with family members. In other words, one could say that they were embedded in a transnational space.

The large-scale survey-based study conducted within the TIES project provides valuable insights into the lives of the ‘second generation’ in various national contexts. However, small-scale studies (such as mine) that employ a rich qualitative dataset can provide more insights into the meanings that young people of migrant background attach to questions of belonging and home and to the local and transnational particularities that may be involved in such processes. In this connection, while the ‘“ethno-national” reference frame’ points to young people with migrant parents being embedded within a transnational space, it does not necessarily capture the multiplicity of meanings that they attach to notions of home, homeland, and their immediate living environment or their ways of doing so.

Religion

The supranational community of Muslims, also referred to as Ummah, seems to be presented often as an example of a transnational community made up of formal and informal networks that cross nation-states’ borders. It has also been argued to provide a powerful source of collective identity for those who identify with it (Castells 1997: 15; see Sayyid 2000: 35–36). Belonging to a supra-national community suggests that religious identities are formed on foundations of non-localised and territorialised forms of belonging alike. It has to be noted also that Muslim communities can be highly heterogeneous, as any religious communities can be, with specific expressions and features characterising local communities. Of the participants in my study, approximately half identified themselves as ‘Muslims’ and the remaining half as atheist or having an individual-level relationship to a deity / God with no particular religion[135]. Overall, the young Kurds’ narrations suggested that they had adopted rather individualistic positionings toward religious guidelines and traditions. However, some narrations also indicated that there was ongoing negotiation over the level of religiosity of the younger generation, particularly with regard to certain practices associated with being ‘a good Muslim’. The interviewees’ narrations indicated heterogeneity of attitudes and attachments to what were considered religious practices and guidelines. In a few cases, belonging to a larger religious community of believers seemed to reinforce an identity as 'Muslim', which was fostered through transnationally common religious observances among members of the same community, including fasting, praying, and adhering to certain moral codes. In other cases, it seemed that the interviewees had adopted a more individualistic view of religious guidelines and considered, for instance, alcohol consumption a personal matter between oneself and God. In line with these findings, one could argue that the younger generations of migrant parentage give new meanings and expressions to what it means to be 'Kurdish' and 'Finnish' but also to 'Muslim' within the multiple national, ethnic, and religious communities to which they belong in Finland.

---

[135] Article II discusses the ethnic and religious identities of young Kurds at greater length.

The religious factor was somewhat relevant in the context of selecting a spouse and teaching children certain values and moral codes, which were linked to religious practices instead of cultural ones. In such cases, it seemed that the understanding of religion went beyond simple moral code; it was considered a way of life – or a 'lifestyle', as Hemida referred to it. Her narration, among those of other female interviewees, suggested that the choice of spouse must adhere to certain religious and, in some cases, cultural requirements. Young male Kurds seemed to have fewer criteria related to the ethnic background and religious affiliation of a future spouse. This indicated that such negotiations have a gendered dimension too, as is discussed in previous chapters.

> *M: So, about the future spouse [...]. How important would it be that he would have similar religious background?*
> *W: Well, that is important. It's really important to me, because I consider my religion more important than my culture, and that's why I would like that he would belong to the same religion. Then everyday life would also be easier and smoother, because my religion is Islam and it's not just a religion. It's a lifestyle where I come from. That's why I wish – or, actually, I demand that; it's one of my conditions – that he's a Muslim.*
> Hemida (F)

Fangen (2007: 412) argues in her study of Somali youth in Norway that 'naturalized and situational ethnic identifications, geographical belonging and everyday practice should be distinguished in the analysis'. She demonstrates, echoing my own findings, that young Somalis have a strong sense of being 'Somali' by identity yet simultaneously feeling at home in Norway. Furthermore, her findings show that feelings connected to 'Somali culture' do not necessarily translate into practices and involvement in the Somali community. As a matter of fact, Fangen concludes that the most explicit way young Somalis take part in the community's practices is in the sense of religion. Jacobson's study (1997), on the other hand, shows that British Pakistani youth make a crucial distinction between religion and ethnicity as sources of identity. Pakistani ethnicity seems to rely on geographical and territorial reference points to a land and its people, whilst identifying oneself with Islam and as 'Muslim' seems to entail universal relevance that permeates all facets of life and to involve a specific set of doctrines applicable in everyday life. In a similar vein, a few of my interviewees emphasised their religious identity over an ‘ethnic identity as Kurdish’. This was the case with Rezan, who explained her negotiation of ‘Finnishness’, ‘Kurdishness’, and being a ‘Muslim’ in the following way:

> *Well, there is no contradiction if I say that I’m Muslim, because I consider myself Muslim. But if I say that I’m Finnish, that’s not completely true. I’m not a Finn if you think that a Finn is born in Finland, or that his parents are Finnish-speakers or Finnish, but if I say that I am a Kurd and I have been living here all my life, I don’t feel myself [to be] so Kurdish. This is a tough question, but I haven’t stressed over it.*
> Rezan (F)

Religious affiliations can provide a way to be involved in and construct feelings of belonging in relation to a transnational religious community, which may intersect with a particular transnational diaspora community, or operate to some extent outside it. Rezan’s narration is revealing in that she identified herself as a member of a transnational religious community instead of associating her identity with national labels and ethnic identity categories. Her narration makes reference to the somewhat territorially constructed boundaries of belonging to nations’ imagined communities (whether Kurdish or Finnish) and to the absence of such boundaries in the case of religious identifications. Islam, as could any other religion, can in this sense be seen as holding universal value.

Final words

The long-term effects of immigration in European societies, particularly those of integration and migration policies, are determined by the coming generation's situation in the various sectors of the society. The case of Finland in its waves of immigration differs considerably from those of European countries that have experienced significant migration waves dating back to the post-WWII years. The larger waves of migration to Finland go back to only the early 1990s and, accordingly, are resulting in great numbers of migrants' children born in Finland reaching adulthood in the 2010s. In late 2012, individuals of migrant background and their children accounted for up to five per cent of the total population of Finland, whereas only a little over two decades earlier, in 1990, such numbers stood at 0.75%. The corresponding figure for young adults between 20 and 30 years old stood at 10% in 2012 and is likely to increase in the decades to come (Statistics Finland 2013b).

The current political climate with regard to migration has inspired opinions and statements that question the position of migrants and their children in European societies – debates related to integration, civic participation, national belonging, and the boundaries of belonging to the nation. The results of the present study are similar to the key findings of studies conducted in Nordic and Western European countries that highlight the processes of inclusion and exclusion that both inhibit and contribute to greater participation of younger generations of migrant background in the respective societies. On the other hand, there are some particularities in the life experiences of younger generations of migrant background in Finland. These would be set in relation to the national context, including its local and national institutional arrangements and policies (related to education, the labour market, and citizenship) and discursive spaces (for political discourses, day-to-day interaction, and media discourses).

Hence, it makes sense in the context of post-migration Finland to examine what sorts of meanings young people of migrant background attach to notions of belonging, home, and homeland and how they understand their position within Finnish society. What do the results of this study tell us about the younger generation of Kurdish background in Finland and possibly, by extension, of the younger generations of migrant background who have grown up in Finland?

In light of this study, the ‘circle of Finnishness’ seems quite exclusive and non-accommodating of a generation who, regardless of parentage, have grown to adulthood in Finland and who speak Finnish as their mother tongue. Young Kurds face contestation of their belonging to the imagined community of Finns and are positioned as the ‘other’ on the basis of their darker complexion. Being identified as ‘immigrant’, ‘foreigner’, ‘refugee’, or even ‘Muslim’ evokes racialised, ethnicised, and gendered identity labels that draw from the (post)colonial imaginaries and that echo the public debate surrounding Islam and ‘Muslims’. This raises the question of the boundaries of belonging to the ‘Finnish nation’, who can claim belonging to ‘Finnishness’, and who consequently remain outside the ‘circle of Finnishness’. This being said, the younger generations of migrant background may have other venues for be(com)ing part of Finnish society by mastering the language, knowing the system, and having Finnish citizenship. Though cultural identifications with ‘Finnishness’ and ‘Finns’ seems to remain out of reach – at least for the time being – alternative attachments to the cities of residence, to the local communities and their social networks, and to the juridical nation (through citizenship) can provide alternative venues through which one can circumvent the mechanisms of exclusion and deal with various forms of ‘othering’. In other words, speaking Finnish as one’s mother tongue, having Finnish citizenship, and feeling that one is an inhabitant of a particular city in Finland may eventually allow more space within which young people of migrant background can claim being part of Finnish society and to feel at home. However, this observation is made with a hint of scepticism, as numerous studies, including this one, explicitly point out various mechanisms of exclusion that the younger generations of migrant background continue to face in the course of their day-to-day life in Nordic welfare societies.

What does it then mean to call a place ‘home’? In terms of theory, this study contributes to the conceptualisations of home and how a sense of feeling at home comes into being among the younger generations in a post-diaspora context. The distinction between Finland as ‘home’ and Kurdistan as ‘homeland’ suggests that, for the younger generations of Kurdish background, belonging to one does not rule out belonging to the other. To some extent, this is reflective of the social realities in which these young people are embedded. Their social environments are not confined within the boundaries of the Finnish state; on the contrary, they may include connections to the societies of departure that are maintained both concretely through travel and visits but also emotionally through family networks, memories, and feelings of belonging. In other words, they are embedded in a transnational (diaspora) space with cross-border lived experiences, networks, and memories of the society of departure and the society of settlement reflected in their feelings of belonging.

It should be noted also that the ethno-national background of the Kurdish diaspora introduces particular dynamics to home-making processes. Theorisations in diaspora studies should address the fact that the meanings attached to homeland among younger members of the stateless diaspora communities can differ significantly from their parents', hence the need for rethinking the conceptual tools at hand. I have argued that the younger generations of Kurdish background in Finland manifest 'diasporic consciousness'. This means indexing one's life story to the socio-political context of the diaspora formation, which is informed by the collective experience of exile and displacement, and by the continuous state of statelessness of the 'homeland'. It becomes a significant part of making sense of one's own life story and the lived experiences following it yet arguably is different from older generations' experiences. For instance, the younger generations do not necessarily cultivate plans of return or engage actively in matters that are related to the society of departure; rather, they are oriented more to living and making plans for the future in the societies of settlement – in this case, in Finland. This means that for the younger generations of Kurdish background, familiarising oneself with one's parents' cultural background and mastering the language can contribute to a sense of cultural continuity in the post-diaspora context and thereby play a significant role in their makings of home. Indeed, the younger generations of Kurdish parentage give new meanings and expressions to what it means to be 'Kurdish' and 'Finnish' but also 'Muslim' or simply a young person of migrant parentage within the multiple, (trans)national, ethnic and religious communities they belong to in Finland and elsewhere. These meanings are reflected in their understandings and makings of home.

REFERENCES

Akkaya, Ahmet Hamdi (2012) Kurdish diaspora: creating new contingencies in trans-national space. In G. Tsolidis (ed.) *Identities in Transition.* Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary Press, 57-68.

Alinia, Minoo (2004) *Spaces of diaspora. Kurdish identities, experiences of otherness and politics of belonging*. Göteborg: Göteborg Studies in Sociology No 22, Göteborg University.

Alinia, Minoo & Eliassi, Barzoo (2014) Temporal and generational impact on identity, home(land) and politics of belonging among the Kurdish diaspora. *Nordic Journal of Migration Research* 4, 2, 73-81.

Alitolppa-Niitamo, Anne (2004) *The ice-breakers: Somali-speaking youth in metropolitan Helsinki with a focus on the context of formal education*. Helsinki: Population Research Institute.

AlSayyad, Nezar & Manuel Castells (eds.) (2002) *Muslim Europe or Euro-Islam. Politics, culture and citizenship in the age of globalization*. Lanham: Lexington Books.

Alvesson, Mats (2002) *Postmodernism and social research*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Alvesson, Mats & Sköldberg, Kaj (2000, 2009) *Reflexive methodology. New vistas qualitative research*. London: Sage Publications.

Amnesty International (2008) *Human rights abuses against the Kurdish minority*. London: Amnesty International Publications.

Anderson, Benedict (1991) *Imagined communities. Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London: Verso.

Anthias, Floya (2012) Transnational mobilities, migration research and intersectionality. *Nordic Journal of Migration Research* 2, 2, 102-110.

Anthias, Floya (2009a) Thinking through the lens of translocational positionality: an intersectionality frame for understanding identity and belonging. *Translocations: Migration and Social Change* 1, 4, 5-20.

Anthias, Floya (2009b) *Methodological nationalism versus methodological transnationalism: moving beyond the binary*. Paper in 6th Annual IMISCOE Conference, Stockholm 2009. <http://www.socant.su.se/polopoly_fs/1.30452.1320939981!/FloyaAnthiaspapers.pdf>. [Last visited June 2014].

Anthias, Floya (2006) Belongings in a globalising and unequal world: Rethinking translocations. In N. Yuval-Davis, K. Kannabiran & U. Vieten (eds.) *Sage studies in international sociology: the situated politics of belonging*. London: Sage publications, 17-32.

Anthias, Floya (2002) Where do I belong? Narrating collective identity and translocational positionality. *Ethnicities* 2, 491-514.

Anthias, Floya (1998) Evaluating 'diaspora': Beyond ethnicity? *Sociology* 32, 3, 557-580.

Anthias, Floya (1992) *Ethnicity, class, gender and migration: Greek Cypriots in Britain*. Aldershot: Avebury Press.

Aslan, Senem (2009) Incoherent state: the controversy over Kurdish naming in Turkey. Special Issue: State-Society Relations in the Southeast. *European Journal of Turkish Studies* 10, 2-17.

Ayyildiz, Esengül (2007) Talkootöistä kansalaistottelemattomuuteen. In A. Leinonen, T. Kojo, M. Nousiainen, S. Peltonen & L. Tainio (eds.). *Turkki. Euroopan rajalla?* Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 319-340.

Aziz, Mahir (2011) *The Kurds of Iraq. Ethnonationalism and national identity in Iraqi Kurdistan*. London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd.

Baser, Bahar (2012*) Inherited conflicts: spaces of contention between second-generation Turkish and Kurdish diasporas in Sweden and Germany*. Unpublished PhD, European University Institute.

Baser, Bahar (2011) Kurdish diaspora activism in Europe with a particular focus on Great Britain. Berlin: *Berghof Peace Support, Centre for Just Peace and Democracy*.

Bengio, Ofra (2005) Autonomy in Kurdistan in historical perspective. In B. O'Leary, J. McGarry & K. Salih (eds.) *The future of Kurdistan in Iraq*. Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 173-185.

Blunt, Alison & Dowling, Robyn (2006) *Home*. London: Routledge.

Brah, Avtar (1996) *Cartographies of diaspora: Contesting identities*. London: Routledge.

Brah, Avtar & Phoenix, Ann (2004) Ain't I a woman? Revisiting intersectionality. *Journal of International Women's Studies* 5, 3, 75-86.

Brannen, Julia (1988) The study of sensitive subject. *The Sociological Review* 36, 552-563.

Bredström, Anna (2003) Gendered racism and the production of cultural difference: media representations and identity work among 'immigrant youth' in contemporary Sweden. *Nordic Journal of Women's Studies* 11, 2, 78–88.

Brubaker, Rogers (2005) The 'diaspora' diaspora. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28, 1, 1-19.

Brubaker, Rogers & Cooper, Frederick (2000) Beyond 'identity*'. Theory and Society* 29, 1, 1-47.

Burgess, Robert (1984) *In the field: An introduction to field research*. London: Allen and Unwin.

Butler, Judith (2007) *Gender trouble*. New York: Routledge.

Castells, Manuel (1997) *The power of identity*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Clark, Julie Byrd (2009) *Multilingualism, citizenship and identity. Voices of youth and symbolic investments in an urban, globalized world*. London/New York: Continuum International Publishing Group.

Clarke, Kris (1999*) Breaking the bounds of bifurcation: the challenge of multiculturalism in Finnish vocational social care education*. Tampere: University of Tampere.

Coffey, Amanda & Atkinson, Paul (1996) *Making sense of qualitative data. Complementary research strategies*. Thousand Oaks California: Sage.

Crenshaw, Kimberlé (1991) Mapping the margins: intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Standford Law Review* 43, 6, 1241-1299.

Crenshaw, Kimberlé (1989) Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist policies. *The University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 139-167.

Cressey, Gill (2006) *Diaspora youth and ancestral homeland: British Pakistani/Kashmiri youth visiting kin in Pakistan and Kashmir*. Leiden: Brill.

Crul, Maurice, Schneider, Jens & Lelie, Frans (2010) *The European second generation compared. Does the integration context matter?* Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Crul, Maurice & Vermeulen, Hans (2003) The second generation in Europe. *International Migration Review* 37, 965–986.

Curtis, Andy (2005) *Nationalism in the diaspora: A study of the Kurdish movement*. The Netherlands: University of Utrecht.
<http://tamilnation.co/selfdetermination/nation/kurdish-diaspora.pdf>. [Last visited June 2014].

Dahinden, Janine (2012) Transnational belonging, non-ethnic-forms of identification, and diverse mobilities: Rethinking migrant integration? In M. Messer, R. Schroeder & R. Wodak (eds.) *Migrations: interdisciplinary perspectives*. Wien: Springer, 117-128.

Davies, Brownyn & Harre, Rom (1990) Positioning: The discursive production of selves. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 20, 1, 44-63.

Davis, Kathy (2008) Intersectionality as a buzzword. A sociology of science perspective on what makes a feminist theory successful. *Feminist theory* 9, 1, 67-85.

den Besten, Olga (2010) Local belonging and 'geographies of emotions': Immigrant children's experience of their neighborhoods in Paris and Berlin. *Childhood* 17, 2, 181-195.

Dyer, Richard (1997) *White*. London: Routledge.

Eliassi, Barzoo (2012a) *We Kurds did not come to Sweden to become Swedish but to continue being Kurdish*. Presentation at the 2nd Scientific World Kurdish Congress, October 11-15th, 2012, Erbil, Kurdistan.

Eliassi, Barzoo (2012b) Political terrains of writing belonging, memory and homeland. In M. Livholts (ed). *Emergent writing methodologies in feminist studies*. Routledge: New York/London, 83-98.

Eliassi, Barzoo (2010) *Stranger in my homeland: The politics of belonging among young people with Kurdish backgrounds in Sweden*. Östersund: Mid Sweden University.

Emanuelsson, Ann-Catrin (2008) 'Shall we return, stay or circulate?' Political changes in Kurdistan and transnational dynamics in Kurdish refugee families in Sweden. *Journal of Migration and Refugee Issues* 4, 3, 134-152.

Emanuelsson, Ann-Catrin (2005) *Diaspora global politics. Kurdish transnational networks and accommodation of nationalism*. Göteborg: Department of Peace and Development Research, Göteborg University.

Ergil, Doğu (2007) Kurdit ja valtio. In A. Leinonen, T. Kojo, M. Nousiainen, S. Peltonen, L. Tainio (eds.) *Turkki. Euroopan rajalla?* Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 264-296.

European Commission (2006) The cultural situation of Kurds. Report. *Committee on Culture, Science and Education*.
<http://www.assembly.coe.int/ASP/Doc/XrefViewHTML.asp?FileID=11316&Language=EN>. [Last visited June 2014].

Fangen, Katrine (2007) Breaking up the different constituting parts of ethnicity. The case of young Somalis in Norway. *Acta Sociologica* 50, 4, 401-414.

Fog-Olwig, Karen (2002) A wedding in the family: Home making in a global kin network. *Global Networks: A Journal of Transnational Affairs* 2, 3, 205–218.

Forsander, Annika (2004) Tekeekö työ oikeaksi suomalaiseksi? In T. Helne, S. Hänninen & J. Karjalainen (eds.) *Seis yhteiskunta – Tahdon ulos!* Jyväskylä: SoPhi, 195-215.

Fortier, Anne-Marie (2000) *Migrant belongings. Memory, space, identity*. New York: Berg.

Fortier, Anne-Marie (1999) Re-membering places and the performance of belonging(s). *Theory, Culture & Society* 16, 41–64.

Freedomhouse (2008) *Turkey in transit. Democratization in Turkey*. Budapest: Freedom House Europe.

Gergen, Kenneth J. (1999) *An invitation to social construction*. California: Sage Publications.

Glick Schiller, Nina & Green Basch, Linda & Szanton-Blanc, Cristina (1995) From immigrant to transmigrant: Theorizing transnational migration. *Anthropological Quarterly* 68, 1, 48-63.

Glick Schiller, Nina & Green Basch, Linda & Szanton-Blanc, Cristina (eds.) (1992) *Towards a transnational perspective on migration: Race, class, ethnicity, and nationalism reconsidered*. New York: The New York Academy of Sciences.

Grönfors, Matti (2001) Havaintojen teko aineistonkeräyksen menetelmänä. In J. Aaltola & R. Valli (eds.) *Ikkunoita tutkimusmetodeihin 1. Metodin valinta ja aineistonkeruu: virikkeitä aloittelevalle tutkijalle*. Jyväskylä: PS-kustannus, 124–141.

Gunter, Michael M. (2011) *Historical dictionary of the Kurds*. Lanham: Scarecrow Press, Inc.

Gunter, Michael M. (2007) *The Kurds ascending: The evolving solution to the Kurdish problem in Iraq and Turkey*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hall, Stuart (1999) *Identiteetti* (eds.) M. Lehtonen & J. Herkman. Tampere: Vastapaino.

Haikkola, Lotta (2012) *Monipaikkainen nuoruus. Toinen sukupolvi, transnationaalisuus ja identiteetit.* Helsinki: Sosiaalitieteiden laitos, Helsingin yliopisto.

Haikkola, Lotta (2010) Etnisyys, suomalaisuus ja ulkomaalaisuus toisen sukupolven luokittelussa. In T. Martikainen & L. Haikkola (eds.) *Maahanmuutto ja sukupolvet*. Helsinki: SKS, 219-238.

Harle, Vilho & Moisio, Sami (2000) *Missä on Suomi? Kansallisen identiteettipolitiikan historia ja geopolitiikka*. Tampere: Vastapaino.

Harney, Nicholas Demaria & Baldassar, Loretta (2007) Tracking transnationalism: migrancy and its futures. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 33, 2, 189-198.

Hassanpour, Amir (2012) The indivisibility of the nation and its linguistic divisions. Special issue: The Kurdish linguistic landscape: Vitality, linguicide and resistance (eds.) J. Sheyholislami, A. Hassanpour & T. Skutnabb-Kangas. *International Journal of Sociology of Language* 217, 49–73.

Hassanpour, Amir (1998) Satellite footprints as national borders: MED-TV and the extraterritoriality of state sovereignty. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 18, 1, 53-72.

Hassanpour, Amir & Mojab, Shahrzad (2005) Kurdish Diaspora. In M. Ember, C. L. Ember & I. Skoggard (eds.) *Encyclopedia of Diasporas. Part I. Immigrant and Refugee Cultures around the World*. Springer Science + Business Media, Inc., 214-224.

Hassanpour, Amir, Sheyholislami, Jaffer, Skutnabb-Kangas, Tove (2012) Introduction. Kurdish: Linguicide, resistance and hope. Special issue: The Kurdish linguistic landscape: Vitality, linguicide and resistance (eds.) J. Sheyholislami, A. Hassanpour & T. Skutnabb-Kangas. *International Journal of Sociology of Language* 217, 1-18.

Hautaniemi, Petri (2004) *Pojat! Somalipoikien kiistanalainen nuoruus Suomessa*. Helsinki: Nuorisotutkimusverkosto.

Hill Collins, Patricia (2000) *Black feminist thought. Knowledge, consciousness and the politics of empowerment*. New York: Routledge.

Hirsjärvi, Sirkka & Hurme, Helena (2008) *Tutkimushaastattelu: Teemahaastattelun teoria ja käytäntö*. Helsinki: Yliopistopaino.

Huddleston, Thomas, Niessen, Jan, Chaoimh, Eadaoin Ni, White, Emilie (eds.) (2011) Migrant Integration Policy Index III Finland. *Bruxelles: British Council & Migration Policy Group*. <http://www.mipex.eu/sites/default/files/downloads/suomi_abridged_migrant_integration_policy_index_mipexiii_2011_fi.pdf>. [Last visited June 2014].

Human Rights Watch (2012) *Time for justice. Ending impunity for killings and disappearances in 1990s Turkey*. The United States of America: Human Rights Watch. <http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/turkey0912ForUpload.pdf>. [Last visited June 2014].

Human Rights Watch (2004) *Claims in conflict. Reversing ethnic cleansing in Northern Iraq*, 16, 4. <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2004/iraq0804/iraq0804.pdf>. [Last visited June 2014].

Human Rights Watch (1991) *Human Rights World Report 1990 – Turkey*. <http://www.refworld.org/docid/467fca3ab.html>. [Last visited June 2014].

Huttunen, Laura (2004) Kasvoton ulkomaalainen ja kokonainen ihminen: Marginalisoiva kategorisointi ja maahanmuuttajien vastastrategiat. In A. Jokinen, L. Huttunen & A. Kulmala (eds.) *Puhua vastaan ja vaieta: neuvottelu kulttuurisista marginaaleista*. Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 134–154.

Huttunen, Laura (2002) *Kotona, maanpaossa, matkalla: kodin merkitykset maahanmuuttajien omaelämäkerroissa*. Helsinki: SKS.

Insel, Ahmet (2007) Kemalismi – huoli valtion eheydestä. In A. Leinonen, T. Kojo, M. Nousiainen, S. Peltonen & L. Tainio (eds.) *Turkki. Euroopan rajalla?* Helsinki, Gaudeamus, 121-135.

Institut kurde de Paris (Kurdish Institute of Paris) *Kurdish inhabited area*. Accessed at <http://www.institutkurde.org/images/cartes_and_maps/iraq_dissident_areas_1992.jpg>. [Last visited June 2014].

Iskanius, Sanna (2006) *Venäjänkielisten maahanmuuttajaopiskelijoiden kieli-identiteetti*. Jyväskylä: University Library of Jyväskylä.

Jaakkola, Magdalena (2009) *Maahanmuuttajat suomalaisten näkökulmasta. Asennemuutokset 1987-2007*. Helsinki: Helsingin kaupungin tietokeskus.

Jaakkola, Magdalena (2005) *Suomalaisten suhtautuminen maahanmuuttajiin vuosina 1987-2003*. Helsinki: Työministeriö.

Jacobson, Jessica (1997) Religion and ethnicity: Dual and alternative sources of identity among young British Pakistanis. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 20, 2, 238-256.

Jasinskaja-Lahti, Inga (2000) Psychological acculturation and adaptation among Russian-speaking immigrant adolescents in Finland. Helsinki: University of Helsinki.

Juhila, Kirsi (2004) Leimattu identiteetti ja vastapuhe. In A. Jokinen, L. Huttunen, A. Kulmala (eds.) *Puhua vastaan ja vaieta. Neuvottelu kulttuurisista marginaaleista*. Tampere: Tammer-Paino, 20-33.

Kasinitz, Philip, Waters, Mary, Mollenkopf, John & Anil, Merih (2002) Transnationalism and the children of immigrants in contemporary New York. In P. Levitt & M. Waters (eds.) *The changing face of home: The transnational lives of the second generation.* New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 96-122.

Kerkkänen, Heikki (2008) Kotouttaminen kulturisoivan biovallan käytäntönä. *Finnish Journal of Ethnicity and Migration* 3, 1, 21–32.

Keskinen, Suvi (2012) Limits to speech? The racialized politics of gendered violence in Denmark and Finland. *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 33, 3, 261-274.

Keskinen, Suvi (2011a) Troublesome differences – Dealing with gendered violence, ethnicity and race in the Finnish welfare state. *Journal of Scandinavian Studies in Criminology and Crime Prevention* 12, 2, 153-172.

Keskinen, Suvi (2011b) Women's rights, welfare state nationalism and violence in migrant families. In R. Thiara, M. Schroettle & S. Condon (eds.) *Violence against women and ethnicity: Commonalities and differences across Europe*. Leverkusen-Opladen: Verlag Barbara Budrich, 367-382.

Keskinen, Suvi (2009a) Pelkkiä ongelmia? Maahanmuutto poliittisen keskustelun kohteena. In S. Keskinen, A. Rastas & S. Tuori (eds.) *En ole rasisti, mutta… Maahanmuutosta, monikulttuurisuudesta ja kritiikistä*. Tampere: Vastapaino & Nuorisotutkimusseura, 33-45.

Keskinen, Suvi (2009b) 'Honour-related violence' and Nordic nation-building. In S. Keskinen, S. Tuori, S. Irni & D. Mulinari (eds.) *Complying with colonialism. Gender, race and ethnicity in the Nordic region*. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 257-272.

Keskinen, Suvi, Tuori, Salla, Irni, Sari & Mulinari, Diane (eds.) (2009) *Complying with colonialism. Gender, race and ethnicity in the Nordic region*. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited.

Khayati, Khalid (2008) *From victim diaspora to transborder citizenship. Diaspora formation and transnational relations among Kurds in France and Sweden*. Linköping: Linköping University.

King, Russell and Christou, Anastasia (2010) Cultural geographies of counter-diasporic migration: Perspectives from the study of second-generation 'returnees' to Greece. *Population, Space and Place* 15, 2, 103-119.

Kivisto, Peter (2001) Theorizing transnational immigration: a critical review of current efforts. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 24, 4, 549–577.

Korkiasaari, Jouni & Söderling, Ismo (2003) *Finnish emigration and immigration after World War II*. Turku: Institute of Migration.

Kreyenbroek, Philip (1991) *Kurds: A contemporary overview*. New York: Routledge.

Kvale, Steinar (1996) *InterViews. An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. California: Sage.

Kvale, Steinar & Brinkmann, Svend (2009) *InterViews. Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Küçükcan, Talip (1999) *Politics of ethnicity, identity and religion. Turkish Muslims in Britain*. London: Ashgate Publishing.

Lee, Raymond M. (1995) *Doing research on sensitive topics.* London: Sage.

Leinonen, Johanna (2012) Invisible immigrants, visible expats? Americans in Finnish discourses on immigration and internationalization. *Nordic Journal of Migration Research* 2, 3, 213–223.

Leinonen, Johanna & Toivanen, Mari (2014 forthcoming) Introduction to Special Issue: The 'visual lexicon' of belonging: researching and defining migrant visibilities. *Nordic Journal of Migration Research*, 4, 4.

Leitzinger, Antero (2008) *Ulkomaalaiset Suomessa 1812-1972.* Helsinki: East-West Books.

Lepola, Outi (2000) *Ulkomaalaisesta suomenmaalaiseksi. Monikulttuurisuus, kansalaisuus ja suomalaisuus 1990-luvun maahanmuuttopoliittisessa keskustelussa*. Helsinki: SKS.

Levitt, Peggy (2009) Roots and routes: Understanding the lives of the second-generation transnationally. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 35, 7, 1225-1242.

Levitt, Peggy & Glick Schiller, Nina (2004) Conceptualizing simultaneity: a transnational social field perspective on society. *International Migration Review* 38, 3, 1002-1039.

Levitt, Peggy & Waters, Mary C. (eds.) (2006) *The changing face of home: The transnational lives of the second generation*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Lincoln, Yvonna S. & Guba, Egon G. (1985) *Naturalistic enquiry.* Beverley Hills, California: Sage.

Loftsdóttir, Kristin & Jensen, Lars (eds.) (2012) *Whiteness and postcolonialism in the Nordic region. Exceptionalism, migrant others and national identities*. Farnham: Ashgate.

Lovell, Nadia (ed.) (1998) *Locality and belonging*. London: Routledge.

Ludvig, Alice (2006) Intersecting voices in a female narrative. *European Journal of Women's Studies* 13, 3, 245-258.

Lykke, Nina (2010) *Feminist studies: A guide to intersectional theory, methodology and writing.* London: Routledge.

Maasilta, Mari (ed.) (2012) *Maahanmuutto, media ja eduskuntavaalit.* Tampere: Tampere University Press.

Malkki, Liisa (1996) Speechless emissaries: refugees, humanitarianism, and dehistorization. *Cultural Anthropology* 11, 3, 377-404.

Mand, Kanwal (2010) 'I've got two houses. One in Bangladesh and one in London…everybody has': Home, locality and belonging(s). *Childhood* 17, 2, 273-287.

Martikainen, Tuomas (2013) *Religion, migration, settlement. Reflections on post-1990 immigration to Finland*. Boston: Leiden.

Martikainen, Tuomas (2011) *Suomi remix*. Helsinki: Like Kustannus Oy.

Martikainen, Tuomas (2009) The study of immigrant youth in Finland. Forum 21. *European Journal on Child and Youth Research* 4, 23-27.

Martikainen, Tuomas & Haikkola, Lotta (eds.) (2010) *Maahanmuutto ja sukupolvet*. Helsinki: SKS.

Martikainen, Tuomas & Tuula Sakaranaho & Marko Juntunen (2008) *Islam Suomessa: muslimit arjessa, mediassa ja yhteiskunnassa*. Helsinki: SKS.

Martin, Denis-Constant (1995) The choices of identity. *Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture* 1, 1, 5-20.

McCall, Leslie (2005) The complexity of intersectionality. *Signs: Journal of Women, Culture and Society* 30, 3, 1771-1800.

McDowall, David (1996) *A modern history of the Kurds*. New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd.

Middle East Watch (1993) *Genocide in Iraq. The Anfal campaign against the Kurds*. The United States: Middle East Watch.

Miles, Robert (1989) *Racism*. London: Routledge.

Nash, Jennifer C. (2008) Re-thinking intersectionality. *Feminist review* 89, 1-15.

Natali, Denise (2005) *The Kurds and the state. Evolving national identity in Iraq, Turkey and Iran.* New York: Syracuse University Press.

Nikunen, Kaarina (2011) Satellite living: transnational television and migrant youth in Finland. In E. Eide & K. Nikunen (eds.) *Media in motion: Cultural complexity and migration in the Nordic region*. Burlington: Ashgate.

Noble, Greg, Poynting, Scott & Tabar, Paul (1999) Youth, ethnicity and the mapping of identities: strategic essentialism and strategic hybridity among male Arabic-speaking youth in South-Western Sydney. *Communal/Plural* 7, 1, 29-44.

Pavlenko, Aneta & Blackledge, Adrian (2004) Introduction. In A. Pavlenko & A. Blackledge (eds.) *Negotiation of identities in multilingual contexts*. Great Britain: Cromwell Press Ltd., 1–33.

Portes, Alejandro & Rumbaut, Ruben G. (2001) *Legacies. The story of immigrant second generation*. California: University of California Press.

Portes Alejandro & Zhou, Min (1993) The new second generation: Segmented assimilation and its variants. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 530, 74-96.

Potter, Robert B. & Phillips, Joan (2006) Both black and symbolically white: The 'Bajan-Brit' return migrant as post-colonial hybrid. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 29, 5, 901-927.

Pyykkönen, Miikka (2007a) *Järjestäytyvät diasporat: etnisyys, kansalaisuus, integraatio ja hallinta maahanmuuttajien yhdistystoiminnassa.* Jyväskylä: University Library of Jyväskylä.

Pyykkönen, Miikka (2007b) Integrating governmentality. Administrative expectations for immigrant associations in the integration of immigrants in Finland. *Alternatives* 32, 4, 197-224.

Pyykkönen, Miikka (2005) Pyhiinvaeltajia, kotoutujia vai nomadeja: maahanmuuttajayhdistysten kolme diskurssia diasporisesta etnisyydestä. In S. Paasonen (ed.) *Aktivismi. Verkostoja, järjestöjä ja arjen taitoja*. Jyväskylä: Nykykulttuurin tutkimuskeskus, 108-136.

Raittila, Pentti (2004) *Venäläiset ja virolaiset suomalaisten Toisina. Tapaustutkimuksia ja analyysimenetelmien kehittelyä*. Tampere: Tampereen yliopisto.

Rastas, Anna (2012) Reading history through Finnish exceptionalism. In K. Loftsdóttir & L. Jensen (eds.) *Whiteness and postcolonialism in the Nordic region. Exceptionalism, migrant others and national identities*. Farnham: Ashgate, 89-105.

Rastas, Anna (2005) Racializing categorization among young people in Finland. *Young* 13, 2, 147-166.

Riessman, Catherine Kohler (1993) *Narrative analysis. Qualitative research methods series 30.* Newbury Park, California: Sage.

Rumbaut, Ruben G. (2004) Ages, life stages and generational cohorts. *International Migration Review* 38, 3, 1160-1205.

Rumbaut, Ruben G. (2002) Severed or sustained attachments? Language, identity, and imagined communities in the post-immigrant generation. In P. Levitt & M. C. Waters (eds.) *The changing face of home: The transnational lives of the second generation*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 43-95.

Ruohio, Heidi (2009) *Kansainvälisesti adoptoituna Suomessa. Ulkomailta adoptoitujen nuorten kokemuksia suomalaisuudesta ja erilaisuudesta*. Helsinki: Väestöliitto.

Ruusuvuori, Johanna, Nikander, Pirjo & Hyvärinen, Matti (eds.) (2010) *Haastattelun analyysi.* Tampere: Vastapaino.

Ryen, Anne (2004) Ethical issues. In C. Seale, G. Gobo, J. F. Gubrium, & D. Silverman (eds.) *Qualitative research practice*. London: Sage, 230-247.

Safran, William (1991) Diasporas in modern societies: Myths of homeland and return. *Diaspora* 1, 1, 83-99.

Saksela-Bergholm, Sanna (2009) *Immigrant associations in the metropolitan area of Finland: forms of mobilisation, participation and representation*. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press.

Saukkonen, Pasi (2013a) Maahanmuutto- ja kotouttamispolitiikka. In T. Martikainen, P. Saukkonen & M. Säävälä (eds.) *Muuttajat. Kansainvälinen muuttoliike ja suomalainen yhteiskunta*. Tallinna: Gaudeamus Helsinki University Press, 81-97.

Saukkonen, Pasi (2013b) *Erilaisuuksien Suomi. Vähemmistö- ja kotouttamispolitiikan vaihtoehdot.* Tallinna: Gaudeamus Helsinki University Press.

Sayyid, Salman (2000) Beyond Westphalia: Nations and diasporas – the case of Muslim Umma. In B. Hesse (ed.) *Un/settled multiculturalisms. Diasporas, entaglements, trasnruptions*. London: St. Martin's Press, 33-51.

Schneider, Jens, Fokkema, Tineke, Matias, Raquel, Stojčić, Snežana, Ugrina, Dušan & Vera-Larrucea, Constanza (2012) Identities: Urban belonging and intercultural relations. In M. Crul, J. Schneider & F. Lelie (eds.) *The European second generation compared. Does the integration context matter?* Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 285–340.

Sheffer, Gabriel (2003) *Diaspora politics. At home abroad*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sheyholislami, Jaffer (2011) *Kurdish identity, discourse and new media*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Sheyholislami, Jaffer (2010) Identity, language and new media: the Kurdish case. *Language Policy* 9, 289–312.

Skrbiš, Zlatko, Baldassar, Loretta & Poynting, Scott (2007) Introduction – Negotiating belonging: Migration and generations. *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 28, 3, 261-269.

Skutnabb-Kangas, Tove & Fernandes, Desmond (2008) Kurds in Turkey and in (Iraqi) Kurdistan: A comparison of Kurdish educational language policy in two situations of occupation. *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 3, 1, 43-73.

Somers, Margaret R. (1994) The narrative constitution of identity: a relational and network approach. *Theory and Society* 23, 605-649.

Somers, Margaret R. & Gibson, Gloria D. (1994) Reclaiming the epistemological 'other': narrative and the social constitution of identity. In C. Calhoun (ed*.) Social theory and the politics of identity*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 37–99.

Somerville, Kara (2008) Transnational belonging among second generation youth: Identity in a globalized world. Special issue: Youth and Migration (ed.) A. Singh. *Journal of Social Sciences* 10, 23-33.

Squire, Vicki (2009) *The exclusionary politics of asylum*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Statistics Denmark (2013) Immigrants and their descendants, year 2013. <www.dst.dk/en>. [Last visited June 2014].

Statistics Finland (2013a) Immigration and emigration by country of exit and entry and by age, sex and nationality 1987-2013; Language according to age and sex by region 1987-2013. <www.stat.fi>. [Last visited June 2014].

Statistics Finland (2013b) Background country and origin according to age and sex by region, year 2013. <www.stat.fi>. [Last visited June 2014].

Statistics Finland (2001) Background country and origin according to age and sex by region, year 2013. <www.stat.fi>. [Last visited June 2014].

Statistics Norway (2013) Immigrants and Norwegian-born to immigrant parents, year 2013. <http://www.ssb.no/en>. [Last visited June 2014].

Statistics Sweden (2013) Foreign-born persons in Sweden by country of birth, age and sex, year 2013. <http://www.scb.se/>. [Last visited June 2014].

Staunaes, Dorthe (2003) Where have all the subjects gone? Bringing together the concepts of intersectionality and subjectification. *NORA* 2, 11, 101-110.

Stoetzler, Marcel & Yuval-Davis, Nira (2002) Standpoint theory, situated knowledge and the situated imagination. *Feminist theory* 3, 3, 315-333.

Säävälä, Minna (2008) How do locals in Finland identify resident foreigners? *Finnish Yearbook of Population Research* 43, 115–130.

Toivanen, Mari (2014e forthcoming) The visual lexica of (national) belonging and non-belonging in the accounts of young people with migrant background in Finland. Special issue: The "visual lexicon" of belonging: researching and defining migrant visibilities (eds.) J. Leinonen & M. Toivanen. *Nordic Journal of Migration Research*, 4, 4.

Toivanen, Mari (2013) *Kotona Turussa ja Suomessa? Kurdinuorten neuvottelua kuulumisesta ja identiteeteistä. Tutkimuskatsauksia*, Turun kaupunki, 7/2013 (*At home in Turku and in Finland? The negotiations of belonging and identities among young Kurds*, Research Report, City of Turku).

Tsagarousianou, Roza (2004) Rethinking the concept of diaspora: mobility, connectivity and communication in a globalised world. *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture* 1, 1, 52-65.

Tuomi, Jouni & Sarajärvi, Anneli (2009) *Laadullinen tutkimus ja sisällönanalyysi*. Helsinki: Tammi.

Tuori, Salla (2009) Postcolonial and queer readings of 'migrant families' in the context of multicultural work'. In S. Keskinen, S. Tuori, S. Irni & D. Mulinari (eds.) *Complying with colonialism. Gender, race and ethnicity in the Nordic region*. Farnham: Ashgate, 155-171.

Tuori, Salla (2007) Cooking nation: Gender equality and multiculturalism as nation-building discourses. *European Journal of Women's Studies* 14, 1, 21-35.

Uçarlar, Nesrin (2009) *Between majority power and minority resistance: Kurdish linguistic rights in Turkey*. Lund: Lund University.

Vali, Abbas (2011) *Kurds and the state of Iran. The making of Kurdish identity*. London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd.

Vali, Abbas (1998) The Kurds and their "others": fragmented identity and fragmented politics. *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle-East* XVIII, 2, 82-95.

Van Bruinessen, Martin (2000) *Transnational aspects of the Kurdish question. Working paper*. Florence: Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, European University Institute.

Van Bruinessen, Martin (1999a) *The Kurds and Islam. Working paper 13*, Islamic Area Studies Project, Tokyo, Japan. <http://www.hum.uu.nl/medewerkers/m.vanbruinessen/publications/Kurds_and_Islam.htm>. [Last visited June 2014].

Van Bruinessen, Martin (1999b) *The Kurds in movement: Migrations, mobilisations, communications and the globalisation of the Kurdish question. Working Paper 14*, *Islamic Area Studies Project,* Tokyo. <http://www.hum.uu.nl/medewerkers/m.vanbruinessen/publications/Kurds_in_movement.htm>. [Last visited June 2014].

Van Bruinessen, Martin (1992) *Agha, shaikh and state. The social and political structures of Kurdistan*. New York: Zed Books Ltd.

Van Bruinessen, Martin (1988) Between guerrilla war and political murder: The Worker's Party of Kurdistan. *Middle East Report* 153, 40-46.

Vertovec, Steven (2009) *Transnationalism*. New York: Routledge.

Vilkama, Katja & Yousfi, Saara (2010) Integration policies and legislation in Finland. In R. Andersson, H. Dahlmann, E. Holmqvist, T. Kauppinen, L. Magnusson Turner, H. Skifter Andersen, S. Söholt, M. Vaattovaara, K. Vilkama, T. Wessel & S. Yousfi (eds.) *Immigration, housing and segregation in the Nordic welfare states*. Helsinki: Helsinki University Print, 232-239.

Wahlbeck, Östen (2005) Kurds in Finland. In M. Ember, C. L. Ember & I. Skoggard (eds.) *Encyclopedia of diasporas. Immigrant and refugee cultures around the world*. Springer Science + Business Media, Inc., 1004-1010.

Wahlbeck, Östen (2003) Mångkulturalism i Finland – en kritisk literaturöversikt. *Sociologi* A, 532. Turku: Åbo Akademi University.

Wahlbeck, Östen (1999) *Kurdish diasporas. A comparative study of Kurdish refugee communities*. London: Macmillan Press.

Weinberg, Darin (2008) The philosophical foundations of constructionist research. In J. Holstein & J. Gubrium (eds.) *Handbook of constructionist research*. New York: Guilford Press, 13-39.

Wimmer, Andreas & Glick Schiller, Nina (2002) Methodological nationalism and beyond: nation-state building, migration and the social sciences. *Global Networks* 2, 4, 301-334.

Yildiz, Kerim (2007) *The Kurds in Iraq. Past, present and future.* London: Pluto Press.

Yildiz, Kerim & Taysi, Tanyel B. (2007) *The Kurds in Iran. The past, present and future*. London: Pluto Press.

Yousfi, Saara & Vilkama, Kaisa (2010) Regional settlement patterns and migration dynamics among immigrants in Finland. In R. Andersson, H. Dahlmann, E. Holmqvist, T. Kauppinen, L. Magnusson Turner, H. Skifter Andersen, S. Söholt, M. Vaattovaara, K. Vilkama, T. Wessel & S. Yousfi (eds.) *Immigration, housing and segregation in the Nordic welfare states*. Helsinki: Helsinki University Print, 240-255.

Yuval-Davis, Nira (2011) *The politics of belonging. Intersectional contestations*. London: Sage Publications.

Yuval-Davis, Nira (2010) Theorizing identity: Beyond the 'self' and 'other' dichotomy. *Patterns of Prejudice* 44, 3, 261-280.

Yuval-Davis, Nira (2006a) Belonging and the politics of belonging, *Patterns of Prejudice* 40, 3, 197-214.

Yuval-Davis, Nira (2006b) Intersectionality and feminist politics. *European Journal of Women's Studies* 13, 3, 193-209.

Yuval-Davis, Nira (1997) *Gender & nation*. London: Sage Publications.

Zeydanlıoğlu, Welat (2012) Turkey's Kurdish language policy. Special issue: The Kurdish linguistic landscape: Vitality, linguicide and resistance (eds.) J. Sheyholislami, A. Hassanpour & T. Skutnabb-Kangas. *International Journal of Sociology of Language* 217, 99-125.

Zeydanlıoğlu, Welat (2009) Torture and turkification in the Diyarbakir military prison. In W. Zeydanlıoğlu & J. T. Parry (eds.) *Rights, citizenship & torture: Perspectives on evil, law and the state.* Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary Press, 73-92.

Zeydanlıoğlu, Welat (2008) "The White Turkish Man's Burden": Orientalism, Kemalism and the Kurds in Turkey. In G. Rings & A. Ife (eds.) *Neo-colonial mentalities in contemporary Europe? Language and discourse in the construction of identities*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 155–174.

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX I – THE ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS

APPENDIX II –INTERVIEW STRUCTURE

APPENDIX III –INTERVIEW STRUCTURE ON POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Appendix II – Interview structure

1. **Background information:**
   - Age, place of residence, country of birth, the age at arrival to Finland, the duration of stay in Finland, first experiences and memories prior to the departure, during the journey and the settlement to Finland

2. **Experiences at school and language learning**
   - Starting the school in Finland, settlement process
   - Intercultural relations at school and outside school
   - Kurdish language maintenance at school and the learning of the Finnish language
   - Difficulties encountered

3. **Family relations and the use of language**
   - Maintaining the acquired languages (Kurdish, but also including Turkish, Farsi and Arabic)
   - Use of language in different situations and meanings attached to language use
   - Marriage, future spouse (or current) and children in terms of language use
   - Family relations and possible intergenerational negotiations

4. **Transnational relations**
   - Participation in the activities of the Kurdish community
   - Contacts, ties and visits to the region of Kurdistan and the Kurdish diaspora elsewhere
   - The significance of religious/cultural practices in everyday life
   - The possibility of return migration

5. **Belonging and identification**
   - Self-identification
   - Identification by the surrounding environment
   - Citizenship and meanings attached to it
   - Understanding of home and belonging

6. **Future**
   - Future goals and ambitions
   - Educational and professional aspirations
   - Eventual migration to another city/country

Appendix III – Interview structure on political participation

1. Background information:

- Age, place of residence, country of birth, the age at arrival to Finland, the duration of stay in Finland, first experiences and memories prior the departure, during the journey and the settlement to Finland, parents’ political background

2. Political activism

- Participation and joining a political organisations or associations
- Details on the association/party, its agenda, membership structure, scope of influence, transnational connections
- Personal role within the association/party, the forms of activities and the level of activity

3. Transnational contacts

- Family participation and political background
- Other Kurdish associations/parties in Finland and in the Kurdish diaspora. The links and activities with other associations/parties
- Meanings attached to political activism
- Other transnational contacts to Kurdistan
- The role of the social media and technological tools

4. Citizenship

- Current citizenship status
- The meanings attached to it or to the lack of it

5. Belonging

- The relationship between political activism and a sense of ”Kurdishness”
- Meanings attached to association/party membership
- The meanings attached to home and homeland
- Homeland political activism in the future
- Eventual return migration and other forms of political involvement