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HOMING DESIRE AT THE JUNCTURE OF PLACE AND TRANSNATIONAL SPACES:
The Case of Young Kurds in Finland

Abstract

Transnational connections and attachments fostered by migrants' offspring between different geographical localities have introduced new dynamics that must be considered in determining how identity formation relates to place. Raised in a transnational field, the way members of the generation-in-between develop a sense of belonging puts into question the centrality of territoriality in understanding the meanings of home and homeland. This paper examines the (digital) transnational ties among young Kurds in Finland and how territorial and non-territorial frames of reference feature in their narratives. The data for this paper derive from interviews conducted with 23 young adults of Kurdish origin currently residing in Finland. Herein we make use of four of these interviews to illustrate in ideal-typical form the variety of ways that young adult members of this diaspora community forge their own identities. The findings indicate that transnational ties represent a form of cultural continuity with one's past in the homeland, while simultaneously raising fundamental issues about what it means to call Finland home.

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1   Introduction

Transnationalism, according to a growing consensus among immigration scholars, is not a new phenomenon. On the contrary, it has been a rather pervasive feature of migratory movements during the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries. However, the abundant evidence of migrants' continuous cross-border ties in the past stands in contrast to the relative novelty of transnational theorisation. With the emergence of the transnational migration studies in the 1990s, scholars have increasingly paid attention to migrants' ties, connections and attachments that transcend nation-states' borders. Simultaneously, they have argued against the nation-state-centred prism of considering individuals' experiences and attachments as contained within and conditioned by the nation-state (see Wimmer & Glick Schiller 2002). Indeed, one of the central questions in the theorisations of migrant transnationalism seems to be to what extent territories defined in terms of their political manifestations as nation-states are significant determinants for individuals to index their feelings of belonging and home.

The transnational turn in migration studies is often associated with an appreciation of globalisation processes and technological developments in the realms of communications and transportation that have been credited with enhancing migrant connectivities (see Vertovec 2009). On the other hand, an increasing body of research suggests that the nation-state still continues to play an important role in conditioning and shaping migrants' transnational practices, attachments and belongings (Harney & Baldassar 2007; Kivisto 2001). For instance, the possession of new technologies, devices or Internet services or simply having basic access to the Internet still remains determined and conditioned by what has been dubbed the digital divide. Nevertheless, what makes the situation for contemporary migrants distinctive is that the capacity to maintain transnational ties is facilitated by air travel and by a variety of communication linkages, including the telephone, television and various forms of computer-mediated communication. While living and in various ways participating in the society of settlement, events in the society of departure permeate into the everyday lives of migrants, particularly through the use of digital media and online social networks. This prompts the question of how home and belonging become constructed betwixt geographical distance and social proximity, the latter to some extent being facilitated by digital connectivities and increased air travel.

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In this study, we wish to raise questions about and problematise the centrality of territoriality in the understandings of belonging, home and homeland through the narrations of young Kurds, who belong to the generation-in-between. With this term (see Alitolppa-Niitamo 2004), we refer to individuals who have migrated as children and in their teens, and thus who have been raised and grown to adulthood in the societies of settlement—in this case in Finland. More specifically, this paper looks at what sort of transnational ties the younger generations of the Kurdish diaspora in Finland foster, and how having been raised in a transnational living environment informs their understandings of home and belonging. On the other hand, the paper explores the role (digital) connectivities and aspirations of mobility play in the formation of transnational ties and belongings. In the following sections, we will present a conceptual framework and then discuss the (mediatised) space of the Kurdish diaspora before proceeding to methodological considerations and analysis.

2 Transnational field and diaspora space

Whether transnational ties and attachments still matter beyond the first generation of migrants has been the centre of many debates (Portes & Rumbaut 2001). With regard to this, it has been suggested that the transnational dimension that possibly characterises the lives of migrants' children also needs to be accounted for. It has been argued that migrants' children are embedded in *transnational social fields* containing multipolar geographical reference points and in settings that "reference the homeland ideologically, materially and affectively each day" (Levitt 2009: 1231). Levitt (ibid.) considers migrants' offspring 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". Anthias (2012: 104) presents similar arguments suggesting that migrants' offspring can be embedded in two different social milieus that contain competing value systems, different sets of social relations, expectations and norms. This paper aligns with such theorisation and approaches the generation-in-between Kurds as being raised within a transnational field and being embedded in multiple transnational sets of social networks and spheres.

This paper is situated between the theoretical fields of transnationalism and diaspora studies. On the one hand, the younger generation of Kurdish background is approached as being embedded within a transnational field that involves possible visits to Kurdistan, regular contacts with family members and involvement in Kurdish communities in Finland. The emergence of Kurdish communities is directly linked to the formation of the Kurdish diaspora in different European societies, including Finland. From this point of view, the diasporic past, the current situation of Kurdish minorities in the Middle East and the continuous "state of statelessness" of Kurdistan provide yet another set of dynamics to consider in the conceptualisations of home and homeland. What constitutes home in diaspora? Where is it located and how does this relate to feelings of belonging?

Minoo Alinia (2004) approaches diasporas as not so much based on the territorial notion of belonging and being, but instead considers them as socio-cultural processes that contain a de-territorial dimension. Similar to her understanding of diaspora spaces, diasporans' relationship to the perceived home(land) is understood as containing both territorial and symbolic dimensions. In the political projects of belonging, claims to homeland can become closely constructed in relation to the notion of territoriality. Therefore, it is

imperative to distinguish longing for a homeland from the "homing desire" denoting merely a wish to have a home, as articulated by Avtar Brah (1996: 194). For her, home refers to a "mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination" and a "place of no return". Therefore, home is not necessarily a place to return to, but yet resides in the diasporic imagination and draws from common experiences and memories that are employed to construct collective belonging within the diasporic space. Belonging is, hence, understood as a "personal, intimate, feeling of being 'at home' in a place (place-belongingness)" as well as a discursive source that relates to collective projects of belonging (Antonsich 2010: 644; Yuval-Davis 2006).

Besides being raised within a transnational field, young Kurds' articulations of home and belonging are approached through the notion of diaspora spaces denoting a de-territorial dimension of home-making. Diaspora spaces are also de-territorial in the sense that members of diaspora communities maintain virtual contacts to their relatives and family members living in the societies of departure in cyberspace. The following section addresses the mediatised diasporic space of Kurdish communities in Finland.

3 The (mediatised) diaspora space of Kurdish communities in Finland

In the 1970s, new Kurdish diasporic movements took off as a result of political instabilities in the region of Kurdistan (Hassanpour & Mojab 2005). The first Kurdish populations to settle in Northern Europe (particularly in Sweden) date back to this period. The numbers of Kurds in Finland rapidly increased in the 1990s due to the escalating violence in Turkey, Iraq and Iran (Wahlbeck 2005). After arrival, the Kurdish diasporans were rapidly organised into ethnic organisations and political associations (see Wahlbeck 1999). According to Statistics Finland 2013, the population of Kurdish speakers in Finland totalled around 10,075 individuals and a very large share of them belonged to the second generation and the generation-in-between.

The increased immigration flows of the 1990s coincided with the advent of the information society when Finland became part of the global telecommunications economy. During this decade, Finland joined the other Nordic countries in becoming a nation of immigration, rather than emigration. Similar to other members of their age group, young Kurds growing up and receiving an education in Finland during this time not surprisingly became rather savvy users of the new telecommunications technologies. This allowed them to remain in constant contact with Kurds living throughout Finland and the rest of the diaspora. This is particularly true of contacts with Kurdish residents in other Nordic countries, but also elsewhere throughout Western Europe.

This ready access to communications technologies provides Kurds in Finland, at least potentially, with an enhanced ability to connect to Kurds in Iran, Iraq or Turkey. In this regard, one could point to increased access to transnational satellite and digital television channels as well as broadband Internet connections. The reality on the ground points to a somewhat less connected world, for although the situation has improved in Iranian and Iraqi Kurdistan, Internet connectivity still seems to be hindered by infrastructure problems characterised by frequent power outages and very slow connection speeds. Moreover, government surveillance remains a factor limiting open access to Kurds who remained in their respective homelands, a situation that is especially evident in Iran.

Nevertheless, the exiled spaces for the Kurdish diasporans have become bases for political endeavours with more freedom to

express a sense of "Kurdishness". Arriving in the 1990s, the Internet and its innumerable communication platforms introduced new dynamics for the manifestation of politicised projects of belonging—the Kurdish political projects aimed at homeland sovereignty were extended to cyberspace. This has taken place through initiatives that would otherwise face constraints in the societies of origin, with the notable exception of Iraqi Kurdistan. Lacking a Kurdish- language communications infrastructure in the societies of origin, diasporic Kurds have taken advantage of the mediated space to claim a Kurdish identity and raise awareness about the Kurdish situation (see Hassanpour 2003). For instance, both the scope and accessibility to Kurdish language(s), considered a central construction block of Kurdish identity, has been magnified by satellite television and the Internet that display various platforms of interaction in the Kurdish dialects (Sheyholislami 2010). The most striking example is probably the creation of the first Kurdish satellite television, MED-TV, in the early 1990s, the functioning of which was early on prevented by Turkey and through diplomatic pressure directed at Belgium, Britain and Germany where MED-TV stations were located (Hassanpour 2003). The mediated space has thus created new contours for constructing a sense of "Kurdishness" that transcend nation-states' border, but remain to some extent informed by political complexities.

Besides the political projects of belonging that are constructed online, digital transnational settings offer new venues to remain connected with relatives and family members in the Kurdistan region. The tools of information and communications technology (ICT) can be employed strategically by transnational young Kurds, thus enabling them to construct a sense of belonging to a community through (online) transnational practices (see Nikunen 2011). Jowan Mahmod (2011) has studied the online articulations of belonging among young Kurds in Sweden and in the UK. She demonstrates how young Kurds debate and negotiate various topics ranging from political issues to constructing a sense of "Kurdishness" through Kurdish-language use to more practical day-to-day matters related to gender and sex roles. The Internet can, therefore, be considered a platform to strengthen (collective) identities but also a platform to negotiate intergenerational conflicts, particularly for the younger generations.

Furthermore, the mediatised diaspora spaces with greater connectivities to the homeland can also facilitate mobility in the form of transnational visits, circulation or even return. Since the establishment of Kurdish de facto rule in Northern Iraq in 1990 and particularly after the end of Baathist rule in 2003, many Kurdish families have returned to visit family members and relatives who were still living in the region. Regardless of whether the plans to return would ever be actualised, the political developments in Iraqi Kurdistan have introduced a situation that may encourage and enable long-anticipated dreams of participating in the reconstruction and nation-building of Kurdistan. The existing social and family networks in which the members of the generation-in-between are embedded, both in Finland and in Kurdistan, potentially play a central role in this regard, resulting in transnational circulation between the two regions. In her study of Kurds in Sweden, Emanuelsson (2008) argues that close relatives bear a significant influence on the issue of considerations of an eventual return. Patterns of mobility and transnational circulation should therefore be considered in relation to how diasporans are embedded in particular social networks, both in the societies of departure and reception (Wahlbeck 1999: 180). Such networks are often maintained through different forms of digital connectivities.

4 The methodological design

The data for the larger project that this paper is part of consist of 23 interviews conducted with generation-in-between Kurds living in Finland who belong to neither the first nor second generation.[1] The *generation-in-between* Kurds refer to those individuals who arrived in Finland during childhood or their early teens, and who are currently in their twenties. The so-called second generation youth, born in Finland, will reach adulthood within a few years (Statistics Finland 2013). The generation-in-between Kurds are at the point in their lives when they will soon be graduating from vocational or higher education institutions, and thus are at the cusp of making future career—and settlement—plans.

The respondents who took part in this study had arrived in Finland during their childhood or adolescent years, with the age range between 1 and 16 years. They had resided in the country for durations that ranged between 10 and 20 years. Mostly, they had emigrated from the region of Kurdistan in Iraq, Iran or Turkey during either the 1990s or the early 2000s, whereas some had been born in refugee camps in Arabic-speaking regions of Iraq. At the time of data collection (2009–2011), the interviewees were between 19- and 28-years-old and lived in two Finnish cities: Helsinki and Turku. Furthermore, they all maintained some level of transnational ties, which were manifested not only in ongoing engagements with residents of one of the various regions of Kurdistan, but also with Kurds living in Germany, Sweden, Norway, Australia and the United States.

The larger research project of which this paper is a part was undertaken by the lead author. It employed two types of qualitative methodology: semi-structured interviews and participant observation. This paper makes use of both sets of data. The interview themes included the subjects' use of ICT-tools and digital media,[2] the nature of their transnational ties, and the role such ties played in shaping the interviewees' sense of personal identity and group belonging, which included exploring their thoughts on return migration and future career aspirations. Observational data were collected concerning cultural and political events within the Kurdish community, and focused on how digital tools were used for transmission and information-sharing purposes. The interviews were conducted in the Finnish language, as the research participants, having grown up in Finland, were bilingual in both Finnish and Kurdish. All interviews with the exception of one were individual interviews.

For the first stage of analysis, three themes were employed to narrow down the transcribed data set. These included *mobility* (transnational visits, ties, aspirations of return migration, future plans); *connectivity* (digital media use, social networks); and *identity* (home, belonging). In the second stage of analysis, we employed thematic analysis to extract identifiable themes from the data that were narrowed down on the basis of the pre-mentioned themes. A draft case report of each individual interview was constructed. The analysis was then undertaken as a multiple case study (see Yin 2003), and four cases were selected for discussion below since they reflect something of the range of options available to young Kurds engaged in a general process of identity work. As a result, in the second stage of analysis, two major themes emerged: the significance of social networks and ties in the constructions of home and the distinction between de-territorial and territorial notions of home and homeland. These are illustrated in the following narrations.

5   Case studies

We present four case studies: those of Rojan, Zagros, Azad and Shilan.[3] The four individuals were born within the nation-states of Iran or Iraq,[4] and either in the Kurdish- or Arabic-speaking areas, before relocating to Finland with their families. These four cases demonstrate some of the commonalities and differences as to how young Kurds foster a variety of transnational ties, practices and attachments. The cases also shed light on how they reflect on home, belonging, mobility, connectivity and territoriality as well as how the transnational aspect is infused with the technological reality they are embedded in. What sorts of (digital) transnational connections do young Kurds desire and foster? What is the content of the narrative accounts they present on such themes as mobility and identity in terms of both the societies of departure and settlement?

Rojan

Rojan was born in Iraqi Kurdistan in the 1990s, after which her family migrated to an African country due to political instability in the Kurdish region and lived there for several years before moving to Finland. At the time when the family arrived in Finland, she was under the age of 10. She participated in a 1-year Finnish-language course, and then joined a mainstream class at school. She also received an education in the Kurdish language, one which was provided in a Kurdish dialect different from hers. She learned Arabic at home. At the time of the interview, she was completing her secondary school education.

Before settling down in their current place of residence, Rojan's family moved within the city they were living in to be closer to other Kurdish families who over the course of several years had converged on one particular neighbourhood. The family ended up in a neighbourhood with other Kurdish residents, yet in one where the majority of neighbours were Finns. Thus, ethnic concentration did not mean residential segregation. She explains that once this move had taken place, she and other family members got to know other Kurdish families, made friends and "made their own society, or [our] own place here". This immersion in an ethnic network in the receiving society was a manifestation of the efforts of Rojan's parents to pursue strategies that resulted in taking part in efforts to transplant aspects of homeland social practices and cultural values in the Finnish context. As suggested by transnational scholars such as Levitt (2009), the transplanted community can play a crucial role in the socialisation of young people with migrant backgrounds. While they are being socialised into the everyday social world of the receiving society, particularly as a result of involvement in the public school system, they are at the same time being socialised into the normative framework and the social practices of the society of departure. Surrounded by Finnish society, even when feeling isolated from it, young people grow increasingly accustomed to it, often without fully realising how "integrated" they have become. This poses a challenge for the viability of second generation transnationalism, which needs exposure to the homeland culture and society to make possible a parallel ongoing connection to it.

That connection was made possible in no small part by the utilisation of ICTs. Regarding the use of satellite channels, Rojan was an avid user.[5] She pointed out that she rarely watches Kurdish-language channels, and instead favours Arabic-speaking channels because due to her socialising with other Arabic speakers she speaks Arabic better than Kurdish. In terms of social media, Messenger and Facebook provide her with a fast and routine way to remain in touch with family members still living in Kurdistan. In addition, taking advantage of enhanced air travel options to the homeland, Rojan's family visits Iraqi Kurdistan quite often, as most relatives of the extended family still live there. Rojan describes visiting Kurdistan as an essential part of not forgetting her own culture:

> *When we go there, we spend a lot of time with our relatives and the environment is like, you understand better…That's why we go there, so that we wouldn't forget, what our parents always want to teach us that in our culture you stick together no matter how far [away] your family is.*

At the time of the interview, she was particularly excited about her family's plans to go to Iraqi Kurdistan during the month of Ramadan, since according to her the atmosphere would be very different from what she had experienced in Finland, particularly so for the celebration of Eid al-Fitr (the day that marks the end of Ramadan). To some extent, it would appear that she feels quite positive about her relationships with people in Kurdistan and with the society as a whole, an attitude largely shaped by her ongoing involvement with a familiar network of social relations. However, Rojan is acutely conscious of the difficulties that return migration might entail. Nevertheless, she believes that return migration to Iraqi Kurdistan with the whole family might be a possibility, but only after she has completed her university-based education and only if the return was undertaken with her family. She would not contemplate returning alone.

Rojan's transnational existence opens up a variety of options for her as she defines her personal identity. When discussing how to identify herself, aspects of ethnicity, citizenship, religion and gender surface. In providing an account of how she views herself, Rojan asserts that she sees herself as "a normal Muslim youth" who feels like she belongs to Finland. The fact that she has become a citizen of Finland is not conceived in merely instrumental terms, but rather has a deeper meaning for her. At the same time, she stresses her allegiance to Islam in a nation that is largely Christian (even if to a large extent secular) and at a time when anti-Muslim sentiment in Europe is high. In this regard, it is worth noting that Rojan opted to stress her religious identity and not her ethnic identity. In part, this may be due to the fact that she does not possess strong Kurdish-language skills. In part, it may reflect an effort to distance herself from more political definitions of self.

When asked to elaborate on her feelings of belonging, she provided a lengthy account that detailed her friendship and family networks in the Finnish city where she dwells, and talked about her relationships with those who share her world views, particularly on matters of religion. Rojan contends that she harbours a deep attachment towards Kurdistan, but also to the Kurdish community in Finland. But what she seems to mean is less Kurdistan or a community writ large, but instead the Kurdish people she knows. She identifies multiple reference points in depicting what she considers to be home, which is defined perhaps less in terms of the geography of particular places than in terms of the social relations she is embedded in. Besides enhancing the possibilities for physical mobility across nation-states' borders, the possession of Finnish citizenship provides a justification for belonging to Finland, which is valued because it is a place that can guarantee security and the possibility, economically speaking, of the good life. She has clear ambitions of becoming a doctor in Finland, and then perhaps to return to Kurdistan with her family.

In Rojan's case, the potential for physical mobility seems, therefore, to be understood in relation to the family unit towards

which she expresses her strongest sense of belonging. A sense of home becomes constructed through the local and transnational social and religious networks she is embedded in.

Zagros

Zagros was born in the 1980s in Iranian Kurdistan from where his family first moved to Iraqi Kurdistan, and stayed there for several years before moving to Turkey. After having received asylum in Finland, Zagros's family moved there in the late 1990s. Zagros participated in a Finnish-language course for half-a-year, after which he entered public school at the sixth grade level, encountering an immersion into Finnish society. As with Rojan, his formative years working through the Finnish school system served to integrate him in many ways into the receiving society. His family, too, had satellite television, which included Middle-Eastern channels. In attempting to be informed about what is happening in the homeland, he follows the Kurdish-language channels. Nonetheless, he admits that most of his television viewing involves watching Finnish-language programmes. Besides Iranian and Iraqi Kurdistan, Zagros's family has close relatives living in Sweden and Germany whom the family members frequently visit. Zagros has visited Iraqi Kurdistan once since his family migrated from there, and recalls how it felt very familiar despite the passage of time. The trip that took place during the post-Saddam era evoked numerous childhood memories and permitted the renewal of some old friendships and family ties. His narration of the travel suggests how the technological reality infuses with the transnational space he is embedded in:

I use the Internet everyday. You cannot live without the Internet nowadays, except once when I visited Northern Iraq, Kurdistan. I stayed as far away from the Internet as possible, and then found myself in a situation that the thought of coming from Finland and having lived there for a decade no longer crossed my mind. Like I forgot it, because I was so adapted to it without the Internet, because I didn't watch Finnish-language programmes, just Kurdish and then met with the relatives…There I was able to be without it, but not here in Finland. There I just wanted to spend time with the relatives, and I went online to check the emails, Facebook and all that stuff once a week. It was probably the longest time in my life without the Internet.

Social networking tools are used for maintaining sustained contact with diasporic Kurds, but for young Kurds during their visits in Kurdistan they also function as a mode of communication with friends in Finland. On the other hand, such tools are not as useful in maintaining contact with those remaining behind in Iran. For instance, Zagros noted that in Iranian Kurdistan Facebook is not that commonly in use and that various restrictions and the pervasive reality of state censorship hinder communication and travel.

In contrast to Rojan, Zagros claims that the sense of being Kurdish is his strongest personal identification though according to him it has never prevented him from becoming enthusiastic about Finnish culture and customs. The identification with Kurdistan as his homeland seems to stem to a large extent from the fact that it is a nation without a state, which he reads as a powerful indication of a longstanding and unresolved historical injustice. It should be noted that this view was a recurring theme among many of the project's 23 interviewees. Home seems to entail multiple meanings for Zagros due to the fact that he had lived in several different locales in both Kurdistan and Finland:

When I talk about 'home', I say that I visit Iraqi Kurdistan, because we lived there. Iranian Kurdistan is where I come from; I was born there so that is a home as well. And now I have a third home in Finland. So you can have several homes, each has good memories, good sides.

As with many Kurdish refugees, Zagros's family lived in northern Finland before migrating south, and he refers to the particular city where he first became acquainted with Finland as his hometown due to memories he carried away from there. At the same time, memories of life in Kurdistan also formed a central construction block of belonging. In fact, Zagros could remember very little of life in Iran; it was his experience as a refugee that constituted his primary pre-migration memories. This was not untypical. Some of the interviewees who had been born in refugee camps in the Arabic-speaking region of Iraq and who had never even visited the Kurdish-speaking areas nevertheless depicted Kurdistan as their homeland. Later on in the interview, Zagros specified that he differentiated between "home" and "homeland", home being the current place of residence that you are familiar with and where you operate:

If I would go to Europe, I say that I will go home to Finland. When going to Kurdistan, I say that I visit Kurdistan, that I visit my homeland. Rarely would I say that I visit home, but that I visit [my] homeland.

His is an instance of an expansive and fluid sense of home. Using the distinction Jan Willem Duyvendak (2011: 8–10) makes between universalistic and particularistic definitions of home, Zagros's narrations of home would indicate the former. For him, homeland referred to the place of memories, origin and continuity in the sense of existing social relations with relatives living there. It is a place you visit, not a place where you are currently anchored. In this sense, home is the "lived experience of locality" and homeland is understood as a place of diasporic imagination (see Brah 1996: 192). For Zagros, Finnish citizenship provided a localised membership category entailing both emotional attachment and a practical dimension:

When I received Finnish citizenship, and because I have lived so long in Finland, I am now a Kurd of Finland…It has the kind of meaning that even though I feel that I am Kurdish and will never call myself a Finn, but still I am the citizen of this country.

Besides enabling greater physical mobility for Zagros, Finnish citizenship also entailed an emotional relationship to the country of residence. Among other interviewees, however, the distinction was not usually this clear-cut. Finally, he expressed his aspirations to take advantage of the language skills and cross-cultural knowhow to work in favour of Kurdistan's development after graduation, although in the meanwhile remaining in Finland part of the year. In short, he contemplated the possibility of transnational circulation.

Zagros's case shows evidence of the multiplicity of ways young members of this diaspora community understood home and homeland. Rojan's case highlighted the significance of social networks in constructions of home and belonging. In Zagros's case, Finnish citizenship denotes a level of civic belonging to the country, whereas the very nation-statelessness of Kurdistan underlined the understanding of homeland. This was also visible in Azad's narration.

Azad

Azad's parents fled from Iranian Kurdistan to a refugee camp in an Arabic-speaking region in Iraq, where he was subsequently born in the mid-1980s. He had started his primary education in a Farsi-speaking school in Iraq, his parents making this choice with the idea that the family might eventually return to Iran. After a time, his schooling continued in Kurdish-language classrooms as the family dropped its plans to return. He finally finished elementary school in an Arabic-language institution as no other language option was available for the last classes he was enrolled in. The family moved to Finland in the early 2000s when Azad was in his teens. He participated in a Finnish-language course, and the following year entered a Finnish high school. Azad's mother tongue is the Sorani dialect of Kurdish, but reflecting his educational background, he follows news online in several languages. He has never visited the Kurdistan region, but still claims to feel a strong connection to it. This is further strengthened by his participation in a diasporic political organisation through which Azad believes he can contribute to the Kurdish cause.

When asked about homeland and belonging, Azad explains in considerable detail his emotional attachment to the homeland, associating this attachment to the concept of honour and the essence of one's being:

> *Even if my homeland would be Somalia, there is no food right now and people are dying, still it's an honor to be a human…. Human is human with honor. Without it, you are nothing, an animal. At least to me, it is like this. Homeland is everything…If someone says that I am a Finn, it tells a lot, that he comes from a Nordic country, Scandinavia; it tells about his culture, so it is like, how could I say it, like a person's distinctive characteristic. I don't have it.*

The sense of defining oneself in terms of "Kurdishness" and commitment to Kurdistan seems to be constructed in contrast to a sense of non-belonging to Finland—or at least not fully belonging as a "Finn" would belong. Azad's dilemma can be summarised as follows. He is a permanent resident but not a citizen of Finland, though he is eligible to apply for citizenship. He contends that he is not seen (nor does he appear to see himself) as "Finnish". His future might provide him with a civic attachment to Finland, but he is permanently precluded from being seen as an ethnic Finn. At the same time, his Kurdish ethnic identity cannot be paired with Kurdish citizenship. For this reason, Azad evinces strong emotions towards Kurdistan, evoking the theme of the injustice of its statelessness:

> *I am twenty-five years old now and I have no country's citizenship. Nobody, except Finland, is willing to give me citizenship. Iraq says I am Iranian, Iran says I am an Iraqi. This is a game, of people's lives and honor. Honor is much more important to me. I would rather die than live like this.*

Belonging linked to citizenship rights is a recurring theme in Azad's narrative accounts. When asked about whether he would like to apply for Finnish citizenship, he observes that it can provide him with a practical or instrumental political identity, one that prevents him from being a stateless person. The meaning Finnish citizenship seems to carry for Azad is resonant with Mavroudi's (2008: 11) notion of "pragmatic citizenship", which refers to citizenship that is "sought, acquired and negotiated for pragmatic and strategic reasons and can result in dual or multiple feelings of belonging and attachment as well

as de/re/-territorialisation". On the other hand, Azad is sensitive about the potential for marginalisation, for being perceived to be a second class citizen on the basis of his darker complexion, which would prevent him from being accepted as a "genuine Finn". It is evident that he accords great significance to citizenship as a membership category and that he fosters a strategic approach to Finnish citizenship, with a powerful emotional attachment towards Kurdistan.

The sense of belonging and the sense of being anchored to a locality also have consequences for how Azad perceives his prospects for mobility. According to him, planning a future similar to other young Finns is not possible, since he has no homeland where a meaningful life can be constructed. In speculating about the possibility of return migration, he argues that Iraqi Kurdistan would not be a realistic option due to the fact that Iraqi Kurds are "culturally different" from Iranian Kurds—a statement similar to those of young Kurds in Sweden who took part in Barzoo Eliassi's research (2010: 152). For some interviewees in this study, who originally came from Iranian Kurdistan, migration to Iraqi Kurdistan's autonomous region is eventually possible. Azad's case shows that the sense of national belonging and legal memberships associated with having a homeland still bear great significance in terms of self-definition.

Shilan

Shilan migrated to Finland with her family from Iraqi Kurdistan in the early 2000s. At the time of the interview, she was completing a double degree. She speaks the Sorani dialect of Kurdish, but mixes Finnish with it while speaking with her siblings and friends. She has visited her relatives in Iraqi Kurdistan several times, as well as in Sweden, although she stays more in touch with her relatives in Sweden than in Iraqi Kurdistan. Shilan follows Kurdish-speaking news and websites daily, but she also watches Finnish television channels. She observed that her visits to Iraqi Kurdistan have helped to improve her Kurdish-language skills, while at the same time permitting her to remain connected with her culture.

When asked about self-identification and belonging, she first defined herself as being proudly Kurdish, but then further specifies:

> *I am Kurdish, but you cannot say that I am entirely Kurdish, because I have lived here…Sometimes it feels like I don't belong to either one. At times I am Kurdish, at times I am Finnish… When I am here, I think a lot about Kurdistan, that I wish I were there, and when I am there, I miss Finland. It is actually pretty difficult. So I don't really know myself to which one I belong to.*

Shilan's portrait of being caught between two worlds is a paradigmatic instance of what Abdelmalek Sayad (2004: 58) described as being "Torn between two 'times,' between two countries, and between two conditions…". It is an expression of the dual ambivalence of the immigrant experience (Kivisto & La Vecchia-Mikkola 2013). On the one hand, the fact that her formative years have been shaped in Finland has resulted in her feeling to some extent to be a part of that society. Meanwhile, her sense of "Kurdishness" stems from being embedded in the diasporic Kurdish community in Finland, which includes actively participating in Kurdish events, in addition to visiting the family's networks in both Sweden and Kurdistan. Connectivity to the local Kurdish community provides the means for cultural production. On the other hand, Shilan reveals that maintaining her Kurdish identity requires considerable negotiation in coming to terms with the norms and moral codes

within the community, particularly regarding girls dating, going out and consuming alcohol.

The tension between belonging and non-belonging to the Kurdish community is narrated in relation to everyday encounters and how to position oneself towards interlocutors. For instance, the aspect of protecting one's reputation in the face of the community permeates the way Shilan operates in transnational space. She points out that she behaves in a more "Kurdish" or more "Finnish" way depending on the situation (see Toivanen 2014). In this regard, it is interesting to note that unlike the three other respondents, she has chosen not to use social networking tools, such as Facebook and Skype. Her rationale for this decision is that she avoids discussing her thoughts and actions in such a public forum, where the discrete worlds she occupies can get mixed up together, and thus might put her reputation at risk:

MT: I was just wondering if you are using Facebook and Skype and that kind of things…
Shilan: It depends on the person, I don't personally have them.
MT: Yeah, some young people use them…
Shilan: Yes, I am a bit far away from all that. But sometimes I think, whether I am a bit different than others, but it's like, even if I want to do something, but then I think of my, I don't want to ruin my reputation, so I'd rather not do it.

When asked if she ever entertains thoughts of an eventual return migration, she replied that while she would consider it to be a possibility, she nonetheless thinks such a move is quite unlikely. According to her, coping with her limited Kurdish-language skills would hamper her professional life and the very different cultural and economic environment of Iraqi Kurdistan weighs on her decision, an implicit acknowledgement that she finds many things about Finland to be attractive. As a matter of fact, her ponderings are similar to those of some Kurdish families in Sweden, as demonstrated in Emanuelsson's study (2008), who weigh on the one hand their material needs in the form of comfortable and secure living in Sweden and on the other hand social needs in the form of warmer and broader social networks in Kurdistan.

At the same time, she stresses the fact that she could import her professional knowhow to work in favour of "her own people". When talking about the possibility of return, Shilan puts a great emphasis on the pre-existing networks of relatives in Iraqi Kurdistan. For this reason, only migration to her city of origin would be a possibility for her, instead of somewhere else in the Kurdistan region, hence pointing again to the centrality of pre-established relations in determining potential patterns of mobility and transnational circulation. But perhaps more likely in her case is remaining in Finland while continuing to be involved in transnational relations with Kurds in the homeland and throughout the diaspora. Shilan's case shows evidence of the ambiguities and feelings of in-betweenness that being raised in a transnational social field with different social norms and expectations might entail.

6 Conclusions

This paper contributes to the existing research literature that deals with the understandings of home and belonging among the growing generations of migrant background in a diaspora setting. The findings show that the generation-in-between Kurds' constructions of home and belonging are to some extent underlined by the diasporic notions of territoriality. This is not surprising as such since Kurds are also a stateless people with a political cause. However, we maintain

that approaching diaspora as de-territorial, socio-cultural processes in contrast to territorially bound understandings better captures the diaspora setting in which the young Kurds are embedded and allows a better understanding of how transnational activities enfold in young Kurds' everyday lives in Finland and how they construct feelings of belonging and home.

Indeed, the four cases reflect the fact that these young adult members of the Kurdish diaspora are located to various degrees and with somewhat different emphases (e.g., religion versus politics) in Kurdish transnational networks. At the same time, they have been socialised in fundamental ways into Finnish society while remaining at some level outsiders due to the fact that they are often not deemed to be "Finnish", insofar as that term has an ethnic rather than civic meaning. This betwixt civic belonging and ethnic non-belonging to Finland resonated in the ways these four participants made sense of their relationship to Kurdistan and to "Kurdishness". Yet, all four expressed an interest in maintaining involvement in transnational networks in the diaspora setting, and wanted to find a way of defining their identities that make room for both Finnish and Kurdish elements.

This paper offers two central findings to understanding the diaspora setting containing both territorial and de-territorial elements that young Kurds are embedded in. The first one is the significance of the established networks and relationships in their varied constructs of home. The existing social networks provide a frame for young Kurds to attach belonging to particular localities, which are not framed as nation-states, yet situated within them. Home is located in the very same place where their families reside. On the other hand, the social networks seem to have an influence on the planned trajectories of mobility in Finland, and might eventually have an impact on expected transnational mobility patterns.

The second finding indicated that young Kurds attach different meanings to the notions of "home" and "homeland". These notions entail both symbolic and more concrete dimensions as well as territorial and de-territorial elements to which one's belonging is indexed. Home is considered to be located in Finland, whereas Kurdistan represents the homeland. Indeed, it seems that home signifies the physical location where lived experiences occur and where different forms of personal agency involving planning for the future are exhibited. In contrast, homeland evokes a symbolic place of origin that entailed memories and emotional attachments—and one that becomes constructed within a transnational and intensively mediatised diaspora space.

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Notes

1. The generation-in-between is distinguished from members of the second generation born in the country, where their parents (first-generation migrants) originally settled.
2. This includes social networking sites and tools, use of blogs, online forums, chat rooms and satellite television channels.
3. The names used are pseudonyms and certain identifiable characteristics have been blurred to maintain the anonymity of respondents for ethical purposes.
4. We chose to use the regional indicators of Iraqi Kurdistan and Iranian Kurdistan as frequently employed by the interviewees. Some interviewees employed the terms Southern Kurdistan (Iraqi Kurdistan), Eastern Kurdistan (Iranian Kurdistan) and Northern Kurdistan (Turkish Kurdistan), thus explicitly questioning the political authority of the Iraqi, Iranian and Turkish nation-states in the region of Kurdistan (see Eliassi 2010: 221).
5. Immigrants with Middle-Eastern origins seem to be the largest immigrant consumer group of satellite channels in Finland in order to view homeland television via satellite (Maasilta et al. 2008).

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