LONGING TO RETURN AND SPACES OF BELONGING.

IRAQIS' NARRATIVES IN HELSINKI AND ROME

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ABBREVIATIONS

ANCI National Association of Italian Municipalities

CIR Italian Council for Refugees

CPA Coalition Provisional Authority

ECRI European Commission against Racism and Intolerance

IOM International Organisation for Migration

KDP Kurdish Democratic Party

PKK Kurdistan Workers Party

PNA National Project on Asylum – Italy

PUK Patriotic Union of Kurdistan

SPRAR Protection System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees

UNHCR United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

1   Introduction

1.1   Background of the study

This research examines how Iraqis negotiate belonging and return in Helsinki and Rome. With the help of the concept 'longing to return', I analyse how the idea of return is understood by the Iraqis and how it is shaped by experiences of integration in the countries of settlement and transnational practices. When I embarked on my research journey, I did not have any idea of the complexity of the events caused by more than thirty years of wars on the Iraqi people living abroad. My knowledge about Iraq and Iraqi culture was connected to my art and history studies at school or articulated by news media during the beginning of the Gulf War. I was twelve when the Gulf War started in 1990. I remember that one night my father woke me up. The TV was on but the volume was turned down. He asked me to comment on what I was seeing. The screen was completely green and there were "lights" popping up. I thought they were just fireworks. Suddenly, my father corrected me by saying that at that exact moment a war was starting in Iraq. Those "lights" were missiles. Since that day, the war became a media event with high international recognition. Images of destruction were accompanied by the exodus of people with images of Iraqi refugees and asylum seekers searching for help and security around the world.

When I started to think about my research project in 2005/2006, I tried to reunite both my personal and scientific interest. I tried to balance my interest in Iraqi culture, history, and refugee studies with a more objective curiosity towards a country, which had experienced loss because of wars, embargoes, and destruction, but also hope for a new future after the capture of Saddam Hussein in December 2003. The changing situation in Iraq, characterised by the end of the dictatorship, aroused my interest in initiating a comparative study, which would not only unearth differences in Iraqis living in different European countries, but also give these people the opportunity to discuss issues related to their diasporic experiences and traumatic past. The end of the regime of Saddam Hussein for many Iraqis in Helsinki and Rome also meant that there was an entirely new cyber and real *space* to talk about the past experiences of wars and violence without the fear of persecution for themselves and their families. For the first time, people were able to tell their painful stories after decades of silencing, creating stronger bonds between the diaspora and their country of origin which in the past were *almost* cut off from each other.

At the time of my empirical exploration during 2007 and 2008, I noticed that even when questions of returning to Iraq were not openly asked, Arab Iraqis and Iraqi Kurds presented their views. I interpreted this as a way to stress that the situation, despite the severe condition of Iraq, was changing. Peoples' transnational activities in fact

increased, reinforcing membership and challenging loyalties. Virtual and physical communication became more regular and questions of a possible return started to rise in light of new circumstances. After more than 30 years of war, embargoes, and *invasions,* all troubles seemed finally to be over. The paths of wars left space for the path to hope. International organisations such as the IOM and the UNHCR started to support returnees and refugees' repatriation[1] by providing assistance and protection *in loco*. Discussion of how to build democracy in Iraq, followed by worldwide demonstrations[2], especially between January and April 2003 against the American invasion, aimed to sensitise public opinion and enhance a new phase of freedom for the Iraqi people and their country. These demonstrations, which also continued in the following years, aimed at examining and discussing democracy as a value, which could not be implanted by external forces, but constructed from the inside and by the Iraqi people. On many occasions, as a student but also as an active participant, I took part in activities and demonstrations where freedom of expression and respect for human rights were raised. Different themes such as the responsibility of the EU countries, political and social reconstruction and perspectives on return were discussed.

After the fall of Saddam Hussein and during the subsequent American operation, some Iraqis, especially from the neighbouring countries, came back to Iraq with the trust that the process of pacification could follow the installation of a new stable government. However, new waves of sectarian violence by the end of 2006 and the beginning of 2007 jeopardised the country in safe and unsafe areas and challenged refugees' plans of return. In the post invasion years, the gradual fragmentation of the Iraqi society emerging through a new social and geopolitical context, followed by the re-emergence of tribalism and religious conservatism, became a fertile ground for the rise to power of former alienated actors and group. The collapse of the Iraqi state in 2003, contributed to new forms of alienation among the ethnic and religious minorities and division among the main communities like Shia, Sunni, and Kurds. Shia resurgence replaced the Sunni minority, controlled the political and economic process of inclusion, and exacerbated the ethno-sectarian divisions (cf. Juntunen 2011).

Moreover, the period after Saddam's reign has been characterised by the difficulties to cope with a system where corruption and patronage were hard to eradicate in

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1 The UNHCR Global Report (2003) estimates that in 2003, 50,500 Iraqi returnees came back from Iran to Iraq. In January 2004, 112,000 people between returnees and refugees came back (UNHCR Global Report 2004); the UNHCR Global Appeal (2006: 4) reports that 250,000 returnees came from abroad and other 46,000 refugees from Palestine, Turkey, Iran, and Syria. The number should increase if the high number of stateless people between half a million and two million is considered (Ibid.). The UNHCR Global Report (2007) summarises that the explosion of violence in 2007 made it difficult to estimate the number of returnees to Iraq.
2 Demonstrations took place worldwide. In particular, in March 2003, after the American invasion, many civilians organized protests and demonstration in the US, Germany, Italy, France, the U.K., Japan, Turkey, the Netherlands, Argentina, Egypt and many other countries. Brussels was one of the cities where antiwar peace protests were organised starting in 2003. In that city, where I lived at that time, I met some politically active Iraqis who recognised Brussels as a strategic place since, institutionally, it represents the political heart of Europe.

society. According to an UNHCR survey[3], most people who actually returned to the capital of Baghdad from neighbouring countries, between 2007 and 2008, had mixed feelings about their return. In fact, 61% of these returnees regretted returning to Iraq due to increasing insecurity. Other factors such as economic difficulties and absence of public services were also reasons for lamenting the return and possibly considering a new asylum application process.

Today, 4.7 million Iraqis have been uprooted as a result of the crisis in Iraq. While over 2 million are living as refugees in neighbouring countries, 2.7 million are internally displaced inside Iraq[4]. Even if the situation of economic and politic stability is improving in the country, in comparison with 2006 and 2007, the idea of a permanent return to Iraq, followed by the renunciation of a refugee status for example, is not an easy decision. The primary reasons for a permanent return to Iraq from neighbouring countries, as monitored by UNHCR/Iraq (July 2011) shows that the reasons were: improved security/political situation in the location of return (64%), negative situations in countries of asylum[5] (25%), improved access to employment in Iraq (4%), lost hope of being resettled in a country of asylum (3%), and other (2%).

This research analyses the question of return with reference to first generation Iraqis living in Finland and Italy. These two countries have developed different reception and integration policies and practices, which inevitably impact Iraqis' lives and perception of return. Despite the fact that few refugees permanently returned to Iraq from abroad, the issue of return was usually a pivotal topic during our discussion. At the same time, talking about return also provided information about Iraqis' transnational lives and their integration processes in the countries of settlement. The research focuses on two localities in the countries of settlement, the metropolitan areas of Rome and Helsinki. This dissertation explores the following research questions:

1. *How is the idea of return to Iraq perceived by Iraqi migrants living in Helsinki (Finland) and Rome (Italy)?*
2. *How do the studied Iraqi migrants describe experiences of integration to Helsinki and Rome, and does this affect their aspirations of return?*
3. *What are the implications of the idea of return for the studies of Iraqi migrants' integration and transnational practices, and vice versa?*

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3 2,353 Iraqis from a total of 537 families were interviewed either by phone or in face to face interviews. The focus was mainly on those Iraqis who returned to the city of Baghdad and in particular to the district of Resafa and Karkh. For more information: UNHCR poll (2010) "Iraqi refugee regret returning to Iraq, amid insecurity". Available at: http://www.unhcr.org/4cbd6c9c9.html (Retrieved on 25/10/2011).

4 "Iraq: Latest return survey shows few intending to go home soon". UNHCR spokesperson Jennifer Pagonis. Available at: http://www.unhcr.org/4816ef534.html (Retrieved 25/07/2012).

5 For example: lack of jobs, no savings, etc.

1.2   From the myth of return to the longing to return

Literature on migrant and refugee return to the "homeland" has basically addressed two different circumstances: return as an imaginative process and the reality of post-return. In the first case, several social scientists have critically adopted the concept of the myth of return (Anwar 1979; Al-Rasheed 1994; Israel 2002; Zetter 1999; Graham and Khosravi 1997 cf. chapter two). According to the literature, the myth of return implicates a two-way analysis focusing on the relationship between the refugee and homeland *and* the refugee and the receiving society (Ibid.). The concept of the "myth of return" is a theoretical construction which investigates how the desire to return is created and maintained by the refugee during his/her exile (Al Rasheed 1994). In general, a dichotomous division between past and present constructs the idea of return, intending to rebuild the life of a migrant as it was before the event that led to the exile. From the refugee's point of view the myth of return is interpreted as a desire or wish to return, which remains a thought but is never put into action (Al-Rasheed 1994; Zetter 1999). The myth of return is, therefore, the answer to the dilemma of being part of two contexts and values which may not only be different, but also contradictory (Al-Rasheed 1994: 200). In other studies, (Cohen & Gold 1997; Mohseni 1994) the existence of the myth of or desire to return impairs the integration process of the migrant into the receiving society, while creating a collective social fantasy.

Furthermore, studies on diaspora have addressed the question of return with more or less emphasis, as I will explain in the next chapter. It seems that the theme of return has been a difficult subject, differentiating those considering the return to their homeland as a natural action (cf. Safran 1991; Cohen 1997) and others who, considering the increasing role of transnational networks, critically approach the theme of return. For example, several social scientists have employed diaspora discourses for tackling other topics such as hybrid identity formation and the question of de-territorialisation by recognising that not all the transnational communities necessarily have a desire to return (Clifford 1994).

In the second case, the reality of post-return has been addressed. Some studies have stressed the practical situations of post-war returnees and their re-integration phases (Allen & Morsink 1994; Dona' 1995; Black 2001; Huttunen 2010; Black and Koser 1999). For example, Black and Koser (1999: 6-7) summarise by stating that for many refugees repatriation does not always coincide with homecoming. For example, people may return to their homeland, but not physically to the home, properties, villages, towns or cities since they have been destroyed. For instance, Hammond (1994: 229 in Allen & Morsink 1994) shows, in her study on Tigrayan returnees from a refugee camp in Sudan to Ethiopia after 1993, how resettlement happens in a new area of the country of origin. On that occasion, the return was not totally perceived as a homecoming but as a situation where identity, culture and home were basically reconstructed in a new socio-economic environment. In another study, Black & Koser (1999: 9) argue that a situation of homecoming may be problematic when ethnic identities do not correspond

to national identities; or when returnees need to reintegrate into radically different political-economic systems from those that existed before going into exile (Rogge 1994: 36). Moreover, the return is not always a pleasant experience, for example as a result of a deterioration of conditions in the country of asylum, which may not correspond to the improvement of conditions in the home country (cf. Rogge in Allen & Morsink 1994: 6).

New transnational perspectives have enriched the debate on the practices of return (Al Ali & Koser 2002; Eastmond 2006), recognising how complex and multifaceted the return actually is (Muggeridge & Dona' 2006; Stefansson 2006). For example, Stefansson (2006) shows how return happens in his study of displaced Bosnians of diverse ethno-national background (repatriates, transnational refugees, and IDPs) to the town of Banja Luka in Bosnia Herzegovina. By doing so, he explains how the property restitution process and the sense of home are perceived by different ethnic groups. For instance, while Serbs wished to settle permanently in Banja Luka for reasons that had to do with better livelihood prospects and with ethno-national identity, younger, "transnational" Bosniak refugees use them as summerhouse residences (Stefansson 2006: 131). On the other hand, elderly repatriated Bosniaks, relying on pension, remittances and repatriation and reintegration grants, did not have to struggle with looking for employment, but simply enjoyed their return to Bosnia (Ibid.).

Likewise, several social scientists have stressed the importance of the temporality and circularity of return movements (Portes et al. 1999; Faist 2010) seen as a transitory phases within a transnational perspective. Moreover, discussions on transnational and sustainable return (Black & Gent 2006; Eastmond 2006) have stressed the sometimes conflicting circumstances of the reintegration of a migrant into his/her home country and community by considering repatriation policies in a more transnational framework (Eastmond 2006; Huttunen 2010). Transnationalism is, therefore, approached as a fundamental process for establishing a gradual social reconstruction (Eastmond 2006). Transnational return, occurring at a slow pace, allows for the (re)creation of social relations, identities and cultural meanings in new circumstances, through which people in a post-war setting (re)connect to a particular place and community as "home" (Ibid., 2006: 143).

However, what happened to the concept of the myth of return? Why did it disappear in the current sociological debate? It seems that since the 2000s, interest in the myth of return simply faded away. I argue that the impact of transnationalism may be an explicatory cause. My study of Iraqis in Finland and Italy belongs to the first group of studies on imagining return, but also intersects with experiences of post-war (temporary) return. I will try to explain how, regarding the Iraqi people, the myth of return has been altered during these years of transformation in Iraq. The concept that I named the *longing to return* exceeds the mere imaginative return, as accounted by the myth of return. The longing to return, due to the increasing use of communication and transportation, provides a more flexible and fluid analysis than what has been called the myth of return in sociology. In the new era, when people have become more

connected and spaces have become more accessible, the return acquires a more fluid status.

1.3 Return and transnationalism

The UNHCR recognises three different solutions when considering forced migrants: voluntary repatriation, which implies voluntary return to the country of origin; permanent stay in the country of settlement by integrating into the society; or resettlement in a third country. In the 1990s, the spread of studies on transnationalism played an important role not only in the analysis of migration dynamics in different countries, but also in bringing new reflection on the issue of migrants' and refugees' return. Some studies (Eastmond 2006; Cassarino 2004; 2008; Huttunen 2010) have in fact highlighted how transnational practices have facilitated peoples' return and reintegration in their countries. Others have stressed that usually a permanent return is immediately preceded by temporary returns or visits back home (Duval 2004). In brief, return and transnationalism are viewed as interconnected processes. Cassarino (2008: 95) adopts the concept of return preparedness, which basically refers to the accumulation of different kinds of tangible and intangible resources needed to secure one's own return home. Therefore, the return is not an imminent and straight choice characterising the end of a migration project, but a decision gained in the light of a transnational frame.

Likewise, Huttunen (2010) examines the case of a returnee couple to Bosnia, after a period of refugee exile in Finland. Her multi-sited research reveals how refugees transnationally lived in two different countries while searching for the "good" between the two. In particular, the return to Bosnia symbolises a reclaiming of the lost sociality or good social relations and a place in the community (Huttunen 2010: 55). In her study, return visits to Bosnia underpin transnationalism by emphasising the value of the sustainability of return. In her conclusion, Huttunen (2010: 57) argues that both discussions on return and repatriation policies should incorporate a transnational approach, which reflects how nowadays refugees manage to live across diverse localities. Moreover, the life of a refugee should be highly contextualised both politically and historically in order to understand how the return is perceived (Ibid.).

Similarly, Eastmond's study (2006: 157) on one and the same refugee community moving from Bosnia to Sweden and vice versa, elucidates how transnational ties provide both a sense of security and access to resources, especially when dealing with returnees. For instance, a migrant with Swedish citizenship will always have the possibility to migrate back to Sweden, if his/her return strategy fails.

1.4 Return and integration

Classical theories on integration/assimilation assume that the longer a migrant stays in the receiving country, the more the process of assimilation limits the likelihood of his/her return to his/her original homeland. Conversely, returnees are those who failed to be integrated into the receiving society and who maintained regular and strong transnational connections back home. Despite the fact that this study focuses on the intention of return rather than its post return reality, the *longing to return* seems to provide important information on peoples' integration practices and impediments.

In this study, "integration" is defined directly and indirectly from the informants' standpoint. As I will explain, immigrants and Iraqi refugees have been viewed as active and liable interlocutors capable of providing personal definitions of the term. Iraqis' paths to integration are not just accounted in terms of employment or language achievements. Social and relational needs are also mentioned by the informants for leading a normal life. As will be explained, (good) integration practices in the receiving society seem to not influence Iraqis perceptions of return to Iraq. Migrants' integration in the receiving societies is not accounted as a deterrent to peoples' intentions to return. In most of the cases, personal motivations such as the past memories of violence and the current structural conditions of instability in Iraq seem to highly inhibit people's perspective of return. Contrarily, integration and return are in fact reconciled and desired at the same time. Integration experiences in Finland and Italy are accounted as a collection of resources (e.g. skills, network, languages, work, education etc.) to be used, once and if, people move back to Iraq (or elsewhere) in the future.

The results of this study indicate that integration symbolises the Iraqi migrants' willingness to firstly "survive" and then to "succeed" in a new country. Life in a different society may create doubts and uncertainty in the migrant's mind due to a new set of rules, values and behaviours. However, the circulation of news and the improvement of connection between Italian, Finnish and Iraqi societies have also altered the meaning of integration. Unlike the Iraqi refugees of the 1990s, those who migrated in the 2000s seem to have a clearer idea of how to escape from Iraq, where to hide, settle and resettle. In this regard, the perception of *potential integration* in a new country begins even before embarking on the journey.

Participation in the receiving society is recounted by referring to past experiences of inclusion/exclusion in Iraqi society. Tribalism and ethnic differentiation underwent a revival under Saddam Hussein when the state and its institution began to collapse (Sassoon 2009:14). In this regard, questions of *disintegration* in Iraqi society, the absence and the lack of institutions and the rampant violence, forced people to find new points of reference such as their community and ethnic groups. Iraqis' stories of settlement in Europe reflect the contradictory experiences between the past and present. As stressed by my informants, once settled in Finland and Italy, the necessity to get acquainted with the receiving society has been described as a gradual process

characterised by regaining trust in authorities and institutions while coping with traumatic past events. Thus, integration is a complex process, which occurs in a particular local setting in the present, but is nourished by past memories.

In this regard, longing to return and reflecting on past and present experiences seem to clarify how Iraqis approach integration. It sheds light on both a sense of emancipation and the pain of being uprooted. Furthermore, the longing to return can act as a cohesive force, reinforcing kinship and community ties with the country of origin. Thus, the longing emerges as linked to refugees' past experiences, memories, time, ethnic group affiliation and relationship with the country of origin (and the meaning of home(s)).

Analytically, the longing to return stresses three different temporal coordinates: past, present and future. While looking at the past, longing to return allows for a political, historical and cultural contextualisation of the lives of Iraqis prior to their exile. In the present, the longing to return sheds light on the actual conditions faced by Iraqis in the settlement process in Finland and Italy and their transnational connections. Thus, the past, extrapolated by the discussion of longing to return, represents the power that reinforces peoples' lives abroad. In this framework, longing to return acts as a powerful force capable of accompanying and guiding the migrant during his/her exile. Longing to return is a type of *strategy* used as a means of survival in a new country by shaping needs and ambition. Thus, Italy and Finland represent *second chances* for Iraqis. Thirdly, longing to return may provide information on how people evaluate the return as a temporary or a permanent option.

1.5   Research aims

My thesis is a qualitative and comparative account of Iraqi groups (mainly Arabs and Kurds from Iraq) in two different European cities. However, it is important to remember that both Arabs and Kurds are not seen as essentialised categories, but rather reflects multiple and overlapping connections to each other in terms of social, political and cultural network. This study explores the Iraqis' perception of return to Iraq after the dictatorship regime of Saddam Hussein. At the same time, it allows for a focus on the social condition of Arabs and Kurds from Iraq by presenting experiences of integration in two diverse EU locations like Finland and Italy.

The first aim of this study is to provide an understanding of return by deconstructing and reconstructing the term. This leads not only to an accurate analysis of return, but also challenges the assumption that refugees should return when general living conditions improve in their home country. In this regard, the analysis of what I call "the longing to return", provides flexibility in the analysis and attempts to capture the complexity of the issue involved. *The second aim* of this study is to describe how integration and aspirations to return are discussed. *The third aim* is to examine how the

idea of return enables an exploration and explanation of how Iraqis articulate the return in relation to their transnational networks and social integration practices in Finland and Italy.

In European countries, reception and integration policies vary widely. These policies have been driven by centralised state sponsored programmes such as in the Nordic countries, while others by minimal or less centralised actions, such as in Southern Europe. Yet, Finland and Italy, in some other aspects, follow the same trend. These countries cope with question of *diversity* while dealing with the reception and integration of the growing number of diverse categories of migrants. In particular, the level and modality of assistance provided especially to refugees is part of a question linked to the welfare state.

Welfare state actions influence reception and integration policies by providing general support like language and working training and access to diverse services such as health. In particular, the Finnish *top-down approach* which is different than the Italian *bottom-up* approach has been reflected by a diverse model of well-structured reception and integration policies' organisation, shifting from state to municipalities. A migrant, embedded in this top-down system, experiences his/her social space with more constraints and less spontaneous actions. The bottom-up approach, however, is characterised by a strong civil society; the migrant finds himself/herself in a state of self-reliance, but with the risk of facing disillusion and exclusion especially at the beginning of the settlement process.

Moreover, despite the importance of the national immigration policies and welfare state configurations, Helsinki and Rome emerge as transnational urban places, where inclusive and exclusive integration practices take place. The idea of social integration, which transpires in this study, is clearly constructed within the urban location where the migrants live, interact and identify themselves. In this regard, even if migration policies are forged at the national level, their actions became visible and accounted by people only at the local level. In particular, the cities, as exemplified by this study, even in a centralised system such as in the Finnish system, may implement actions also independently (cf. Martikainen et al. 2012). Immigrant and refugee associations in collaboration with local institutions, become important "listeners" and "actors" for my informants. Cities become significant references for Iraqis when dealing with political, economic and socio-cultural participation and identification.

In this study, I approach integration through a discussion of inclusion and exclusion within the key areas of integration that were identified by the informants. The states and policymakers usually have the tendency to simplify immigrants and refugees' questions by overlooking the complexity and ambiguity that surrounds the issue of migration. This could be explicable as a consequence of such a state centric view which homogenises migrants into certain categories in order to fit within the framework of state policies and actions. However, this research demonstrates that migrants' integration can be better explained while looking at both the transnational

and local level, rather than strictly focusing at the national level. Integration in fact seems to be influenced by the interrelation of diverse levels of analysis (micro, meso and macro) which also involves a temporal shift between past, present and future perspectives as accounted by the migrants. Immigrants and refugees' difficulties, doubts and uncertainty toward new societies may not only be related to questions of reception and integration in the countries of settlement, but also to experiences in their countries of origin before their flight. Transnationalism, therefore, becomes an important perspective to take into account. The increase of transnational practices does not happen in a *vacuum*, but rather influences the way integration and return perspectives are understood by Iraqis. At the same time, connections between people and places, challenged by temporary return experiences, confront the static view of home, affecting people's sense of belonging.

Comparative studies that deal with diverse research sites and concern similarities and dissimilarities, allow for a better understanding and interpretation of diverse processes. Finland and Italy, and in particular their capital cities, Helsinki and Rome, were the sites where the study was carried out. These two sites are suitable research sites partly because they provide sufficiently diverse reception and settlement policies and practices, and partly because they also have many potential factors of comparison, including the migration histories, economic features and welfare structures. Both Finland and Italy are countries in which immigration is regarded as a new phenomenon. However, because of its history and geographical location, Finland has never had preponderant immigration pressure. The trend shifted at the beginning of the 1990s, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the admission in the European Union, which also determined a new increased interest to develop proper immigration policy (Sagne et al. 2007). In addition, Italy is a country where immigration and asylum has been recognised relatively late. Only in the 1990s, the Italian Parliament approved the first law resolutions, highlighting the necessity to implement reception measures for asylum seekers and refugees. Moreover, the lack of comparative study on Iraqi migrants is relevant across location, especially when dealing with issue of return and how the returns can be deconstructed and reconstructed during the process of settlement in a new society.

1.6 Thesis outline

Chapter two provides a general presentation of the theoretical framework. Discussions on transnationalism, integration and return are analysed and framed within a discussion on refugee diaspora studies, myth of return and home, and belonging. Chapter three sets a discussion on methodology and methods, which have been employed during the phase of the investigation, collection and analysis of the data. At the same time, it also presents the expected and unexpected problems as experienced by the researcher during the intensive phase of research. Chapter four goes over the various stages of Iraqi history from the Ottoman Empire until more recent events. In

particular, this chapter also evidences dynamics of Iraqi migration connected to specific events from the 1970s to the 2000s. Chapter five introduces a discussion on Italy and Finland as national contexts by presenting an overview of their immigration histories and reception and integration policies as linked to welfare state configurations. However, despite the focus on the national level, the chapter provides a basis for further discussion on the role of localities or urban settings as exemplified by the informants.

Chapter six is the first of the four empirical chapters which comprises Iraqis' experiences of travel and settlement within the cities of Helsinki and Rome. In particular, cities of origin and settlement emerge as places characterised by intensive social, economic, political and cultural actions. The seventh chapter of the study consists of reflections on home by focusing on how home is described, remembered and located by my informants. Chapter eight discusses issues related to the longing of return. This concept permits the overcoming of the gap between the fantasy and reality of return. The longing to return explains how people articulate their transnational actions (either physically and/or virtually) while at the same time offering information on social integration practices. At the same time, this concept provides elasticity in the image of return, which is described as a temporary process more than a permanent one. Therefore, the return is exemplified by diverse shades ranging from strong to almost absent desire to return to Iraq, which is challenged by people's increasing transnational actions. Chapter nine, following the previous discussion on the longing of return, discusses questions of integration and transnationalism as experienced by Iraqis living in Helsinki and Rome. In particular, this chapter tries to look at integration, transnationalism and return as interconnected processes. The chapter addresses the question of incorporation in diverse locations while contextualising the life of the migrants' before their journey. At the same time, the chapter explains that, transnational activities do not hinder integration, but rather provide grounds for understanding both social integration and return. Finally, chapter ten summarises the main findings, provides a theoretical discussion of the reformulation of the myth of return in terms of longing to return, and outlines the importance of urban sites in integration and transnational studies.

2 Theory and literature review: framing trans-nationalism into the global world of migration

2.1 Introduction

Recent years have seen a growing consideration of the effects of international migration on societies. The process of globalisation, the global economic disparities, as well as the socio-political instability produces a diverse kind of migrants. These events generate challenging questions for European societies in terms of reception and inclusions. At the same time, the academic world needs to assess its methodologies and ethical issues while conducting studies. In this chapter, I examine how migration has been defined in the international migration debate and how the sociological approach to the migration field has developed during the end of 20th century and the beginning of 21st century. Firstly, this chapter presents transnationalism as the main framework of analysis and its relation to the question of integration. Secondly, I focus on refugee transnationalism, which according to several scholars has led to a new debate in integration studies. Thirdly, the chapter seeks to highlight how the question of return has been discussed by presenting the concept of the *myth of return,* while also examining the construction of home and belonging as fundamental factors to take into account when dealing with the question of return.

2.2 Globalisation and migration

One of the most vibrant discussions today refers to the debated phenomenon of globalisation and its features. In the early 1990s, the British sociologist Anthony Giddens (1990) asserted that globalisation, due to its multidimensional traits, is considered as a political, technological, cultural as well as economic phenomenon. In general, globalisation refers to the current flows of capital, information and people across national borders. In opposition to the Marxist position, Giddens (Ibid.) believes that communication, rather than the economic revolution, has produced a new postmodern perspective characterised by a connectedness of information, technologies and social relations. Globalisation is, therefore, a dialectical and interconnected process. Giddens (Ibid.) describes globalisation as the increasing interdependence of world society, in which the events from one part of the globe influence us directly, no matter where we are. Defining globalisation is not an easy task, because it is a mixture of processes, which often happen in contradictory ways, producing conflicts, fracture and new forms of stratification (Ibid. 64). For example, in a globalised world, where barriers seem to be torn down, we still find people with restricted mobility, or

subjected to specific agreements aimed at permitting only temporary movements (e.g. migrants without official papers).

Recently, some social scientists have highlighted how growing theoretical and empirical literature focuses on the tension between the global homogenisation and local divergence. As Bauman (1998) states, globalisation unites and divides simultaneously. It promotes uniformity and heterogeneity; creating centres and peripheries. The term "glocalisation" is a term suggested by Robertson (1995), born from the merging of terms such as: global and localisation, which effectively summarises how hybridisation reduces the gap between local circumstances and global pressures. Global and local are, therefore, not contrasting forces, but they mutually constitute each other through embedding and disembedding processes. Rosenau (2003) suggests that if we really want to grab the real meaning of globalisation, we need to think in terms of "distant proximities", which means not to overlook the dichotomic effects of globalization and localization, but seeing how they can be interchangeable and/or communicative. Distant proximities, therefore, help to capture both people and fragmented relationships outside and inside borders. For instance, migrants whose lives are fragmented because they often span across two or more countries, may reconnect in the global world as they try to keep their families together. These processes may create the so-called transnational families and communities.

The development of a new globalised world, characterised by travel connections and information technologies, also frames the new migration order with consequent severe constrains on mobility. The implications of international migration involve not only migrants, but also societies of departures and arrivals. In comparison with the European mass migration of the 19th and 20th centuries, the new movements appear more global, differentiated and wider. In the new global perspective, migration has challenged societies as well as the roles of the nation states determining the political, social, cultural and economic consequences.

People continuously move but state borders have also moved. The process of decolonisation, the dissolution of the USSR, the fall of the Berlin wall and the collapse of the former Yugoslavia have drawn a new geopolitical order which represents an important precondition in the analysis of the new migration discourse. Especially the birth of the European Union and the subsequent involvement of new countries have redefined new rights and duties among the European countries and their citizens.

Migration, as for example Castles & Miller (1998) argue, is not a new phenomenon; what is new, however, is the perspective in which migration manifests itself. If in the past, migration, both voluntary and involuntary, could be described as a mainly bipolar movement from a point of departure to the point of arrival; today migration displays itself in more manifold ways and with inevitable consequences for migrants both in sending and receiving societies (Ibid.). According to previous studies, if an actor belonged to society "X" and lived and acted within it, in terms of intransitivity, he/she could not simultaneously belong to society "Y". If the same actor physically moved

from society "X" to society "Y", he/she did not belong to society "X" anymore. This exclusive sense of belonging to an absolute society, in which people have exclusive and strong roots in an immutable and fixed place, is abandoned in the transnational perspective where the traditional notion of space becomes problematised.

In the "age of migration", which is also the title of their well-known book, Castles & Miller (1998: 8-9) predict why in the 21st century international migration will become so significant in the new global scenario, stressing as to how migration becomes, differently than before, a *globalised, accelerated, differentiated, feminised and politicised phenomenon.* Firstly, migration appears to be more global when looking at the number of the involved countries; the diversity of countries of origin is also increasing, revealing diversified migrants in terms of cultural, political, economic and social background (Ibid.). Secondly, in contemporary societies the expansion of foreign population is a visible feature, even if this *acceleration* can be different from country to country and may involve diverse populations. Thirdly, the *differentiation* of migrations, a complex composition of flows for social, demographical, cultural causes, is another important aspect to consider which defines specific types of migrants such as labour migrants, refugee, or permanent settlers. Fourthly, a new characteristic, mentioned by the authors, is also the *feminisation* of migrations; women can be protagonists of the migration experience, accentuating a new role differently from the past when usually the man was the first to migrate. Finally, the last emphasised aspect by Castles and Miller (1998) is the *politicization* of the phenomenon, where the migration subject seems to be progressively regulated by law, bilateral agreements and acts, among worldwide countries in order to control and contain adverse effects. Furthermore, Castles (2002: 1146) argues that, thanks to globalization and the growth of the global economy, a further development of migration is occurring. This development is characterised by a transnational network in which the flow of capital, goods and services follow the flows of ideas, people and their cultural products and vice versa (Ibid.). A sample of these kinds of transnational networks and trajectories could be found in the growth of intergovernmental organisations, institutions and corporations at the macro and meso level, as well as at the micro level in a set of consecutive actions driven by migrants across different localities.

As Waldinger & Fitzgeral (2004: 1177) also note, in the turn of the 21st century characterised by globalisation, migration produces a plethora of connections spanning home and host societies, proclaiming the emergence of a new perspective on migration studies: transnationalism. For Kearney (1995) and Faist (2000: 192) transnationalism and globalisation are two overlapping phenomena. In particular, Faist (Ibid.*)* explains that while globalisation has an unlimited and decentred purview with global actions happening in the global spaces, transnationalism happens in a more limited area that is known as the transnational social space, which usually connects people across two or more countries. At the same time, a certain kind of flows transcends the nation state, such as cultural images (ethno-space, media-space, etc.) people, and goods that create new kinds of spaces (Appadurai 1996). In today's world, migrants are able to build and nourish socio-cultural, economic, and political ties across countries and /or rooted

localities (Eade 1997; Wahlbeck 2004; Valtonen 2004; Smith 2005) operating in the transnational social field (Glick Schiller et al. 1992; Vertovec & Cohen 1999), transnational social spaces (Faist 2000b), or in translocality (Appadurai 1996).

2.3   Transnationalism

One of the most quoted definitions of transnationalism among sociologists and anthropologists has been presented by Basch and her colleagues (1994). In their articulated study on the Caribbean and Filipino population in the New York metropolitan area, they define transnationalism as "the processes by which migrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement" (Ibid. 1994: 7). The new category of migrant, labelled "trans-migrant" (Basch et al. 1994), refers to those people who engage in activities which span over borders, creating an intangible social, political, economic, cultural net across two or even more countries and constructing and reconstructing their identities into a broader space in which they live and regularly act. According to their argument, transnationalism, characterised by technological progress, seemed to be a new, fresh and challenging theoretical paradigm for analysing this new type of migration.

Some sociologists (Portes et al. 1999; Portes 2001; Portes 2003; Kivisto 2001, Faist & Kivisto 2010;) have criticised Basch's observation on *transmigrants,* suggesting that, looking at the historical framework, migrants, in the past, have always maintained *an active interest and involvement in their homeland* (Kivisto 2001: 554) through sending economic remittances, engagement in home politics and charity organisation, travelling etc. Even migration in its form of return, circular, or seasonal migration has always taken place. The focal point of Kivisto's argument against the term transmigrant focuses on the lack of explanation of divergence between the old and new *trans*migrants, (Kivisto 2001; Faist & Kivisto 2010) which in Basch's study seems to be unsatisfactory. Moreover, the use of modern technologies is not an automatic outcome through which transnational connectivity is explained, but also others factors (social class, gender, etc.) must be taken into account (Ibid.). An interesting critique is also made by Ambrosini (2008), an Italian sociologist, who even traces pre-transnational manifestation, especially the economic one, in the Middle age time, when particularly in the Mediterranean area, Genoese and Venetian merchants regularly engaged in international trade business, obviously with a more limited scope and extent than today. In addition, the Arab Gulf, in the nineteen-century, was a vivid port between the Middle East and Asia, where the Indian, Persian and Arabic merchants engaged in economic relations with visible consequences, such as living in different towns, speaking several languages and having transnational families (cf. Onley 2005).

Another immigration theorist who has abundantly written on transnationalism is Alejandro Portes. Born and raised in Havana, Cuba, but educated in American universities, Portes has written numerous articles and books dealing with the topic of

trasnationalism. In an introductory article published in 1999 in a special edition of the journal Ethnic and Racial Studies, Portes et al. (1999: 218) remark that, in the 1990s, *transnational migration studies form a highly fragmented, emergent field which still lacks both a well-defined theoretical framework and analytical rigour*. In his understanding, there was a diffuse and not well enlightened trend to indistinctly perceive migrants as transnational actors. The authors suggest that not all migrants' groups may be labelled as transnational ones (1999). Therefore, what makes an actor or a group transnational? As Portes et al. (1999: 218-219) explain, the transnational process should involve a considerable proportion of people caught up in activities across different countries; moreover, these activities should be somehow constant and stable over time; the content of these actions should offer new characteristics that are not captured by pre-existing concepts (Ibid.). In 2001, Portes continues his argument on the conceptualisation of transnationalism, expanding the scope of his analysis and taking into account new studies of European and North American scholars. In particular, in order to capture the trends and impact of economic and political transnational practices of three specific groups (Colombians, Salvadorans and Dominicans) living in the United States, Portes looks at the numerical incidence of these practices and tries to quantify and explain their effects across the involved countries. Looking at the available data, he notices that the numbers of the people habitually involved in these practices were still quite small, but the transnational perspective was, however, the new possible lens through which one can look at contemporary migration (Portes 2001).

Portes' conclusion, which is also discussed in a subsequent article (Portes 2003), led to a conceptualisation of trasnationalism *as a novel perspective, but not as novel phenomenon* (Portes 2003: 874). Moreover, he specifies that transnationalism can be shaped into two typologies: "transnationalism from above" and "transnationalism from below". In the first case, activities are initiated and conducted by institutions such as nation states, national and multinational corporations; in the latter case, actions are driven by the migrants themselves, rooted in specific localities, without or with limited state intervention (Portes 2003: 875-876). Thus, he schematises a classification of political, economic and socio-cultural activities in three levels: international, multinational and transnational ones. In this way, Portes and his colleagues aim at clarifying the need for specific terminology to use for migrants involved at diverse levels of cross border activities and they also suggest that the concept of transnationalism, as used in the contemporary research literature, refers primarily to the cross border activities of private grassroots actors, mainly immigrants (Portes 2003: 876). Migrants rely on social networks not only for finding jobs or accommodation; social capital, mobilising through the network, distributes symbolic and material resources that can be deployed in order to enable social actors to achieve their goal faster than in the official bureaucratic paths and sometimes generating a better outcome (Portes et al. 1999; Field 2003). However, social networks may appear strong or weak (Granovetter 1973) or broad and/or narrow (Itzigsohn et al. 1999) but their survival is dependent on the maintenance and reproduction of the transnational correlations. Furthermore, Portes (2003) looking at the effect of migrants' cross border actions in

the home country, in terms of flows of capital to the country, investments in the homeland, participation in the home politics and civic movements, as well as new cultural practices imported to the home country from the United States, recognises quite evident macro-social consequences not only for the immigrants communities but also for their home countries and governments.

The increasing interest in transnationalism has also inspired interesting research in Europe. Hence, Vertovec, former director of the ESRC (Research Programme on Transnational Communities), has written various and timely articles and reports on transnationalism. In the above mentioned special issue of *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vertovec (1999: 449-456) elaborates six intertwined conceptualisations of transnationalism as a social morphology, as a type of consciousness, as a mode of cultural reproduction, as an avenue of capital, as a site of political engagement, and as a reconstruction of "place" or locality. Broadly speaking, he schematises transnationalism into cultural, social, economic and political features recapitulating some of its main features already discussed by his colleagues (multiple ties, cross border activities, social capital etc.). A subsequent article by Vertovec (2003) is an ambitious feat of synthesising some *cross cutting concepts* which are widely used by researchers, and sometimes confusingly employed in the social scientific field while dealing with the transnational perspective. These sociological notions were: the social network, social capital and concept of embeddedness (Ibid. 2003: 646). As a method of abstraction and analysis, the social network approach sees each person as a 'node' linked with others to form a network (Vertovec 2003: 646) in which people tend to share common values and traditions, with other members. These networks, if based on internal trust and reciprocity, may in general constitute resources which form a kind of (social) capital (Vertovec 2003; 2009; Vasta 2004). In addition, Vertovec (2003; 2009) discusses the concept of "embeddedness" and agrees with the previous analysis made by Granovetter (1985) and Portes (1995; 2003) who recognise degrees of embeddedness, such as: relational and structural embeddedness. In few words, while the first refers to how people mutually communicate with each other, the latter explains how people's broader ties and networks affect the entire social structure (for example, the community, the city, the group, etc.).

Subsequently, Vertovec (2004) directs his attention from the theory to the practices of transnationalism, emphasising the concept of "bifocality", as a transversal concept extrapolated from a couple of studies carried out in recent years, with reference to the practices of everyday life of migrants who live both "here" and "there" (Ibid. 2004: 9759). Obviously, this kind of dual orientation towards different locations influences families and generation dynamics as well as amplifies the meaning of home (Ibid.; Al-Ali and Koser, 2002; Rapport and Dawson, 1998). Vertovec's approach shows quite interesting outcomes while moving to the discussion on nation states and borders which in Europe demonstrate peculiar historical and social dynamics compared to the United States. Vertovec (2003; 2004) notices how states play an increasingly important role, on opening or restricting borders, setting migration laws and shaping internal membership. From the classic vision of states as a container of individuals who share a

common language, ideology, cultural background and ethnic identity, Vertovec (2004: 978) argues that in recent years states have been challenged as well as transformed by processes and phenomena surrounding the emergence of complex new global economic patterns, regional pacts, multilateral agreements, and coalition military interventions as documented at the level of European Union.

The special edition of *International Migration Review,* published in 2003, claims that this is – for the first time – the opportunity for transnational scholars (from Europe and US) to confront each other and engage in an interdisciplinary dialogue on the recognition of transnational migration as a main framework of today's migration and on the challenges of the framework in terms of definitions, methodology, theoretical, empirical results and possible implications. In this regard, scholars such as: Peggy Levitt, Josh DeWind, Steven Vertovec, Alejandro Portes, Ewa Morawska, Andreas Wimmer and Nina Glick Schiller, just to name a few, met in a couple of meetings[6] with the intention to tackle questions on transnationalism from different points of views and levels of analysis. The final premises underlined some common points, which I will briefly summarise below:

1. Migrants are embedded in multi-layered social fields and their lives shifted from global to local and vice versa (Levitt et al. 2003: 567-568).
2. Despite migrants' activism, states continue to hold a preponderant position on the influence on people's transnationalism, either on the promotion or on the limitation of it (Ibid. 568).
3. Scholars agree upon the fact that research on transnationalism needs to investigate who is benefiting from transnationalism in terms of resources and power relations, etc.
4. Social scientists are encouraged to look at particular aspects of transnationalism that have been overlooked, such as religion, gender, and other correlated themes.
5. Despite similarities between old and new migrations, technologies and transports redesign new patters of transnational migrations (Ibid. 569) enforcing more intense and regular contacts than in the past.
6. Not all migrants (both individuals and groups) rely on comprehensive or more selective transnational practices and those who do vary because of people involvement, sector of action, its strength, frequency, intensity, formality (when actions are driven by institutionalised structures) and informality (when driven in unofficial way) (Ibid. 569-570).
7. Incorporation and transnationalism may be seen as converging processes (Ibid. 570).
8. Terminology has been challenged in the new framework of transnational migration studies. New concepts and new research strategies are

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6 These meetings, held in 2000 and 2001, at Oxford and Princeton Universities, were sponsored by the International Migration programme of Social Sciences Research Council, the Transnational Community Program at Oxford University and the Center for Migration and Development at Princeton University (Levitt et al. 2003:565-566).

recommended as solutions able to accurately provide comprehension of the new migration experiences (Ibid. 571).

9. Migrants' memories, personal stories and artistic creations are also relevant aspects in people's lives. Although these are subjective, not overtly expressed and difficult to capture, they may still reveal significant data for explaining transnational affections and successive dynamics (Ibid.).

2.4 The concept of integration

The word "integration" comes from Latin *integer,* meaning *whole*, *bring together* or *corporation of parts into the whole*. In sociology, the word "integration" means all or nothing. Whatever we want to call it – assimilation, acculturation, incorporation, accommodation, amalgamation and more recently – the integration seems to be a mutual process in that two parts (migrants and societies) are usually involved in some kind of negotiation involving reciprocal rights and obligation.

In the sociological perspective, as Robinson (1998) suggests, integration is a vague concept. Asselin et al. (2006: 137) argues that the concept reminds one of generality, indefiniteness and even imprecision. In recent years, the integration of immigrants and refugees has been studied as a dynamic and two-way process, as a long-term practice and as multidimensional and transnational aspects (cf. Vermeulen 2004; Valtonen 1998). Integration incorporates an interactive aspect (Valtonen 1998: 42) where minority groups need to find a way within the dominant culture society. However, this relationship as documented by various studies, appears disproportionate (towards the migrants population) in terms of power and resources (Penninx 2009: 5). Migrant and refugees are seen as people who must integrate within the receiving society or become a part of it. This kind of perspective may encompass negative consequences such as blaming the refugees for not being able to become a member of society.

Since the 20th century, traditional models of integration have focused on two main directions: assimilation and cultural pluralism. The *assimilation theory* considers the incorporation of the weaker groups into a dominant one. Migrants are absorbed in the receiving country, just as food is assimilated by a body. In the 1920s, the Chicago school, analysing the cohabitation of different ethnic groups in the United States, developed the concept of assimilation exemplified by the *race relation cycle* that followed four main steps, named as: contact, conflict, accommodation and assimilation. In this view, change occurs gradually and inevitably for all immigrants. Therefore, assimilation was a final and unavoidable product of migrants' inclusions. Overall, in Europe the term assimilation, with the development of nationalism at the beginning of the 20th century, became synonymous with ethnocentrism as a blurry

tendency of constructing culturally homogeneous nations[7]. Differently than the US, a country built by immigrants (Favell 2005), in Europe integration was adopted as a term of reference. European states which mainly experienced great fluxes of immigration after World War II wrongly considered immigration as a temporary phenomenon, which should vanish in the near future. Migrants were perceived as temporary "guest workers".

Today, the revival of the "term" assimilation seems to be dependent on the fear that immigrants and their children will not integrate in the future in our multicultural society creating serious problems within our societies (Asselin et al. 2006:136). However, differently than previous theoretical discussion, Brubaker (2001) argues that assimilation regained attention in the public discourse, as well as in the academic circles. Citing the case of Germany, France, and the US he notes, however, a shift between the old version of assimilation characterised by the consequent final stage of total absorption of the minority groups into the main population (Gordon 1964) towards a more neutral and organic meaning of it. Therefore, in the abstract version of assimilation, where the focus is on similarity more than identity, the assimilation is a process of becoming similar, or of making similar or treating as similar (Brubaker 2001: 534). In this new transnational frame, migrants are seen as active actors more than passive agents relating to more multidimensional assimilation levels concerning both the likelihood and desirability of assimilation (Brubaker 2001: 544). A variance of the previous theory was the so-called *amalgamation theory* or *melting pot model*. It refers to the idea that societies formed by immigrant cultures, religions, end ethnic groups, produce new hybrid social and cultural forms. The metaphor of the melting pot in which metals are melted at great heat in a pot, gives the idea of a new compound: a mixture of diverse ethnic groups. The US has been considered as the best example of a melting pot society. According to this model, immigrants tend to slowly fuse into the receiving society at the expense of their original identity, thereby creating a new homogeneous American culture. However, the melting pot theory was quickly considered as a utopian and simplistic model because of the fact that the United States, since its origin, is a huge mix of different cultures and religions, which when mixed together cannot definitely yield one homogeneous culture.

The second prominent model, the cultural pluralism or multiculturalism, suggests a new society in which all groups survive in harmony, by preserving and sustaining their own culture and traditions. However, in a version of *radical multiculturalism* clear distinctions among groups may determine a rigid, static and essentialised vision of culture with a consequent constitution of society of enclaves (Touraine 1997 cit in. Grillo 2005: 11). On the other hand, a form of weak multiculturalism may determine a return to assimilation. Grillo (2005) propose a more dynamic vision of culture where interculturality overcomes the mere division while entering in a neutral space of hybridity or syncretism. In postmodern societies, as he argues (Ibid.38), actors are in dialogue with one another, responding, joking, playing, crossing, mixing, and engaging

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7 In Europe, the term "integration" was largely used as substitute for "assimilation", even if EU states such as France or Denmark in practice adopted assimilation measures in their migration policies.

in negotiations through which new orders emerge, and certainly not always harmoniously. Similarly, Grosfoguel (2004: 316) argues that in the cultural pluralist model the ethnicity continues to be recreated in a new form of identity that is neither a "melting pot" nor a simple repetition of their community of origin. As a result, he discusses the new hyphenated identity (i.e. Irish-Americans, Afro-American, Italian-American, etc.) that emerges out of common political interests. However, the main concern of this model refers to the recognition of diverse ethnic and racial groups within the same society. This model is based on a distinction between the public and private sphere. Minority groups are expected to participate in the economic and political sectors of society while preserving their culture in a private sphere. However, conflictive or consensual approaches have emphasised the relationship between the majority and minority groups, which are seen as active participants within the receiving society.

These classical models have sometimes been seen as problematic: the society of reference, mainly nation states, is regarded as bounded, homogeneous, structured and isolated units (Favell 2005). Globalisation concerns with new changing patterns of mobility. At the same time, the changing size and composition of migrants determine a 'new geography of migration' with consequent reflections on integration practices and sites (Penninx et al. 2008: 1-2). Transnationalism is, therefore, the third emerging perspective in migration and integration studies which place migrants in between two or more locations. In this regard, integration appears to be characterised more as a process than a phenomenon, exemplified by fluidity and heterogeneity and framed into the landscape of transnationalism. One of the basic shifts of analysis, encouraged the intensification and rapport among diverse levels of analysis involving macro, meso and micro spaces where social integration is a visible trait and where migrants are actually living (Penninx et al. 2008; Caponio & Borkert 2010; Favel 2001). These spaces pertain to diverse levels of analysis: the national (and supra-national), the regional and/or provincial and/or the urban one (the city).

Integration especially from the point of view of the migrants is visible at the local level (city/town) where migrant face the first challenges (language barrier, service access, discrimination etc.). Therefore, as Penninx (2009: 5) states, integration takes place at the local level, even if some of its mechanisms are steered by institutional rules that have been established at higher (regional, national or international) levels. In this regard, a top-down (from the national to the local) and bottom up approach (from the local to the national) provides diverse approaches on migration policies by showing centralised and decentralised practices. Particularly, the top-down approach refers to the implementation of integration policies from the state to the municipality and local bodies. As Puggioni (2005: 319) argues, this approach is based on the assumption that the more assistance the public sector offers to refugees, the more successful the settlement and integration processes should be. However, the outcome of this system, characterised by an efficient plan of integration could determine a vision of integration as something that is imposed rather than necessarily wanted (Korac 2003). Conversely, the bottom-up approach, on the other hand, refers to small unit such as the municipality

(or the neighbourhood) that in collaboration with the third sector (NGOs, immigrants associations, etc.) may develop special reception and integration programmes in the absence of a national political efficiency. As we know, European societies have faced immigration and refugees movements at different times. European states have also adopted diverse reception and integration measures as well as a way of implementation according to their traditions and histories of migration. In this regard, a clarification of welfare state dynamics is fundamental for approaching how migrants participate to the societies. For example, the 'strong' and 'weak' welfare state strategies have usually been reference for many studies dealing with migrants' process of inclusion and exclusion (Puggioni 2005; Korac 2009; Valtonen 1998; Ghorashi 2005; Wahlbeck 1999).

For example, Mestheneos and Ioannidi (2002) in their qualitative study of refugees' obstacles of integration in 15 different European states, confirm that despite problems such as discrimination, racism and ignorance, welfare dynamics should be also taken in consideration. As the researchers affirm the states providing extensive welfare support to refugees may also enforce the idea of refugees as less able, dependent and possibly socially excluded (Ibid.: 314). Bureaucratic procedures and inflexibility, over-generosity and enforced dependency, acted to inhibit initiatives by refugees to become independent within the system (Ibid.) Differently, in the cases of 'weak' welfare states, the lack of support by the public authorities, for example in Southern Europe, leads to tremendous problems such as the initial reception and the question of survival bringing migrants between legality and illegality (Ibid.). However, studies on welfare state systems stress how refugees paradoxically may benefit more from welfare state approaching a *laissez faire* regime than a highly regulative welfare approach (Korac 2003). In weak welfare states, the process of adjustment to society, in the long run, seems to be more personalised and less imposed (Ibid.).

Specifically, in terms of *social integration,* the micro, meso and macro spheres may also be distinguished. Firstly, the micro sphere focuses on individual interactions as a special environment. The macro sphere refers to the political, social and economic structures. The meso sphere, which Faist (1997) designs as *the crucial one* for migration dynamics, deals with the household, the family, and the social networks in which people's lives are embedded. The particularity of the meso level reflects a process of convergence between the micro and the macro level, generating also convergence between the structure and agency. Generally, it is an intermediate level with a special emphasis on the role of the networks between the actors and the political, socio-economic, cultural systems. According to Asselin et al. (2006: 139) these levels of analysis are connected, since the immigrant integration is often seen as resulting from the interplay between structural factors in the receiving society and purposive behaviour of immigrants.

In this study, stories of refugees from Helsinki and Rome indicate how integration is perceived by migrants. Social integration is primarily reflected through migrants' accounts, but also discussed in relation to the *meso* and *macro* perspectives. In

particular, these cities exemplified a basis where Mediterranean and Nordic welfare regimes determine the level of dependability and undependability on migrants' processes of integration. In this regard, the scarce welfare provision of the Italian welfare state clashes against the strict Nordic regime which despite the larger amount of resources for refugees do not always achieve good results. Generally, a centralised and decentralised approach on migration policies, as exemplified by the case of Helsinki and Rome, provides grounds for discussion on structural integration with reference to the political and economic dimensions of the society. Despite the importance of the macro national analysis, involving nation states and supranational bodies, some researchers (Penninx 2009; Caponio 2005) have shown interests in studying processes of decentralisation by looking at the implementation of reception policies and migrants' social integration at both the regional/provincial and urban level. Thus, in this study, cities represent unique meso-level contexts where the processes of social integration emerge in forms that may be disentangled by purely centralised logic. It seems that cities may also benefit from high/medium/low level of flexibility when implementing specific policies in collaboration with the civil societies' actors (NGOs, associations, etc.).

2.5   The challenging relation between integration and transnationalism

Over the last decade, some studies, mainly limited to the British and German (see for example the findings from COMPAS – Centre on Migration, Policy and Society and the TransComm: Transnational Communities programme) and American contexts (Levitt 2001; Morawska 2003; Itzigsohn & Giorguli-Saucedo 2005), have addressed the relationship between integration, (or "assimilation" in the American discourse), and transnationalism (Kivisto 2001; 2003).

Whereas integration and transnationalism have been perceived as a separately conflicting process by some sociologists (Snel et al., 2006: 287; Glick Schiller 1992; 1995), some others have recognised a potential coexistence between integration and/or assimilation and transnationalism (Morawska 2004; Itzigsohn & Giorguli-Saucedo 2005; Kivisto 2001; 2003; Faist; Vertovec 2007; Brubaker 2001; Grillo 2001). If for some social scientists transnational activities may divert migrants' attention from processes of incorporation into the mainstream society (e.g. diasporic communities may be seen as a threat to national and local projects of integration since they create transnational social spaces), for others, they are seen as dialectical processes helping migrants and society of settlement (Vertovec 2007).

However, the terrorist attacks in the US (2001), Spain (2003), and the U.K (2005) have strengthened scepticism in the public opinion. Political statements, such as Angela Merkel's on the failing of multiculturalism in Germany (2010), or political measures like Sarkozi's expulsion of Roma people from France (July 2010), as part of a new package of tough immigration laws, have ignited a harsh debate in Europe which

collides with the European Union's official values devoted to pluralism, tolerance, equality, solidarity, justice, and non-discrimination (cf. Vertovec & Wessendorf 2010; Lentin & Titley 2011). In addition, events of growing racism around Europe, and especially in those European countries that have always been seen as migrant friendly in terms of migration histories, immigrant policies, tolerance towards diversity, have strongly reinforced a trajectory of change towards unfavourable migration policies restrictions, followed by vibrant speculations on the 'death of multiculturalism'.

However, the development of converging aspects between integration/assimilation and transnationalism has also generated wide interest in the academic world and many social scientists have offered specific explanations, not only on the forms and combination of these two modes of incorporation, but also on their varying relationships (Morawska 2003). For example, social scientists like Itzigsohn et al. (1999) and Mahler (1998) argue that people may be "embedded" or just participate in a certain kind of transnational activities. Others, such as Portes (2001), contend that integration and transnationalism may coexist and provide interesting insights on the current debate on multiculturalism and sometimes reinforce it. As Kivisto (2001:571) suggests, transnationalism can be one possible variant of assimilation since migrants may be incorporated in the country where they settle and contemporarily engage in activities with the country of origin.

In a report submitted to the Commission on Integration and Cohesion, a fixed term English advisory body constituted in 2006 in the UK, Vertovec (2007) takes on the difficult task of outlining the linkages between processes and practices of transnationalism and integration referring to the British context. In particular, he critically illustrates three core concepts: super-diversity, transnationalism, and civil-integration. In particular, he emphasises migrants' pending lives across localities and implies that a dual orientation does not hamper integration (Vertovec 2007).

Many migrants develop and maintain strong modes of community cohesion – but not necessarily with others in their locality. The strongest senses of cohesion or belonging may remain with others in a homeland or elsewhere outside Britain. However, this needn't mean they are not becoming integrated in the UK. Belonging, loyalty and sense of attachment are not parts of a zero –sum game based on a single place. That is, the 'more transnational' a person is does not automatically mean the 'less integrated' he or she is, and the 'less integrated' one is does not necessarily prompt or strengthen 'more transnational' patterns of association (Vertovec 2007: 20)

Specifically, Vertovec (2007: 3) asserts that persistent transnational attachments are often correlated with enhanced patterns of integration. Trasnationality is, therefore, perceived as an important component of the migrants' lives, where economic remittances, the growing amount of international phone calls, transnational marriage practices and diaspora politics are evident examples of how people nowadays interact across borders (Ibid. 19). Similarly, Itzigsohn & Giorguli-Saucedo's (2005) analysis of three first generations of Latino immigrant communities (Dominicans, Colombians and

Salvadorans) in some US cities (New York, Los Angeles, Washington, DC and Providence) shows how incorporation and transnational practices are *concurrent and intertwined processes* (Ibid. 2005: 916). To better understand transnationalism in its connection to migrants' incorporation, they present three different forms of it: *linear, resources-dependent and reactive transnationalism*. Firstly, the linear transnationalism manifests itself when people travel or exchange goods and information across two or more countries. People are, therefore, assimilated in the country of settlement, but able to regularly maintain their contacts back home. Secondly, the resource-dependent transnationalism is not an immediate process, but rather slow and dependent on the accumulated resources by the migrants in the country of settlement. Once the resources are finally collected, people are able to start up their connections back home. Finally, the reactive transnationalism becomes evident as a form of migrants' protest against discrimination, economic difficulties and frustration in the country of settlement; therefore, the migrant is naturally encouraged to engage in transnational actions with no predetermination. In their argument, supported by a survey[8] conducted for some months in 1997-98, Itzigsohn & Giorguli-Saucedo (2005) argue that the gender perspective reveals interesting results on the analysis of the dynamics of migrants' incorporation into American society and consequent transnationalism. Despite common opportunities and constraints which both men and women encounter in the receiving society, Itzigsohn & Giorguli-Saucedo (2005) explain how these two groups experience social interaction and transnational participation differently. If men are seen as mainly promoting transnationalism as a reactive way to cope with difficulties, then women are more driven by a resources-dependent transnationalism. Despite foreseeable class and racial exclusion, they also argue that usually men encountered more problems in their process of incorporation in the receiving society than women, especially if they belong to a lower social class. However, women, more than men, gain a higher social status in the US than in their country of origin, thanks to the resources available in the country of settlement for women such as: more open employment opportunities, social security and other protecting institutions. As a consequence, women adapt faster to the new country and their stay in the US is perceived as a way to preserve their own rights.

Likewise, the study of Levitt (2001) about the transnational village of Miraflores, a small Dominican village close to the city of Bani', highlights how people, at the community level, manage to organise their life in the historic neighbourhood of Jamaica Plain in Boston, while at the same time remaining active in the country of origin. Basically, the study on the "Transnational Villagers" shows how transnational migration challenges internal and external development[9] in the village of Miraflores and assert compatibility between transnational and assimilation processes (2001:5). Based primarily on in-depth and semi-structured interviews, a survey, a document analysis and three-years of fieldwork carried out in Boston and in the Dominican Republic, Levitt's work provides insights on how social remittances flow across

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8 The survey was conducted within a project named Comparative Immigrant Enterprise Project (CIEP).
9 Internal development referred to the family and group level; the external one to the economic and political level.

countries. In particular, these remittances that are defined as *ideas, behaviours, identities, and social capital that flow from host to sending country community* (2001: 54) shape and perpetuate the Miraflores' community in terms of lifestyles, economic profits, civic and political responsibilities, infrastructures, etc. Specifically, social remittances are divided into three different groups: normative structures, systems of practice, and social capital (ibid.). The first group refers to ideas, beliefs, values, codes of behaviour, family, neighbourhood and community responsibilities, etc. (2001:59); the second group, concerns the households and organisational practices shaped by the normative structures (2001: 61); while the third group, deals with the social capital itself shaped by values and norms (2001: 62). In particular, Levitt clarifies that the impact of these social remittances, which can be harder to quantify than the economic remittances, are various and may also produce opportunities for some social actors while tensions for others. Social class, especially, but also education and social networks have absolutely an impact in peoples' lives once they move to US Social hierarchy affects the success of these migrants since the beginning of their transnational activities. Levitt, in fact, explains why transnational migration does not reduce social differentiation, but she is able to capture how people and groups are reinvented in the new social order where hierarchy still persists but within a new system. Particularly, Levitt (Ibid.) shows how, because of the constant transnational relations, some non-migrants, paradoxically, become dependent on the remittances sent from their families from Boston. However, the migrant may also experience, sometimes, tensions for a life divided across such different localities. For example, themes such as the egalitarian gender relations, between men and women, have been challenged by those migrants living in American society. This is not just visible at the personal or family level, but also at the community and public sphere level. However, the dissonance between the modern life in the US and the traditional society in Miraflores fulfilled with old-fashioned values and restricted economic opportunities, challenges women migrants once they travel back to the Dominican Republic.

Furthermore, the people's interaction between the US and the Dominican Republic helps Levit to outline three general categories of transnational migrants, such as: the recipient observer, the purposeful innovators and instrumental adapters (Ibid. 57). Firstly, the *recipient observers* are those who prefer to stick within the Dominican community in where they live and work, avoiding mixing with the American environment; however, they are passively influenced by ideas and practices, circulating through the media. Secondly, the *purposeful innovators* are those who revolutionise their lives by benefiting from the world around. They are able to combine their personal ideas and culture with the world outside. They have thirst for knowledge, curiosity and motivation to improve their life once they have the opportunities to do so. Thirdly, the *instrumental adapters* implement a strategic interaction with the society of settlement thanks to their working life, which can be helpful for the life of migrant living abroad. This categorisation clarifies the dialectic relation between integration and transnationalism, showing how, people may integrate in the receiving society, at different degrees, but at the same time, sustaining relations or remaining connected with their homeland. However, despite potential frictions between these two societies,

Levitt, in sum, clarifies, how migrants are able to distinguish one's own good (for example, for a woman a possibility to get a better job in the US than in Jamaica), selecting at what extent and in which sector (e.g. economic, social, political, cultural one) they want to be incorporated once moving to a new society as well as benefiting from the advantages of their attachment to the home country. The migrant is an active agent able to choose his/her path of integration as well as perform at various levels of transnational involvement. In this regard, the states are also facilitators of transnational people's involvements, in different sectors and at different degrees.

Similar to Levitt's study, Østergaard-Nielsen (2001; 2003) studying the case of political participation of Turks and Kurds in Germany and in the Netherlands, argue that transnationalism and integration are not reciprocally exclusive events, although their features may inflate or weaken over time. On the one hand, Østergaard-Nielsen (2003: 762) wants to demonstrate how migrants and refuges participate in cross border politics in the country of origin (for example by voting, supporting parties, attending meeting and debates, participating in demonstration) as well as their indirect participation via the political institutions of the country of settlement (or international organisations). In this regard, while *homeland politics* refer to the migrants' political activities aimed at improving domestic and foreign policy in their country of origin, *immigrant politics* are conversely, implemented in the country of settlement for a quest of better life in terms, for example, of socio-economic rights and prevention against discrimination and racism. (Østergaard-Nielsen 2001: 262). On the other hand, she observes how, these two areas of politics are not mutually exclusive but overlap each other according to the diverging/converging interests of the main actors involved as in the local, national and international stage (Ibid.). Migrants' organisational activities are, in fact, influenced by the global sphere, but also rooted into their local and national environment.

These main studies which I have previously presented show a consolidated consensus on the concurrent and overlapping relation between transnationalism and integration. Especially interesting is also the study of Piperno and Stocchiero (2006), where the authors explain the link between the transnationalism and integration process in terms of interchangeability. In this perspective, the migrant's integration occurs in a new and inevitable transnational dimension, where migrants' worlds are much more interconnected than before and where local authorities (of both involved countries) play a central role in increasing or decreasing transnational relations. In their study, Piperno and Stocchiero (2006: 21) shape the discussion around the concept of the transnational integration, sustaining two main positions of analysis. In the first case, transnationalism may drive to integration. Piperno & Stocchiero (2006) stress that local authorities can in fact provide services and assistance to people, such as pre-training or language courses or just an information campaign in the migrants' country of origin, with the purpose of enhancing migrants' chances of succeeding in a new country. Local authorities of diverse countries can also promote and facilitate the connection between the migrants and his/her home country encouraging cooperation and partnership, ethnic entrepreneurs and social practices. It has also been discussed how

transnationalism may reinforce people's self-esteem and confidence for the future once migration takes place. In the view of some experts, a migrant with a strong transnational connection, represents a good social capital and economic and cultural resource for the receiving country (Levitt 2001). Practically, these transnational migrants may import and export goods creating business, or stimulate transnational dialogues linking migration and development in both countries.

In the second case, integration may be a driving force of transnationalism. In reality, specific policies, implemented by local authorities, can improve the integration of migrants removing critical constraints which deter them from maintaining, fully managing and developing their transnational ties (Piperno & Stocchiero 2006: 28). According to this statement, integration would be not just the final step of a long process but also the beginning of a further one: the promotion of transnationalism. An integrated migrant, in fact, could easily and spontaneously, under specific conditions, promote and be the creator himself/herself of transnational activities. Therefore, once integrated, a migrant holding a good knowledge of the language and general familiarity with the receiving society in terms of economic, socio-cultural, political, legal information would possibly have more access to local resources. For example, in a study carried out in 2003 in Albania, Piperno (2003) discovers and clarifies how migration has been a determinant condition for the development of the economic sector in Albania. Many Albanian entrepreneurs, in fact, explain how their business career started up once back in Albania, and they recognise the importance of their life experience as migrants and their subsequent transnational connections within the Italian context. For instance, buying raw materials and repairing machineries in the agricultural sector, was an example of economic growth which nourished both the Albanian and the Italian economic market. The salient point of this discussion shows how a well constituted network with families, friends, or organisation, employers, and local authorities may generate, at precise circumstances, partnership and cooperation of which both countries may benefit.

2.6   Approaching refugees studies and question of return

As exemplified at the beginning of this chapter, the challenging relation between integration and transnationalism has caught researchers' attention since the 1990s. During this phase, issues of migrants' return have gained less attention or mainly started to be discussed in specific migration domains. In the following parts, the question of return will be broadly approached by presenting a brief introduction of the areas of investigations where return discussions became an important aspect especially dealing with refugees and diaspora studies. These studies provide explanations on the complexity of the return.

2.6.1 Refugee Studies

In this study, the focus is on Iraqis in Rome and Helsinki. In this regard, it is important to present how within sociology of migration, refugee studies have acquired a special domain of investigation reflecting on cases of forced migration. During the 20th century, many migrants fled because of wars, economic inequities, political conflicts and environmental calamities. This new category of forced migrants, the refugees, became legally and internationally recognised by the Geneva Convention (1951) and the Protocol (1967)[10]. The Geneva Convention recognizes that a refugee is a person who "owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it"[11]. As Zetter (1991: 39) argues, "refugee" constitutes one of the most powerful labels in the world. However, after 9/11, the question of refugees mainly coming from the Middle East and settling in Western societies has also shifted the discussion from humanitarian reason to security measures as actuated by the receiving states (Vertovec & Wessendorf 2010).

Interests in questions regarding refugees exist within migration studies regarding issues such as the loss of homeland, exile, return, question of settlement and re-settlement as well as more recent studies on transnationalism with reference to situations of post-return countries and reintegration processes. Refugee studies became an independent branch within the migration area since the 1970s, but acquired a recognised status mainly in the 1980s (Steen 1992). The birth of the *Journal of Refugee Studies* in 1988 published by the Oxford University Press provided a platform for discussion regarding refugees, enriching new theoretical and analytical tool and emphasizing a multidisciplinary approach (Zolberg et al. 1989). In Sociology, despite the large quantity of detailed studies on refugees' communities, only few studies have dedicated attention on developing theory and models regarding refugees' settlement or relationship with the country of origin (Robinson 1993; Joly 2002). For example, Petersen (1958 cit. in Joly 2002) classifies migrants in two categories considering the flight's motives in force and impelled migration. According to Petersen, the difference between these two classes of migration lies in the amount of free individual choice. *Forced* migrants are physically expelled from an area by an external force with no choice. Conversely, the *impelled* migrants have the opportunity to freely weigh positive and negative factors involved in their decision either of moving or remaining while facing external threats. As Richmond (1993: 8) argues these kinds of theories based on push and pull factors may fail to distinguish movers from non-movers in the

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10 As Kiagia et al. (2010: 41) argues, at the European level only several agreements have been ratified among the EU member states in order to harmonise the refugee policies on the minimum and general levels.

11 Convention of Geneva related the Status of Refugee (1951). Art 1 (2).

same territory as well as pay little attention specifically to refugees' movements. Differently, Kunz (1973) suggests referring to flight and displacement to a *kinetic model* where he distinguishes between the *acute refugee movement* and the *anticipatory refugee movement*. This model differently explains that refugees are always *pushing out* instead of *pulling in* of territories. In this regard, he distinctly separates refugees from immigrants. On the one hand, the *anticipatory refugees* anticipate the danger and flee from their country. Paradoxically, they seem to be beforehand organized once arrived in the new country of settlement with some finance, language skills, information, etc. On the other hand, the *acute refugee* movements depend on events like war, hunger and other disasters. In an acute movement group, refugees leave their country in search of safety. For this reason, expectations from the country of settlement as well as future plans of return are quite vague. Similarly, other scholars exemplified sociological models with the purpose to reduce and exemplify meanings. For instance, Zolberg (1989) identifies three groups of refugees: activists, targeted and victims. All three groups present a factor in common: the threat of violence. The activists are the opponents within the political elite, dissenters and rebels; the targets are people who are persecuted for being members of a particular group; victims' refugees are those who are exposed to an indiscriminate violence.

'Victims' are usually what come to mind when talking about refugees—those people randomly caught in the crossfire or exposed to generalised violence. (…) 'Targets' are individuals who are singled out for violent action through membership in a particular group, mostly because of their social, political, religious, linguistic or ethnic affiliation. 'Targets' are recognised by all legal instruments as refugees. (…) Activist refugees are the classic refugees— dissenters and rebels whose actions contribute to the conflict that eventually forced them to flee (Zolberg et al. 1989: 278).

Moreover, in terms of resettlement, Kunz, (1981) states that the refugees can be divided into three groups: *majority identified refugees*, *event-alienated* and *self-alienated*. Kunz in fact is one of the first to clarify that refugees' resettlement processes may be driven or traced back by former experiences (e.g. exclusion) within their country of origin. According to his typology, the majority identified refugees recognise themselves within the nation/homeland they have left behind and not with the government in charge. In this regard, the return to the homeland would be feasible once the government would be replaced by a different one. The event-alienated refugees are those persons belonging to minority ethnic groups or religious groups who have been marginalised or discriminated by the majority. In this regard, they show an ambivalent or resentful attitude towards the homeland population and a weak desire to go back. The last group, known as the self-alienated refugees, are those migrants who, for various political and ideological reasons, felt alienated by their nation. Following Kunz, but upgrading his view, Joly (2002) suggests analysing the

refugees within the structure of the conflict of their country of origin which oblige them to flee. The reference of the society of origin may be determinant in the refugees' process of settlement in the receiving society. In this case, prior experiences in the society of origin may also drive or better clarify both practices of settlement and future plans of return. In her study, Joly (2002) suggests two main ideal types namely: the *Odyssean refugees* and the *Rubicon refugees.*

The first group of refugees concerns those people who had a collective project of society in their land of origin and bring with them in the land of exile. The second one includes those people who did not have a collective project in the land of origin or those who have forsaken it (Joly, 2002: 9).

The Odyssean refugees live in a sort of equilibrium between the past and present. They believe in a temporary settlement and they are oriented towards their return. Their project can be socio-political as well as social or religious. Odyssean refugees fight against the regime and the majority that forced them to flee; but they have fought the system even before the flight. Historically, it could be the case of the Kurds who are a national minority in Turkey, Iraq and Iran (Ibid. 10). Looking at Kunz' typology, the case of the Kurds, according to Joly (2002) are difficult to place, because they appear *in between* the typologies of event alienated and majority identifies refugees. Despite their difficult relationship with the main political governments, the Kurds manifest intensive networks with the society of origin. However, the interaction with the country of origin does not imply that the Odyssean refugees appear as passive guests in the reception society. Hence, they can inform politicians, political parties and international organisations of the receiving society about their conditions; they can denounce the system; they can organise meetings, seminars and demonstrations within which they can explain their points of view. The fact that the Kurds do not specifically identify themselves within the country of Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey does not mean that they do not display attachment to the homeland and their identity (Joly 2002: 8). In contrast, the Rubicon refugees do not have any collective projects regarding the future. The return to the homeland is thus not a priority. Usually, they have good relations with the receiving society and assimilation is considered as a possible option. They want to be integrated into society but at the same time, they are able to maintain their group's cultural traditions. As Joly (Ibid.) states, the Vietnamese experience an example of Rubicon refugees. Yet, from this perspective, the role of the receiving society and its policies becomes fundamental in recognising the refugees' path of inclusion. However, one of the possible risks could be the double marginalisation both from the society of reception and the society of origin.

Similarly in my study, the reference to the country of origin and the country of settlement is clearly intertwined. However, the overlap of different "places", like the country of origin and settlement, is also characterised by the overlaps of different "times", such as before and after Saddam's dictatorship. However, the relationship

between time and space is dynamically presented through the concept of the *longing to return*. In this case, the equilibrium between past and present experiences is challenged by the intensification of connections made available by technologies and travel opportunities. The intensification of transnational activities, after the post Saddam's power, are also constituted and driven by diverse socio-political, economic and personal motives. The orientation towards the country of origin is, therefore, deconstructed and reconstructed by Iraqis in terms of short visits. At the same time, accounts of inclusion and exclusions in the receiving society, amplify how home and belonging are perceived across diverse locations.

Other social scientists (Stein 1981; Eisenstadt 1954, cit. in Valtonen 1994) have proposed linear stages of adaptation as well as patterns of adjustment to the receiving society recognising universal factors such as the time or psychological causes[12]. However, research as suggested by Joly (1996) proposes that further study should attain to develop auxiliary investigation which goes beyond the mere descriptive typologies. Refugees' migration is in fact an intricate theme to explore because people under the same threat, may react in diverse ways. Since the 1990s, a great assortment of sociological and anthropological studies, mainly approaching a comparative approach (Gold 1992[13]; Wahlbeck 1999; Korac 2003; 2010; Mestheneos and Ioannidi 2002) have also traced the social process of refugees' adaptation and orientation to both societies with qualitative methodologies. Overall, these studies have also provided valuable information on internal and external resources, refugees' trajectories, orientation towards the country of origin without underestimating their various, and sometimes conflicting groups internal divisions (Korac 2003; 2009; Puggioni 2005; Wahlbeck 1999). In depth and semi-structures interviews are also important tools for investigating refugees' social integration between possibilities and constraints while looking at diverse countries and their welfare state structures.

2.6.2 Diaspora Studies

Diaspora studies provide support to the research area of refugee studies (Lie 1995; Wahlbeck 1999). The concept of "diaspora" is an interdisciplinary one, used in social sciences, from cultural studies to Sociology with various emphases. However, it seems that this concept is quite complex and problematic since it has been interpreted in diverse ways and has been *overused* and *misused* (Anthias 1998; Alinia 2004). Despite

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12 Cf. also Stein (1981) and Eisenstadt (cit. in Valtonen 1994); Joly (1992).
13 Gold (1992) studying the case of the Soviet Jewish and Vietnamese refugees in the United States, points out that the refugee resettlement system is facilitated by resettlement agencies which operate in both communities but at diverse grade. For example, Soviet Jewish resettlement agencies are highly centralized and integrated, long established and well-funded. In contrast, the Vietnamese ones are decentralised, characterised by a few professionals and subjected to severe fiscal problems (Ibid.:145). The effects of the resettlement system, in relation to the adaptation of refugees are, therefore, different and frequently characterised by cross-cultural conflicts and negotiations.

efforts to theorise "diaspora", the concept seems to be perplexing and under-theorised despite its increased use (Vertovec 1996; Wahlbeck 2002).

In particular, Brubaker (2005) stresses how the term diaspora fashionably proliferated in migration studies from the 1970s until its boom in the 2000s. The concept of diaspora refers to the *de-territorialised* communities forcibly scattered across the world and unable or unwilling to completely assimilate within the society of settlement (Vertovec 1999; Tölölyan 1991; Wahlbeck 1999). Diaspora groups manage to often recreate *new* spaces and *ways* of belongings while demonstrating "loyalty" and "solidarity" to their original homeland. This is especially evident in the diverse forms of transnational activities. Several scholars have carved out a space for diaspora studies presenting diaspora as a descriptive tool (cf. Safran 1991 on the Jewish case; Cohen 1997) and as analytical one where the diaspora is identified as a social and dynamic process (Hall 1992; Appadurai 1996; Clifford 1997; Wahlbeck 1999; Alinia 2004). For example, the classification of diaspora proposed by Safran (1991) enumerates six characteristics that diasporic migrants should share. The fourth characteristic, in particular, refers to an exclusive relationship between the migrants and their homeland, which involved an eventual return to the ancestral home when the conditions would be appropriate (Safran 1991:83-84). Cohen (1997: 178) in his book *Global Diasporas,* also utilises the notion of diaspora in descriptive ways, identifying five categories: victim, imperial, labour, trade and cultural diasporas. These typologies provide more variance than Safran's which is based on the case of the Jewish people. Thus, Cohen (1997) refers to other migrants experiences ranging from the Chinese labour migrants to specific African refugee diaspora.

However, his typology shows the same rigidity as Safran's, especially referring to the triadic relationship exemplified by: homeland, exile and return to the homeland. Other researchers have shifted their attention from the topic of return, which is not always considered (Clifford 1994: 305), to other emerging processes such as: hybridity, creolisation, multiple home attachments, identity formation (cf. Gilroy 1993; Hall 1992; Clifford 1994). For instance, Clifford (1997) criticizes Safran's typology of diaspora arguing about its inflexibility, strict criteria as well as the assumption of considering the return to the homeland as a mechanical action. Conversely, he proposes the concept of *diasporic community* which elucidates multiple forms of longing, attachment and identifications among the members which are highly *situated and localized.* The increasing role of transnational connections transcends peoples' kinship and networks out of their traditional nation states, restructuring new forms of living across spaces. Obviously, a modern communication system and revolutionary transports allowed such change. This kind of diaspora focuses on practices of belonging, which surpass the mere notions of race, nation and culture, as unified features characterising people located in the same territory (Gilroy 2000). According to these latter studies, the permanent return has lost its emphasis and faded away as it has been substituted by the increasing role of transnational movements across countries or by the intricate process of home construction in between spaces. At the same time, diasporic communities are highly heterogeneous. Diaspora is, therefore, characterised

by a complex situation where there is no static notion, but rather an intersecting self across diverse categories in regard to class, gender, profession, ethnicity, generation etc. (Brah 1996; Alinia 2004; Khayati 2008).

Of particular interest is the consideration presented by Faist (2010). He refers to transnationalism and diaspora as *awkward dance partners* by stressing how often these two are usually used interchangeably in social sciences (2010: 9). He argues that in practice the two terms refer to different processes. While diaspora usually refers to transnational communities living detached from both their country of origin and country of settlement, the concept of transnationalism is characterised by groups, organisations and peoples' trans-border ties. In particular, Faist (2010: 12-13) summarises new and old forms of diaspora in three main groups of studies. The first group assembles studies which have focused on the reasons for migration or dispersal like the case of the "classical diaspora" of the Jews and Palestinians for historical and political reasons and/or the Chinese or the Mexicans as economic diasporic groups. The second group refers to those studies investigating the various cross border connections between the "homelands" (in its territorialized and deterritorialised forms) and the country of settlement. Finally, the third group encompasses studies referring to both diaspora and integration dynamics highlighting successive aspects such as: resistance to incorporation and assimilation and forms of hybridity, etc. (Ibid.).

Brubaker (2005: 12) argues that it would be more beneficial to consider diaspora more as a claim, idiom or a stance rather than a bounded entity as certain groups. By treating diaspora as a category of practices, rather than a substantial entity, it is possible to avoid false generalisations. In this regard, Brubaker (Ibid. 5) shows three critical factors which enable the formation of the diaspora: dispersion, homeland orientation and boundary maintenance. These three criteria have been widely discussed by scholars referring to diverse categories of migrants. However, Brubaker (Ibid.) is quite critical of affirming that diaspora cannot be universally applied to every dispersed population. The three core elements discussed previously have also been regarded as elements of tension and difference across the heterogeneity of scholars' views. While the first criterion of dispersion has been widely recognised by all social scientists, the second criterion, the orientation to homeland creates tension since not all the migrants have the desire to return to their native countries (Clifford 1994). Furthermore, a number of studies have stressed how the concept of diaspora presents heterogeneity, especially when considering, for instance, categories of migrants like labour migrants and refugees. Recent studies dealing with diaspora communities and the emergence of civil, religious and ethnic conflicts, on the one hand, have criticised the static relationship between culture, identity and territory. On the other hand, according to this idea, refugees escaping from native states are not an undifferentiated mass of people who will regain their territorial and cultural characteristics only when returning back "home". Diverse studies have in fact problematised the meaning of home, presenting a more fluid and multiple vision of it clashing against the nationalistic discourse which locates home in an exclusive and bounded territory (Brah 1996; Cheran 2006). Moreover, also identities emerge from the analysis as always *in process*, transversal,

plural, flexible, hybrid and multiple (Hall 1992; Appadurai 1996). The third criterion, identified by Brubaker, is also seen as problematic because it implies double perspective enhancing the boundaries maintenance approach against the boundaries erosions approach (Brubaker 2005: 6). In this regard, a diaspora may emerge as a bounded and distinctive community over time within the receiving society (as a sort of hindrance to assimilation), as well as a hybrid or creolised unit characterised by extensive transnationalism as well as dialogical interaction with the receiving society (Hall 1992; Brah 1996).

Analytically, Wahlbeck's comparative study (1999; 2002) on the Kurdish refugee communities in the U.K and Finland includes an important aspect for analysing diaspora as a social process. In particular, he emphasises how the concept of diaspora may be an important tool of investigation as well as a linking concept while dealing with refugees' relationships with their country of origin and destination. Diaspora may be a way to critically approach refugee studies. In particular, looking at diaspora as an ideal type, Wahlbeck (1999; 2002) considers it a form of *social organization* animated *in primis* by people involved in homeland politics. He also states that Kurdish identity and nationalism are strengthened by the exile. However, despite the economic and political relations and networks reuniting Kurds across countries and in the diaspora, people do also live and act in localities. Localities are, therefore, not the only places where people exert power and re-structure transnational actions, but also places where people might experience successful and unsuccessful local practices of integration which may also have an impact in their diaspora pattern.

An ethnographic study conducted by Pirkkalainen and Abdile (2011) on the role of Somali migrants in Finland and the U.K. and their connection to their homeland shows how the concept of diaspora can be either recognised or rejected by local communities in Somalia. Diaspora engagement presents different nuances depending on the political and socio-economic stability and access of certain areas in Somalia, the local population's perception of diaspora towards Somali returnees and different kinds of interests. In this regard, diaspora is portrayed with both positive and negative effects. While diaspora can bring fresh and useful ideas and contributes to significant developments in Somalia, it can also fuel tensions, conflicts and hostilities. The results of the study show that there is not only one homeland and there is not only one diaspora (Ibid. 67), thus bringing the idea of diaspora as fluid and volatile community rather than fixed and homogeneous one.

In my study, I do not adopt the theoretical concept of diaspora, since not all my informants, who consisted of Kurds and Arabs from Iraq, considered themselves to be part of a diaspora. Neither do these two groups present a common identity/ethnicity, nor a unidirectional attachment to their homeland with the intention of returning home. As I will show, firstly the concept of homeland becomes problematic for the two groups. Secondly, each de-territorialised ethnic group is internally characterised by diverse roots and routes (Clifford 1997) focused on diverse political, social, religious features. In this regard, the concept of the longing to return may be more flexible than

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the concept of diaspora, when examining wider transnational practices of Kurds and Arab Iraqis and investigating their transnational and integration processes. Thus, I argue that the longing to return may be considered a fruitful concept both in refugee and diaspora studies when dealing with questions of "homeland" and investigation of the concept of return.

2.6.3 *Transnationalism and integration in refugee studies between settlement and return*

At the end of the 1990's, a group of social scientists highlighted the incorporation of a transnational perspective into refugee studies (Al-Ali *et al.* 2001). However, scholars have also stressed the difference between *refugee transnationalism* and *immigrant transnationalism*. In their view, the main differences are firstly that refugees are forced to leave their country, often with little notice and limited choice, because of problems such as wars, persecution or ecological disasters, etc. Hence, their stay is often perceived, unlike other migrants, as temporary rather than permanent (Ghorashi 2005). Secondly, refugees have different resources and motivations than those of other migrants especially regarding their project of return and integration. Thirdly, I would add that transnational interaction might be a consequence of the lack of refugees' rights and freedom as will be shown in chapter nine.

Moreover, the intensity and variance of transnational activities may be explained by looking at the extensive level of heterogeneity among refugee communities (Al-Ali 2002; cf. Vertovec 2007, on superdiversity). Considering people of the same ethnic group as a definite and homogeneous group is a mistake. Differences such as education and professional background are also important features to consider in addition to ethnic background, gender and age (cf. the concept of intersectionality in feminist studies[14]). As Al-Ali (2002) points out, the variance of transnational activities among refugees belonging to the same ethnic groups can be explained by looking at their heterogeneity like different political views or ideas about religion and even educational background. In some cases, the time of arrival shapes the differences between the old and the newcomers. Though refugees' mobility between the country of origin and the country of settlement, can be limited because of instability, war, persecution, geographical distance or lack of documents, some refugees continue to engage in virtual as well as physical forms of transnational activities. In other cases, transnational activities may also be important resources for newly arrived refugees. Families back home can provide them with economic support if needed. At the same time, refugees, once situated in the receiving society, may help families back home by sending remittances and other kinds of support. These transnational connections vary from with the passage of time. They can be stronger or weaker and specifically orientated to

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14 The concept of intersectionality provides direction on how socio-cultural categories and power intertwine along the line of gender, ethnicity, generation, sexuality, class and nationality (Knudsen 2006: 1; cfr also Brah 1996; Yuval-Davis, 2005).

economic, political, social, religious issues. It has been demonstrated that transnational connections between diaspora refugees and communities at home can help or fuel conflicts and tensions as well as ameliorate their effect (Van Hear 2006: 11). For instance, in a study of Somali returnees to Somaliland, Tiilikainen (2011) introduces the concept of "failed diaspora". This concept reunites those Somalis who have been repatriated or deported back to Somalia for different reasons such as: criminal behaviour, mental problems, drugs abuses or contrasting life styles in the society of settlement. In these cases, the coming back is seen as an economic and social loss for the involved families. Disappointment and embarrassment emerge among family members when diaspora expectations do not generate fruitful results. However, returning back to the homeland may result in a curative opportunity for getting special treatments and family support, or in a negative experience characterised by destructive behaviour (Ibid.).

In any case, beyond the refugees' connections to places, questions of practices of belonging and identity may also be investigated (Korac 2009). Joly (2002) suggests that to better understand refugees' practices of integration once they have settled in, we should broaden our scope of analysis to include the places of conflict from where refugees are forced to flee. How activities are maintained across spaces are important variables for understanding refugees' lives both in the present and the future.

New studies have also shown that forced migration has led to forced transnationalism (Al-Ali et al. 2001: 591; Al-Ali & Koser 2002). Transnational engagement is, therefore, perceived as a constraint. In this regard, certain family responsibilities and bureaucratic affairs (like owning a property) push refugees to become more involved in their home country than they would like to (Al-Ali 2002: 115). Koser (2002), analysing the case of Eritrean refugees, charts the transition of a refugee community into a (forced) transnational one. The author goes on to say that one of the reasons that refugees, even after years of exile, maintain their contacts back home, is social obligation towards their families and their country. For example, Eritreans living abroad usually provide financial relief to families and friends, while assisting in the reconstruction of the Eritrean state. Some sociologists (Al-Ali et al.2001; Levitt 2001; cf. Vertovec 2003: 654) call this phenomenon a "mobilising structure" referring to the way migrants collectively manage different types of resources, formally and informally, from abroad for community development. Moreover, by making these contributions, refugees acquire a special status both in their host and home communities. The link, therefore, between collective opportunity and action, is really slight and legitimated by a process of negotiation of shared meanings, motivations, and interests. Conversely, concerning the Eritrean state, this transnational process has almost institutionalised the diaspora as a means to be benefited from[15] (Koser 2002).

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15 Since gaining independence, Eritrean citizens, residing outside Eritrea, have been asked to pay the 2 per cent of their annual income to the Eritrean State (Koser 2002: 144).

From Graham & Khosravi's point of view (1997) transnational activities can also be encouraged by a spontaneous feeling of guilt and shame, for having left family and friends back home. The reception of undeserved benefits and privileges, while leading a "normal life" away from the threat of war and instability, creates the base for a collective remorse and anxiety.

However, a less conflicting analysis of integration and transnationalism reflects the contemporaneous balance between these two processes. If a refugee integrates into a society, it does not mean that automatically his/her attachment to the homeland is severed. It may occur, but it is not an inevitable consequence. Transnationalism recognises that settlement and integration occur within the context of two or more locations, with the consequence of forging migrants' identities across space (Sherrell & Hyndman 2006: 16). As a consequence, speaking about integration from a transnational perspective also means bearing in mind the role of the countries of origin involved and the diverse ties that a refugee may preserve. For instance, the ability to engage globally in homeland affairs is also dependent on the degree of openness of the country of origin (Østergaard-Nielsen 2001). Generally, the improvement of socio-economic and political conditions in the country of origin should influence refugees in their willingness to return (Al Ali et al. 2002; Black & Gent 2006). In particular, short visits work as "reality checks" (Muggeridge & Dona' 2006) or represent opportunities to realistically see the change in one's own eyes. Short visit can be precursors of permanent plans to return. At the same time, the return is not properly a return "home". Thus, people's identity as well as society changes politically, socially and economically especially in post conflict countries (Hammond 1999; Koser & Black 1999). In this regard, the return should been approached as a continuous process, a re-adaptation or reintegration to the new condition of the society of origin (Black & Gent 2006). In this regard, repatriation is not a mere end to the so-called *refugees' cycle* (Koser & Black 1999) characterised by interconnected phases (the escape, the temporary settlement and the return), but rather the beginning of a new phase (Koser and Black 1999).

2.6.4 The "myth of return"

The expression "myth of return", often utilised in immigrant and refugee studies, originally came from sociological and anthropological research (Al Rasheed 1994: 199). This expression was first coined by Anwar (1979), who in his sociological study of Pakistani communities in a town in the North of England noticed how settlement was considered a temporary condition even by those economic migrants who arrived to U.K in the early 1960s. The return to Pakistan did not happen[16] but the myth of return revealed to be a perfect bond through which migrants maintain and reinforce the ethnic

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[16] Generally, economic opportunities, standard of living as well as children's future were addressed as the main reasons for staying.

boundaries while resisting the assimilation processes. In recent decades, the myth of return has been widely employed in immigrants and refugees studies when addressing people escaping from political, social, economic and environmental disasters (Al Rasheed 1994; Cohen and Gold 1997; Zetter 1999). One of the best definitions of the concept has been provided by Cohen and Gold (1997), in their study of Israeli immigrants in Toronto, where imagination and reality are presented as intertwined elements:

The two words, myth (usually a fantasy) and return (maybe a reality), connote a wishful fantasy, or belief, of immigrants that, in an unspecified date in the future, they will return permanently to their homeland. While aspirations to return are not regarded by the migrants as a myth, they become a social myth because they never materialize despite the fact they are commonly expressed by many migrants of different ethnic origins (Cohen & Gold 1997: 375).

Other researchers like Al-Rasheed (1994: 203) point out that the m*yth is not a universal state of mind,* but is a fluid concept which may be approached both at the individual and group level. In her study of Iraqi Arab and the Iraqi Assyrian refugee communities, Al-Rasheed (1994: 202) points out that refugees do not constitute an undifferentiated mass of people just because they share the experience of displacement, persecution and fear; or because they come from the same country where they possibly speak the same language or share the same cultural background. One of the elements to take into consideration, when dealing with the myth of return is the relationship with the homeland prior to the flight. Al Rasheed (1994:202) notices that people's accounts of homeland also intertwine with perceptions of national and ethnic belonging. As a result, Iraqi Arabs are more homeland-oriented, while Assyrians, recognised as a minority in Iraq, are more inclined to integrate in the U.K. In terms of settlement, while Iraqi Arabs perceived their exile as a temporary state, Assyrians recognise their stay as a permanent one since they believe they do not have a home in Iraq (Al-Rasheed 1994: 204). In this case, the concept of the myth of return has been critically adopted to reject the refugees' desire to return to their homeland as a natural given. The return arises from past experiences intertwined with memories, histories and relationship with its country of origin.

Some years after, Zetter (1999) renames the "myth of return" with the "myth of return home" focusing on the fact that what is idealised is not the return, but the meaning of home described in terms of both symbolic and material aspects. Drawing on his article, Zetter (Ibid.) says that, studying Greek-Cypriot refugees, they have maintained a strong conviction to return home. He also points out that, in the meantime, they have pragmatically adapted to exile. The variation between adaptation and nostalgia for home seems to be explained differently than in Al-Rasheed's study (1994). In order to explain his theory, he adopts the metaphor of a *fragmented triangle* where the points at each intersection represent the past, the present and the future. When refugees are forced to leave their homes, one of the parameters of the triangle, the past, is removed, or fractured. The triangle is broken and the refugees lose their

past. According to this model, the refugee seeks to maintain the social and cultural elements of the past; to adapt to the present exile situation; to return home in the future. In terms of settlement, the adaptation of Greek-Cypriot refugees, after more than two decades of exile, is essentially regressive and progressive. Zetter (Ibid. 6) notices the simultaneous co-existence of progression and regression among the refugees. Some refugees experience a more easy transition into the receiving society by becoming forward-thinking, while others reproduce the past resulting in alienation. Both groups have a strong attachment to home but they express the "myth of return" through different concepts: belief and hope (Ibid. 14-15). On the one hand, in the *belief strategy*, the refugee abstracts from the present to the past (Ibid. 15). In this case, the return condition seems to be pathological. The restoration of the past takes on great significance in the lives of this group of refugees. On the other hand, in the *hope strategy* the refugee abstracts the present to the future (Ibid.). Refugees hope to return home, but the return never occurs. At the same, their energies and activities are allocated to their current social setting. In sum, while Al-Rasheed (1994) explains that the development of the myth of return is dependent on refugees' past experiences and group's relationship of their ethnic group with their country of origin, Zetter (Ibid.) fails to explain why the myth of return varies, in intensity, from individual to individual or household to household (La Vecchia 2011: 343). In particular, the myth of return constructs a dichotomous division among past, present and future and aims to restore the situation by a return to what was. However, according to Hermansson (2003, *et al*. 149) the model of Zetter seems to be effective in the analysis of longitudinal data because it allows for a deeper understanding of the complexity and dynamics of the adaptation process.

Subsequent studies, following the concept of the myth of return, began to notice its conceptual limitations. For instance, Graham and Khosravi's study (1997) addressed the case of Iranian refugees settled in Sweden. In their article, they explain the avoidance of the concept of the myth of return since it does not completely capture the variation of Iranians' perception of home. In particular, they identify two main categories of refugees: the *political exiles* and the *emigrant Iranians*. While the first category of refugees refers to those people who left the country for political reasons, the second one refers to those who fled from Iran for other motives. Specifically, the latter category includes ethnic minorities, people displaced after the Iraq-Iran war and family reunification. Political exiles suffer from feelings of guilt and shame because they left their families and friends back home (Ibid.). They believe in the return to Iran as a *way to pay back their debt* and considerer the life in Sweden a brief sojourn (Graham & Khosravi 1997: 118). In order to preserve, their cultural identity, they seldom participate in the Swedish society. On the contrary, for Iranian emigrants the idea of return becomes weaker and weaker with the passage of time. The conclusion that emerges from their study is similar to Al-Rasheed's (1994). In both studies, forced migrants conceive the "myth of return" with varying intensities because of the nature of the relationship with their country of origin. However, home is clearly recreated around social networks and a sense of community which goes beyond a specific geographical and political location. In various accounts, Iran is often associated with

"*the 'good old days', formative years, youth, and the absence of adult responsibilities*" (Graham and Khosravi 1997:126) which seem to be lost forever and/or possibly never existed.

Ghorashi (2003) in her study of exiled Iranian women in the Netherlands and in the US specifies that the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion in the country of settlement may further challenge the myth of return. According to her view, the context where people are living influences the ways in which concepts such as homeland and nostalgia are approached and change over time (2003: 151). The Dutch and the American welfare states with aspects such as social security, refugees' reception, lifestyle and environment are elements that explain why in some cases the myth is relatively abandoned or revitalised by the exiles. Usually, while the US Iranian exiles are able to establish continuity between their past and present conditions with relative self-determination, in the Dutch context the adaptation to the new system takes more time and energy (Ghorashi 2003: 159). In the latter case, the myth of return is used as survival strategy.

Israel (2002: 27) claims that the myth of return refers to migrants and refugees idealising and reinventing the past and imagining a fictitious future that would reconnect them to their home. According to him, the reason why migrants want to return might be explained by looking at their life in both the country of origin and the country of settlement. Israel (2002) particularly analyses the ideologies of exile of South Africans, as individuals and as a group, preparing for their return home after 1990. Israel (2002) explains the process of return through the concept of *ideology of return*. He prefers to use a new approach instead of considering the discussion on the myth of return. The reason for this depends on the fact that the myth is not widely recognised among the refugee communities. The ideology of exile, developed and encouraged during the exile, explains firstly how the process of return is individually perceived and secondly how dynamics between the returnee and the group are structured. During the exile, refugees face two processes. On the one hand, the refugee, through a process of preservation, deals with the maintenance of their identity. On the other hand, through a process of construction, he/she develops new identities and ideologies. These two processes are not mutually exclusive, but they may coexist together. The development of a new identity and ideology fulfils the limitations of the past. As Said (2000: 186) claims, the exile is never a state of being satisfied, placid or secure. If the exile is the fracture, the ideology of exile is a bonding agent, which brings the refugees' broken histories back together while providing a sense of stability. In particular, ideologies are human constructions which refer to a specific history and group and are characterised by time and space. As Israel (2002: 28) states, the ideologies both structure and are structured by the lives that people lead. They may influence how people make choices and live out their social relations (*Ibid.*). Looking at ideologies, the refugees frame and shape their lives outside their home country.

The concept of return, whether addressed as a myth, an ideology, a dream or as hope has been presented as dependent on the dynamics of the country of origin,

country of settlement or both (Al-Rasheed 1994; Israel 2002; Ghorashi 2003; Graham & Khosravi 1997). Basically, the concept enforces the idea that beyond nostalgia, there can also be action. Pain, loss and loneliness can inspire the exile to believe in the possibility of a new life. As Said (2000: 177) stated, the exiles are cut off from their roots, their land and their past[17]. Despite the tragic situation, they feel a strong need to recreate their own world abroad. In addition, exiles live in two dimensions: the memory of the past and the certainty of a new life. The juxtaposition of these levels deepens the relationship between the refugee, his/her society of origin and the society of settlement. The concept of the "myth of return" is a theoretical construct (Al Rasheed 1994) which allows for the investigation of how the desire to return is created, maintained or restructured by migrants during their exile and across different countries. At the same time, as shown by previous studies, the myth of return provides useful data on how question of home are perceived by the migrants. However, the fascinating view of the *myth of return* seems no longer applicable in postmodern societies where a globalised world has increased the way in which people communicate and travel across the globe. For this reason, I will use the concept of the "*the longing to return*" in order to revisit the relation between the myth (as a fantasy) and return (as a reality). More details on the clarification of the concept will be provided in the subsequent chapters.

2.6.5   Notions of home

By contextualising the notion of home and belonging, researchers may discover migrants' ambivalence towards their native country (Kivisto & La Vecchia-Mikkola 2013 forthcoming; La Vecchia-Mikkola 2011) as well as forms of diasporic affiliations and loyalty to the homeland. Home and belonging are notions which are usually analysed by referring to bounded and unbounded places/spaces and time (Rapport and Dawson 1998). However, both terms contain varieties of meanings, scales of analysis as well as perspectives of study where both methodological and theoretical approaches should be better explained (Mallett 2004). In this study, both home and belonging are analysed in a local as well as in a transnational space. As I will discuss in chapter seven, Iraqis traveling to Iraq after 2004 were able to distinguish the Iraq of their memories from the real one. Home emerges from Iraqis' narratives as a combined description of physical, social and cognitive characteristics and belonging is socially constructed according to specific contexts, situations and system of meanings (cf. Anthias 2008). In particular, I will try to explore how questions of belonging after 2003/2004 developed or became even stronger for Iraqis living in Helsinki and Rome especially for forced migrants.

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17 Said (2000), for example argues that the lack of the contact with the "solidity" of the homeland can be substituted from different forms of "art" through which expressing feelings (the pathos of exile) or considerations. Hence, for many writers, poets, politicians and philosophers the experience of exile was fundamental for developing their literary works.

Social scientists analyse the meaning of home as a way to grasp and discover an intimate and emotional version of it. Home is an intimate *locus* tied to specific places and is explainable through a specific set of time. In the concept of home are condensed various meanings: (a) place(s), (a) space(s), feeling(s), practices, and/or an active state of being in the world (Mallet 2004: 65). Thus, in migration studies, home is usually considered as a multidimensional concept, which combines different levels of analysis (Somerville 1992; Rowles & Chaudhurry 2005). Social scientists provide different meanings to this term via psychological, socio-cultural, political and economic perspectives. For instance, home can be analysed at the individual, group, state and transnational level (Al-Ali 2002). Moreover, debates about home generate confusion and misunderstanding when terms such as home, homeland, place, state or nation are erroneously considered as synonymous. Hobsbawm (1991: 67-68) presents a quite clear definition of home (*heim*) and homeland (*heimat*) which is a useful element to start with. While the first term, depicts home as an intimate feeling, usually attached to infancy and childhood memories and household dynamics, the latter refers to the more patriotic and collective meaning of home as country territory or homeland.

In sociology, traditional literature has shaped the concept of home according to three main perspectives (which may also overlap): physical, social and cognitive. In the first case, home coincides with the country of origin, a specific territory or a bounded *locus* in which a homogeneous community, with a definite culture, lives and organises itself by developing a particular identity and set of practices (Warner 1994; Hayward 1975). Home carries within itself a sense of identity in which people feel safe. From a social perspective, home is a place of identification, defined in terms of social relationships and cultural meanings (Fullilove 1996; Fog Olwig 1998). It is a place in which a set of practices, in a repetition of habitual social interactions are created and recreated (Rapport & Dawson 1998: 27). The study of Tiilikainen (2003: 282) suggests that Somali Muslim women in Finland recreate home thanks to daily routines, social memories, language, family network, religious practices and other rituals which span over borders. According to Saunders and Williams (1988: 82 cit in Mallet 2004: 68) home is a 'socio-spatial system' that represents the fusion of the physical unit or house and the social unit or household. Following a constructionist approach, they argue that geographical factors, together with issues such as class, ethnicity and housing tenure, explain some of the variations in the meaning of home (Ibid.). Home is, therefore, the result of ongoing dynamic social relationships which are highly contextualised in a specific space. Other social scientists prefer to analyse the concept of home via its cognitive perspective, and therefore associate it with pleasant memories, intimate situations, a place of warmth, refuge and protective security amongst family and loved ones (Sarup 1994: 94; Dovey 1985), nostalgia and longing for self and origin (Ray 2000; Akhtar 1999) or a land evoking emotional history and memory (Kingsolver 2001:41).

Recently, transnational studies have initiated a new debate on locating home in a new perspective arising from the view of a globalised world. Instead of regarding home

as a stable, safe and physical centre of the universe to where return to, new studies highlight how the notion of home becomes more and more fluid and ambiguous (Rapport & Dawson 1998: 27). The idea that people are encapsulated in demarcated territories with specific cultures is no longer suitable in a world in which people and borders move. Therefore, home does not have a crystallised meaning, but it can be extrapolated from a specific territory to others in which people experience special attachments and develop a specific identity. For instance, Habib (1996) considered her personal experience of Lebanese living in exile, from which she argued that the concept of home changes over time and is not only related to a geographical place. During her travels across different countries such as Greece, France, Cyprus, and United States, she was able to find a bit of home in all of them. In addition, Black (2002: 126) explored the case of refugee from Bosnia-Herzegovina and argued that is more appropriate to articulate the *"concept"* of home with the *"concepts"* of home because home can be made re-made, imagined, remembered or desired; it can refers as much to beliefs, customs or traditions as physical places or buildings (Ibid.). But, in order to get its significance completely, people need to think about it as a concept in flux (Ibid.).

According to these above mentioned perspectives, home can be defined as a process of living, remembering and creating constant points of reference across time and space. People may develop multiple homes across space while being capable of living in pluri-localities with their multiple identities (Al-Ali & Koser 2002; Rouse 1991; Vertovec 1999). Therefore, home becomes hyperlocalised and deterritorialised (Malkki 1992; Massey 1994), as transnational practices are facilitated by changes in technological communication and transport, reduced distances, disintegrated borders, condensed cultures and hybridised identity (Rapport & Dawson 1998; Glick Schiller & Basch 1994). Migrants are able to travel back and forth across countries with different cultures and histories. They can communicate easily and quickly, thereby reinforcing their social and political network (Levitt 1998; Juntunen 2012). They can start political, social and even economic connections with people back home. Furthermore, forced migrants, as it will be shown in this study, are able to connect to their country of origin. Refugees in particular may have different motivations and resources available to them than other migrants do who may form transnational networks in a quest for economic advancement and social recognition (Sherrell & Hyndman 2006: 19). The reason why transnational practices are constituted by refugees may be explained in various ways. Social pressures, unwelcome family responsibilities and feelings of guilt may also reinforce transnationalism (cf. also Al-Ali & Koser 2002).

But what are the implications of this new vision of home on people's lives? For some social scientists, the tensions between two societies, i.e. the society of origin and the society of settlement, are solved in a unique social field that people live in and at the same time belong to, without creating any conflicts (Glick Schiller 1992). On the other hand, others present a compelling analysis of post-modern societies where migrants' lives across two or more countries, generate fragmentation and conflicting feelings such as confusion, sense of discontinuity, ambiguity and/or rupture that

enforces a feeling of belonging to neither place (Salih 2002; Huttunen 2010). Even memorable events such as holidays, celebrations and other special occasions became stressful (Ibid.). Restoring the meaning of home is usually a difficult task because people have to cope with psychological and emotional trauma (Webster 1998).

In refugee studies, the sense of rupture, especially the one caused by a forced displacement, may encourage people to embrace a special meaning of home, where home is more of an invention than a *reality* (Malkki 1992). This situation may happen when migrants live far away from home for a long time. For others, situations of exile, concomitantly with the expansion of the cyber space culture, have shifted the meaning of home from materiality and sociality to a cyber space dimension where artificiality rules (Morse 1999: 67 cf. also diaspora Studies). Moreover, the number of people in situations of being deterritorialised and displaced increases everyday (Al Ali & Koser 2002). The sense of being deterritorialised and alienated may also be perceived in the home country. As Cohen (1995) states, people who have gone through social exclusion in their home country may still refer to the place as their home. In any case, it is widely accepted by sociologists and anthropologists that to better understand the meaning of home, people have to be alienated from it (Rapport and Dawson 1998; Case 1996). The separation from home, and from what people usually associate with it, strengthens the meaning of home and homelessness in a dynamic and dialectic fashion (Wardhaugh 1999:93). However, others argue that home is not just about feelings, and it can embrace a wider ideological meaning where people may have a sense of home even if they have no experience or memory of it (Somerville 1992:530; Gurney 1990).

In sociology, belonging lacks of pure analytical scope due to its absorption of and intersection with concepts such as identity or home, and affiliation with processes of integration and assimilation. In the transnational framework, belonging and identity are interchangeably used to describe people's mobility and forms of consequent inclusion and exclusion in diverse societies (Tiilikainen 2003; 2011; Pirkkalainen & Abdile 2011). However, as Anthias (2008: 8) states, while identity is about narratives of identifications (contextual, situational, temporal or fractured), belonging is about a multi-experience usually associated with inclusionary or exclusionary dynamics.

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 2008:8).

This multidimensionality of belonging is also extensively approached in other studies. For instance, Miller (2006: 94) in her study on Australian identity and belonging recognises three features of belonging as social, historical and environmental. In the first case, belonging is characterised in forms of connection explicated through social relationships between the *self* and the families, associations, community, society etc. The second case of belonging recognises the importance of

history as a filter for understanding people's actions and identity. Finally, belonging as an environmental feature stresses the idea that human beings are influenced by the environments, both natural and built, that they inhabit (Miller 2006: 151). Clearly the environments are exemplified by discussions about home, being away of home, homelessness, being at home *here*, being at home *there,* which basically brings lots of feelings, emotionality, homesickness, resentments and anger, especially when dealing with refugees and stateless or displaced people. The multi-layered dimensionality of belonging has also been addressed by Yuval-Davis (2006). In her article on "belonging and politics of belonging[18]" she traces three main analytical and overlapping levels through which belonging is constructed: the social location, the individuals' identifications and emotional attachments and the ethical and political value (Ibid. 200). In the *social location* context, belonging and identity are constructed along multiple axes of difference, such as gender, class, race and ethnicity, stage in the life cycle, sexuality and ability (Ibid.). The individual's identification and social attachments draw attention to the conflation of personal and emotional narratives within the group's narratives (Ibid.). As she states, this level of analysis relates directly or indirectly, to self and/or others' perceptions of what, being a member in such a grouping or collectivity, (ethnic, racial, national, cultural, religious) might mean (Yuval-Davis 2006: 202) as well as the meaning of home, sense of safety etc. In the third case, belonging is not just about social locations and constructions of individual and collective identities and attachments but also about the ways they are valued and judged by people (Ibid. 203).

However, belonging is a fundamental issue, especially when dealing with uprooted and diasporic people in search of home. As Alinia (2004:135) argues identity and belonging are not fixed but have to do with drawing borders and identification which is a relational and situational process. In particular, in her study of Kurdish diaspora in Sweden, she notices how the constitution of boundaries becomes more intense and sometimes necessary in a context that is made up of quick and sometimes fundamental change (Ibid.). In this process, collective and individual memories relating to alienation and displacement become fundamental issues to discover the process of identity construction. Past and present situations are there dialogically connected and reconnected across spaces.

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18 In the article, she distinguishes between the mere "belonging" from the "politics of belonging". She believes that the politics of belonging becomes politicised only when belonging is threatened in some way (Ibid. 197). In this regards, politics of belonging emerge by drawing a line between "us" and "them". On the other hand, belonging is explained through subjective and collective emotionality.

2.7   *Conclusion*

The emerging study of transnational migration has dominated the current discussion on migration since the 1990s. Various social scientists recognise transnational migration as a new pattern of migration reflecting globalisation and its consequences in a more partial scope; differentiating contemporary transnationalism from earlier instances of transnational migration. Transnational relations, therefore, appear to be more widespread than before, both geographically and socially. On the one hand, due to advanced technologies and low cost transportation, it is possible to connect within distant geographical locations. On the other hand, these connections, unlike before, are constantly and cheaply reproduced. Consequently, migration is characterised by a differentiated group of actors (involved at the global, national and local level), which in turn is structured through diverse political, social, religious, economic and cultural channels.

In this chapter, I have presented a conceptualisation of the term "transnationalism" ranging from its first definition as well as its consequential elaboration looking at the American and European perspective. Specifically, I have also discussed how a transnational perspective has enriched the integration discourse, presenting studies which have dealt with empirical results and demonstrating a potential coexistence between transnationalism and integration/assimilation. I have also presented important differences in the analysis of immigrant and refugee (forced) transnationalism. By doing so, I have also presented refugees and diaspora studies with reference to the perspective of return. In particular, the concept of the myth of return has been introduced as a way to critically and analytically deal with the issue of return by introducing a reflective perspective on home and belonging.

3   Methodology and methods

3.1   Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the relationship between methodology and methods in my study. I will explain why qualitative methods have been used to collect data and I will clarify the practicalities concerning the entry tactics to the field and the approaches to the data analysis. By doing so, I will also examine questions of positionality and reflexivity. The chapter will conclude by discussing ethical principles and validation strategies in a qualitative study.

3.2   Methodology

Social scientists employ various methods to describe, discover and understand social life. Methodology is a critical activity applied to the research process, which provides the philosophical groundwork for methods. It comprises assumptions, values and criteria that social scientists utilise to interpret data and establish conclusions (Boudon 1970; Bailey 1995).

In particular, the qualitative research tradition, to which my research belongs, tries to understand how participants socially construct the world, and what meanings those constructions have for the participants. The notion of the "constructed world" implies that individuals reside in a social, private and relational world that can be viewed and constructed from different perspectives (La Vecchia 2011: 338). The world is constructed and shaped through language, memory, systems of meaning, etc. (Ibid.). Data collected by researchers operating within a qualitative paradigm are thus rich, complex and various (Ibid.).

Grounded theory, which my research is inspired by, has become one of the widely used frameworks in qualitative data analysis. Theory derives from data gathering through the research process. Researchers analyse data by continuous comparison, firstly data with data, secondly between interpretations of these data into codes and categories (Mills et al. 2006: 3). The method entails the development of hypotheses after the data are collected. During the research process, hypotheses are produced more than tested differently from what happens in quantitative studies. As Glaser and Strauss (1967) state, theory generation may be accomplished by a comparative study among groups within the same substantive area. In my study, the comparison is made among

Iraqi people in two European countries. New interesting highlights, proposing a revision of grounded theory, have advanced over time. Charmaz (2000; 2006) suggests that constructivist grounded theory focused and reorganised the relationship between researchers and informants. Firstly, she believes that grounded theory encompasses an implicit constructionist paradigm. On one hand, the notion of *tabula rasa* with the researcher entering into the field without predetermined ideas is not practical. On the other hand, the researcher may proceed with an "open mind", which does not implicate the *blank state* or *tabula rasa*. Starting from the analysis of the traditional work of Glaser and Strauss, and proceeding with Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998) works, Charmaz (2000) upgrades grounded theory, elucidating that commonly researchers in relation to participants are not *completely free of bias* (Strauss & Corbin 1998: 97). Reality is more complex than it may seem, encompassing a multitude of perspectives and truths. As Guba and Lincoln (1994: 110) state, realities are understandable in the form of multiple, intangible mental constructions. *Theorizing is the act of construction* from data and the explanatory scheme that systematically integrates various concepts through statements of relationships (Strauss & Corbin 1998: 25). As Charmaz (2000: 524) states, data do not provide a window into reality, but rather reality comes out of the process of research in its temporal, cultural and structural context. This implicates that individual perceptions and constructions of reality vary, depending on personal experiences, time, values and principles. I believe that data has to be collected and analysed, but that data is also constructed through the interaction between the researcher and the informants. For instance, the concept of longing to return is a constructive concept, which rose from the interaction between me and my interviewees.

I think, as Charmaz (2006) suggests, that constructionist grounded theory allows for greater flexibility within research and for managing the intensifying diversity and multiplicity of the social realities of the participants. Reality, in fact, is more complex than we actually see and perspectives and truths may be multiple and altered over time. Therefore, processes rather than facts have to be explained (Skeggs 1995: 196). According to this perspective, knowledge is not discovered but constructed and reconstructed and dependent on individuals, contexts and time. In this regard, Helsinki and Rome are the "social laboratories" (Park et al. 1970) in which I apply empirical research and social theories. The Chicago school, since 1920 and for a decade after, is recognised as the first effective centre for qualitative research promoting "field research studies", which are based on methods presented in the traditions of sociology and anthropology. The inductive approach, presented in field research studies, immerses the researcher in the social world. Instead of beginning with a theory, the researcher is more likely to begin with an examination of the empirical world. Instead of testing hypotheses, the researcher focuses on gaining access to the site or creating relationships with the people she/he intends to study. In this regard, constructivist grounded theory implies an interpretive portrayal of the studied world, not an exact picture of it (Charmaz 2006: 10). In my study, grounded theory has inspired the analysis to focus on a careful reading of the empirical data and to create knowledge by coding, categorising and analysing central themes. Moreover, the interaction of empirical data and theoretical literature has been central for interpreting the findings.

Some sociologists argue that to better comprehend the dynamics of transnational migration today, it is necessary to broaden the analysis from the nation states' borders where migrants have settled; this implicates shifting from methodological nationalism in which nation states are the unit of analysis, to methodological transnationalism, an emerging consequence of the transnational paradigm (Wimmer & Glick Schiller 2003). Methodological transnationalism allows the researcher to reformulate existing accounts and data, to invent new kinds of information and evidence, to apply existing investigative approaches and to design research tools and approaches which analyse, interpret and explain transnational dynamics and phenomena (Levitt 2007: 11). However, this perspective seems to be quite fashionable and feasible amongst researchers in the US and more applicable to immigrant populations, rather than refugees. My study, despite the importance of the nation state as unit of social analysis, clarifies that, for understanding dynamic processes such as integration and return, national boundaries need to be transcended. What became clear during my empirical investigation was that Iraqis were no longer lacking space and time; they no longer lived in a state of *limbo,* but for the first time, their actions became embedded in social, cultural and economic activities reuniting both the country of origin and the country of settlement. However, communication tools as well as the new travel opportunities determined a variance and fluidity on the perception of the return itself. In this regard, methodological transnationalism helps to discover how people relate to different places and how belonging develops over time. Integration, return and transnationalism are seen as complex processes which can be fully understood within and across local, national and transnational borders.

My research also involves a comparative research perspective. As Durkheim (1982: 157) argued, comparative sociology is not a particular branch of sociology but it is sociology itself, in so far as it ceases to be purely descriptive and aspires to account for facts. Ragin (1996: 74) suggests that all empirical social research virtually involves a comparison of some sort. In the past few years, the sociology of migration has become concerned with the comparison of concepts, phenomenon and processes across countries, attempting to explore and explain similarity and variance. Moreover, the comparative method seems to be a fruitful expedient against two other fundamental methods: the experimental and the statistical methods (Smelser 1966 cit. in Lijphard 1971: 683) providing deeper and more valuable contextualised explanations. In a fast growing globalised world, cross-national comparative studies are suitable for analysing socio-political, economic and cultural flows and features across borders. In an increasingly global world, dialectic relationship between the global and the local appear reciprocally affected and also reinforced. In particular, Snyder (2001: 96) notices that comparing similar "sub-national units" across distinct national units may be a more powerful strategy for making valid statements than comparing national units. Sub-national comparisons, from city to city, prevent researchers from generalising one country case and allow him/her to move from the global to the local and vice versa. In the view and analysis of my collected data, it seems that a global perspective is usually made perceptible at the local level. The bottom-up view, which is the migrants'

perspective, comes out visibly and stronger attached to the city where people live or lived. Moreover, as Khayati (2008: 46) states, a comparative approach is generally sensitive to complexity and historical specificity and it may be used to generate new conceptual schemes. In this way, ambiguity is reduced by using emerging explanatory categories (e.g. the longing to return) and thematic readings.

According to Mills *et al*. (2006) possible problems to take into account in comparative research are: the case selection/sampling, the construction of equivalence and variables. In my research, as specified before, Iraqis are selected from two capital cities. The number of my interviewees is small as is in general the case in qualitative research, in which it is unfeasible to have statistically representative populations. However, in terms of time of arrival, Iraqis started to arrive in Italy in the 1970s as students. In Finland, the first Iraqis arrived as quota refugees during the 1990s. This is an important difference, because it permits to select diverse migration stories and reception experiences while separating the immigrants from the refugees. Likewise, equivalence, as suggested by Johnson (1998), is a fundamental prerequisite in comparative studies because it explains the dimensions and procedures used to make cross-cultural comparisons. Equivalence is, therefore, represented by the sample of population which has been carefully selected in two countries. However, in the Finnish case Iraqis display a higher level of socio-cultural and political diversity than in the Italian case. On the one hand, the selected countries have been chosen as new immigration countries with a really small refugee population. On the other hand, these countries differ in their welfare state structure and civil society organisation. While Italy is characterised by a weak welfare state and a strong civil society, Finland is a country with a strong welfare state and limited role for the civil society in immigrant integration. Moreover, with reference to reception and integration policies, these countries present different frameworks for dealing with diversity and fostering inclusion within the selected localities.

3.3   My research framework in practice

When I started this project, I immediately realised that even my first introduction to my first Iraqi informants was a delicate phase. Misinterpretations or negative attitudes could have a negative impact on the subsequent phases of the research process. I understood, therefore, that the issue of trust had to be highly stressed and continuously considered from the beginning. Here, I will present how the research framework came into practice.

Before starting with my interviews and participant observation, I conducted several "pilot interviews" with Iraqis living in Italy and Finland. My main goal was not only to get a general picture of the life of refugees in different societies of settlement but, to also organise and systematise my interview guideline in order to address a specific topic. Moreover, pilot interviews accompanied by brief fieldwork experiences allowed

me to discern the initial information on the ethnic groups in terms of the keywords used and ethnic diversity variance.

As a qualitative researcher, I believe that exploring people's experiences through their narratives provides important information on (un)predictable things. For example, I noticed that even when questions of return were not openly asked, the interviewees presented their views on this topic. In many cases, people stressed that, coming back to Iraq and particularly to Kurdistan, became easier after 2003 and 2004. However, my interest was to look beyond the literal meaning of return and try to discover peoples' motivations, fears, hopes and possibilities while they live across different countries. In particular, I tried to construct and deconstruct the complex issue of return by discovering different nuances. Iraqi voices, therefore, became useful to answer various questions and to get insights into situations which were little known. In this regard, qualitative investigation, characterised by the use of semi-structured interviews and fieldwork, was suitable for the analysis of *transnational* Iraqis, as capable of capturing processes and aspects that would be difficult to grasp by quantitative investigation.

My role as a researcher was not to search for the truthfulness of people's stories, but to understand why for my informants certain stories became so important to tell. I was not the migration officer they needed to convince for claiming a refugee status or some other official interrogating them on the authenticity of their stories; I was simply a researcher who tried to get a "perception" of their lives without a power to decide whether a story was true or not. The relation between true and untrue stories is in fact problematic when considering refugees. For example, Blasim (2009:1) an Iraqi writer, in the introduction of his best-seller book "the Madman of Freedom Square", explains that refugees usually have two stories: the real one and the one for the record. The stories of the record are those provided to officials for receiving the right to humanitarian asylum, while the real ones remained locked in the heart of the people (Ibid.). However, the difference between the real and the fictitious stories with the passing of time become blurred and it is finally impossible to distinguish them (Ibid.). In this regard, the role of the researcher as a listener is not to distinguish between the real and the fictitious stories, but to comprehend the meaning of refugeeism and other related processes emerging from these stories. In this study, narratives help to situate people in new locations and to capture people's perception of belonging, settlement and return. At the same time, narratives permit to better contextualise stories of uprooted people especially when dealing with political complicated issues.

Moreover, the advantage of semi-structured interviews allowed me to obtain broad information but, at the same time, to investigate certain topics beyond my list of questions while avoiding confusion and ambiguity. At the same time, qualitative research helped me to look at return not as an independent process, but as linked to others such as integration and transnationalism. In particular, people's return perspectives were connected and accounted with reference to integration and transnational activities, which represented the basis for understanding social life. At the same time, participant observation permitted, not only to challenge interview data, but also to explore how the social world was constructed by the informants from an insider

perspective. I was not merely observing, but also experiencing and participating in certain activities and upholding trust. These two methods were the most appropriate for gaining knowledge on Iraqis, their social organization, and especially to comprehend people' connection between the society of settlement and the society of origin.

3.4   Selecting the sample

I used four different sources to find my interviewees: national researchers/activists in the field of migration and refugees studies, national organisations/associations with multicultural orientations, Internet resources, and mosques. After the first contact, I used the snowball method, which allows the researcher to contact an informant who in turn suggests a second or third name and so on. In particular, this technique, often employed in ethnographic and sociological studies, has been used for reaching populations not easily accessible by the researcher. The reason why I utilised different channels was because, in my pilot interviews, I noticed that refugees with similar backgrounds stuck together and suggested other refugees to me with relatively homogeneous social traits in terms of experience, age, political affiliation and length of migration (La Vecchia 2011: 339). The diversity of gateways helped to guarantee variation in the refugee population in terms of background, status, ethnic group and network characteristics. However, the diasporic reality reveals that, the people from both groups which participated to the study, present many different kinds of identification –ethnic, social, economic - and these identifications are performed in interplay with other identifications. Since I wanted to maintain variety in the segment of the community, I tried to emphasise a diverse range of refugee experiences discovering variation even inside the same ethnic group. I attempted to reach people who belonged to different networks and, therefore, to partly solve or contain problems of representation and sampling principles generated from the snowball technique (Atkinson & Flint 2001). However, the interviewees, due to my lack of both Kurdish and Arabic language, included mainly educated and secularised Iraqis.

In order for me to analyse questions of return and integration, the interviewed Iraqis needed to be able to reflect on specific experiences. To be included in the sample they had to be: **a)** Arabs and Kurds from Iraq who settled in Finland or Italy for a minimum of two years or maximum of thirty years. The time frame is, therefore, an important variable to better specify the connection between return and integration. **b)** Iraqis who were networking with other Iraqis (from Iraq and/or other countries) **c)** Iraqis who would be at least fifteen years old when they left Iraq. This is quite important because the meaning of home, homeland and memories are deeply analysed when referring to return. The analysis of migrants' home and life before exile is significant for understanding the dynamic of the myth of return among different ethnic groups (Joly 2002). At the same time, it permits to re-challenge the complexity of meaning of home; how people describe it; and where home is possibly located.

Table 1. The 48 Semi-structured interviews

Ethnic group in Helsinki	Time of arrival to Finland		
	1970/80s	*1990s*	*2000s*
Arab Iraqis	1	5	6
Iraqi Kurds	-	6	6

Ethnic group in Rome	Time of arrival to Italy		
	1970/80s	*1990s*	*2000s*
Arab Iraqis	5	4	3
Iraqi Kurds	3	4	5

In total, forty-eight people were interviewed, twenty-four in Finland and twenty-four in Italy (table 1; cf. also Appendix 1). Nine individuals had arrived in Europe during the 1970s or 1980s (only one of which resides in Finland), nineteen during the 1990s, and twenty during the first decade of the twenty-first century. Women were underrepresented in the sample. Especially in Rome, it was difficult to find women permanently residing in the capital. This trend reflected the demography of the diasporic Iraqi community with a strong male predominance. In total, twelve women (seven in Helsinki and five in Rome) and thirty-six men (seventeen in Helsinki and nineteen in Rome) have been interviewed.

In terms of age, people were between twenty to sixty years of age, with a majority being around forty.

Table 2. Age variance in total

Age	20>29	30>39	40>49	50+
Total	6	16	15	11

In particular, in Helsinki the 12.5% of the informants were between ages 20 and 29; the 45.8% between ages 30 and 39; the 33.3% between 40 and 49, while only the

0.083% were age 50 or older. In Rome, the 12.5% of the informants were between ages 20 and 29; the 20.8% between ages 30 and 39; the 29.1% between ages 40 and 49; the 37.5% of age 50 or older.

Half of the people possessed a university degree or equivalent from Iraqi universities and/or from institutions in the country of settlement. The rest of the people had completed the equivalent of a low and high school diploma. At the time of the interviews, thirteen people (six in Rome and seven in Helsinki) were unemployed. Many Iraqis from both countries worked in various job fields like arts and entertainment, education, transportation and food industry.

Almost all of the informants have been raised as Muslims though in most cases they were non-practicing. In terms of language capabilities, whether they were native Arabic or Kurdish speakers, most of them possessed good English-language skills. Those who were part of the Italian data set tended to speak Italian quite proficiently, while a larger number in Finland had a comparatively less developed command of Finnish, especially those with no higher education. Kurdish women were the least inclined to be able to speak English. With reference to their geographical origins, the majority of the people came from big cities like Baghdad, Karbala, Erbil, Nasiriyah, Kirkuk, Basra and Sulaymaniya. Only ten people referred to coming from small rural areas. However, the division between urban and rural areas is not always so sharp, but interconnected due to reference to tribes, family affiliations and generations.

In terms of marital status, the sample included four categories: those never-married, those married to other Iraqis, those married to locals (Italian or Finns), and those who were divorced or widowed (more details in the appendix 1). In terms of family structure, all married and divorced/widowed Iraqis had children living with them. Finally, on the legal status of the interviewees, in the Finnish case, all my informants either arrived within the refugee quota system or as asylum seekers coming especially from the former Soviet Union and Baltic states (especially from Estonia). All asylum seekers ultimately received refugee or humanitarian status. The Italian case is more complicated. The number of Iraqis who arrived during the 1970s and 1980s are officially labour migrants. Individuals who arrived at the beginning of the 1990s included those who had refugee status upon arrival, those who sought asylum, and the undocumented. Some of these undocumented migrants, during the years, took advantage of the Italian system of sanatoria (or *regolarizzazione*), which has permitted them to regularise their status and obtain work permits. A consistent number of those who arrived in the 2000s were characterised as deported Iraqis. Those who illegally crossed the Italian border to reach their compatriots in other European countries, such as Germany and Sweden, were sent back to Italy under the Dublin convention for a new hearing.

3.5   Methods

Intensive research was performed for six months in Helsinki in 2007, from February to July and a semester in Rome, from October 2007 to March 2008. In total, 48 semi-structured interviews were conducted combined with participant observation. These methods will be presented below.

3.5.1   Interviews

In my research, I opted for the semi-structured format. Semi-structured interviews allowed me to ask major questions and to have the freedom to alter their sequence and probe for more information. Usually, personal information was asked in a standardised form. However, for the rest of the interview I sought both *clarification* and *elaboration* on the answers given by the informants. In my opinion, semi-structured (and also unstructured interviews) are especially useful for exploring undefined and considerably complex issues. This is because interviews can be modified thanks to their high flexibility. By contrast, structured interviews are typically inflexible; they generate answers that can be coded and processed quickly. Answers must fit into boxes of categories, which the researcher has predetermined. In qualitative interviewing, however, the researcher looks for rich and detailed answers. As May (2001: 120) notices interviews yield insight into people's biographies, experiences, opinions, values, aspirations, attitudes and feelings. I also think that, with the semi-structured interviews, the informant is encouraged to discuss everything he/she and thinks is important regarding the topic. This situation can generate a more informal and comfortable feeling between the two or more persons. However, not all the interviews showed the same degree of bond and understanding. Some interviews more than others provided richer and more detailed data. Overall, the semi-structured approach helped me to develop personal empathy with the participants and acquire useful information. Therefore, some sociologists claim that these kinds of interviews are particularly recommended for the study of marginalised groups and women (Esterberg 2002).

A single interview lasted approximately 30 minutes to 2 hours. In most of the cases, interviews were anticipated by previous conversations and meetings in which I provided information about the nature of the research project. Informed consent was obtained before embarking in the research process. Generally, the interviewees decided where and when to meet. This option of choice created a more comfortable situation. Generally, their home and working places, cafes and sometimes mosques were the preferred locations. Moreover, I was aware of external factors. A few days before planning an interview, I paid attention to events happening in Iraq as well as in Italy and Finland related to the Iraqis, which could have an impact of my informants' accounts. Then, before starting with the interview process, scrupulous attention was paid to the issue of anonymity, privacy and confidentiality by assuring that data were used just for research purposes. In particular, numerical reference was given to protect the informants and their stories during both the writing and the research process (cf.

Appendix 1: Informants). The collection of interviews ended when the so-called "saturation point" was reached. The interviews were almost all tape-recorded and fully transcribed and included symbols to indicate pauses, silence, enthusiasm, intonations and overlapping speech (cf. Esterberg 2002). In seven cases, interviews were not recorded to meet people's wishes and ethical principles.

In every interview, informants were encouraged to answer some questions focusing on their life in the country of origin, memories and conditions that forced them to flee, desire to go back and life experiences in the country of settlement, nature and extent of their network within the Iraqi community and expectations for the future of their country. The interview guideline was structured in three parts, which included three main temporal phases: the past, the present and the future. Feelings, hope and memories were also analysed as a starting point for explaining questions of home, belonging, desire to go back and expectations for the future.

What did I take into account when conducting the interviews? Firstly, I believe that interviewing is a continuous process of learning. Therefore, I noticed how my interview skills improved with practice. Time after time, I felt more comfortable and was able to negotiate my questions with my informants' accounts without creating inopportune gaps. As England (1994: 82) suggests, research should be seen more as a process than a mere product, involving reflections, re-evaluation and decisions.

Secondly, I considered the interviews to be *forms of conversation* (Kvale 1996). Presenting two alternative metaphors for the research interviewer's role, Kvale (1996: 3) speaks about the "miner" and the "traveller". These metaphors explain the implications of different theoretical understandings of interview research. The miner metaphor corresponds to the modernist notion of knowledge as a given, buried metal to be excavated, and the researcher as either seeking objective facts or "nuggets of essential meaning" (Ibid.). On the other hand, the traveller metaphor reflects the idea of an interview as a conversation. Therefore, the traveller wanders along with the local inhabitants, asks questions that lead the subjects to tell their own stories of their lived world, and converses with them in the original Latin meaning of conversation as 'wandering together with' (Ibid. 4). Moreover, this process of investigation leads to new knowledge and a change in the interviewer's self-understanding through a process of self-reflection. This process of investigation leads to new knowledge and a change in the interviewer's self-understanding through a process of self-reflection. My experience, as "the traveller researcher", stressed the fact that knowledge is neither inside an individual nor outside in the world, but exists in the connection between individuals and the world. Clearly, the constructivist grounded theory approach supports an inductive contextualised process where the researcher and the informants are the ones responsible for constructing and reconstructing a system of meanings together. Moreover, these meanings are strictly bound according to the individuals, the time and the space. However, I was always aware of the fact that an interview goes beyond the small talk or the chat; interviews involve careful questioning and listening with the purpose of obtaining thoroughly tested knowledge. In this regard, as a

researcher I was able to lead the interview maintaining control of the informant (Kvale, 1996) not only as a talker, but also as a careful listener able to historically, politically and socially contextualise people's responses.

Thirdly, following the previous point, during the interview I tried to keep the conversation rolling. The interview process is not a mechanical way of asking questions but is an empathic dialogue between two or more people that "live" the same experience. As a metaphor Esterberg (2002) prefers the idea of a meandering river rather than a ping-pong game. The process involves actively listening to what your interviewee has to say, following up, and keeping the conversation rolling (Ibid.). It's important to use follow-up questions and probes to clarify replies or to gain further information. In addition, during the interview process it is best to avoid rough transitions. For example, when an informant was speaking about a particular tormenting past experience, I did not change the topic immediately, but listened and tried to understand why that specific story was told. In some cases, I switched the tape recorder off, as a form of respect to the person, when they started to cry or needed a break because of sad memories.

Fourthly, Patton (1990: 278) suggests that qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable and able to be explicit. For this reason, the interviewer's task becomes challenging when the researcher tries to find out what is in and on someone else's mind. Unlike some researchers (Bryman 2004; Esterberg 2002), who believe that "being similar" in terms of culture, life situations and language is important for getting close to the informants, I think that it is as important to be trusted by the interviewees (cf. ethics section of this study). In this regard, empathy understood as feeling, awareness and understanding is one of the key aspects to consider.

Finally, general advantages of the semi-structured interview approach included the flexibility of the researcher in asking questions; the establishment of an atmosphere of confidence between the interviewer and interviewee; the observation of non-verbal behaviour; the spontaneity of the interview process and the possibility to have more complete answers (cf. Bailey 1995). However, I also faced disadvantages such as costs and time. Costs are usually addressed because comparative research across different countries demanded frequent travel and time, because in some cases interviews can be prolonged for quite some time and also the transcription process is lengthy.

3.5.2   Participant observation

During the study, I combined interviews with participant observation in relevant social settings in Helsinki and Rome during 2007 and 2008. This fieldwork period preceded my interview collection and provided me with contacts to this social setting. I attended some meetings and private parties (such as birthdays and reunions) and traditional festivities (e.g. the Halabja Memorial Day, the New Year 's Eve: Newroz,

the Anfal memorial day and other Iraqi cultural events), or events promoted by multicultural centres and ethnic associations such as seminars and demonstrations as suggested by key informants. Also typical restaurants and mosques were considered as channels for getting to know people and their traditions, the food, the music, etc. Generally, these places became the *locus* where observational data were also visually recorded through my field notes. Thus, Esterberg (2002: 59) argues that participation is more than simply asking questions. The researchers can use all of their senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch (Ibid.). All these situations gave me a general picture of the lifestyle that Iraqis experienced in both countries.

I tried to engage in conversations with as many people as possible during these occasions. In many occasions, I introduced myself as a researcher in the field of migration. In this way, I became "visible" through the participant observation period even before starting the interviews. Moreover, as we know in order for fieldwork to be successful it needs to be constantly challenged and trust needs to be established and be maintained. This routine situation of participation created an atmosphere of trust among the Iraqi people, who already saw me on different occasions and talked to me like a "sister[19]". By doing so, I also tried to prevent refusals, by interviewing people I had met several times and who showed interest in what I was doing. In Italy especially, in the case of Iraqi refugees, clandestine and deported people with pending applications, trust and rapport has been built gradually over time. I made it a habit to move around the city with them in order to discover how these people lived and where they ate and slept. As soon as I became a little familiar, the research process became easier. I was also surprised by their hospitality even when their resources and conditions were difficult and adverse. Sometimes I helped them in various situations such as: the translation of some official and unofficial paper/letter; information about Italian society in terms of jobs, housing, education, etc.; meeting with some officials (usually volunteer lawyers) to discuss their situation; or in other cases, some other people showed curiosity about my life in Finland, as a country they had heard about from family and friends.

Participation in these kinds of events raises questions of positionality and reflexivity, two overlapping features. In the critical relation between researcher and informants mutual differences, positionality and reflexivity have been spatially and temporally bounded to the contexts. Reflexivity refers to the subjective but critical account of the researcher's feelings during the data collection experience. It is concerned with the connection between the researcher and the social world. The degree of reflexivity is usually quite deep in ethnographical studies where the researcher has a more intimate relationship with those being studied. Rose (1997: 309) states that reflexivity usually requires two perspectives: the "inward" to the identity of the researcher and the "outward", which reveals the connection between the researcher and the wider world. By considering both perspectives, reflexivity may also lead the researcher to self-discovery as they confront challenges and problems (England, 1994).

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19 "Sister" is the equivalent of "*friend*" in the Arabic world.

Davies (1999: 5) when addressing reflexivity suggests that the boundaries between subject and object disappear; the one becomes the other. I progressively felt like an integral part of the setting. My feelings of being guilty, happy or stressed became inevitable consequences of people's narrations. These feelings will be addressed in the following paragraphs of this chapter.

On the other hand, positionality refers to a dynamic and contingent situation of the researcher in the context of conducting research. I was aware of the fact that my gender, education, and identity as a Western citizen could impact the construction of knowledge and interpersonal relationship with my informants. However, the way I entered into the field overcame the essentialist binary categorisation between Eastern/Western or they/us or rich/poor or men/women, but reflected a situation of *in-betweenness* (Bhabha 1994). In the process of knowing each other, favourable conditions emerged from both sides over time. Little by little, our (multiple) identities coordinates became more hybridised. In Finland, I was the Italian girl living in Finland, with an interest in Iraqi cultures and history and ready to hear stories highlighting Iraqis' identities. In Italy, I was an Italian expatriate, who needed to be "guided" and reconnected with the Italian migrants' lives. They were the Arab Iraqis and Iraqi Kurds, living in Finland and Italy, with many stories and experiences left behind and with a narrative to be told. Moreover, gender issues such as being a woman dealing with other women, did not guarantee immediate empathy; my insider/outsider role was always negotiated. As Riessman (1987: 172) says, "gender (affinity) is not (always) enough". In some cases in fact, I needed to ask permission from the husband in order to get my contact. It was a question of politeness. On many occasions, the number of the men participating in activities and events was largely preponderant on the numbers of the women; this lack of visible female contacts, in fact slowed down the research process[20].

My presence was also mediated by events where I was not only seen as a researcher taking notes in the corner of a room, but also as companion of Kurdish dance or a listener of Iraqi music; a taster of Kurdish and Iraqi food. On some occasions, especially in Finland, I invited people to come to my house with the promise to cook good Italian food while exchanging Italian, Kurdish and Iraqi recipes. In this regard, my main concern was basically not seeing people as mines of information to be exploited by the researcher (England 1994: 82) but rather as reciprocal teammates. In connections with this, identities become relational, being structured and restructured through mutual relations. In this regard, identity is, therefore, based on *difference* from others but not on *separation* from others (Rose 1997: 314).

In terms of power relations, as England (1994) states, researchers may appear stronger and more powerful when dealing with vulnerable people or marginalised

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20 When asking for the reasons for absences, in most of the cases, causes were related to family responsibilities like taking care of kids and job issues. This trend was more visible in some specific meetings like the Halabja Memorial Day or the Anfal meetings. Differently, the New Year celebration, known as Newroz, was a party for families.

groups such as refugees, deported people, asylum seekers and clandestines. However, how does power become visible? According to England (1994: 84) researchers do not parachute into the field with empty heads and a few pencils and a tape recorder ready to record the "facts". The mind is not a *tabula rasa* ready to be imprinted, but we do have knowledge and sometimes sympathy for a political cause (Charmaz 2000; 2006). According to Davies (1999: 5), the researcher is a part of the context in which she/he conducts research and to think that the researcher does not have an influence on the surroundings is misleading. As she argues, consideration of reflexivity are compelled to move beyond the notion of a researcher's effect on the data and begin to acknowledge the more active role of the researcher in the actual production of those data. In few words, the researcher and informants are engaged in the co-construction of a world (Ibid. 8). In my understanding, subjectivity does influence the research process since the researcher interprets data, providing meanings. The interpretation belonged to a sort of invisible power exerted by the researcher during the phases of coding and interpretation. The process of analytic induction inspired by a constructivist approach, while moving between data and theory, permits to re-challenge existing concepts (such the myth of return's concept) and possibly develop theory. However, the degree of his/her influence (if high or low) should be under control by the same researcher (Geiger 1990; England 1994). In terms of implicit power relationships, I was the only one responsible in the end for the "interpretation" and the conclusive results of my study (cf. Gilbert 1994: 94). Following the previous point and as suggested by several social scientists from the field of forced migration especially refugee studies and those relating to vulnerable groups are usually characterised by a "partisan" status rather than a "neutral" one (cf. Dona' 2007: 210). In this study, the "partisan status" will appear evident by the large use of Iraqis' quotations with the express purpose of providing voices to people. Thus, it was quite common among my informants to thank me for the time and the attention I reserved for them. However, I did not consider for a moment that Iraqi refugees and migrants could possibly be seen as victims, but mostly as important voices, which are sometimes "hidden" or not properly heard in public.

In such a research, it is necessary to consider the time and contexts (Hammersley & Atkinson 1983; Davies 1999). Therefore, people's behaviour may be influenced by time and context. For this reason, I wanted to study Arabs and Kurds for a long time and possibly in different environments in order to have a general and clear picture.

> Attending to time means that the ethnographer must make sure that people or events are observed at different times of the day and different days of the week. (...) People's behaviour is influenced by contextual factors so that it is important to ensure that such behaviour is observed in a variety of locations (Bryman 2004: 306).

Data collection is based on theoretical framework and it is comparative, which means that the researcher generalises from that situation to others. Esterberg (2002)

suggests that, at some point, the researcher needs to stop collecting data. This usually happens when the researcher does not find any additional information for his/her data. This situation is called *saturation*. A long-term ethnography and fluency in the languages of the informants could obviously have provided more in-depth knowledge on the topic, but has not been possible within the scope of this study.

3.6   Translators

In Finland, most of the interviews were carried out in English. When I started to contact Iraqi females, in particular, I immediately understood how the English language could be a limitation sometimes[21]. Therefore, in Finland two interviews were carried out in Arabic with the help of an interpreter[22] and immediately transcribed into English. During the interviews, I asked the translator to briefly summarise the interviewee's point of view after every main question in order to maintain control of the interview. In my view, the researcher's control over the process of interviewing is fundamental for maintaining flexibility and avoiding digressions. In a few cases, the Finnish language was agreed with the interviewee, when our level of Finnish was complementary. My knowledge of Finnish is nowadays sufficient enough for a conversation after almost 2 years of courses and conversational classes. In Italy, the main language used was Italian; in a few cases, English was adopted when requested by the informants. Language differences and barriers with which I struggled were, however, visible since I started with my data collection. I believe that a researcher, despite difficulties, should try to identify the language barriers and overcome them in all possible ways. In my situation, the choice of a face-to-face interpreter and my own Finnish language knowledge became coping strategies.

As Temple (1997: 614) argues, the use of both interpreters and translators 'is not merely a technical matter that has little bearing on the outcome. It is of epistemological consequence as it influences what is "found" (Ibid.). Nevertheless, in order to eliminate translation-related problem, I collaborated closely with the translator in order to avoid loss of meaning or misinterpretation of concepts during the transcription. Moreover, consultation with other people such as researchers from other countries helps in defining the meaning of those words, which may have double translations or different meanings across cultures.

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21 At the same time, a lack of both Arabic and Kurdish language limited my access to other relevant materials (blogs, Internet pages, etc.) which could have filled some of the gaps of this study.
22 I chose a Moroccan translator, who is able to communicate in Modern standard Arabic (MSA). MSA is a modernised form of Classic Qur'an and it is the official written language of many Arabic countries such as Morocco and Iraq.

3.7 Expected and encountered problems (*and not*) by the researcher during the data collection

Despite common beliefs on suspicion and mistrust circulating around the difficulties on entry access to the social setting, I did not encounter any relevant problems that could not be solved by an extended time in the research setting. As we know, interviewing and participant observation are among the challenging forms of gathering data, but before that, the initial access is a delicate phase, which may have an impact on the remainder of the research process. Aware of this, I was really concerned about how I had to introduce myself to a possible interviewee. Questions of positionality, reflexivity and power, which I discussed earlier, dealt with how I negotiated my access into diverse research *fields*. In practice I applied three strategies or tactics, which are shown in the figure below.
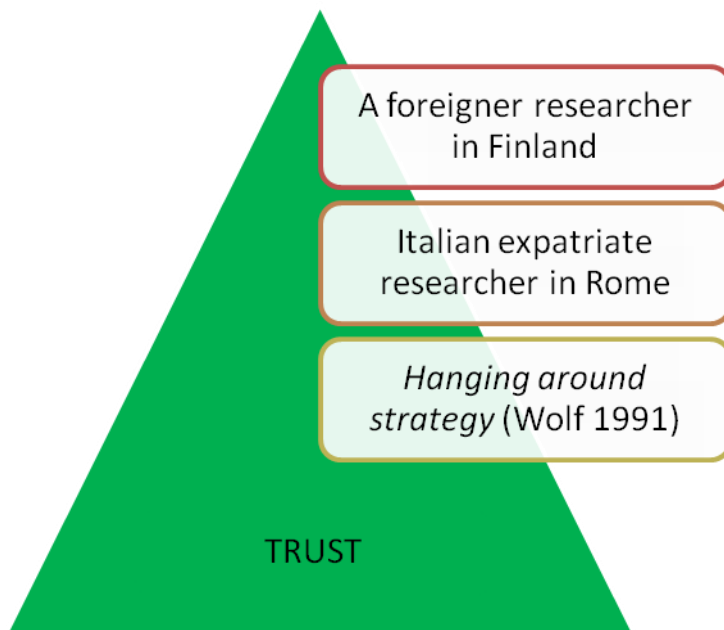
Fig. 1. Tactics of entrance to the entry fields

In Finland, I was able to utilise my foreign nationality, as means of avoiding reticence and facilitating discussion. The "foreignness", accompanied by the English language allowed me to *almost* position myself as an "*outsider*" with whom the Iraqis could share a common feature. In Finland, introducing myself to Iraqi people as a foreign researcher helped me, firstly to attract some curiosity from my informants, secondly to have an instantaneous sympathetic reaction to my research ideas. Usually, informal discussions about the aims, motives and intentions of my research project were followed by questions on my life in Finland or a general conversation about the

Finnish people and my ideas about *their* country. People were keen to invite me to their homes for a chat and sometimes invited me for lunch and/or dinner without any planning beforehand. Moreover, I also perceived, as Borchgrevink (2003) observes, that the condition of being a foreigner may facilitate a more profound discussion on certain topics that local researchers might take for granted. Questions like living abroad, traveling across countries or discussions on the resistant Finnish culture, in their view, were raised quite frequently. Additionally, some interviewees associated their answers with my background as southern European girl, as a way to strengthen their view, especially when talking about the warmth of the people of the Middle East as similar as to the Mediterranean countries or the importance of the families in a person's life, which I doubt they would have emphasised if I had been a Finnish researcher. Overall, I perceived that, the motives behind my study were considered useful and important.

Before beginning data collection in Rome, I thought *a priori* that the process of participant observation and interviews would cost me more in terms of time, especially for gaining access to the Iraqi population, due to my Italian nationality. Moreover, a dispersive city with more conflicting communities, accentuated by episodes of racism, could alter an ordinary research situation, which already involves a complex negotiation of two parts. Experiences of racial discrimination and prejudice, as reported by the ENAR (European Network against Racism) showed that in 2007 racism and intolerance seemed to be mainly directed at specific groups like Romanians and Roma people. However, the succession of violent attacks perpetrated against these specific communities had consequences on all other immigrants groups and anyone seen as "diverse". This tense atmosphere where both physical and psychological violence reached directly or indirectly all the ethnic communities, was also perceived in some of my interviewees' stories. A new *witch hunt*, inaugurated by the "*Circle of Freedom - Liberal Rome*", an extremist right movement, highlighted a local initiative of anti-migrant patrols, with the scope of ensuring security on the streets of Rome after the reticence of the local government's initiatives. Quite often, migrants suffered from anxiety and perceived sentiments of hidden suspicion and xenophobia circulating in the city at any time of the day. Despite the general situation, in the case of some specific Iraqis and Kurds with pending refugee applications, the process of trust building took a little bit more time. I was often asked whether I was working for the Italian police department as an informant, tracing and repatriating illegal migrants. So, even if I was not asking about their full names or identification documents, they introduced themselves using fictional names or nicknames.

Contrary to my expectations concerning my Italian identity as a researcher conducting research in Italy, I could have been less accepted. I preferred to introduce myself as an Italian *expatriate* researcher. Iraqi people demonstrated curiosity and kept asking questions about the place where I was coming from (Finland); how my life was there; or reasons why I moved away from Italy; and why I was back in Italy under such complicated economic and political situations, etc. In some cases, people smiled at me saying further that they had friends or a part of their families living in Finland or in the

Nordic countries in general, places about which they had heard many nice stories. Frequently, this encounter helped to break the ice and to negotiate and approve my access into *their* space.

The *hanging around strategy* (Wolf 1991: 10) permits the researcher to socialise into and become regularly "visible" in the social setting. This tactic allowed me to also consider how to possibly approach the people on the different occasions (formal and informal meetings), but also to create some kind of curiosity about myself. This tactic was performed during my participant observation experience in order to explain who I was and what I was doing; this situation of knowledge created a sense of natural, mutual and ongoing trust.

Participant observation also became a really *intensive process* and may also be an *emotional experience* (Skeggs 1995). Qualitative methodologies permit to build constructive and trustful relationship between the researcher and informant while exploring a significant aspect of the migration experience, but also discovering researcher's emotive dimension (Ibid.). It's a certainty that sensitive topics may arise more spontaneously during qualitative research studies, when people are able to express their feelings with more freedom (Lee 1993; Dickson-Swift et al. 2009, Liamputtong, 2007). But sensitivity is not a one-way street. It usually conveys when both researcher and informants emphatically engage in their own private worlds. Situations such as either the indebtedness of the researcher towards those who help in the research process or the sense of exploitation, betrayal and abandonment towards the researched, can be possible negative outcomes (Skeggs 1995: 197). Skeggs (1995: 194) defines this kind of research as highly emotive affairs. However, if the researcher's state of readiness on such susceptible topics may be predicted *beforehand* in terms of people's difficulties and environmental complexity, what cannot be perceived is the process of growing intimacy, especially during the interview process, which may vary from people to people and from researchers to informants.

In my case, the post-access group experience surprised me. I remember that, especially at the beginning of my interviews in Finland, I suffered from anxiety. I have also noticed how the interview process as such was more beneficial to my informants than me. I do not know, if it depended on the initial phase of these kinds of sensitive themes or if I coincidentally picked up those tragic stories, which made me vulnerable. However, it was not an easy experience. On certain occasions, during the night, I was woken up by nightmares indirectly related to the stories of interviewees, and I felt terribly tired and sad for no reason. Other times, I suffered from insomnia. Emotional accounts triggered my sleep disorder, exacerbating concentration problems the next day. Suddenly, I realised that the only way I could process my strong emotions would be to temporarily avoid such circumstances and to take control of my grief. I was also aware of the fact that this disruptive situation might also have a negative impact on my data collection. Consequently, I momentarily stopped with the interviews. Researchers are not unemotional robots that compress peoples' speeches onto tapes; we are not just good listeners, who collect and place new information in order. We are simply people

who deal with other people who lived crucial experiences, sometimes distant from ours, which require a rigorous but unhurried cognitive processing.

However, in Italy where the visible conditions had a more direct impact than in Finland, I faced really contrasting feelings. For instance, when I was conducting research in the Ararat cultural association, in Rome, located in a run-down building with no hot water and electricity, I was overwhelmed by a sense of guilt, seeing the conditions in which people lived. I faced the cruel reality of people owning nothing but their dignity. However, I knew, even before starting my fieldwork in Italy, as an Italian, that I would have to encounter such extreme cases, which made me uncomfortable, but somehow also prepared.

However, there were a couple of circumstances in which I felt scared. Lee (1993) argues that some circumstances may violate the researcher's personal security especially when dealing with vulnerable people and/or when conducting research in unfriendly environments. However, threats of all sorts are always around the corner and it is up to the researcher to try to minimise, manage or mitigate them (Lee 1993: 16). In my case, it happened in Rome. Various times, I met one of my interviewees in front of the main entrance of the place where I was staying at that time. He had probably followed me the day before. I spontaneously greeted him and told him that it was really an ironic coincidence, having found him by chance in such a big city as Rome. This situation occurred a couple more times without any consequences. Each time, acting out of habit, I friendly and gently talked to him, but I avoided dwelling on endless discussions. However, I avoided, for example, going out alone during the night and if that happened, I simply asked a friend of mine to keep me company on my way home as a way to avoid possible unpleasant circumstances.

3.8   Ethical principles

In general, qualitative research is conducted by, for and about people. For this reason a discussion about ethical principles has to be considered. Questions about ethics may have support from professional organisations, such as the International Sociological Association (ISA), the British Sociological Association (BSA) or the Social Research Association (SRA), which provide ethical codes. These codes present standard for behaviour (Bryman 2004; Esterberg 2002; Bailey 1995; Wahlbeck 2008b).

Esterberg (2002) argues that confidentiality and informed consent are some of the relevant issues for beginning researchers. Because qualitative research is conversational, it is important for data collectors to maintain clear boundaries between what they are told by participants and what they tell to participants (Mack et al. 2005: 11). Conversation is a social act that requires give and take (Ibid.). Researchers collect different information from participants but at the same time they have to assure

participants to protect their privacy. Hence, in ensuring confidentiality the researcher may not report private data that identifies participants.

Informed consent indicates that people participating in the research process have obtained clear information from the researcher about a specific project and agreed with it. In this regard, people can consciously decide whether they want to participate or not. This requires informing participants about purposes, risks and benefits of participating in a study. Once, I started to get to know the people, I asked generally for some information that could help me better outline the two ethnic groups that I intended to study. At the beginning of an interview, I usually asked my informants to answer some simple questions such as: names, age, city of origin, time of arrival in Finland or Italy, education, work experience and marital status. What I understood was that the most complicated question to answer was frequently related to their names. Some people provided me with their nickname or just their first names avoiding the use of surnames. Others gave me their full names without any hesitation, while many others gave fictional names with no explanation. As far as I know, the reasons why people still do not provide their full names, reasons that were also validated by the Iraqis living in Finland, is that they are still, somehow, influenced by the way of thinking inculcated by the ex-regime in Iraq or lived in precarious situations in Italy/Finland. Avoiding their full names is a way to protect themselves and their families, especially if they have had something to hide such as: active participation against the ex-regime, religious affiliations, if they came to Europe illegally, etc. For this reason, personal names and city of provenience are omitted. Numeric references are used for each interview. Other information like education, time of arrival and job data are reported but not specified. Age relates to the time when the interviews were collected (cf. Appendix 1).

Nevertheless, even if I explained the motivation behind my study, and ensured research ethics and confidentiality, on some occasions, people felt more comfortable not being tape-recorded. Because of this, I have always tried to respect their wishes. I was also cautious not to be too formal, which could create distance and silence, but at the same time, I was clear in explaining the objectives of the interviews, so people, especially young men, would not misinterpret my openness or the way to interact with me.

Therefore, since the first contact with the Iraqi people, I pointed out what I was researching and the main frame of my work. Confidentiality, privacy and anonymity are crucial for refugees and other vulnerable minorities (Jablensky et al. 1994) and sometimes it is a difficult task to assure them about privacy and trust especially with those people whose rights were violated in the past.

From the first moment when I engaged in discussions with Iraqis, I realised that I was dealing with really sensitive topics, since I was exploring their past memories. Lee and Renzetti (1993: 5) define a sensitive topic as one that potentially poses, for those involved a substantial threat, the emergence of which renders problematic for the

researcher and/or the researched the collection, holding and/or dissemination of research data.

Especially, at the beginning, when I started my interviews, I noticed that sensitive and personal subjects occurred naturally in general conversations. Some questions about their memories and accounts of the past unearthed vivid and painful emotions and evoked sensitive situations such as death, violence, loss, torture, lack of freedoms and destruction that they had experienced before they fled. Sometimes, I noticed that my role as an active listener allowed them to open their own Pandora's box, where unresolved pain, anger, sense of guilt and powerlessness were stored.

Moreover, current events such as bomb explosions in their own cities and neighbourhoods, children's sickness, atrocities, usually learnt through newspapers and TV, monopolised peoples' attention and moods during our meetings. However, the ways in which people coped with these distressing events varied depending on their own individualised experiences. People, in fact, hold varying degrees of sensitivity, which may be explained through various factors as gender, age, culture, etc. (Dickson-Swift et al. 2009). While some people were able to control their feelings, others started to panic and/or cry uncontrollably. At that point, I preferred to switch off the tape-recorder and continue with the interview and/or stop the interview, so the informant could cope with his sorrow without further stress. The pause from the interview allowed them to take a break or "to express" freely their feelings and sometimes even cry, without being recorded or feeling ridiculous. On several occasions, when I noticed that the informant was not able to concentrate and focus on the discussion, because of the tape-recorder, I switched it off again, trying to divert the attention and strengthen the bond between the informant and me. In the same way, I have also tried to respect religious interpretations avoiding classification; in particular I refer to Sunni and Shias religious affiliations, which created vibrant discussions and tensions especially at the beginning of my pilot interviews. Therefore, I did not ask precise questions about people's religious background, but I tried to deduce it through the general conversation.

3.9   Coding and analysis

Coding is one of the key operations in qualitative data analysis. Qualitative researchers have exemplified numerous coding practices inspired either by interpretative or constructivist approaches, which may have different implications and results in the way through which we compare and conceptualise categories (cf. Strauss & Corbin 1990; Charmaz 2006). Coding usually refers to the process of sorting out and labelling grounded data (Charmaz 2006). As Coffey & Atkinson (1996: 26) suggest, coding is a process of condensing the bulk of our data into analysable units by creating categories with and from our data. It is essentially a process through which a researcher reaches a higher level of specificity and possibly generates a theory by synthesising the

initial categories. The core category, therefore, emerges spontaneously, as the most cited one, during the process of constant comparison of data. Obviously, core categories and sub-categories should be interconnected but also significantly reflect the importance of findings in association to the research questions (Bryman 2004: 409).

But when to start coding? I started my first coding phase during my *social mapping exercise* characterised by the initial collection of pilot interviews accompanied by a fieldwork experience. During 2006, I collected some interviews and participated in some activities organised by Iraqi groups both in Finland and in Italy. The collection of the initial data, which were simultaneously analysed and compared, allowed me to better outline and organise a more structured research plan for applying for funding as well as to systematise my future interview guideline. Moreover, the early coding, followed by the fieldwork notes, allowed me to identify the important information, in terms of used key words or ethnic diversity's variance. For example, I learnt how the term "homeland" which I previously identified with "Iraq" had to be substituted by a more delicate and neutral meaning that could be easily adapted by both Arab Iraqis and Iraqi Kurds as "the country of origin". I also learnt to avoid categorisation such as the Shia against the Sunni sects by fostering communication and recognising difference even when dealing with people who belonged to the same ethnic group[23].

Once the pre-coding phase was completed, I started with the collection and analysis of the interviews[24] and the participant observation data gathering. The coding was in fact a process, which I had started since the first transcription of the interviews. The "line by line" coding, as suggested by Charmaz (2006), was my first approach to virtually vivisecting the interview into pieces. The "line by line" coding, which I identified as "period by period " coding (Ibid.), allowed me to clarify the first common and relevant categories or themes exemplifying the first patterns of meanings. At the same time, categories were redefined through comparison in order to reach a coherent pattern. Further data and constant comparison between interviews, statements and notes allowed me to reshape the first common categories until a saturation point was reached. By comparing interviews, notes on the participant observation and memos, categories were slowly reduced until I was able to reach a main one. During the coding phase raw data were basically compared and transformed into categories, which have been subsequently interpreted. For example, the emerging core category/theme, which I named the "longing to return," seems to be primarily shaped by some sub-categories or sub-themes, which are associated with ethnicity, memories, city of origins as well as time. The links between the longing to return and its themes emerged gradually during the interviews and participant observation process. Obviously, longing to return does

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23 For example, I avoided direct questions regarding the Shia and the Sunni confession which, as I noticed during my pilot interviews, created friction and misinterpretation. I have in fact noticed how this categorisation could have had a negative impact in the process of collection and analysis of data (cf. also Juntunen 2009a/b on sectarian tensions).

24 In particular, my semi-structured interview guideline was organised in 3 main parts focusing on migrants' past, present and future perspectives.

not appear equally evident in all the people's accounts but fragmentally during the interview.

I view the interviews as narratives that are social products produced by people within a specific context. Similarly, as Lawler (2002: 242) argues, narratives are social products produced by people within the context of specific social, historical and cultural locations. As Eastmond (2007: 248) argues, migrants' narratives are not transparent renditions of 'truth' but rather reflect a dynamic interplay between life, experience and story. By treating interviews as narratives, I try to provide an interpretation of the past, instead of a mere description. In particular, Riessman (2004: 708) states that the "truths" of narrative accounts are not the faithful representation of a past world but the shifting connections they forge among past, present and future. A form of thematic analysis provides interpretation of data by shifting from complexities to migrants' stories (Creswell 2003; Patton 1990). Common themes have to be selected among informants' stories. In particular, a theme is a hub of linked sub-themes or categories, which emerge from the discussion but they are also constructed through the interaction between researchers and informants. These sub-themes provide consistency and valid arguments to the overall discussion, not only in relation to the connected categories/themes but also with reference to the research question(s).

At the same time, the existing literature addressing refugees' perspectives of return and integration processes added sociological evidence and meaning to the study of return. The "myth of return" has been my consequential theoretical reference while dealing with Arab Iraqis and Iraqi Kurds in Helsinki ad Rome. Iraqis in fact have lived in a situation of initial exclusion and alienation especially during the time of Saddam Hussein's dictatorship where traveling and daily connections were definitely limited for obvious reasons. Successive coding of interviews and the constant comparison of data, made me realise how the *myth of return* became a faded and opaque concept for my informants. The new course of events in Iraq after 2004 followed by the development of new technological means and transportation restructured and even amplified peoples' perception of return. What I noticed was that in most of the interviews people moved from a fictionalised idea of return, typical of the myth of return, to a more real experience of it: the longing to return. However, the return in fact changes its status. Little by little, I understood how the way people referred to the return, appeared to be less permanent, but more anchored to a flexible and temporary vision. After 2004, Iraqis virtually and physically, reconnected with their country, their past and their people. Even those Iraqis who had conflicting feelings about their past, could not just ignore the new changes that happened in the country.

During the coding phase, I partly employed the Nvivo' 8 computer software; this software facilitated part of my coding simply by reducing the amount of time, which usually is demanded by the manual work of margin notes or searching text. The *cut* and *paste operations* sped up and quickly reframed our interview and helped me to sort out the data. However, I have to admit that reading the full interviews of my informant has been a pleasant and refreshing experience as it provided context to people's accounts.

3.10   Representation and validation of a qualitative study

The analysis and interpretation of the collected data as well as the presentation of the findings are usually challenging tasks for a researcher. These tasks seem to be even more complex when we deal with a larger amount of rich data. Generally speaking, there is no formula for providing significance, but simply "advice" for assisting in the analysis of data. A researcher can use deductive or inductive approaches as a way to link theories and research data. In my case, I would refer to an "*iterative approach*" (Gurd 2008), which involves moving back and forth between data and theory. However, firstly, I believe that a researcher should critically contextualise the life of the "others", looking at historical, temporal, socio- cultural, political contingencies in which the research takes place. The researcher, metaphorically speaking, acts as a filter, critically selecting information, which is unavoidably tied to particular contexts and periods of time. As Skeggs (1995: 199) suggested all research involves the researcher in the process of representation, which itself is historically situated within theoretical debates and frameworks. Secondly, the analysis of the data, the hardest part, deals with the interpretative action, in which formal discussions are contextualised and translated into sociological concepts.

But how does the researcher represent the experience? Usually, in qualitative studies, researchers are encouraged to be descriptive and creative. While the description involves the explanation of findings, the creativity is connected to the critical interpretation of data (Patton 1990). Discussions on the concepts of reliability and validity, largely used in quantitative research, are also sometimes adapted to qualitative research during the analysis of data. Other social scientists prefer to ignore them because they appear to be oppressive and linked to a positivist paradigm (Bryman 2004). In general, reliability refers to the *consistency from one measurement to the next* (Gilbert 1993: 27). "External reliability" refers to the possibility to replicate a study. However, replication in qualitative studies assumes different features than in quantitative studies. "Validity is a greatly debated topic in social research since there is no single or general definition of the term. Insofar as "validity" definitions are concerned, two common ideas emerge: firstly, whether the means of measurement are accurate (Winter 2000: 3); secondly, whether they are actually measuring what they are intended to measure (Ibid.).

In general, I agree with Lincoln and Guba (1985) who argue that instead of reliability and validity, we can validate a qualitative study by assessing other criteria such as trustworthiness and authenticity. Both of these requisites presuppose a relationship between the researcher and the informant based on trust and genuineness. Trustworthiness is explicitly characterised by four criteria: credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability (Ibid.). *Credibility* refers to the fact that the research is carried out according to the rules of good practice in an environment where the researcher observes and engages with people in formal and informal conversations. In

particular, a study appears credible not because of the topic per se, but because of the efforts of the researcher to present it to the audience as credible, transparent and clear. In my study, I assess and maximise credibility by a prolonged engagement with two kinds of data sets and close interaction with the informants. I also preferred to start with the observation, since I truly believe that it acted as a filter through which I could better select and observe my sample. During my study, I wrote memos as a form of backup or a sketch plan, which helped me to think over the topic without losing my focus; then, once the interviews were collected, I tested credibility through the cross-checking with fieldwork data and interviews, which allowed me to be more confident regarding my conclusion.

Moreover, *dependability* is a criterion which shows similarities with the concept of reliability in quantitative studies and refers to the stability of data over time and under certain conditions. In particular, in qualitative inquires, results cannot be replicated. However, researchers may learn and take inspiration from previous studies by viewing them as "prototype models" (Shenton 2004: 71). For example, the use of overlapping methods as well as in-depth descriptions may help to ensure dependability by providing logical and clear explanations. *Transferability* means that qualitative studies should provide other researchers the possibility of transferring findings to other contexts where appropriate. Even if qualitative findings cannot be generalised as in positivist studies, they might provide conclusions and findings, which might be helpful in future research. In my study, I help to ensure transferability by providing a *thick description* (Geertz 1983) of my data emerging from two different local contexts. For example, in this study narratives exemplified through the use of quotations followed by interpretations, may provide a better understanding of processes to other researchers dealing with similar topics and/or groups. Finally, *confirmability* is concerned with the good faith of the researcher in providing data. It is a criterion through which the researcher can demonstrate the neutrality and integrity of their research interpretations.

The second main criterion, authenticity, deals with ethical[25] and ideological issues of the researchers, usually associated with the informants' answers, which I already discussed in this chapter. In particular, authenticity is associated with the voices of migrants being authentic during the interviews and critically reported by the researcher.

3.11   Conclusions

In this chapter, I have discussed the methodology and specific qualitative methods which I used in my research. In the first part, I have highlighted the complexities of social reality and how it is constructed and reconstructed across time and space from a transnational perspective. Therefore, qualitative inquiries are not looking for the one ultimate answer resolving all the questions, but they try to explain and understand what

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[25] Check the discussion on ethical concerns.

happens in societies over time (Gilbert 1993: 7). In particular, sociology involves a constant generation of questions about social life and explanations on how societies change. People think, believe and act differently and there are different cultures and societies, codes and conventions. For this reason, the best way to comprehend the subjectivity and uniqueness of phenomena is through the use of the qualitative methods, which I am employing in the study of transnational Iraqis in Finland and Italy. In particular, the longing to return has been used as a means to investigate Iraqis' integration practices and perceptions of return. The longing to return, addressing past, present and future perspectives, clarifies how Iraqis sustain transnational contacts, familiarise themselves with a dominant society and think about ideas of return.

In the second part, I present the methods I have used for collecting data, mainly: participant-observation and interviews. The observation is an essential component of the research process. On the one hand, participant-observation may provide the basis for starting research; it helps to establish familiarity with participants; it provides focus and structure for interviews; and it ultimately offers an opportunity to build foundations for theory generating. On the other hand, the interview is a form of "careful" conversation through which the informant expresses not only information but also opinions. In my opinion, for complex situations or specific groups, it is recommended to use a flexible form of interviewing, such as the semi-structured. In this situation of reciprocal empathy, the informant would possibly feel at ease and truthful. At the same time, I have also shown the channels through which I have selected my sample and its characteristics; I have explained how I have negotiated my access to the social setting; how reflexivity and positionality were discussed while ensuring ethical issues. In addition, unpredictable circumstances, from the researcher's point of view, have been addressed. Finally, I have discussed how I represented the experience and other issues on the validation of a qualitative study. Based on my research, the goals of my study would not be to discover reality *as such*, but rather to focus on the *process of* constructions of it, looking at the group dynamics of two diverse ethnic groups across two different localities.

4   Iraq: history and dynamic of migration

4.1   Introduction

This chapter provides information on the Iraqi historical context as well as on the migration dynamics in order to provide a background of the experiences of Iraqis in recent political and social developments.

As Tripp (2003), an expert in history and politics of the Middle East, argues, Iraq is a country which lives in tension between its past and present events. The contemporary facts in Iraq are understandable only if we consider ethnic, religious, socio-political and economic conditions as historicised elements where the past represents the matrix to understand the present. In this regard, firstly I will introduce some historical facts elucidating the idea of the constructed state of "Iraq". Secondly, I will discuss and report how migration has been a highly distinctive component of the Iraqi history for a long time.

4.2   Demographic factors

In terms of population, the international Monetary Fund in 2009 estimates that 31,234,000 people are currently living in Iraq. However, the wars and tensions of the last thirty years have persistently affected and still affect the process of the Iraqis' migration. Today, the majority of the population is Arab[26] (75-80%), which divided religiously across two main Muslim lines into the Sunnis and the Shias[27]. The Kurds (mainly of Sunni faith) are the biggest minority (15%-20%), and they basically inhabit the northern part of the region or the so-called Iraqi Kurdistan, the new autonomous region of Iraq. Other minorities are in particular the Assyrians, Armenians, Turkmen and some others like Jews and Yezidis (5%). Despite the fact that ethnic groups are differently recognised, it is important to note that mixed marriages between people belonging to different ethnic groups has been quite common in the past, before the spread of sectarian violence.

One difficulty regarding the construction of Iraqi state, as reflected in some of my informants' stories, is related to two diverse dynamics: the gradual split between the

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26   CIA   World   Factbook.   Available   at: https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/iz.html (Retrieved 25/05/2011).
27 In Iraq, the Sunnis, who represent a smaller group, mainly live in the central part of the country. Differently, the Shia people, who represent the majority of the population, are mainly concentrated in the southern part of the country.

Sunni and the Shias and the relative predominance of the latter group during the rule of the Ottoman Empire and the Kurdish plan of autonomy and/or independence of Kurdistan. This plan began to take place gradually during the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th with the spread of the Kurdish nationalism (McDowall 1997).

4.3   The Sunni-Shia split and the Kurdish case

In the Arab world, it seems generally agreed that the split between Shia and Sunni faith initially coincides with the death of the Prophet Muhammad in 632 AD. As Allawi (2007: 23) points out, when referring to the history of Iraq, the split between the Shia and the Sunni Muslims is even more intricate because of a complex situation where familial, tribal, social and religious characteristics mutually intertwined. However, as my informants pointed out, these two religious groups experience periods of conflict as well as peaceful cohabitation.

Yet, tension between the Sunni and Shia sects became preponderant with the unification of the territories of Mesopotamia by the British under the Iraqi state in 1921. Successive tensions also characterised the period of Saddam Hussein who manipulated these diverse ethnic and religious groups against each other in order to prevail and achieve his Baath party goals (Tripp 2003). Finally, the so-called "American invasion" with their plans of reconstruction and democratisation in 2003 further exacerbated these differences, determining even more cruel conflicts as reported by my informants. However, traces of difference and possible clashes justified that tensions between the Sunni and Shia sect began to surface especially during the Ottoman Empire (1638-1916). At that time, the contemporary territory of Iraq was a group of provinces in the Mesopotamian area situated at the periphery of the Ottoman Empire. In these provinces, power and privileges started to be associated within the Sunnis' groups more than with other groups. In the following sections, I will briefly discuss how the gap between the Shias and Sunnis was gradually produced and how inside the territory the Kurdish cause started to play an important role. Moreover, I will also provide information on relevant historical and political events which may elucidate the Kurdish and Arab history.

4.4   The Ottoman Empire (1638-1916)

The term Iraq or *Al- Iraq* was already used by some Arab geographers since the 8th century with the purpose to refer to that land between the two rivers: the well-known Mesopotamia. During the 16th and the 17th century this territory was gradually incorporated into the Ottoman Empire and three main *vilayet* (provinces) such as Baghdad, Mosul and Basra were constituted (Tripp 2003: 37). Since that time, the

territory appears as a jeopardised amalgam of varied populations including mainly Arabs, Kurds, Chaldean-Assyrians, Turkmens, Shabaks, Yezidis and Sabeans (Batatu 1978). At the same time, the rural areas, which were not directly under the power of the Ottoman Empire, were subjugated by groups of diverse tribal families who exerted diverse forms of power. This dual system between the urban zone and the rural zone is one of the most visible fractures of that time (Batatu 1978: 13). On the other hand, cities as well as towns and villages displayed high internal heterogeneity, differing in terms of class, ethnic and tribal origins, faiths, sects, language, territorial identity, etc. (Batatu 1978: 18). However, good neighbourhood coexistence was primarily enabled in terms of economic relationship.

However, it is just in these years within the Ottoman Empire that the first gap between the Sunni and the Shia groups visibly appeared. Generally, the Sunni people, who mainly inhabited the urban areas, were recognised as privileged partners of the Empire. Generally, Sunni officials gained high and special positions as administrative collaborators or officials of the provinces, while Shias and other minorities held inferior positions. Moreover, Sunni families exerted indirect political and economic power while benefiting from possibilities offered by the Empire. The division between the Shias and the Sunnis is also visibly perceptible, as Batatu (1978: 17) argues in a social structure where usually families of opposite faith did not socially mix with each other but peacefully coexisted in *ghettoized* areas of the same city.

It seems clear that the Ottoman Empire used the strategy of "*divide et impera*" accentuating and encouraging a social, political and religious division among the groups in Mesopotamia as a way to maintain and strengthen their sovereign (Hechter & Kabiri 2004: 11). The new reform system, characterised by the centralisation of power, was contested by numerous revolts of tribal groups and families who did not identify with the new politics of the Empire as well as by the preference of certain tribal families (mainly of Sunni orientation) upon others who foretold the emergence of contemporary ethnic and religious political cleavage (Ibid. 2004: 10). In some cases, like for the Kurds who lived in the most imperious and peripheral part of the empire, the organisation of Kurdish autonomy started already to loom during this time. Self-determination, reinforced by the lack of control and communication with the central government, enforced movements that started to be the premises of future nationalist movements.

Likewise, the end of the 19th century was not a trouble-free period of the Ottoman Empire. Natural calamities (e.g. the plague, the famine and the flood) as well as political events like the desire of independence of some internal states inaugurated an epoch of decadence. Moreover, the economic penetration of some European states in the Levant territory became a clear indicator of how the central Ottoman system was incapable of competing with these (McDowall 1997: 39). Also in the three Iraqi provinces the dissatisfaction against the Empire circulated concomitantly with new forms of internal collaborations amongst the three provinces, other internal cities and villages that discovered common traits like the political empire resistance.

In 1908, the Young Turks revolution which spread from the centre to the periphery of the empire, reached the Iraqi and Kurdish intelligentsia within the three provinces. The predictable collapse of the Ottoman Empire thus coincided with the revival of new political movements, clubs, groups, associations which blocked the process of *turkification* (Hechter & Kabiri 2004; Tripp 2003) while promoting a decentralisation process, a more liberal doctrine based on secular politics and the recognition of constitutionalism. New spaces of autonomies and self –sufficient tribal communities stood up against the system determining a convergent sentiment across the two religious faiths. At that time, for instance two main secret corps reigned on the scenery of Baghdad and attracted the participation of both Sunni and Shia sympathisers: the National scientific club and Baghdad branch of the *al-Ahd* (the covenant) characterised by a peculiar reference to the Arab nationalism (Tripp 2003: 59). Attention was especially devoted to the Arab language, culture and literature. Arab nationalism became also visible along other areas especially in the centre and in the south of the country. Arab nationalism also became a manipulated issue when a new phase of political renovation started in the territory of Mesopotamia after World War I.

4.5   Modern Iraq

The genesis of the modern Iraq was initiated by the delineation of a secret plan named the Sykes–Picot Agreement (1916) drafted by England and France with the purpose of organising their political and economic interests in Western Asia. This plan acquired significance once the expected collapse of the Ottoman Empire with its fragmented provinces took action after World War I with the treaty of Sevres signed by the Empire and the Allies in 1920. The British participation in the peace treaty resolution also showed an interest in the three provinces in Mesopotamia. For the British it was a strategic way to utilise the territory of Mesopotamia as a bridge for increasing their economic plans in Asia toward India. All three *vilayet,* Basra, Baghdad and finally Mosul, were gradually occupied by the British, who were received by some tribal (mainly Kurdish) families as liberators, and as the new occupants by others. In fact, 1920 is a crucial year, characterised by an extensive national demonstration in the mid-Euphrates region which turned into in a bloody revolt with the aim of gaining independence from British power and asserting the recognition of an Arab autonomy (Tripp 2003: 72-78).

Therefore, in the Great Iraqi Revolution (Al-Thawra al-Iraqiyya al-Kubra) of 1920 for the first time various forces such as the Sunni and the Shia *ulema* (religious scholars), the tribal families from the countryside guided by the *sheikhs, the cities* and ex-Ottoman officials, were reunited in their national sentiment for fighting against the British mandate (Batatu 1978: 175). However, on November 1920, the new state of Iraq granted by the League of the Nations was created under the British Mandate

(Tripp 2003: 85) and *Faysal Ibn Husayn*, a former collaborator of the British, was recognised as the new king of Iraq in 1932.

In 1920, the Kurdish community, which positively acclaimed the British in their plan of settlement in Iraq, gained an important political victory. In fact, through the treaty of Sevres, a new Kurdish region was finally recognised as autonomous (Chaliand 1978). The new provisional constitution in Iraq (1921) was the first juridical attempt to respond to the Kurdish nationalist claim (Natali 2005: 28). Finally, Arabs and Kurds inside Iraq were equally and institutionally recognised as the main ethnic groups inside the country with same equal rights, two different languages, etc. Moreover, two separate independent regions for administrative policy and practice were also constituted (Ibid.). According to Bruinessen (1994b: 20) Kurdish nationalism in Iraq (as well as in Iran) restricted to demands to self-determination within the framework if the existing state, instead of nurturing the dream of a United and independent Kurdistan.

However, the project of Kurdish autonomy fades some years later under the treaty of Lausanne in 1923, when the Kurdish area was dismembered among Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey. Parts of the Kurdish people were, therefore, readmitted into the territory of Iraq and their autonomy plans were constantly hindered. Moreover, the socio-economic, political and religious dichotomies growing between the rural and urban Kurds accentuated a more complex segmented fragmentation inside the same group debilitating the perception of *Kurdayeti* across the country (Natali 2005: 31-32).

The memorandum of 1932 written by King Faisal I, (cit. in Allawi 2007: 22) is a sharp observation on how the lack of unity in the country constituted a problem within the new state formation. The lack of communal interest and cohesion among people, if not stemmed, could drive to a violent response. In particular, Faisal's accusation, about the dual crystallised system inherited by the strategic plan of the Ottomans, occurred with the consideration that between the two main groups of Iraq taxes and death were for Shia people while the privilege of office for the Sunni ones (Ibid.). However, Faisal's memorandum also outlined the feeling of alienation of the Shia community protracted during the years and the emergence of the Kurdish case in search of their traditional homeland as non-Arabs in an Arab majority country. Clearly behind the memorandum there was a belief of Arab nationalism, which could possibly spread not only in Iraq but also in other Arab territories. Faisal's statement determined important consequences in the Arab world and it was not a casualty that in those years the Arabic press in Iraq, Syria and Palestine advocated issues on the Arab unity (Husry 1975: 324). At the same time many Arab nationalists, all around the Middle East, recognised in the new king the materialised hope for the Arab cause. In contrast, as Natali (2005: 34) observes, the nationalist "Kurdayeti" feeling was still very weak, localised and fractured across the Kurdish society.

The Hashemite Monarchy however, ended in 1958 through a coup d'état by the Iraqi Army on 14 July 1958; King Faisal II was executed and the royal family forced to

flee. Suddenly, Iraq was recognised as a bi-national Arab/Kurdish republican democratic state (Allawi 2007: 34; Mcdowall 1997: 302). As many of my informants pointed out, the 1960s and 1970s and partially the 1980s proved to be decades of relatively harmonious cohabitation among the diverse ethnic and religious groups inside Iraq. Especially some big cities and other strategic towns have been described as a mosaic of diversified minorities which have peacefully lived together for many years.

However, in the political setting the rise of the Baath party[28] not only in Iraq, but also in the neighbourhood countries, was made visible through diverse bloody operations even inside the same party. In July 1968, the Baath party finally staged a triumphant coup against the government in power, shaking the foundation of the "multicultural" Iraq and established the entry of Saddam Hussein in the national and international scene.

4.5.1   The rise of the Baath party (1968)

The regime of the Baath party was centralised around a core of faithful people linked by the same kinship, or somehow related to the family of Saddam Hussein[29]. The state soon became a dictatorship, marked by a system of patronage, where few Sunni people instituted a system of privilege and coalition characterised either by a blind trust and fear towards the leader (Chaliand 1978; Juntunen 2011: 39-40).

After 1968, Saddam Hussein who was aware of the high heterogeneity and conflicts of a country rifted along ethnic, religious, political and social lines decided to strategically strengthen his position by embracing the cause of a political centralisation. Saddam realised that in order to consolidate his position he needed to neutralise hostile forces like the Kurds and other political dissidents. Thus, a policy of accommodation towards the Kurdish people was an attempt to contain the conflicts while fortifying his power. Thus, the negotiation of 1970, between Saddam Hussein and Barzani, leader of the KDP, resulted in an agreement which was however never implemented; the agreement for instance foresaw the promise of an autonomous Kurdish region in the north of the country; the involvement of Kurdish people in the Iraqi government; the Kurdish language recognition, etc.; however, one of the controversies, and perhaps the most influential one, which destabilised the ongoing negotiation, regarded the case of Kirkuk. This city inhabited by a Kurdish majority, was considered without a doubt to be an economic point of interest for its oil resources of all Iraq. Obviously, Saddam Hussein was unwilling to lose it (McDowall 1997; Tripp, 2003).

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28 The motto of the Baath party referred to the "Unity, Liberty and Socialism". Originally, the socialist party ideology supported the creation of a whole secular Arab nation. However, after 1968, the party modified its program moving from a plural and laic party to a national centralised one (Tripp 2003).

29 Saddam Hussein belonged to the Albu Nasir tribe. In particular, this tribe was part of a federation which was allied with the Jibur tribe (from the Tikirit area to Mosul), the Ubayd tribe (from the northern part of Baghdad) the Dulaim (in the region west of Baghdad) and others (Hassan 2007).

Saddam Hussein invested heavily in schools, hospitals, food subsidies, and housing projects (Hechter & Kabiri 2004: 16) but he also reinforced the party militia and restructured the secret police corps and instituted secret violence against those who did not follow his rules (Makiya 1989: XII; Al-Khalil 1989: 36-37). As Tripp (2003: 290) reports, Saddam Hussein also invoked various myths on the Iraqi pre-Islamic identity as a way to enforce nationalism and his *persona*. For instance, for justifying his role of being a "chief" he made people believe he was directly a descendent of the absolute ancient chiefs of Mesopotamia. Following the sample of the great ancient leaders, he justified his role of supreme leader by asserting that he was the only one capable of reducing ethnic internal tensions and renovating Iraq as the greatest civilisation on earth (Ibid.). In practice, once Saddam became president in 1979, he started to present himself as a historically essential character and as a symbol of unity to *his* people. Many of my informants in fact stressed how Saddam's personality was visibly spread through the media of that time; for instance posters, statues and other monuments were erected across the country strengthening the cult around him. Schools, universities, working places, streets, were upholstered by Saddam's face which paradoxically became an icon of Iraqi multiculturalism.

In a couple of years after his rise to power, Saddam Hussein consolidated his authority through purge, imprisonment, abductions, assassination and a pervasive system of control which spread in and out the country. As stressed by my informants, violence and fear became instruments of control on the society as well as formation of followers and militants. Many people became the target of the Baathist regime for having a family name that was associated with banned religious, left-leaning, or ethnic political activism (Juntunen 2011: 40). In this situation, Iraqis living in the diaspora and Iraqis in Iraq maintained limited connections.

As my informants noticed, Saddam's cruelty also reversed on those Iraqi's exiles, seen as betrayers, who lived abroad and who were *spied* on through the Embassies' networks. However, physical and psychological pressure did not dissuade these people from fighting for their cause, either at the personal or collective level especially during the most obscure times of Iraqi history. In the following paragraphs, I will discuss three main events which permeate my informants' accounts: the Iran-Iraq war, the invasion of Kuwait, and the American invasion with its consequences.

4.5.2   *The Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988)*

The war corresponds with the peak of corrosive relations with the state of Iran. One of the motives that lit up the conflict was the political conquest of the Iranian province of Khuzestan, in the southwest of the country, at the border between Iran and Iraq. This region was earlier recognised as Iranian territory in 1971. The interest in this area was not just a pure act of irredentism, but also an economic attempt to take possession of one of the largest operating refineries in Iran. Many of my informants also stated that

there was a religious component implicated in Saddam's decisions. The possible consequences of the Iranian revolution of 1979 could also echo among the large number of Shiites living in Iraq who criticised the internal relations between Shiites and Sunnis. However, the war ended in 1988 with no winners or losers; the extreme economic loss and the huge debts submerged Iraq and its people. At the same time, the large number of civilians and soldiers killed and wounded hindered the Iraqi reconstruction after the war (Tripp 2003).

In the same years, the Iraqi government conducted military operations against the Kurdish nationalist organisations operating in the north of the country (Bruinessen 1994a). The Anfal Campaign (1987-1988) was considered as well-planned and executed programmes of ethnic cleansing where almost 200,000 were executed (Al-Ali 2007: 165; McDowall 1997). Bruinessen (1994a: 7) states that the Iraqi government was the first ever to utilise chemical weapons against its own citizens. In those attacks, chemical weapons such as nerve gas but also deportations, imprisonment, and mass executions were employed as a means to systematically attack the Kurdish populations. In particular, the massacre of Halabja, on 16 March 1988, is one of the most cited events among the Kurds till today. The reason why this town was bombed was justified by the Iraqi regime as a strategic act against the Iranian forces who occupied that specific area at the border. However, today the cause behind that atrocious act is still a matter of discussion among the Kurds in exile. However, in the small town of Halabja, more than 5,000 people perished and many others were injured because of the nerve gas (Chaliand 1978; Bruinessen 1994a: 7). The documentation of the tragic event, reported by foreign reporters entering in the town of Halabja a couple of days after the attack, not only gained worldwide attention, but also recognises the atrocity committed by the Iraqi government as the only responsible for genocidal attacks (Bruinessen 1994a).

4.5.3   *The first Gulf War: the invasion of Kuwait*

The invasion of Kuwait by Saddam Hussein in 1990 immediately drew the attention of the Western powers and US *in primis*. Relations between Iraq and Kuwait started to dissipate after the Iran-Iraq war. At that time, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia were Iraqi military partners, helping to sustain the Iraqi military expeditions. However, the end of the Iran-Iraq war left a large debt in its wake along with other consequences. The debt extinction, requested by Saddam Hussein, to his fellow countries Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, was not extinguished[30]. Saddam Hussein, at that point, noticed that a general change was needed. To accomplish Iraq's recovery as Slantchev (2009) points out, Saddam Hussein operated in two directions; firstly he needed to remedy the economic debts and secondly he had to reaffirm his powerful status in the Arab world after the inconclusive outcome of the previous war (Ibid.).

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30 Iraq claimed to have fought against Iran, in the name of the other Arab countries as an act to defend the Sunnis' world against the Shiites' threat (Slantchev 2009:2).

The occupation of Kuwait was his first move. The Iraqi forces entered into Kuwait territory forcing the Emir to escape to Saudi Arabia, where he found exile. Suddenly, Western and Eastern powers displayed their disapproval and condemnation of the Iraqi attack on Kuwait which materialised in the UN security councils' Resolution n. 660, but noticeably overlooked by the Iraqi government. In 1991, between January and February Iraq was attacked by the US and other allies in the *desert storm* operation. The Iraqi coalition was not able to respond to the massive attack and on 3 March Saddam Hussein retired his troops. More than 100,000 Iraqi soldiers and innocent civilians lost their lives and the city of Baghdad was left in ruins.

As a consequence, sanctions known as the embargo (Resolution n. 661) implicated a status of profound isolation and poverty for Iraq and its people. As many of my informants argued the embargo was another stroke for the Iraqi people. Lack of electricity, water, sanitation and other essential utilities, destroyed during the war, are remembered as periods of intense hardship. Flows of information and capital in and out the country were limited, leaving Iraq in a situation of alienation. For Iraqis living abroad, the communication with their families in Iraq (e.g. sending letters or callings) was either very restricted or simply impossible. At the same time, the memories my informants recalled to their minds included high child mortality, spread of diseases and malnutrition and extreme poverty. My interviewees also indicated how the consequences of the embargo mainly hit the civilians who were forced to live in precarious situations due to high inflation rates and a lack of employment. Schools and universities lacking proper investments and teaching training affected the quality of the education, and the drop-out rate of students, causing a rise in illiterate people (Al-Ali, 2007: 192-193). Especially women's opportunities to work and study diminished, transforming them into "forced" housewives and mothers. This trend increased the inequalities between men and women of a middle and low class background (Ibid.). At the same time, crime and a sense of insecurity increased the role of patriarchal values and social conservatism. Moral and cultural codes became more marked by a strong sense of religiosity which demanded adherence to a strict system of rules (Ibid.).

Overall, the embargo led to catastrophic political, social and economic consequences which impeded the general state reconstructions, but paradoxically reinforced Saddam's position. The critical situation immediately became a humanitarian case. The United Nation thus modified the prior resolution and between 1995 and 2003 adopted by the UN Security Council's Resolution n. 986 which launched the "the oil for food" program. Basically, the new resolution established that Iraq could sell its oil reserves only in exchange for food, medicine or other basic assistance. However, the suffering and the sorrow of the Iraqi people did not come to an end.

4.5.4   *The second Gulf War: the British-American Invasion*

By the end of the previous conflict, Saddam Hussein was encouraged to cooperate with the UN especially concerning the inspection on suspected chemical weapons (Resolution n. 1441). The negotiations ended negatively and the consequential invasion of Iraq by the United States became a reality in March 2003. Even though one of the main justifications for the attack was the assumption that Saddam was hiding chemical weapons, nothing was found.

It is important to remember that the occupation of 2003 took place during an extremely delicate period. The Iraqi society, still suffering of the devastating effects of the embargo, like poor infrastructure, lack of social services, and education, was aggravated by looting, crime and the collapse of security forces (Al-Ali 2007; Juntunen 2011). A process of de-Baathification, sustained by a provisional government (CPA), reached the economic and the socio-political sectors of Iraqi society. Feelings of revenge pervaded the former victims looking for revenge against Baathists (Cockburn 2009).

It was not by chance that the exiled Shia political leaders who returned back to Iraq became important persons of reference, for example for the formation of the new government in 2006. Many religious and political Iraqi activists, engaging in a political and religious network, especially from Shia and communist parties, returning back to Iraq, obtained prestigious positions in the political field[31]. De-Baathification became a tool of ethnic purification of the Iraqi society, but also a reproducer of sectarian divisions in Iraq and abroad. By banning the Sunnis from the participation in the new government and the economic market, Shia Iraqis and other groups finally occupied new positions. However, the alienation towards the Sunnis, not only regarded important Sunnis' officials but also others who in the past were weakly linked to the Baath party.

The end of the Baath party also led to the resurgence of sectarian and diversified Shiite movements and militias, and the re-emergence of tribalism and patriarchal forms of authority (cf. Juntunen 2011). For example, as reported by Juntunen (2011: 50) Shiites Islamist parties DAWA and SIIC, were both effectively organised in the diaspora and thus favourably positioned to take over the Iraqi power vacuum. The same holds true for the major Kurdish political parties – the KDP and the PUK (Ibid.). At the same time, aside Shia Islamist militias like the Mahdi Army created by Muqtadā al-Ṣadr during the 2003, there were various Sunni Islamist groups that spread across the country like the Al-Faruq Brigades, a militant wing of the Islamic Movement in Iraq, the Mujahideen Battalions of the Salafi Groups of Iraq, and many others (Al Ali 2007: 242). The actions of these Islamist groups spreading conservative trends in particular concerned women accused of following Western values. Wearing inappropriate dresses and/or driving, working, studying or accessing specific public

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31 For example, cf. Ahmed Chalabi, Nuri al-Maliki or Ayad Allawi.

spaces could serve as an excuse for justifying violence and persecutions. Many Iraqi women experienced threats, fears, abductions and sexual violence but in many cases these physical assaults were never reported (Al-Ali 2007; Juntunen 2011). Similarly, religious minorities faced discrimination and sexual minorities suffered torture, violence and intimidation.

The effects of these tremendous facts on Iraqi families also happened in a situation of demographically reordered society. Sectarian and ethnic boundaries also materialised in previous heterogeneous towns and urban areas where entire neighbourhoods were *ethnically* cleansed (Al-Ali 2007). Ethnic groups relocated to different areas where they could possibly find protectors and community affiliations. In this way, mixed areas turned to mono sectarian ones with Sunni or Shia predominance. The zones and their borders were also guarded by militias in charge of supervising the movement of the people around the areas (Juntunen 2011).

4.6   The phases of the Iraqi migration

As we know, wars generate all kinds of atrocities but also migration. As Barnes (2009: 1) argues the Iraqi exodus represents the largest displacement crisis in the Middle East since 1948 (which refers to the mass departure of Palestinians after the constructions of the state of Israel). During the beginning of the conflicts in 1980, while some people have had the possibility to return to their country once the conflicts were resolved, others were living in exile since the growing of the political instabilities.

Over 4.7 million Iraqi people in search of refuge have been internally and externally displaced between 2003 and 2008 (Sassoon 2009: 1). Harper (2008: 170) notices that in a series of cross-checked figures derived by government estimates and independent surveys, the Iraqi diaspora has been principally contained by the neighbouring countries of Syria, Jordan, Iran, and Lebanon[32]. The absence of a systematic legislation on refugee issues in these neighbouring countries however, did not diminish the mass exile of people who were admitted by emergency policies (Barnes 2009).

In my study, I focus on three main Iraqi and Kurdish migration phases according to my interviewees' information. The time frame is an important element because it initially clarifies people's motives for migration; secondly, it permits to differentiate the categories of migrants in: refugees, immigrants and stateless people, which are recurrent forms of peoples' legal identification in this study. According to Kunz's

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32 Harper (2008:170) argues that more than 1 million Iraqis live in Syria, 450,000–500,000 in Jordan, 200,000 in the Gulf States, 50,000 in Lebanon, 40,000–60,000 in Egypt, 60,000 in the Islamic Republic of Iran, and about 10,000 in Turkey. However, estimates state that hundreds of thousands of Iraqis also left the country prior to 2003 for various motives such as educational reasons as well as for political and economic reasons (Ibid.).

model (1973) of migration patterns, both Kurdish and Arab refugees who escaped after the 1990s and settled in Helsinki may be mainly considered as "acute refugees", namely those people who fled from their country of origin with short notice because of a general insecurity resulting from wars, dictatorship and embargo (see also Wahlbeck 1999). On the contrary, in Rome, the members of the Iraqi elite who migrated in the 1970s and 1980s were legally recognised as (student) immigrants since the Italian asylum law was not yet applicable to non-European migrants. Few people were regarded as "anticipatory refugees". To be precise, only a few people perceived the sense of increasing danger of the regime in Iraq and decided to flee early in advance. However, they were not recognised as *de jure* refugees but rather as normal immigrants with a student visa, which was later converted to an immigrant visa. The first Iraqi and Kurdish people who were recognised as refugees were accepted only after 1990, when Italy abolished the *geographical reserve* on political asylum, as will be further explained in the next chapter. However, others living in Italy took advantage of the various amnesties (1990, 1995, 1998 and 2002) as a way to speed up the process of migrants' regularisation against the bureaucratic and provisional refugees' recognition. The amnesties likewise represented important solutions for coping with the high number of illegal immigrants. Hence, Kurdish and Arabs migrants can be informally regarded as "acute refugees" as in the Finnish case, even if their legal status was diverse and imprecise.

4.7 Migration in the 1970s and 1980s

As my informants stressed, the 1970s were generally flourishing years for the Iraqi people. The petrol industry and increased commercial relations with the other countries in the Middle East (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait) vividly depicted a system characterised by dynamic imports and exports, and enabled highly educated peoples' mobility especially to Iraq. The number of Iraqi people, who migrated as labour migrants abroad, was conversely quite low as Chatelard (2009) points out. However, members of the Iraqi elite, driven by personal and labour market motives, began to leave the country and head towards the US, Canada, and Europe.

The end of the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s are years of change for Iraqi migration. In reality, the consolidation of the Baath party started to slowly delineate its rigid ideology. In order to purge the Iraqi society of its Iranian influence, Saddam Hussein forced Iraqi people (Shia Arabs and Shia Kurds) of Iranian origin to leave the country. Therefore, flows increased due to political persecution, invigorating diverse ethnic and sectarian lines. According to Chatelard (2009: 5) at that time around 100,000 expellees from Iraq (mainly Shia people) received Iranian citizenship after having proved their Iranian origins. Many others, however, were accepted as "*refugees*" and gained some basic rights. However, at the same time, other ethnic minorities started to flee Iraq for political, ideological and ethno-religious reasons (Chatelard 2009: 10). Of course, Iran (for Shia Arabs), Jordan and Syria (especially for

the Assyrian and Chaldean Christian communities; Kurdish nationalist groups), were the most popular destinations. Few Iraqi migrants reached also diverse locales such as Europe, North America and Australia. Working visas as well as student visas were the ploy used by people who felt somehow threatened by the regime (Chatelard 2010).

The beginnings of the 1980s are characterised by several events such as the Iran-Iraq war and its effects (1980-88), the *al-Anfal* campaign against the Kurds and the Arabisation process. Internal migration and displacement which characterised this period primarily coincides with the Iran-Iraq war. As Chatelard explains (2009: 10), with the beginning of the conflict between Iraq and Iran, the closing of relations with neighbouring countries determined a more directed intercontinental migration to Europe and North America. A number of Iraqi people were recognised as refugees, asylum seekers, students with visa permission, stateless, etc. While some people were able to travel back, others preferred to stay and wait until the end of the conflict. Thus, as Tripp (2003: 291) argues the Iraqi intelligentsia's exodus reached considerable numbers after 1985 when those Iraqi intellectuals who expressed criticism against Saddam Hussein's patronage or did not want to collaborate with his regime, decided to flee abroad.

The process of *Arabisation* which started in the 1980s developed in two directions, with the common goal of ethnic cleansing of the country from non-Arab ethnic groups. The first direction contemplated a regime of institutionalised violence which culminated with *Al Anfal* campaign in the Kurdish territory, as previously discussed. The second direction institutionalised a corpus of discriminatory policies which spread across the country against ethnic groups like: the Kurds, Shia Arabs, Turkmens and other minorities. In the first instance, the expulsion of Kurdish families from the north to the south, and expulsion of Shia Arabs from the south centre to the north was a strategic way to diminish the power of these communities by their dismemberment on the territory. As Facett and Tanner (2002: 12) point out, the Iraqi regime established a system of bureaucratic law which prohibited for example non-Arabs from purchasing properties in the north, while encouraging incentives for investing in the south. At the same time, a significant number of Shia Iraqis from the centre and south of Iraq were forced, following the same logic, to migrate to the north regions where they could find better life opportunities. This system of legalised ethnic discrimination determined an increase of internal migration (*Ibid.*).

For example, the *Al Anfal* campaign against the Kurds, which started in February 1988, is considered as one of the most terrible and barbaric chapters in Iraqi history with consequences of forced migration and displacement (McDowall 1997). In order to find safe havens, civilians mainly migrated to Iran and Turkey. According to McDowall (1997: 360) the number of Kurds (about 60,000) who found refuge in Turkey in 1988 was extremely low in comparison with the number of people accepted periodically by the Iranian state. In many of my Kurdish informants' stories, the city of Halabja and the *Anfal* persecutions are still remembered as a negative and sad event

which summarises the human rights violations and brutality committed by the ex-regime.

4.8   Migration in the 1990s

The invasion of Kuwait and the internal uprising's repression in the southern and northern areas of Iraq as well the economic embargo disposed by the UN created a lot of displacement among the populations (Tripp 2003). Many people crossed the eastern and western borders mainly escaping to Saudi Arabia and Iran[33] where they finally found refuge. Chatelard (2009: 15) points out, as also reported by some international organisations, that in the first months of 1990 an estimated number of three million Iraqis crossed the border finding temporary and permanent refuge in nearby countries. However, some of these people returned to Iraq when the conflict ended. Many of my informants stressed that the migration to Europe and particularly to Sweden, Denmark, and Germany were usually performed using Syria, Russia, and Estonia as corridors of escape. When Syrians obstructed the Iraqi migration by closing its borders, the flows started to transit across Turkey, Greece, and/or Italy either for staying or for reaching other Kurdish and Iraqi communities in other parts of Europe.

During the embargo, escaping from Iraq was not an easy task. Chatelard (2009: 18-19) thus discusses that, since 1993, the regime started to aggravate the control over the population movement by introducing restrictive measures such as the exit tax for those who wanted to cross the Iraqi border, or an expensive bank deposit or a mortgage on properties, and various other special permits. However, a special surveillance was also actuated towards those "active" Iraqi refugees and asylum seekers, seen as traitors, who were caught abroad. Special agreements and privileges for Iraqis living abroad were only recognised for those Iraqis supporting and collaborating with the regime.

Especially in 1996 an increased number of Iraqis fled also because of the extensive fights between the Iraqi Kurdish groups inside Iraq. The fratricidal war among the Kurdish political parties of PUK and PDK for the control of Iraqi Kurdistan determined a high level of displacement among the population. Simultaneously, groups of Turkmens and Assyrians tried to find refuge from the northern part of Iraq to Syria (Socci 2010: 164).

According to UNHCR data (1996: 3), the number of Iraqi people in Europe between 1991 and 1995 recognised as conventional refugees was about 16,000, while the number of others accepted for humanitarian reasons was about 17,000. The 1990s were also a time of new arrivals of Iraqis to Finland especially as quota refugees. Many of my informants asserted that the choice of being refugees in Finland was not dictated

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[33] In that occasion, 1.5 million Iraqi Kurds reached Iran, while almost 500,000 others arrived in Turkey (Fawcett & Tanner 2002: 10).

by a conscious choice. Many people in fact directed their choices towards those countries where the presence of Iraqi people was already evident, like Sweden where the first Iraqi Kurds already arrived in the 1970s. However, the settlement of people coming from Iraq in Finland started to take form after the 1990s mainly based on a quota agreed between the UNHCR and Finland (Wahlbeck 1999).

The Iraqi and Kurdish people who arrived in Italy mainly travelled by boat from Turkey and then Greece. The region of Apulia was basically the first Italian soil where these people arrived in order to later on head into other directions. In 1995, as Fringuello (2010: 149) argues, Italy deployed a vast number of military personnel for fighting against the variegated Kurdish arrivals, implementing the expulsions instead of asylum request acceptance. It was only some years later, after 2007, that Italy started recognising the status of refugees to a large number of Kurdish exiles[34].

4.9   Migration in the 2000s

The Iraqi exodus after the American invasion in 2003 has been described as an unexpected crisis in the international humanitarian agenda. Despite the profound political chaos and the rise of violence, my informants considered the US troops, besides other terrorist groups, to be responsible for worsening the situation. Looting of social service institutions, museums, and schools for example and the escalation of violence (e.g. abuse, torture and random killing) towards Iraqi civilians turned the Iraqis to anger and resentment against the Americans.

At the same time, people's accounts of de-Baathification were not clearly explained, probably due to the political transition. Nevertheless, from Iraqis' narratives, it is possible to capture how political and economic exclusions became exasperated, enforcing distance and distrust on the already fragmented Iraqi communities. For Iraqis living in Helsinki and Rome, and returning to Iraq for short visits, the situation of the country is accounted with puzzlement. People talked about the end of the dictatorship with emphasis and hope, but at the same time they stressed the economic, political and religious difficulties. Moreover, the time spent abroad and the ethnic and sectarian violence which spread across the country contributed to the growth of resentment and distance between the "temporary" visitors and the "permanent" stayers.

Currently, some Iraqis are temporarily coming back, but others are constantly fleeing. Insecurity and political threats have forced millions of Iraqis to legally and illegally flee from their country. Moreover, a devastated economy followed by skyrocketing inflation became a structural problem since the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime in April 2003 (Sassoon 2009). High unemployment also forced new categories

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[34] Today, in Italy, the majority of Kurdish people have Turkish origins.

of vulnerable Iraqis to move abroad in search of economic security or to oblige people in participating in shadow business in order to survive especially in those neighbouring countries where there was no proper procedure for granting asylum (Ibid.). At the same time, high corruption in political institutions and a patronage system slowed down the political and economic reconstruction of the country (Sassoon 2009:135.). As in the previous years of migration, the neighbouring countries were the first to contain the migratory pressure. As Sperl (2007: 2) points out, it has been estimated by some international agencies that the number of refugees in Iraq's neighbouring countries is greater than the total number of refugees currently living in the entire European Union. According to Chatelard (2009: 16), while most of the Iraqis were registered as refugees by the Iranian state, others (about 20,000) settled in Turkey, Syria and Jordan while waiting to be resettled by the UNHCR in other Western countries and they had limited legal protection.

However, the situation dramatically changed after 2005-2006 as I discussed earlier. In particular, the Samarra bombing of 2006 increased the sectarian violence across Iraq, determining new and crowded waves of internal and external displacement as documented by various organisations such as the UNHCR, the Human Rights Watch and IOM (cf. IOM 2009; Human Rights Watch 2006). In an attempt to stem the constant flows, Syria and Jordan instituted more restrictive entry requirements for those "guest" Iraqis such as a visa and other residential permits especially after 2007 (Harper 2008:179). As Barnes (2009: 19-20) notices, Lebanon also instituted a rigid system; in fact the Iraqis who illegally crossed the border, or did not renew their visas, faced either deportation to Iraq or imprisonment. However, even if Iraqi people could gain a temporary residence permit, in most of the cases they were not entitled to legally work; generally, saving and remittances from relatives (from Iraq) were the most common source of income for these displaced people (Sassoon 2009).

European countries such as Turkey, Greece, and Italy reinforced their borders, while others such as Denmark, but also Finland either rejected most of the Iraqi asylum applications or sponsored repatriations or the recognition of temporary protection (ECRE 2008[35]). At that point, the EU Parliament, advised by the UNHCR, adopted a resolution[36] on the situation of Iraqi people demanding more participation of Europe in the general humanitarian assistance and remanding the states' obligation under the 1951 Refugee Convention (Harper 2008).

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[35] European Council on Refugees and Exiles, *Five Years on Europe is Still Ignoring Its Responsibilities Towards Iraqi Refugees*, March 2008, AD1/03/2008/ext/ADC, available at: http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/47e1315c2.html (Retrieved 27/08/2012)

[36] European Parliament, *Resolution of 12 July 2007 on the humanitarian situation of Iraqi refugees*, available at: available at: http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4697795d2.html (Retrieved 27/08/2012)

4.10   Conclusion

This chapter has clarified the historical and migratory dynamics which frame the Iraqi and Kurdish exodus. Since its origins, Iraq has been constructed from disparate ethnic, religious and cultural groups. In 1932, Iraq was unified and become an independent nation under the British Empire until 1958. However, violence, in its direct and indirect forms, has been the primary means of keeping order especially during the regime of Saddam Hussein.

Iraqi people during the more than thirty years of conflicts have been displaced internally and externally throughout many countries around the globe. The Iraqi order of migration may be explained through a time frame which delineates specific causes and better explains people's motives and the country's conditions. However, considerable differences among the Iraqi population's resettlement abroad also depended on national asylum and migration policies, which received large numbers of Iraqi migrants since the 1970s, especially considering the Italian case, and the 1990s and 2000s for both the Italian and Finnish case.

However, usually political as well as economic motives overlapped especially for those who migrated during the 1970s and 1980s. The following years from the 1990s and thereafter, correspond with the intensification of the republic of fear of Saddam (Makiya 1989), which constitutes the massive refugee case. A higher concentration of internally and externally displaced people depicted these dramatic years. The acceptance of the refugee regime since the 1990s by many European states such as Italy and Finland characterised for the first time the recognition of the migration of Iraqis across diverse legal statuses.

5 The countries of reception

5.1   Introduction

This chapter explores Finland and Italy as national units of analysis. Reception policies and welfare state dynamics in particular will be introduced in order to provide grounds for future discussion on the aspects of immigrant integration in a local context. In the first part, both Finland and Italy will be presented by highlighting certain characteristics that they have in terms of immigration. Thus, both countries have been characterised by the coexistence of immigration and emigration especially during the 20th century. Moreover, they have been considered as new countries of immigration because they only developed a system of asylum and refugee laws since the 1990s, despite the fact that migration flows were already visible during the 1970s and 1980s. Today, a wide range of nationalities are living in these two countries and especially in the main capital cities where jobs and other formal and informal services are concentrated. However, the diverse configurations of *immigration policies* and *immigrant policies*[37] (Hammar 1985), derived by different welfare state models, have had a significant impact at both the reception level and the local level in terms of the Iraqi communities' organisation.

The Iraqi population in Helsinki and Rome is quite diversified in terms of ethnic, socio-economic, political and religious characteristics. The Iraqi communities often display high internal difference which makes it impossible to generalise the Iraqi case. In Finland, Iraqis are one of the biggest migrant communities in terms of numbers. The majority of the Iraqis are Muslims, but there are also Christian and Mandaean groups living in Finland. The people, who have been interviewed in this study, are people of Arab and Kurdish origins who started to arrive in Finland since the 1990s as quota refugees.

 In Italy, the Iraqi community is also composed of different ethnic and religious groups. In terms of migration, the first Iraqis who started to arrive in the 1970s are quite different from the refugees who arrived in the 1990s and later in the 2000s in regards to motivation and plans for their future. In particular, and differently than in the Finnish case, many Iraqis consider Italy today as a country of transit more than a country of settlement. In this regard a quantification of the Iraqi people in the Italian territory is difficult to conduct, but the numbers seem to be low.

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37 According to Hammar (1985) while immigration policies refer to the regulation of the flow of migration and border control, immigrant policies deal with the rights and duties gained by the (legal) migrants once settled in the new country. Differently, welfare benefits like housing, health services as well as work and education are part of the immigrant policies.

With reference to the welfare state structure, Italy and Finland belong to different traditions. Esping-Andersen (1990) uses the term welfare state regime to explain country welfare variance with reference to market, family and state dynamics. The "liberal welfare regimes" (USA, Great Britain, New Zealand, etc.) are characterised by a marked predominance and limited welfare provision based on the assessment of people's needs. The "conservative regimes" (Italy, Germany, Austria, etc.) provide assistance based on people's employment status. Employment is, therefore, the precondition of the social rights recognition. The "social democratic" regime (the Nordic countries, Finland included) is based on the principle of universalism, equality among all the citizens. Rights derive from citizenship and, therefore, are uniformly recognised for all inhabitants. The same Danish sociologist, in his successive works, rethinks the welfare state structure, suggesting the term "models" rather than "regimes" as a more accurate title (Esping-Andersen 2002). The process of transformation regarding the role of globalisation, demographics and social changes (e.g. family composition, migration, etc.), the European integration process, etc. undermines the welfare states configurations as singular and homogeneous units[38].

Today, social scientists claim the emergence of localities is challenging nation state dynamics (Martiniello 1995:4). For this reason, this study, despite the importance of a national focus, also proposes important reflection on the role that locality has in shaping migrants pathways of incorporation. The cities of Helsinki and Rome represent important platforms where claims and questions of democracy are linked and related to the Iraqis. European and Iraqi cities also represent important urban domains where Iraqis sustain their activities and draw important points of reference for their past, present and future lives. In this regard, Rome and Helsinki are places of subsequent identification for the Iraqis who by accident or by choice suddenly settle there.

5.2   Finland: the Nordic pole of Europe

Situated in the north east areas of Europe, Finland is a country with a long history of emigration[39] as documented by many scholars (Koivukangas 2003; Heikkilä & Peltonen 2002) and characterised as a relatively homogeneous society (Koenis & Saukkonen 2006; Valtonen 1998).

However, Finland is also a border country which has felt the pressure of particular events. For instance, during the Middle Ages, the tension between the social and

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38 Other studies have traced a more specific "Mediterranean" variant within the group of conservative regimes characterised by extreme family responsibilities, monetary transfers rather than services, structure of employment (Ferrera 1996). The problem of Esping-Andersen's theorisation as well as others' (Ferrera 1996) is that they mainly consider the nation state as a static unit of analysis, underestimating the role that localities represent nowadays.

39 Koivukangas (2003: 2) argues that between 1945 and 2001 about 755,000 emigrants left Finland because of famine and economic depression, trying to find a better future in countries such as North America, Australia, Sweden, etc.

cultural environments of the east and west influenced the evolution of Finland and its inhabitants. Finland in fact was under the Swedish empire for almost six centuries until 1809 when it was incorporated into the Russian Empire as a Grand duchy, after the powerful armies of the Tsar Alexander I of Russia defeated the Swedish troops. The *October revolution* coincided with the Finnish independence (1917). In 1919, after a period of internal struggle and civil war, Finland officially became a Republic, and by constitution an officially bilingual country. As Koivukangas (2003: 3) argues, since its origins, Finland has been characterised as a society composed of "old" ethnic groups. For example, the Roma people have been a part of Finnish society since the 1500s; the Tartars since the 1800s, and the Jews since the late 1700s. Russians arrived mainly as civil servants, officials and merchants when Finland was under the Russian Empire and remain the largest ethnic group. The Sami, on the other hand, are the only indigenous people living in Finland (*Ibid.*).

However, immigration has been a quite contained and relatively new phenomenon from the 1980s onwards. Therefore, as many Finnish scholars argue, Finland's geographical location and the lack of history of colonialism followed by a small sized economy, partially explains why Finland does not represent an attractive destination for migrants (Alitolppa-Niitamo 2004; Wahlbeck 1999; Valtonen 1998). However, migration patterns have changed since the 1980s. As Valtonen (1998:38) argues, in the mid-1980s, Finland's role changed from a migrant sending country to a receiving country. As Wahlbeck argues (1999: 76) three main reasons explain the increase in immigration during this period. Firstly, Finland's modest economic success attracted a significant number of Finnish returnees from Sweden. Secondly, the collapse of the Soviet Union (1989-91) resulted in increased migration of labour migrants from the CIS and Baltic states to Finland[40], despite the heavily guarded borders. Thirdly, the first arrival of refugees constituted a new phase in terms of migration management. The 1980s were, therefore, marked as Finland's first confrontation with the challenges of immigrant and refugees reception (Lepola 2000; Kosonen 2008).

In the 1990s, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the admission of Finland into the European Union (1995) established new and increased migration to the country despite the economic crisis between 1990 and 1993 (Sagne et al. 2007). Push factors such as wars, and the disruption of former communist regimes in the neighbouring countries, created new waves of migrants and refugees to the new EU country followed by family reunification agreements. Open reception policies attracted Ingrian Finnish returnees from the former Soviet Union as well as Finnish Swedes from Sweden. However, unlike the 1990s, the 2000s saw the diversification of the countries of origin of incoming migrants. Due to the increased flow of people, goods and services the Finnish society modified its composition and ignited an interesting debate on national security, immigrants and refugee rights as well as on integration and citizenship (Koivukangas 2003; Lepola 2000; Pitkänen & Kouki 2002; Forsander 2008; Wahlbeck 1999; 2008). As Forsander (2008: 72) explains in those years of transformation, the

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40 This was the case of many Ingrains from Estonia and Russia that came back to Finland thanks to new repatriation policies.

Finnish state adopted "legalised attitudes" towards foreigners following internal and external historical, cultural, socio-economic and political contemporary developments.

5.2.1   Reception and integration policies in Finland

As Sagne et al. (2007: 100) report that the first documentation of immigration came into being in 1919, as a general collection of rules regulating entrance into Finnish territory via passport controls, visas, and residence permits. Finnish legislation on issues regarding refugees arrived later and was based on the recognition of the 1951 UN Refugee Convention and the signing of the 1968 Protocol. Especially after the 1990s, other pieces of legislation were created to regulate the arrival of asylum seekers and refugees as well as approaches to integration and reception.

At the national level, legislative acts tried to preventively implement and promote good governance and legal protection in matters concerning aliens and the refugees (Finnish Aliens act 1991, section 1). Finland was already receiving quota refugees as early as 1986. The term "quota refugee" refers to those migrants in need of international protection and who are relocated to Finland from refugee camps located in specific areas across the globe. Usually, the UNHCR officials are in charge of selecting the potential applicants with reference to humanitarian policy and the Refugee convention. The quota is set every year in accordance with the available government budget which is approved by the Parliament (cf. the Finnish Aliens' Act Section 90, Subsection 2). In practice, refugees and other people in search of protection are selected by the UNHCR delegation in specific refugee camps through an interview process. Since 2001, the refugee quota has consisted of 750 people per year. In comparison with other EU Nordic countries[41], the quota is still quite small but proportionate to the number of Finnish inhabitants, which is about 5,375,276 (Statistics Finland - Population Structure 2010). Quota refugees receive an automatic and permanent residence permit. The Aliens act, in particular, grants protection to migrants on humanitarian grounds (section 88 a) and recommends the introduction of a new form of subsidiary protection as suggested by the European Union Qualification Directive[42].

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41 For example, in Sweden the refugee quota varies between 1,200 and 1,900 persons (Swedish Migration Board, data available at: http://www.migrationsverket.se/info/601_en.html Retrieved 15/05/2013). In Norway, the quota is set at 1,200 refugees each year (Norwegian Directorate of Immigration, data available at: http://www.udi.no/Norwegian-Directorate-of-Immigration/Central-topics/Protection/Asylum-seekers-and-refugees/Resettlement-refugees/ Retrieved 15/5/2013); the only exception is today for Denmark which usually receives around 500 quota refugees each year (cf. the Official Portal for Foreign and Integration, available at: http://www.nyidanmark.dk/en-us/coming_to_dk/asylum/quota_refugees.htm Retrieved 15/05/2013).

42 The European Union Qualification Directive (2004/83/CE) was recognised in most EU states during 2004. EU States were encouraged to convert part of the EU directive into their immigration policies. The purpose of this EU directive was not only harmonising the EU jeopardised system on refugee protection, but also recognising other forms of international protection (e.g. the subsidiary protection) to third country nationals and to stateless people.

The Act of Integration of Immigrants and Reception of Asylum Seekers (493/1999) prefers the use of the Finnish term *kotoutuminen*[43] (beginning to feel at home) instead of the term *integraatio* as a way to dissolve accusations of assimilatory motives (Lepola 2000). Thus, this term helps to ensure the importance of dual relations between the migrant and the society by recognising societal participation and respecting migrants' language and cultural practices. In practice, integration is handled at different levels: the national (the state, the government), local (the municipalities) and individual level (through a personal integration plan). The *top-down approach* of the Finnish system relies on the implementation of integration and migration policies from the government to the municipalities where refugees are registered. Municipalities and other collaborative bodies (usually NGOs, and associations) need to fulfil the state requirements and implement training programmes and other services for migrants. These public bodies provide guidance on a diverse range of services such as: accommodation either in reception centres or in apartments, language tuition (either in Finnish or Swedish), access to health services (including mental health care, if needed), interpretation services, legal aid, family reunification support, etc. Usually language and culture courses followed by skills training support the promotion of employment through the integration process (Act of Integration and Reception of Asylum Seekers, section 2). In this regard, municipalities hold a certain level of flexibility in terms of financial resources to transfer to migrants' integration activities. The planning and implementation of personal integration programmes are contingent on the municipalities' resources as well as the associations and the cultural centres' initiatives. At the individual level, the Act of Integration also recognises the possibility to draw a personal integration plan in cooperation with local authorities, the Employment and Economic Development Centre. This plan, which may vary from 1 to 3 years, usually focuses on the migrants' resources such as education, work experience, etc. The main goal of the integration plan is promoting integration through employment. Once the migrant acquires a job or initiates a course of study, the integration plan is interrupted.

Despite its apparent perfection, the Finnish welfare system, when dealing with asylum and refugee issues, has not been immune to criticism. The changing character of international migration between 1970 and 1989 with the arrival of new migrants blurred the boundaries between economic migrants and refugees. However, despite their similarities, researchers contended that refugees might also have additional and distinctive needs as they suffer from psychological stress and trauma (cf. Alinia 2004; Walhbeck 1999; Valtonen 1999; Castaneda et al. 2012). The debate on immigrants and refugees has also fluctuated from positioning migrants as fruitful economic resources, to passive users of the Finnish welfare system (Forsander 2008; Jaakkola 2000; Wahlbeck 1999). Following the previous point, it could also be argued that the strong emphasis on economic integration is related to the logic of the Nordic welfare state structure, which by encouraging economic integration tries to attenuate social inequalities and difference. Thus, immigrants and refugees need to function in Finnish society (e.g. Act of Integration and Reception of Asylum, section 1). This view of

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43 *Kotoutuminen* derives from the word "koti" which in Finnish means *home*.

seeing migrants and refugees as an economic workforce reflects a system of well-structured welfare where people are perceived more as passive recipients than active, equal and creative users of the system. Research on Nordic welfare states has already addressed this topic, highlighting how immigrants and refugees should not just be seen as a threat or mere labour force, but also as human beings with dignity (cf. Ahlberg 2002 and Necef 2000 cit in. Alitolppa-Niitamo 2004: 16). However, the binary relationship between the *equality of opportunities* and the *equality of outcomes* (*or results*) is problematic especially when dealing with ethnic minorities. Equality of opportunity manifests itself in the *formal* equal access to education, employment and other services. However, the shift from equality of opportunities to equality of outcomes can be problematic especially for migrants and refugees facing racism, discrimination and social exclusion in the society of settlement.

Similarly, discussion on inequalities has been addressed with reference to welfare state models in terms of people's dependency on public support (Valtonen 2008). For example, several studies have explained the role of welfare dependency as intrinsic to the migration policy system (Forsander 2002). The overwhelming welfare state, materialises through municipal support that may also have the *negative effect* of causing passive addiction to the welfare system and resulting in disempowerment (Valtonen 1998), de-labourisation and clientification (Necef 2000: 134, cit. in Forsander 2008: 74) or clienthood (Valtonen 2008). In this regard, disempowerment refers to a process of subordination to a welfare system where refugees have little or no control (Valtonen 1998). Training, education and job placement should create *empowered refugees*. However, distrust of refugees as well as an overwhelming social security system does not allow refugees to achieve a sense of autonomy and self-reliance. At the same time, institutions in charge of resettlement and integration have received disapproval for treating refugees as incapable and disadvantaged people who need a special support and guidance in their process of inclusion into Finnish society (Wahlbeck 1999: 81). Clientification or clienthood is generally defined as a process of socio-economic dependency on the social service system (Valtonen 2008; Ålund & Schierup 1991). In these circumstances, refugees perceive the authorities as dominant, as not giving them any chance to communicate their genuine experiences (Ålund & Schierup. 1991: 35). Refugees become clients of the complex system of the welfare state which incorporates cultures within a dominant frame. These issues will be discussed in chapter nine where my empirical material will be presented.

Moreover, researchers such as Walhbeck (1997), Valtonen (1997), and Matinheikki-Kokko (1997) have specifically criticised the *policy of dispersal,* which has aimed to disperse the refugee population across the country since the 1980s in order to avoid spatial concentrations of ethnically homogeneous groups. In fact, at that time, Finnish institutions were not aware of the fact that immigrants and refugees also utilise their own resources and social networks to pave their path towards integration (Wahlbeck 1999). Moreover, the lack of cultural community may also have detrimental effects on the psychological well-being of refugees (Liebkind 1996). Following the previous critique, presented by Wahlbeck (1999), in his study on Kurdish people in

England and Finland, argues that the Finnish resettlement system underestimates people's transnational connections and diasporic networks, while placing undue focus on the Finnish programmes of integration, which foment perspectives that are more assimilative than multicultural. More specifically, Finnish integration policies have been criticised for their lack of realism, and short-term approach to refugee integration/assimilation (Wahlbeck 1996; 1999). Similarly, Huttunen (2010: 55) argues that Finnish policies dealing with refugees are ambiguous in character. On the one hand, discussion on equality suggests that migrants are entitled to integrate into their new society as equal members (Ibid.). At the same time, however, the right to maintain one's own culture, usually suggested in abstract terms, is only expressed in the private sphere and not visibly externalised within civil society (Ibid.).

At the same time, the configuration of the Finnish welfare state, as reported by a group of researchers (Keskinen 2009a et al.; Saukkonen 2013) seems to be steeped in nationalism that is responsible for erecting boundaries and spacing out national and non-nationals as well as inhibiting multicultural dialogue across differences. In this regard, it seems that the Nordic welfare model is basically built around a perception of *national* and *patriotic* loyalty constructed in opposition to foreigners who do not share a common history and identity. Saukkonen (2013) in particular, notices how terms such as cultural diversity and multiculturalism are part of the state and municipal agenda and legislation. However, practices of multiculturalism and recognition of diversity are not properly concretised at the local level creating a gap between a vision of potential and effective multiculturalism (Ibid.). At the same time, it could be argued that the role that transnationalism plays in the system of resettlement and repatriation is underestimated (Huttunen 2010; Wahlbeck 1999; 2002).

5.2.2 *Refugees in Finland*

As reported by Sagne et al. (2007: 100) in the 1920s and 1930s the first groups of refugees to arrive in Finland were Russians and Jews from Central Europe. At that time, Finnish legislation regulating asylum seekers and refugees was basically inexistent. However, the monitoring of foreigners was quite common and institutionalised by the Foreigners Decree in 1938 (Ibid.).

The first wave of non-European refugees arrived in 1973 from Chile, by the action of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. In 1979, groups of Vietnamese were recognised as refugees as well (cf. Valtonen 1998). Refugees from Somalia, former Yugoslavia and Iraq arrived mainly during the 1990s. Heikkilä and Peltonen (2002: 2) argue that since 1973, Finland has received over 21,000 refugees. This number comprises not only quota refugees, but also asylum seekers, humanitarian refugees, and people who came through family reunification.

In 2010, general refugee quotas had been selected for Iraq, Myanmar, Democratic Republic of Congo and Iran (Statistics Finland - Population Structure 2010). Since 2007, the number of Iraqi refugees has consistently risen until 2010[44]. Usually, Iraqi refugees are selected before their arrival in Finland through interviews[45] with UN delegates in refugees camps mainly located in Syria, Jordan and Turkey. Besides the refugee quota, the Finnish migration service also reports data for the "emergency and urgent quota referrals" which includes people of diverse nationalities (whose nationality is not specified) and who are immediately, yet temporarily, resettled in Finland because of exceptional humanitarian reasons or for medical treatment. As the Finnish migration service also points out, when a person's motives do not correspond with the criteria for granting asylum (as specified in the Geneva Convention and in the Aliens Act), other special protections may be considered. Firstly, people may be granted a *resident permit through the subsidiary protection*. This kind of protection enters into action when the requirements for granting asylum are fulfilled. Usually, people whose lives have been threatened by torture, executions and other punishments and who cannot return to their home country because of a situation of general danger, like a war, obtain the subsidiary status. Secondly, *humanitarian protection* entails the issuance of a resident permit to those people who are unable to go back to their country of origin because of an environmental disaster, or a human rights situation. Thirdly, a *temporary resident permit* can also be granted on other grounds such as health reasons, family ties or reasonability (cf. Finnish immigration service).

People may also apply for asylum upon arrival in Finland as asylum seekers claiming a violation of human rights. Usually, the asylum application is drafted by the border police and is later handled by the Finnish Immigration Service, which is the responsible body for the granting of asylum. As Tanner (2011) argues, Finland generally collects between 2,000 and 6,000 applications for asylum annually. Overall, Iraqi applications from 2007 to 2009 have occupied the first place followed by Somalis, Afghanis, and other vulnerable groups. A total of 5,988 migrants sought asylum in Finland in 2009. Iraqis (1195), followed by Somalis (1180) and Bulgarians (739) were the most represented nationalities (Finnish immigration service 2009). Similarly, in 2010, when the total number of people who sought asylum in Finland decreased (4,018), Iraqis were still the first group with 575 applications, followed by Somalis (571) and Bulgarians (485) (cf. Finnish immigration service 2010). In comparison to previous years, the growth of asylum applications in Finland could be dependent on several factors *tout court*. In the case of Iraqis, migration chains have

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44 The Finnish immigration service has reported that in 2007, 159 Iraqis came from refugees camps located in Turkey and Syria. In 2008, 282 Iraqis were selected from a camp in Syria. In 2009, 301 Iraqi refugees came from Syria and Jordan. In 2010, 144 refugees were selected from Syria (22/11–02/12/2010). Data available at:

http://www.migri.fi/about_us/statistics/statistics_on_asylum_and_refugees/quota_refugees (23/04/2012)

45 The interviews provide various kinds of information such as: the applicant's identity, information about the applicant's family members, the travel route, etc. Moreover, in order to be valid, the interviews ensure if there are grounds for the violations of the persons' human rights and other concurrent motives. Interpreters are also provided if necessary during the interview process.

also been a reason especially for those people who arrived after 2000, as reported by my informants.

In terms of illegality, there are rather few illegal immigrants in Finland. Usually, the Finnish borders are under surveillance and it is difficult to cross them without being caught. Illegal migrants are mainly usually over-stayers: people who overstayed their visa or resident permit without having them extended (Sorainen 2002), or people who were smuggled mainly from Estonia (as in my sample). However, various scholars have approached the problem from a different angle, focusing more on illegal immigrant labour than illegal entry (Sorainen 2002).

5.2.3 Iraqis in Finland

In 2010, according to the Finnish population register, Iraqis were the sixth largest group of foreign citizens living in Finland[46]. In 2010, there were 5,024 Iraqi citizens, of which a large proportion lives in urban areas such as Helsinki, Turku, Tampere, Espoo and Vantaa. In 2011, the number of Iraqi citizens increased to 5,742 people (Statistics Finland – Population Structure 2011).

As was already stressed earlier in this thesis, Iraqis constitute an extremely segmented population in terms of religious, ethnic and political characteristics. This is also reflected among the Iraqis living in Finland. Most of the Arab Iraqis I managed to interview originated from central and southern Iraq. As Juntunen (2009:29) points out most of the Iraqi Arab refugees in Finland arrived after the first Gulf War; in the mid-1990s entire families were sent directly to Finland from refugee camps in the Saudi-Arabian desert, while a second group consisted of quota refugees from Syria and Jordan (Ibid.). In terms of language affiliation, the Finnish population register also provides valuable information which, in the case of the multi-ethnic Iraqi society, helps to better frame the varieties of ethnic groups. According to statistics, the sixth largest group by native language between 2000 and 2010 is the Kurds (with both dialects Sorani and Kurmanji), after Russians, Estonians, Somalis, British, and Arabs (Statistics Finland – Population Structure 2010). Therefore, it could be argued that a significant number of Iraqis living in Finland are of Kurdish origin (Wahlbeck 2009; 2005).

In his study of Kurds in Finland, Wahlbeck (1999; 2005; 2007) points out that the majority of Kurds, who have been living in Finland since 1990s originated from Iraq. A large number of Iraqi asylum seekers who arrived at the beginning of the 1990s reached Finland from the former Soviet Union and the Baltic states or were smuggled through Western Europe (Wahlbeck 2005: 1004). In many cases asylum applications were followed by residence permits issued for humanitarian reasons (Wahlbeck 1999).

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46 The other main immigrant groups living in Finland in 2010 came from Estonia (29,080), Russia (28,426), Sweden(8,510), Somalia (6,593) and China (5,559) (Statistics Finland Population structure 2011)

Though a majority came as quota refugees during the 1990s and 2000s, few Kurds arrived in the 1970s as students or in the 1980s and 1990s as asylum seekers (Wahlbeck 2009: 83).

Separate data on Finnish citizenships granted from 2006 to 2010 shows that among the first ten countries of former citizenship, there is no mention of Iraq (Statistics Finland – Population Structure 2011). This could be explained in many ways: a state of temporary perception of stay by the refugees in Finland due to the improving condition in Iraq; or a large number of pending or unsuccessful applications because of a lack of proper documentation needed, or lack of fulfilment of other criteria required to make an application for citizenship in accordance with Finnish legislation; or simply the fact that social rights depend more on permanent resident status than the effective possession of Finnish citizenship (Wahlbeck 2008). However, for refugees and asylum seekers, as also documented by my interviews, citizenship may be used as a means to travel more easily or to prevent deportation or imprisonment.

However, starting in 2005, the Finnish Directorate of Immigration granted temporary residence permits (so-called class B or B-permits) to almost 600 asylum seekers coming from Somalia, Afghanistan, and Iraq. This temporary status also implied limited access to basic services such as education, employment and family reunification. At that time, the Finnish officials explained the spread of the use of B permits as dependent on the relatively improved conditions in these three asylum countries (Somalia, Iraq, and Afghanistan) and the relative decrease in the number of people seeking asylum in Finland. At the same time, repatriations were arranged for areas considered as safe such as in the Northern part of Iraq. During the time of my empirical research, Iraqi associations and international organisations, as I will explain in chapter nine, protested against these "temporary permits" and partly succeeded in the achievement of their goals, since B permits are no longer granted.

5.3   Italy: the South Pole of Europe

Italy is a country with two souls; one belongs to the dynamic of emigration, and the other to the dynamics of immigration. As Pugliese (2002: 15) explains, Italy experienced two major emigration flows: a transoceanic migration between 1860 and the beginning of the 1990s, known as the *great exodus,* and a more recent one after World War II, mainly directed to other European countries like Germany and Belgium. Despite the fact that emigration still plays a major role in the Italian case (Bonifazi et al. 2009), here the attention is placed on immigration, which only recently acquired major recognition.

Immigration only emerges as an evident phenomenon in the 1970s. As shown by Macioti & Pugliese (2010), the first groups of migrants moved to specific areas that, at the time, attracted specific migrant groups. For example, Tunisians who settled in

Sicily worked in the fishing industry as seasonal workers, while former Yugoslavians worked as construction workers in the northeastern part of Italy after an earthquake, which devastated the Friuli-Venezia Giulia region in 1976. Small groups of domestic workers coming from different parts of the world (Philippines, Eritrea, etc.) also found jobs in various cities across the peninsula. However, in the 1970s, as explained by Caponio (2005: 932), immigrants were also students and political dissident escaping from dictatorial regimes and persecution in Africa, the Middle East, Latin America and Asia. Even if there was no law regulating asylum and refugee status in Italy, forced migration flow was already a concrete event. In short, within the Italian legal framework, a *laissez faire* approach to questions of immigration and asylum dominated the 1960s and 1970s. As Macioti and Pugliese (2010: 97-98) stress, migrants found themselves in a situation of *a-legality* and not *illegality* since there was no appropriate or available legislation regulating the issue. The only available piece of documentation was the *Public Security Law of 1931* which suggested the foreigners register with the authorities. At that time, little assistance was provided to migrants by the Caritas and other organisations, trade unions and some political parties like the Christian Democrats, the Communist party and the socialist party (Melotti, 2004). Immigration acquires a mature configuration during the 1980s. Due to its favourable geographic position and lack of legislation, Italy became an easy country of access as well as transit.

In the 1990s, immigration is seen in its critical phase by a country which was still unprepared to receive diversified migrants influxes, regarding both economic and forced migrants. The change in immigration and asylum policies occurred only in 1986 with Law no. 943/86 and successively by Martelli Law no. 39/90 which regulated asylum for the first time. In particular, the awareness of necessity for more consistent legislation can be explained by several factors. First of all, the question of asylum started to monopolise the attention of European countries because of the increasing numbers of asylum seekers in Europe. Thus, the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989, the collapse of the communist regimes, especially in Albania (1991), Romania (1989), and the former Yugoslavia (1991, 1995, 1999), the deterioration of the political situation in Somalia (1991), and the wars in Iraq (1990s, 2000s) created new flows of people – legally and illegally – directed towards the Italian coasts (the so-called "boat people"). The Italian government tried to cope with these situations with a packet of *ad hoc* decrees based on government agreements, promising asylum seekers temporary resident permits, beyond the setting of the Martelli Law (Hein 2010: 50; Korac 2009; Caponio & Pastore 2004). Secondly, as many scholars note, restrictive policies actuated by central and northern European states such as U.K., France and Germany redirected and channelled the migration towards Italy and other Mediterranean countries (Olivero 1995; Bonifazi et al. 2009).

The effect of the Schengen agreement, signed by Italy in 1990, required a massive control of the external borders as a way to coordinate the EU countries in combating illegal immigration. The ambivalent Italian position in implementing a policy of "*doppio binario*" or "*double track*" (my translation) has been discussed by Sciortino

(2004; 2013) who argues that, since 1990, Italy has faced quite challenging situations. As an EU member state, Italy has had to adopt a more restrictive approach to migration, fitting into the "Fortress Europe" discourse. Additionally, it had to respond to an increasing structural demand for foreign labour as a way to compete in the internal and external market. At the same time, the urgent call for an organic legislation was also determined by some xenophobic outbreaks at the end of the 1980s[47] especially in large cities and Southern rural areas, which started to receive political and media attention for the first time (Zincone 2006: 20).

As Reyneri (2007: 4) points out, the migratory inflows only became sizeable in the mid-1990s and have skyrocketed since the 2000s. The effect of the Eastern Enlargement of the EU in 2002 delineated new patterns of migration and interest in the Italian market (Cvajner & Sciortino 2010). The Mediterranean model of migration (Pugliese 2002), was slowly replaced by a new dynamic migration, structured through the East and West, as well as by the combination of a diverse migration system (Cvajner & Sciortino 2010; Bonifazi et al. 2009; Scida' 2002). The increase in the foreign population raised important issues for which Italy – traditionally an emigration country – was unprepared.

However, as Melotti (2004: 80) notes, in 2002 more than 702,000 migrants were regularised through a process of *sanatoria[48]* or regularisation. As Carfagna (2002: 53) explains, amnesty has been usually employed as *a* privileged modality to cope with the widespread disregard of the rules of residence by immigrants. Two categories of migrants in particular – clandestine and irregular – are considered the main beneficiaries of the amnesties[49] (cf. Carfagna, 2002). Most probably, refugees and asylum seekers also benefited from the system of *sanatoria*, as a way to *quickly* improve their condition, and integrate into Italian society (Caponio & Pastore 2004). As Hein (2010: 38-39) states, between 1997 and 1999, 120,000 non-European migrants, including refugees who could neither obtain a residence permit nor the right to work because of geographic restrictions, became regularised. The number of the regularised migrants in 2002[50] was paradoxically equivalent to the sum of all the previous amnesties, which have resulted in 1.3 million applications for regularisation

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47 In the 1980s, the case of Jerry Essan Masso, a young South-African man who escaped from the apartheid system with the hope of starting a new life in Italy, represents the first case of the fight against racism. This young man, who worked as a tomato picker but with no proper working contract, was killed by a group of Italian bandits in search of money. His death ignited a public discussion on racism and migrants rights' protection. After the tragic event, a national demonstration was organised by associations, immigrants and refugees. The event also captured the attention of the Italian politicians by reinforcing the need of a new legislation for the recognition of refugee status.
48 The purpose of the so-called *sanatoria* is to regularise the high number of unauthorised migrants residing in the Italian territory through a working contract. This kind of resolution has been an important tool for managing migration policies "a posteriori".
49 In particular, the people who benefited by this amnesties were mainly "badanti" (people working in families) or immigrants employed in companies (Bonifazi et al. 2009: 29).
50 In particular, the Bossi-Fini regularised almost 700,000 people (Hein 2010: 72)

(Alexander 2007: 58). Regarding refugees and asylum issues,[51] the law tried to improve flexibility through decentralisation, which was partly instituted by the previous law. Thus, ten territorial commissions coordinated by a national board located in Rome were the units in charge of evaluating asylum requests (Hein 2010: 72). Under this system, asylum seekers are in fact invited for an interview to ascertain the causes of their requests. Interpreters are usually provided during the interview sessions. The results may be positive (receiving refugee status, or the status of subsidiary protection, or humanitarian protection) or negative (the request has been denied, but with possibilities to appeal within a certain time). However, unlike the Finnish case, where the refugee status can be permanently issued, in Italy refugees are given a residence permit valid for five years, while holders of subsidiary protection are issued residence permits valid for three years with the possibility of renewal (Hein 2010: 74). However, the waiting time for an interview can vary from three months to over a year, depending on the complexity of the case (e.g. the repatriated migrants under the Dublin II regulation[52]) and overcrowded territorial commissions like in Rome.

5.3.1   *Reception and integration policies in Italy*

Italian migration policies became institutionally decentralised only at the beginning of the 1990s (Alexander 2007). In particular, thanks to the Martelli Law, regions first and municipalities afterward became involved in recognising reception as well as integration based on the national available funds. However, bureaucracy did not guarantee that government funds properly reached the local institutions (Alexander 2007: 66). This trend of decentralisation was subsequently enforced by the act (40/1998) that recognised the local level as responsible for managing migrant policies (Ibid.). During these years, what became evident was what Zincone (1994: 15) calls the *localismo dei diritti* (localism of rights). With this term, Zincone (Ibid.) refers to a territorial differentiation which is exemplified by a diverse access to social services both for migrants and natives. During the 2000s, a number of researchers attempted to challenge the image of a unified Italian welfare state through the use of terms such as *welfare locale multiculturale* – Multicultural local welfare (Calloca 2008), Municipal welfare (Caponio 2004), or *internazionalizzazione del welfare* – internationalisation of welfare (Piperno 2008). These researchers not only wanted to demonstrate the important role of collaboration between migrants and natives in the pursuit of local inclusion, but also to recognise how migrants are integral to the sustainment of the Italian welfare system. For example, Piperno (2008) discusses how Italian society has witnessed the internationalisation of welfare thanks to the high number of immigrant workers employed in Italian families. In this regard, the Italian welfare state appears to

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51 Among these typologies of protection, there is also the humanitarian protection, valid for one year with possibilities of being renewed for example as a permit of stay for working reasons.

52 The Dublin II Regulation, which passed in 2003 (Council Regulation EC no 343/2003), establishes the principle that only one member state is responsible for examining an asylum application (art. 3). Usually, the member state who handles the asylum application is the first country where the asylum seeker lodges his/her application (Ibid.).

be dependent on the role of migrants, but at the same time, unable to include them within a structural plan of social integration (Piperno 2008: 5-7). Caponio (2004) also argues that immigrants' requests for housing, health and employment services happen at the local level and crucially involve the organisation of resources, services and people, which are not always available. Additionally, Caponio (2004) suggests that local administration should be seen both as *welfare institutions* (service providers) and *development institutions,* which consider immigration a resource within the territory (Caponio 2004: 790). Similarly, Calloca (2008) holds that local administrations reformulate relationships between foreigners and native inhabitants. By focusing on three cities within the Tuscany region, he believes that the opportunity to build a *multicultural welfare state from below* involving coordination between local institutions, immigrants and associations, represents an efficient way to address today's migration issues.

The initial efforts to develop suitable reception policies towards refugees and asylum seekers were first enacted in a frame of territorial differentiation during the 1990s. However, as Puggioni (2005: 324) states, refugee influxes were always perceived in terms of short-term crises – precisely because of the absence of any ready-made plan – whose immediate solution left no other option than emergency strategies. Thus, the system appeared to be characterised by jeopardised efforts at collaboration where national and local bodies could promote coordinated projects. In practice, NGOs and other associations (both religious and secular) were basically the key supporters in materially helping the migrants by providing accommodation and access to general services (Caponio 2007). In particular, Korac (2009: 14) states that the lack of state interest in the reception and integration of refugees was determined by two main factors. The first factor was easily explained by the immature attitude of the Italian institution and inability to cope with the new phenomenon of immigration, which consistently became more visible. The second factor concerned the idea that migrants looked at Italy as a place of transit instead of stay (cf. Caponio & Pastore 2004; Hein 2010). On the other hand, the characteristics of the conservative Italian welfare system, similar to other Western European countries, have denoted that migrants grow out of their welfare state dependency (Brucker et al. cit in Sciortino 2004: 112). In particular, Sciortino (2004: 126) maintains that in Italy the low migrant welfare provision is also contingent on different legal statuses available to migrants. For example, undocumented migrants are usually entitled to very limited benefits (e.g. medical treatment); while refugees and other temporary categories of migrants are helped on a temporary basis (Sciortino 2004:124). However, Sciortino (2004: 112) argues that migration plays an important role in the performance of the European welfare, especially regarding the relationship between the household, the state and the labour market. In a country where the families[53] work as buffer institutions (2004: 115), regular immigration is an important contributor of the welfare state regime, especially when considering the widespread domestic service sector.

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53 However, as documented by diverse studies (Reyneri 1997, 2003; Quassoli 1999) the logic of the familiar organisation has intensified the role of the informal labour as a way to cope with postindustrial market changes.

At the same time, due to the scarce legislative initiatives, discussions on immigration became synonymous with public disorder (Pallida 1998) and irregular migration, usually associated with criminality. Barbagli (2002) for example looks at statistics on criminality (extortion, theft, prostitution, smuggling, selling drugs etc.) from 1998 to 2000, noticing that during these years the number of immigrants accused of and convicted for mild and severe offences increased, especially in those cities where the concentration of immigrants was high. In most of the cases, Barbagli (2002) notices that undocumented migrants were more likely to commit crimes due to their vulnerable status and precarious socio-economic conditions. Conversely, sociologist Dal Lago (1999), criticising Barbagli's view, argues that prejudices may also arise from this kind of research, where questions of security are inextricably connected to immigration discourses. Criminalisation is, therefore, a social construct fed by a correlation of different systems, which amplify and emphasise the image of specific migrant groups and contribute to their marginalisation. In particular, the rise and consolidation of two anti-immigration parties, the Northern League and the National Alliance, between the 1990s and 2000s followed by an economic recession and discriminatory discourses, transformed migrants into *scapegoats* for rising unemployment (Alexander 2007: 57) By defining migrants as *non-persone* (*non persons*), Dal Lago (1999) indicates people who do not exist, people who are marginalised by the mainstream society when categorised across hierarchic lines and possibly penalised for their vulnerable legal status. This process was, however, amplified by a new legislative resolution (law no. 189/2002) better known as the Bossi-Fini law. This law, introduced by the centre-right coalition, reflected the spirit of the "Fortress Europe approach" where regulatory barriers started to be followed by physical ones (implementation of expulsion, internal controls, etc.). Generally, this law introduced a dependent correlation between the right to employment and the resident permits[54] namely the contract of stay for working reasons[55]. Moreover, it instituted penalties for trafficking/smuggling migrants and both forced expulsions as well as illegal migrants and clandestine entrants[56].

At the beginning of the 2000s, the creation of the PNA – the National project on asylum – within the Bossi-Fini law, enforced the logic of decentralisation and partnership between national and local administrations. The PNA's aims were not only to provide basic assistance but also to offer special aid like mental and psychological support, information on family reunion, interpreting and cultural mediation, language and cultural courses, as well as other special services for minors and vulnerable people.

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54 The law abolished the previous "sponsorship system" as enacted by the Turco-Napolitano law (40/98), which allowed a person to look for a job once entered in the Italian territory. On the contrary, the new Bossi-Fini law disposes that a migrant, before coming to Italy, must have an employment contract through which validating his/her permits of stay.

55 The permit of stay is therefore dependent on the working contract.

56 Pugliese (2002: 110) defines as clandestine those people who illegally entered in Italy, or continue to stay despite the expulsion order; on the other hand, the illegal immigrants mainly refer to the overstayers.

Successively, the state-run SPRAR[57], based on the old PNA[58], instituted in 2002 a new public system in charge of the reception, orientation and integration. The focus of the SPRAR claimed a network system where national and local institutions should cooperate for addressing the main lines of the Protection System towards refugees, asylum seekers, humanitarian protection holders and subsidiary protection holders[59]. As Carlini (2010: 233) points out, the system of the SPRAR, spread across the peninsula, was used to organically deal with deficiencies in the sector of reception and integration overall. In practice, this system is characterised by a multi-level collaboration between different bodies in charge or connected to *governance*, such as the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the national association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI), NGOs and other associations, secular and religious centres as well as local and provincial institutions. The SPRAR suggested the so-called "*accoglienza integrata*" or "*integrated reception*" which instituted a decentralised but coordinated network aimed at a process of social and economic inclusion of migrants under the management of the Central Service[60].

However, reception and integration projects, in terms of the used resources and material solutions significantly vary across the different Italian municipalities and regions due to previous existing resources, economic perspectives, mobilisation and local diversified projects etc. Moreover, according to Carlini (2010: 237), the European normative, translated into the Italian fragmented legal system, establishes today that all foreigners, refugees included, should have equal access to reception and integration services. However, such assistance is not always recognised in practice. For example, in 2008 the SPRAR system received 8,412 people (SPRAR 2008/2009). Even if the number increased in 2008, the number of people who actually received support was still low, especially when looking at the estimate of refugees and asylum seekers in Italy, which is around 47,000 (Caritas 2008). As also reported by the *fondazione anci ricerche* (cit in Carlini 2010: 234), the refugees and asylum seekers' reception was still an enormous problem in 2008. At that time, there were only 4,388 accommodation possibilities out of the 31,097 asylum applications presented in the same year (Ibid.). Many refugees, who were actually entitled to proper accommodation or subsistence support, could not benefit from their rights and lived in precarious conditions, on the streets, in parks or in squats, as I will show in this study. Similarly, language courses, due to the number of participants were not able to cover the high demands especially in

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57 Despite the SPRAR, there are several other "governmental centres" which have been created to cope with immigration and refugee matters. For example, the CPSA (Centre of Primary Help and Reception) instituted in 2006; the CDA (Centre of Reception) instituted in 1995; the CARA (Reception Centres for Asylum Seekers) instituted in 2008; the CIE (Centre of Identification and Expulsion) already known in 1998 (cf. Carlini 2010: 242-243).
58 The PNA was earlier instituted in 2001 by the ANCI (National Association of Italian Municipalities) the UNHCR and the Ministry of Interior as mean to cope with the assistance and protection of both asylum seekers and refugees in Italy.
59 The system of protection and reception was also suggested by the EU Directives. The EU Directives have been transformed into legislative decrees like, for example, Italian law nos. 251/2007 and 25/2008. A special emphasis was related to the increase of reception measures.
60 Despite the role of coordination between national and local projects, the Central Service is also in charge of monitoring the statistics on asylum applications and recognitions of refugees.

big cities like Rome. The situation was therefore more tragic for rejected asylum seekers and repatriated migrants under the Dublin II Regulation who were left to fend for themselves (cf. Bethke & Bender 2011).

5.3.2   *Refugees in Italy*

UNHCR (2010: 2) reported that in 2009 there were approximately 43.3 million people who were displaced worldwide because of conflict and other persecution. During 2007, according to the UNHCR (2008: 16) in Europe 44,100 refugees were recognised as conventional refugees, and 49,200 with complementary form of protection (subsidiary protection and humanitarian status). However, in comparison with other EU countries, the number of refugees in Italy has been consistently low (Hein 2010). By the end of 1988, in Italy, there were 7,895 refugees recognised by the Geneva Convention and 2,662 by the UNHCR mandate (Birindelli 1989: 12 cit. in Caponio & Pastore 2004: 3), while between 1952 and 1978 almost 77,580 refugees moved from Italy to third countries (UNHCR 1980: 13 cit. in Caponio & Pastore 2004:4). In 2010, according to UNHCR data, refugees are in total 56,000[61] (UNHCR 2010). Thus, it could be argued that looking at these estimates migrants perceive Italy as a country of transit rather than one of settlement.

Italy ratified the Geneva Convention in 1954, recognising the refugee status but with geographic restrictions, which basically limited refugee protection to EU asylum seekers. In the 1990s, when the geographical restrictions were lifted, thanks to the Martelli Law, the number of registered asylum applications and refugee recognitions increased. In those years, events such as the Albanian crisis (1990) followed by the Yugoslavian wars allowed for the entry of a diverse number of displaced people who were subsequently recognised as refugees. However, as shown by Eurostat (2010/2011) the numbers were and still are incomparable with other countries such as France, Germany, UK and many others.

By the end of 2002, Italy recognised more than 5,200 refugees and asylum seekers who needed protection (US Committee for Refugees World Refugee Survey 2003 – Italy). The majority of the approvals were for people from Sri Lanka (350), Turkey (150), and Iraq (140). Overall, the refugee population totalled 19,209 with a percentage of 0.2 per inhabitant. In 2006, there were 20,000 refugees, a number that is quite low, in comparison with other European countries such as Germany, (700,000), U.K. (293,000) or the Netherlands (100,000)[62].

According to the SPRAR report in 2007, the territorial commissions received 14,053 asylum applications in total (SPRAR 2007: 33). In the end, only 13,509 were

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61 This number does not include the underage migrants and the refugees recognised before 1990.
62 "Rifugiati, in Italia sono più di 20mila" Available at: http://temi.repubblica.it/metropoli-online/rifugiati-in-italia-sono-pi-di-20mila/ La Repubblica 2007. (Retrieved 30/08/2012)

examined with the following results: 10.42% recognised as refugees, 46.77% with humanitarian status, 36.33% with subsidiary protection and 6.48% with other results like unavailability (Ibid. 2007: 34). Among the refugees, Iraqis occupy the last position in a top ten list on the biggest beneficiary of the Italian protection system, where predominant positions are rather occupied by the Eritreans, Afghanis, Ethiopians, etc. According to the Eurostat data (2011), requests for asylum in Italy seem to be modestly contained. In particular, in 2010 the majority of asylum applicants came from Nigeria (14%), Pakistan (9%), Afghanistan (9%), Turkey (8%), Bosnia and Herzegovina (8%). and other (52%)[63] (Ibid.).

5.3.3   Iraqis in Italy

According to Italian statistics (Istat 2009), the number of Iraqi citizens living in Italy in 2009 totalled 2,547 (1,797 men and 750 women). On the other hand, it is difficult to estimate today the number of Kurds residing in Italy because they have registered according to their nationality i.e., Turkey, Syria, Iran and Iraq. According to some estimates of the UIKI- Onlus 2,000 Kurds came from Turkey, 1,000 from Iraq and 300 from Iran.

As stressed by my interviewees, the first few Iraqis arrived in Italy in the late 1960s as a result of the agreement between the Italian and new Iraqi Government after the *coup d'etat* of 1958 which substituted the monarchy with the Republic. These Iraqis who mainly belonged to the Arab ethnic group, moved to Italy on student visas issued on a temporary basis in order to specialise in art, architecture and cinema studies. This migration was also made possible thanks to the partnership agreements between Italian and Iraqi universities. A second, more substantial and variegated wave of Iraqis arrived in the 1970s after the student movements of 1968. But still, the reasons why people migrated were diverse and ranged from the socio-cultural and professional reasons to ethnic and political. The 1970s in fact are quite peculiar years for both Iraqis living in Iraq and abroad; different events characterised those years such as: the oil boom and the nationalisation of the Iraq petroleum company by *Al Bakr;* the breakdown of diplomatic relations with Western countries such as the US and U.K.; and the rise to power of Saddam Hussein in 1979. Another important event such as the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988) occurred. With this development came the first realisation by Iraqis that a possible return home would have to be postponed.

At the beginning of 1990, the majority of the people who escaped were Kurdish (Puggioni 2005). Most of these people initially fled to Iran and/or Turkey and

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63 In 2010, Italy received almost 11,325 applications. The 62% of the applications were rejected, while only38% received a positive response. In total, 1,615 people were recognised as refugees; 1,465 people received subsidiary protection, while 1,225 people were granted humanitarian protection (Eurostat 2011).

afterwards to Europe. However, due to restrictive immigration policies in countries such as Germany, UK, and Sweden, most of these people remained in Italy, even if their conditions and rights were overlooked. In 1997, as Puggioni (2005: 327) reports, some EU countries like Germany, France, Austria and the Netherlands criticised Italian immigration policies requesting more interventions for stopping the constant transit of irregular Kurds to central and northern Europe.

From the late 1990s to early 2000s, Kurdish Iraqi asylum applications were one of the most consistent followed by the Kosovars and Turkish Kurds. However, as Finotelli (2006: 232-233) reports between 2001 and 2002, the central commission, in charge of decision-making, refused most of the asylum applications submitted by Turks and Iraqis. The rejection was due to non-attendance at interviews with officials. Despite the lack of quantitative data, an observatory committee related to the PNA at the French border noted that 70% of asylum seekers who crossed the border illegally were of Kurdish and Turkish origin (Ibid.). In addition, the last Census (1 Jan 2003) confirmed 2,015 Iraqi citizens in the national territory, out of 6,000 people. Moreover, the limited number of Iraqi people recognised in the amnesty in 1998 and 2003, strengthen the hypothesis that Kurdish people prefer to transit to other countries rather than to remain in Italy (Ibid. 2004: 233). Furthermore, data provided by the German Dublin Unit, (cit. in Finotelli 2006: 234) confirmed that 75% of the total of people sent back to Italy (1,035) between 2001 and 2003 were mainly Iraqi Kurds (386), Turkish Kurds (256) and Kosovars (304). Most probably, this case is explained not only through the lack of controls or mistrust in the Italian refugee system, but also by the existence of more consolidated Kurdish and Iraqi communities in other countries such as Germany, England and Sweden, countries from which these Iraqis were repatriated. Looking at the overall statistics on Dublin transfers to Italy the number of repatriated migrants since 2007 is increasing. As reported on the website of the Italian council for refugees (CIR) based on data on the Dublin Unit, 1027 people were transferred to Italy in 2007; 1,308 in 2008; and 2,658 in 2009[64].

5.4   Discovering the city

It seems that recent attention relating to factors and development of migrants' integration practices transpires from diverse recent studies focusing on localities (Penninx & Martiniello 2004; Penninx et al. 2008). Despite the importance of national context, the influence of welfare state dynamics on migration patterns, localities and urban settings have become a target of attention. Previous research has demonstrated interest in the study of urban and social phenomena, for instance in the Chicago school from 1920 to 1950. The focus of several researchers was on the way through which immigrants assimilated into the American mainstream society, particularly at the local

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64 CIR data, available at: http://www.cir-onlus.org/Dati%20unita%20dublino%202007-2009.htm
(Retrieved 02/02/2012)

level. Cities were, therefore, seen as places of economic resources for immigrants and *social laboratories* for researchers to explain different degrees of social interaction and cohesion.

In Europe, the situation was different. As Caponio & Borkert (2005:15) explain, typically European societies only started to recognise cultural diversity after World War II, when masses of immigrant workers moved to major cities in search of better opportunities. The awareness of the increased diversity inside the European countries soon attracted the interest of many researchers. While during the 1990s issues on immigration and integration were basically raised at the national and international level, at the beginning of the 2000s, some researchers focused on a more local perspective where immigrants lived and worked (cf. Penninx & Martiniello 2004; Caponio 2005; Eade 1997; Korac 2009; Alexander 2007). Thus, cities and medium sized towns provide several kinds of services as well as opportunities (Penninx & Martiniello 2004) and represent magnets for immigrant and refugees. Cities are in fact places where important events happen and where people's lives, social positions and future plans are challenged (Ibid.6). Similarly, in addition to general settlement practices, cities deal with an increasingly ethnic and religious population, challenging not only the lives of those living within the city, but also affecting migration chains and lives of those in process of migrating from their location of origins (Alexander 2007: 7). It is important to stress, that within these studies, migrants are usually recognised as active actors able to perform and exert power within the city of settlement.

In particular, Alexander (2007: 9-11) summarises local level studies dealing with migration policies in three main groups. In the first group, attention is dedicated to a single city and to a specific policy domain (Ibid.). In the second group, comparative studies of cities help to trace local level variations within the same national unit (Ibid.) The third group focuses on studies related to multi-city research projects, involving less theorisation and more practical policy recommendations for the future (Ibid.). Others studies have focused on specific ethnic groups localised in specific cities by emphasising transnational and integration practices, migrant experiences and opportunities (cf. Amiraux 2001; Kastoryano 2002 cit in Glick Schiller & Çaglar 2009: 185). In particular, Glick Schiller & Caglar (2009) introduce the concept of *city scale*. These migration scholars define the city scale as the differential positioning of cities determined by the articulation of institutions of political, cultural and economic power within regions, states and the globe (Glick Schiller & Çaglar 2009: 188). In this neoliberal perspective, the migrant becomes the primary actor in the rescaling of the city, both at the local and transnational level. By doing so, migrants, as active participants, contribute to a re-evaluation of a city's global image (Glick Schiller & Çaglar 2009: 189). In this regard, similar paths of integration and transnational opportunities may also be traced, but at different scales, among top-scale, up-scale, low scale and down-scale cities (Glick Schiller & Çaglar 2009). For instance, they demonstrate that top-scale cities characterised by a strong globalised economy, and a lively multi-cultural environment, seem to offer a wide range of opportunities for migrants. In contrast, down-scale cities provide fewer opportunities for the migrant

incorporation into the urban economy, politics and culture (Ibid. 194). In general this perspective provides a dynamic view of cities as relational spaces switching between the global and local levels.

The awareness of cities as new promoters of action on integration and immigration matters was also discussed at the European political level. For instance, the conference on "Integrating cities: European Policies, Local Practices[65]" in 2006 was a clear message of productive collaboration among experts in various fields, who discussed issues of migration and integration from diverse European local perspectives. This conference served as a platform for sharing ideas and thinking about possible innovative solutions for common problems relating to migration. However, this conference was not an isolated episode, but rather the beginning of a new dialogue and point of view on migrant integration (cfr Puggioni & Borkert 2010). In the next sub-chapters I will present the cities of Helsinki and Rome, which encapsulate an array of imaginations, personal memories and practical experiences of transnational and integration practices. Today, cities probably more than nation states are implementing a discussion on "global migration from below" (Smith & Eade 2008) which conceptualises the city as vivid node of transnational urbanism. Cities are, therefore, recognised nowadays *as key sites of the transnational ties that increasingly connect, people, places and projects across the globe* (Ibid. 3). In this regard, transnationalism affects the way in which people feel and experience their places either in geographic territories or in cyberspace, (Korac 2009), engaging in multiple homes and challenging their sense of identity and belonging. As Sassen (2001) suggests, new forms of centrality and marginality have been redesigned in the new global era where the intensity and complexity of connections, materialisation and dematerialisation of economies have (over)amplified the space. In this regard, supranational, national and local are fruitful levels of analysis for critically addressing the dynamics of migrant inclusion, exclusion and social networking. Questions of social integration should pay attention to not only new localities but also people's mobility within those localities with reference to the forms of two-way solidarities that underpin integration (cf. Martikainen et al. 2012: 141).

5.4.1   *Helsinki metropolitan area*

The city of Helsinki, since its origin (1550) was a tiny town under the Swedish protectorate. Since 1809, when Finland became the Grand Duchy of Russia and the capital moved from Turku to Helsinki (1812), the population started to grow. As Klinge and Kolbe (2007: 35) argue, Helsinki started to receive people with differences

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65 The conference was organised in Rotterdam in collaboration with the European Commission and the representatives of the EUROCITIES (which consisted in a network of more than 140 European cities), the Committee of Regions and other European High Commissioners, and migrant organisations. In 2010, the Finnish EU-MAN network also participated in the "IV Integrating Cities Conference" which was held in London.

in term of languages, wealth, line of business and nationalities. The university and other civil and military administrative offices caused transformations which were followed by industrial and commercial development. By the beginning of the 20th century the "white city" was a tiny multicultural and cosmopolitan place within the Imperial Russian period (Klinge & Kolbe 2007). However, only after World War II, the city transformed into a metropolis, composed of separate upper-middle class districts and lower class ones (Vaattovaara & Kortteinen 2003). Huhdanmäki & Dubois-Taine (2004: 98) reported that between 1950 and 1960 half a million inhabitants were living in the city centre which thus became dense and compact. In the 1970s the growing number of internal and external immigrants, and the increasing demand for accommodation, developed into a system of organised "forest suburb" which also included the metropolitan area of Espoo and Vantaa (Klinge and Kolbe 2007). This new city plan, inspired by welfare policies, should have provided a harmonisation of nature with urban life while decreasing the polarisation between the rich and poor areas.

Today, Helsinki is an attracting pole for internal and external migrants. As Raento & Husso (2001: 159) argue, Helsinki is the most diverse city in Finland linguistically, culturally, and ethnically. As defined by Vaattovaara & Kortteinen (2003: 2129), Helsinki is a pocket-sized metropolis that experienced great change since 1990s in terms of populations, information and communication technologies and economic growth. In 2009, there were 38,654 foreign nationals residing in Helsinki, making up 6.7% of the city's population (City of Helsinki, urban facts 2010: 3). However, 58,405, (i.e. 10.1%) of Helsinki residents had a foreign background[66] (Ibid.). According to Statistics Finland – Population structure (2010), the total number of Iraqis in Finland is 5,742. Helsinki, among the other cities, is the most populated by these groups.

Iraqi refugees, who started to populate the Helsinki metropolitan area after the 1990s, were usually concentrated in the northeastern part of the city in suburbs like Malmi, Kontula, Meri-Rastila, Itä-keskus, Myllypuro and Kannelmäki where cheaper accommodation and public rental housing are more easily found and/or provided by the municipality (cf. Kauppinen 2002 on social Housing in Helsinki metropolitan area). The same kind of trend is also visible in other neighbourhoods like for example in Espoon Keskus in Espoo and Hakunila in Vantaa. However, as suggested by previous studies (Wahlbeck 1999; Valtonen, 1997; Matinheikki-Kokko 1997), most of the Iraqi people I met had previously lived in a location other than in Helsinki. Their movement to the capital was mainly a strategic plan for searching for better opportunities in terms of jobs, education or simply community affiliations. However, as documented by a number of studies (Vaattovaara & Kortteinen 2003; Dhalmann & Vilkama 2009) despite the efforts of the city of Helsinki to disperse ethnic minorities across the different neighbourhoods, specific areas such as the eastern and north-eastern parts of the Helsinki metropolitan area still have a high concentration of refugees and

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66 In 2011, foreign nationals in Helsinki represented around 170 nationalities; the largest group was the Estonians (8,481), followed by the Russians (6,008), the Somalis, etc. (City of Helsinki, Urban fact 2011:5).

immigrants. Similarly, the comparative study of Galanaki (2008), on the Somali community in Helsinki and Albanians in Athens, shows how socio-spatial discrimination emerges in particular urban spaces. In order for cities to be culturally competitive, diversity needs to be negotiated and sustained not only at the social but also at the urban and public level. More inclusive public spaces in fact encourage social spatial sustainability and thereby an appreciation of social diversity and participation.

Moreover, four reception centres were available for migrants in the city of Helsinki during my data collection period. In 2009, some hotels located in the Kallio and Punavuori district in downtown Helsinki were converted into reception centres, with a capacity of about 200 people each. The Kylasääri reception centre in the district of Hermanni in the north-eastern part of Helsinki is the oldest one, built in 1996 and provides places for about 230 people[67]. These centres provide basic services such as temporary accommodation, social and health care services, asylum-related consultation, etc. Additionally, there is also another centre in Metsälä, (northern Helsinki) which has been receiving illegal migrants since 2003 (Nuutinen & Mäkinen 2009 cit in Global detention project). Unlike the others, this detention centre, run by the Helsinki City Social Sector, is quite small with a capacity of about 40 migrants (men, women and minors) with pending deportation orders or unclear identity (Ibid.).

5.4.2 *Rome metropolitan area*

Rome has been a multicultural city since its origins. It has always been a city of passage, emigration and immigration. It has attracted artists, as well as professional people due to its cultural, economic and political structure. As Casacchia & Crisci (2006: 19) argue, during the 1950s and 1960s the city of Rome demographically grew thanks to waves of immigrants directed to the capital, as well as the baby boom. Immigrants (and also refugees) have mainly populated the capital since 1980s. According to the statistics of the Municipality of Rome (2009), the first groups of foreign residents are Romanians (139,821), then Filipinos (28,628), Polish (20,302), Albanians (13,585), Ukrainians (12,859), etc. In Rome, the Iraqi community is quite limited and counts about 743 people (589 men and 154 women) in 2009. According to Caritas (2010), Rome is the second largest province, after Milan, with a high concentration of immigrants which counts around 405,657 people.

It is argued that in Rome, between 1970 and 1990, there were no real integration policies available despite the visible presence of migrants (Alexander 2007: 67). In

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67 According to the Minister of the Interior, "Räsänen: Finland has too many refugee reception centres". Available at:
http://www.hs.fi/english/article/R%C3%A4s%C3%A4nen+Finland+has+too+many+refugee+reception+centres/1135269939545 (Retrieved 07/06/2012)

those years, some studies addressing the increasing multi-ethnic diversity in the city of Rome suggested the necessity to create better structured reception plans for migrants or to solve the first cases of xenophobia. However, these studies basically received no attention (Ibid.). Contrarily, actions started to be carried out by various religious institutions (e.g. Caritas), NGOs, trade unions and other associations which tackled directly migrants' needs. According to some experts (Alexander 2007; Caponio 2007) the lack of state action could be explained by different reasons like the idea that migrants were just temporary inhabitants; the political instability in the city of Rome followed by political scandals; problems of coordination among the state, region and municipality on migration matters especially after the 1990s; and the adoption of temporary measures for emergency situations. Moreover, in most of the cases, the competition between Italian pro-migrant associations and migrant-run associations became quite sharp. When funding started to flow from the state to the municipality of Rome, the Italian voluntary organisation monopolised migrant services due to a familiarity with the Italian bureaucratic procedure, while migrant associations remained in charge of socio-cultural activities (Alexander 2007: 72). This tension was, however, weakened by the improvement of the cultural mediator services where trained migrants facilitated communication and understanding between migrants and public service offices and/or associations as well as other general initiatives, which actively involved migrants.

As mentioned, the various amnesties (1986, 1990, 1995, 1998 and 2002) which have led illegal migrants and clandestine to become legalised, became an important tool to legalise diversity across the peninsula. Rome by the end of 1990s was already recognised as a multi-ethnic city (Alexander 2007). As Strozza (2006: 67) argues, Rome has attracted the presence of Italians and foreigner people due to some basic factors: the administrative offices (e.g. embassies and consulate offices); the Catholic reference for many believers because of the Vatican; the lively economic resources due to the various services; the high demand of the domestic work labour; or simply for its infrastructures as an international airport as well as an efficient road and rail road network which make of Rome either a place of passage or stay (Ibid.).

The process of immigration has also influenced the internal dynamics of transformations of the city. For instance after the 1970s, the reconstructions of the historical centre as the headquarters for the institutions, trade and tourism brought new changes favouring new settlements of locals and foreigners from the centre to the periphery (Mudu 2006). However, Rome is a city where there are no visible ethnic enclaves. Accorinti (cit in Alexander 2007: 60) referring to the case of Rome, stresses that immigrant communities are highly heterogeneous, in terms of their migratory patterns. Some quarters (e.g. Esquiline, located in the city centre) may have a dense heterogeneity of inhabitants in terms of spoken languages, professions, country of origins, etc. Since the 1970s, a number of people of immigrant background started to populate the area, occupy abandoned buildings and start up the first business shops. By 2004, the international area of Esquiline became a multi-ethnic quarter with one in six being a foreigner (Alexander 2007: 64). Today, the prices of the apartments located in

the city centre or in nearby neighbourhoods are quite expensive and the solution is, therefore, moving either to the periphery or sharing as an apartment with more people in the centre. In particular the emergence of consistent influxes of documented and undocumented migrants has resulted in a number of problems in the form of a lack of housing.

The first official reception centres in Rome ware instituted with the Martelli Law (1990s). In 2007, there were about 20 centres operating in the territory. They offered and still offer accommodation to men, women and families. However, such services are only available to those holding a residence permit. Usually these refugee centres are run by private cooperatives, NGOs and religious centres with specific requirements affiliated with the immigration office of the city of Rome. However, some of the Iraqis I met in Rome, although equipped with refugees or humanitarian statuses and similar, the only solution was trying to find a place to stay overnight or simply moving to other locations with a lower concentration of migrants. Queuing for food and overnight accommodation, for example at reception centres, is usually a quite stressful situation. In particular, I also refer to a large number of repatriated Iraqis (of Kurdish origins) who I met in the Ararat centre where I conducted participant observation. These migrants, who crossed the Italian border before getting a proper decision on their status, were repatriated back to Italy under the Dublin II regulation without receiving any proper assistance or accommodation (cf. also Bethke & Bender 2011).

5.5   Conclusion

In this chapter, I have introduced Italy and Finland, their migration histories, reception and integration policies as well as information on their Iraqi communities. Finland and Italy are both new immigration countries but they differ in terms of immigration pressure, immigrant populations, history and welfare state structure. Both countries have also faced increased refugee migration since the 1990s. At the same time, regulations dealing with refugees and asylum seekers, on the basis of the Geneva Convention, started to also be implemented around the same time that refugee migration increased.

The Finnish system insists on the improvement of equality which is guaranteed in diverse sectors such as: education, employment, social and health care and general rights. However, Finland has been criticised for its restrictive immigration policy and nowadays the rise of the populist party, the True Finns, which emphasises even stricter rules for asylum and decreased humanitarian aid. Moreover, integration, which is basically run at three levels (national, local and individual) is encouraged through language training programmes and aims at economic integration. However, as previous studies show, the Finnish system and its pervasive welfare state are not immune to faults and discrepancies (Valtonen, 1999; Wahlbeck, 1999). However, the Iraqis today are one of the biggest groups residing in the country. Conversely, the conservative

Italian welfare state (Esping-Andersen 1990) tends to promote less egalitarian but fragmented interventions. However, since the 2000s Italy started a process of reconfiguration regarding immigration and asylum which slightly accentuated a character of flexibility through the decentralisation process. Reception and integration are, therefore, mainly dependent on local agents and their own resources (region, municipalities, associations, etc.) and the migrants.

This chapter has also provided a basis for the introduction of cities as new and emerging areas of investigation. The next chapters will more closely look at the case of Helsinki and Rome. As Caponio (2007: 46) suggests, cities, in general, may develop specific dynamics of immigrants' policies which may depend on various factors such as: different welfare provisions, immigration pressure and political influences. In spite of the existence of a top-down approach, as in the case of Finland, cities are always somehow "free" from the nation state dynamics, since they are *also* shaped by people and their (transnational) actions.

6 Iraqis' experiences between escape and settlement

6.1 Introduction

The following four sub-chapters examine the empirical evidence of Iraqis' experiences of journey and settlement within the cities. Both the city of origin and the city of settlement are presented as important parts of migrants' lives.

In this particular chapter, experiences of escape and settlement will be critically addressed. Firstly, attention is dedicated to the causes and triggers motivating Iraqis to flee their country of origin. Secondly, the journey, in organised and unorganised circumstances, presents a series of realistic trajectories and potential dreams where feelings of hope and fear intertwine. In the second part, the cities of Helsinki and Rome independently emerge as area of investigation. Despite the importance of nation states, Arab and Kurds from Iraq refer to the city as places where personal reflections of social, economic, political and cultural actions take place. As I will argue in the following sections, both the city of origin and the city of settlement act as points of reference in people's lives. Cities become vital spaces between the heritage of the past and the discovery of the future. Moreover, these cities reflect diverse kind of dimensions, moving from subjective and symbolic units to being social and material ones. Starting from an analysis of the case of the cities/towns of origins as places of identification, I will sequentially introduce both the cities of Helsinki and Rome as exemplified by my informants.

6.2 The triggering cause

The Iraqis who migrated in the 1970s had diverse life plans and motivations from those who forcibly migrated in the 1990s and 2000s. Iraqis who settled in Italy in the 1970s were basically young students in the field of art, architecture, cinema and literature. In their accounts the decision to migrate is related to academic and professional factors. However, it is easy to discern, from their accounts, instances of abuse and subjugation on the part of the ex-regime since 1968, when Saddam Hussein began to consolidate his power. Some of my informants reported how they gradually experienced the first vague repressive presence of the regime during that time. In Italy, the Iraqis who migrated in the 1970s were basically students who got a visa student permit and a grant for supporting their studies. Most of these gravitated towards

cultural cities such as Rome, Florence and Perugia where they could find adequate courses. An Iraqi artist currently living in Rome said:

> *I came to Italy in the 1970. I had always in my mind for my studies, the idea to go to Italy for studying art, sculpture, architecture…Since I was young, my teachers told me to follow what other Iraqi artists did before me …going to Rome and specializing. So, I left by train with just 50 dollars in my pocket. It was a long travel. I have a study Visa; the (Iraqi) embassy was helping me then with the other needed certifications with Academy of Art. After that my career turned up and I started to organized exhibition all over the world like New York, in the Arab countries and even in Iraq.*
> *(1, Arab Iraqi Man – Rome)*

> *In that period, in 1968, I was a student...in Baghdad there were the secret services who entered to the art institute, they shoot to the air when we organized some kind of event. (…) the infiltration was quite common mean for controlling the society… We did not like the state repressions, because we were artists, not politicians. We wanted just to express our ideas, but there were limitations, controls…also other students like us, but sons of the regime spied on us…but we have always found the way to tell things each other, exchange ideas…in the same time, there was the rising division between diverse ethnic groups that started to be magnified, not as a clash…but if you want to do a document, like a student visa…it seemed that there was a ban to keep people inside the country. I realized later, after struggling with my visa and grant, when I left and got by plane to Rome what would have been happened some years later.*
> *(9, Iraqi Arab Man – Rome)*

Both excerpts refer to the case of Arab Iraqi men who migrated to Rome as artists. In the first case, the acquisition of a student permit is made simple, in its bureaucratic paperwork, through the support of the Iraqi embassy operating in Rome. In the second quotation, the process of getting a visa was complicated by the countercurrent "political" position of my informant. Moreover, the second quotation also reveals interesting information about the kind of internal power, which was organised by the police and other secret bodies for controlling people within the country. Institutions such as schools, universities and working places were under the control of Hussein's regime.

The histories and the trajectories of Kurds and Arab Iraqis' flight have changed during the 1990s and the 2000s. However, the motivations for leaving the country became amplified once the Baath regime took over power. For example, an Iraqi Arab who migrated after the invasion of Kuwait in the 1990s argues:

I have never though, as most of the Iraqis, to leave my country…I have tried to fight while living in Iraq, with my families and with my people…But, the ex-regime of the Baath put me in a situation of no choice. The solution was either to stay and loose my material and cultural identity or escape for keeping it…I have never left my country; I just left Baghdad in 1994.
(23, Iraqi Arab man – Rome)

Fleeing was the only possible solution against the adaptation to the regime. Paradoxically, the escape was the only preservation against the cultural and material loss; escaping does not signify a new life, but a way to protect their past and possibly to fight for the future. In the next passage, the frustration with the oppressive yoke of the Baath regime runs from the father to his child highlighting unpleasant circumstances.

My father during the 1980s was obliged to join the Baath party. One day, he was killed by the regime…well, first he was beaten, and then they shot him. Then they came to my place and they wanted me to work with them. I was not interested in their proposal…I was devastated by my father's death. They beat me and arrested me…I was in prison also for a while and they continued on beat on me…finally I decided to collaborate. I worked as a sort of spy…no one knew I was working for the regime…I had to visit school for checking of schools events such as plays…I had to listen to what kids said…if they said something negative about the regime and reported to the regime… One day, a person of the regime was assassinated. The chief police thought it's an outrage and he thought I was involved because my father a couple of days earlier was killed…they catch me and they put me in jail. They beat so much to break my back. Till today I cannot walk properly anymore…Then I realized I have to do something…I hid in one of my friends' house, then I hid in a truck and I arrived illegally to Turkey. Then I took a ship and I reach the Italian coast…
(5, Iraqi Kurdish man – Rome)

In a totalitarian regime, as during Saddam's dictatorship, people are forced to collaborate without any possibility of negotiation. People were forced to sympathise with the ideologies of the Baath party, otherwise punishment would have been granted. Moreover, a regime of secret organisation and party militia spread throughout Iraqi society leaving no space for dialogue (Makiya 1989). Moreover, hierarchic divisions among the different ethnic groups started to occur and prejudices and marginalisation endangered the idea of a multicultural society inaugurated since 1920 with the British mandate. As Chaliand (1978) argues, discrimination in education and politics as well as economic exploitation, especially towards the Kurdish people, reached incommensurable levels starting in the 1970s.

Since most of the Iraqis arrived in Finland after 1990 and 2000, the circumstances that forced them to flee were connected to the *climax* of atrocities committed by the Saddam regime. In those years, people escaped from Iraq seeking political freedom and better opportunities. As these quotes demonstrate:

> *It was very dangerous to live there (Kurdistan). I had also a young daughter. It was a hard decision that of going away. I started also to receive treats from the regime. They told me that they could kill my sister, my cousins, and my all family. So I move to Turkey. I lived there 1 year and a half. There I was active as well. There were many refugees coming and I was always working with the same association as in Iraq helping women.*
> *(14, Iraqi Kurdish woman – Helsinki)*

> *It happened that Iraqi intelligence forced me to work with them...And they surround me...I couldn't go anywhere!*
> *(4, Iraqi Arab Man – Helsinki)*

> *When I realized that the situation for Kurdish people became bad with Saddam Hussein...There was not a single episode but many of them, so, I escaped to Iran...Where I found the same kind of atmosphere...in a way...I was with my mother. My father and my brother were in prison because of Saddam Hussein...then they disappeared…they were killed it was told…*
> *(36, Iraqi Kurdish woman – Helsinki)*

> *Well, the only thing I need was the peace...I was looking for the peace...It was not because of there was electricity or because of the water...or the job...I needed peace from Saddam's regime...*
> *(10, Iraqi Arab Man – Helsinki)*

As exemplified by these quotations, once the Baathists came into power, despite the tight control of the masses, violence and killing for those not collaborating with the regime was an ordinary occurrence. Moreover, people who were fighting politically and culturally against the regime understood that their beloved family members could be endangered by their actions. Conversely, Saddam's regime affected internal social dynamics creating distance and doubt between members seen as "collaborators" and those seen as "traitors".

> *This is the darkest image of Iraq. I was not free... I was obliged to do things...I was not free in my mind and body…then you do not have anything...cinema, books they were all censured and the Saddam regime… the totalitarian regime didn't make people think freely... (...) In the schools the same, in the university…the same…The logic of not complaining against Saddam was*

applied in all sector of our society and even inside the most holy units: the family.
(33, Iraqi Arab man – Helsinki)

The iron dictatorship invaded both the public and private sphere. The results of these disruptive effects which were visible also in other units, such as schools, university, and workplaces, were elements which also explain why people suddenly left Iraq. The pervasive power established a system of patronage characterised by few elected Iraqis, usually belonging to the same clan of Saddam Hussein. People who stood against the regime basically had three options: escaping, fighting against the regime or simply following the rules. Considering these dramatic events helps to contextualise how both Arabs and Kurds from Iraq lived before their exile. In this case, the process of *distanciation* between the Iraqi citizens and the state, incarnated by the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein, also resulted in ignorance, distrust, and discomfort especially towards the Iraqi political institutions. In this regard, people responded to the political homologation of the Baath regime not only by the denial of the institution but also with increment of individualism over the collectivism. I argue that in the case of the Iraqis the effect of political repressive regimes on people living in new societies of settlement leads to feeling of distrust or stress especially when the presence of the state is strongly perceived. In particular, this characterises the Finnish case, where the welfare state, with its efficiency and promptness, immediately overwhelms the refugees upon the arrival within the framework of reception and integration policies. In many Iraqis' stories, feelings of confusion, disorientation and stress surfaced. These feelings are often associated with a new social system which appears to be not only unfamiliar, but also presented as "different" than they experienced previously in the country of origin. More details on this issue will be provided in the following chapters.

6.3   The journey

The journey to the new country, which represents the passage between the past and the future, is an unforgettable experience. It comes with mix feelings like hope and fear, but it also resolves between known and unknown routes and through legality and illegality. In this case, Italy represents an important gateway through which people (asylum seekers and illegal immigrants) seek to reach the EU. Crossing the border is a dangerous act which cost the life of many who tried. However, the numbers of those who arrived (mainly illegally[68]) in Europe as well as those who died during their

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68 OSCE experts estimate that in Italy, the number of clandestine people ranges from 500,000 to 750,000 (OSCE cit in Corriere della Sera, 10/8/2009). Data available at:
http://www.corriere.it/cronache/09_agosto_10/focus_8c0ab4f0-8572-11de-8be5-00144f02aabc.shtml
(Retrieved 04/06/2012).

journey is generally ignored. Two Kurdish men echoed their initial feelings once they crossed the border and began their new life in these words:

> *I knew it was risky for example, at the border between Iraq and Iran, I felt steps after steps, the danger...I did not know if I would I arrive alive or dead...I wanted to go back, because everything was so unsecure..I was scared...the the border is not so simple...there are the mountains, you need to walk, you do not have proper food or water..it's hot and cold...you arrive to Iran, and you need to continue walking...then Syria, Turkey, Greece...I used to walked during the night...sometime I hitch-hiking, but not so many times, because I was scared, it was not safe. Then Ie took a boat with 18 people, generally it could be only for 2/4people maximum... The boat had an Italian flag...perhaps a strategy to avoid attention...and the engine made a deafening noise...I thought that eventually it would burn and that it would have been a fire; no one was at the helm and the boat drifted for days and days ...*
> *(35, Iraqi Kurdish Man - Rome)*

> *I arrived as clandestine: Iran, Greece and Italy...I hide for 2 days in a van and I crossed the border...I was near the wheel...bent and hungry...Once the van stopped..I did not know even where I was..I started to walk in the highway...the the police stopped me and I started to cry, I did not know what to say...I was scared they took me back....*
> *(15, Iraqi Kurdish man – Rome)*

From people's accounts of their illegal entry in Europe via sea, land and air, I had the impression that year after year, these routes became more known and familiar to others in transit. It is possible that the increase in transnational connections may be the result of such awareness. For example, the main routes, the fees to be paid to the smugglers and the forms of organisation are nowadays known even before people flee or identified during peoples' travels. As some Iraqis from the *Ararat Association* in Rome reported:

> *I knew how to come here, thanks to a friend of mine... When I decided to leave, I already knew where I wanted to go...how much I had to spend...something you learn by doing also...something not...*
> *(6, Iraqi Kurdish man – Rome)*

> *All the guys who see here (in the Ararat association) arrived illegally to Italy and now after years they are still illegal. After crossing Iraq, you find Turkey. There you find the Kurdish-Turkish mafia which is in charge to send you to Italy or Greece...Just walk to a restaurant or to a bar on the coast and you'll get all the information you need; then you pay 6000 or 7000 Euros...some*

people paid also 10000 Euros for their trip. A lot! Then you have to wait in a house and wait for the right time…travels are always arranged at nights; in my boat there were 140 people…but it was so small…there were few women and children as well..For 5/6 days we do not eat and drink properly..I was just praying to Allah, days and nights, to help up to reach the coasts. Then after you are in Italy…it is done…
(7, Iraqi Kurdish man – Rome)

Iraqis (and in this case mainly Kurds) who left after the 2000s seemed to be quite well informed about the possibilities and methods of illegal entry into Italy. They already knew that Italy was a country of quick entrance and possible transit[69]. However, the transit, as documented by Papadopoulou-Kourkoula (2008), is a process that may last for some time. The smuggling of migrants is based on an efficient *transnational* system which constantly updates its own organisation, but basically it follows permanent routes. Most of my informants in fact accounted the same kind of travel characterised by long walks, usually organised at nights while crossing the borders between Iraq and Turkey; then the first boat to Greece and after a while a second one to Italy. Usually, families chose young and strong men in the hope that they will succeed in making the long, hard journey and finding employment opportunities.

In the Finnish case, the smuggling of human beings was quite small. However, there were cases, as documented by media, where people were illegally traveling in containers or flying in order to reach Sweden. At the beginning of 1990, groups of Arabs and Kurds from Iraq tried to reach Sweden from Russia first and then from Estonia. The case of these illegal migrants, which became publicised in the news, attracted the attention of the Finnish institutions which suddenly recognised some of these people as refugees. Here is an account of how the story went:

I arrived in Moscow, then to Tallinn, with a different name...and without Visa...when I was there I met some smugglers that could take me to Sweden where my brother was living as a refugee...It was a group of people from Estonia, Russia and Chechnya and also an Iraqi person was involved. The Iraqi guy used to bring people to them, even before us...and then the Estonians and Russians arranged the flat where the people waited before taking the ship… The plan was that after collecting hundreds persons, so they had less risk and more money, we could have left…everyone paid 3000 dollars…we needed to wait for some trucks, big ones, transporting generally food. We needed to hide there in a safe place, a house, and then take the boat to go to

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69 Transit migration is generally misunderstood by the states (Papadopoulou-Kourkoula 2008). In particular, drawing in her study of Kurds in Greece (2001-2003), she affirms that transit migration may be applicable not only to irregular migrants, but also to others, such as: asylum seekers, refugees, trafficked person and also students. Moreover, she demonstrates that transit movements can extend for diverse years. The impact of the transit migration can also reach more than one country where migrants have temporally lived.

Sweden. However, these smugglers had a plan…they taught us what to say once we arrived to the police stations…like we needed to say that we came by plane..they gave us all the details such as the time numbers of the flights, country which had to be a country that never signed the refugee convention …Anyway, we were arrested by the Estonian police before leaving in the flat…And they took us to prison…(…) They send us to a real prison with criminals because in Estonia they do not have refugees' agreement, at that time... there some of the people that were with me, chose me as their spokesman...I spoke Russians a bit…So I told to the policemen to send us back to Russia, but Russia refused us. <<So, let us to live in Estonia, Just give as a possibility, a normal life...>> I said. But they said :<< No>>.

<<So, let us go to another country! >> I scream. After a while they agreed. From the prison, we started to write to The UN, to the Parliaments of Baltic States and the Nordic countries. I contacted my brother, in Sweden. He is a writer. We were connected...My brother became our spokesman outside...So he talked to the press in Sweden, he sent letters to UN and different places; he called me – we received callings every week, Saturday or Sunday for exchanging ideas and information. I sent him letters from the prisons like a diary. The other people that was arrested with me were in different other prisons in Estonia…In every prison, there was a person that was chosen by us, to be a spokesman for our group. Then these spokesmen reported to me...we worked as a net and also with my brother outside...that got attention from Sweden, England and the United Nations...It was a lot a work...My brother was also spending money from his own pocket...a lot of time, you know, writing everyday letters, and callings ...and then 1994/95 we were refugees in Finland. We wrote to Finland that accepted the idea. We get in Finland; we came in Helsinki, we stayed in Hospital for a while...I stayed 3 months, for example...then they send us to different cities.
(2, Iraqi Arab Man – Helsinki)

This quotation provides detailed information about travel trajectories, safe houses, the nationality of smugglers, tariffs, and the international debate on increasing human rights, refugees and asylum procedures. Moreover, the intensifying network of collaboration among the Iraqis made people less vulnerable while accelerating their refugee status recognition. In 1990, Sweden, Finland, Estonia, and national and international institutions influenced by the action of migrants working in networks, received quite strong media attention. Letters and extensive phone calling were the main forms of communication. Today, the same situation would be a bit different especially in terms of faster communication technologies such as the Internet, which provides immediate publicity, and also in terms of users (e.g. cases of online petitions signed by people who are not immediately involved).

Today, smuggling immigrants into Finland is still a relevant case, despite strict border control. While the phenomenon of illegal immigration may be inclined to

increase, few studies have addressed this issue (Asa 2011; Lehti & Aromaa 2002). A police report however states that in 2008, 5,400 illegal migrants were found in Finland, while in 2009, the number had risen to 6,888 (Supreme Police Command of Finland: 2009: 11). In many cases, these illegal migrants, who are quite often young adults, come from Iraq, Somalia and Afghanistan but also Russia, Iran, and Serbia (Ibid.). Like in the Italian case, people paid large sums of money to smugglers to reach Finland. For example, an article in HS[70] reported that in 2010, Afghanis were usually paying more than EUR 7,000 to enter to Finland via Russia, Belarus, Latvia, and Estonia, hidden either in vans or ferries. A young Iraqi man, who arrived in January 2006, confessed:

> *R: For security reasons I do not want to tell you how I get to Finland...But, I came here illegally...not in the United Nations...but now I am in the reception centre and I am a refugee..*
> *VLV: Have you lived in another foreign country before Finland?*
> *R: No...I do not tell you...I cannot because it can create problems…to me and people…*
> *VLV: So, did you plan to come to Finland?*
> *R: Yes*
> *VLV: Which kind of information did you have about Finland?*
> *R: I know that the state helps…and I could find a better solution…*
> *(8, Iraqi Arab man – Helsinki)*

This quotation reveals two main things. Firstly, that there are still people, who, despite the border control, are able to illegally enter the country. Secondly, this person did not come to Finland by accident, but was instead motivated. The idea of Finland as a helper state is not just a matter of convenience, but most probably an effect of the so-called dark side of globalisation regarding unfortunately the role of transnational organised crimes which also positively publicises the role of the generous Nordic welfare states.

6.4 The city/town of origin as spectrum of identification: the subjective dimension

An important element provided by the informants was their specific attachment to the town where they were born or lived. *Localised loyalty* manifested itself through the description of the city or town and its history, accounts of families, tribes and their traditions. Localised loyalty reconnects people with their land. It provides not only

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[70] "Sharp rise in illegal immigration" available at:
http://www.hs.fi/english/article/Sharp+rise+in+illegal+immigration/1135252839940 (Retrieved 31/05/2012)

social identity and a sense of belonging, but also supports security in terms of social, political and economic system (La Vecchia 2011: 358). In this regard, it is important to stress that localised loyalty usually intertwines with tribal affiliations. Tribal identity in fact is a central trait of the Iraqi and Kurdish societies and appears to be highly complex and stratified (cf. Alinia 2004). Values, identity, politics and culture are strictly dictated by tribal affiliations spreading across the country (Bruinessen, 1994b). Tribes are defined here as forms of social organisation and may also be divided into sub-tribes, clans, extended families, etc. (Hassan 2007). These tribes affiliate and communicate with political institutions or simply act as opposing forces against them (Alinia 2004). As Sassoon (2011: 14) notes, tribalism and kinship underwent major changes under Saddam Hussein. During the 1990s in fact a *tribal revival* was highly exasperated due to the effects of Saddam's dictatorship which supported his own tribe and exacerbated tribal hostilities (Alinia 2004). Similarly, during the time of the American occupation, Marfleet (2007: 410) notes that Iraqis, influenced by the dissolution of the regime, the disasters of the wars, sanctions and a lack of social cohesion within the society, sought help within sectarian parties and communalist networks. In this situation, characterised by the absence of a strong central state, resources came increasingly from family ties, clans, religious institutions and political parties (Ibid.). As Marfleet notes, groups' survival relied on relations with their 'own' community (Ibid.). Tribes are in fact characterised by diverse tribal structures and origins, as well as a profound sense of solidarity or *asabiya*[71] (Alinia 2004). For example, as Hassan (2007: 2) argues it is common to see some of the major tribes in Iraq having related branches in Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Kuwait, and other Gulf states as well as in Turkey. Moreover, in terms of religion, tribes may also have both Sunni and Shia members (Ibid.). However, tribes and confederations of tribes are usually associated with specific villages, towns and neighbourhoods within bigger cities.

The interviewees usually began by introducing themselves, talking about their city or town of origin, or the origins of their tribes and ancestors. However, the city of origin is not just a mere geographic place or an enclosed space but an extension of people's experiences. The city where people were born and lived is not just a starting point of their life, but rather usually the lens through which they have learnt to see and experience the world. Although the city has been destroyed, it always remains as connected with the people because it is not just a city, but the people themselves.

> *I am from Baghdad. In two words it's really complicated to explain, because telling about the city from where you come from it's just a mixture of many things... It's all that explain my existence. It is a place where happened a miracle, the life, my life... the place where you started to live and to dream...*

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[71] Muhammad Abed al-Jabiri (1994 cit. in Alheis 2011: 6) defines "asabiya" as "a social-psychological bond, conscious and unconscious at once, linking the members of a community, based on blood relations; its constant bonding intensifies and becomes more prominent when a danger threatens these individuals as individuals and as a community.

Even if today, Baghdad is destroyed, dusty, ruined...it will be always attached to my soul...and I will be with it.
(39, Iraqi Arab man – Rome)

Many Iraqis, Arabs and Kurds, despite their culture differences, reconstruct their own life experience in terms of solidarity. For example, in big cities like Baghdad tribes are usually displaced in specific districts but not seen as opposing forces. The city of origin is, therefore, presented as a site of physical and psychological resources including family, the multicultural neighbourhood, friends, school and/or university, all of which are channels for vivid memories of their past which overcame ethnic and tribal differentiations. Their narratives traced how sociality was constructed in specific places such as school, playgrounds, student cafeterias, or simply in the neighbourhood. Similarly, Massey (1994: 5) discusses places as being open and porous characterised by extensive, diverse, social relationships. The place in this study is basically represented by the municipalities under study which are analysed as fixed entities but in a situation where they *keep moving* (Massey 1994: 11). At the same time, *cities are theatres of social activities* (Mumford, 1937) where people are able to perform and interact with each other. Cities and towns of origin are in fact described as places where individual and collective social activities occur; where peoples' and communities' actions intersect and determine the processes of self-identification and differentiation. Historical, religious, cultural and political traditions are often the main domain where relationships become visible. Usually, cities are recognised for their vivid multicultural areas; shaped by diverse ethnic groups' traditions, languages and religions. This seems to be an evident trait of Iraqi society before the establishment of Saddam Hussein's regime. As some informants point out:

What I remember so well about my city (Baghdad) was our huge family...I lived in a popular neighborhood, where was a feeling of home everywhere I could go...The quarter was so big, but I was always at home...
(39, Iraqi Arab man – Rome)

My city was a sort of international one... full of Kurds, Jews, Arabs...It was not strange for me. I received inspiration from all of them. It made my life more intellectually active.
(48, Iraqi Kurdish woman – Helsinki)

However, these cities are also structured by multiple spatial-temporal contexts within which social action takes place. Through these dimensions, social actors reconstruct their past experiences and world views filtered by their present life. Therefore, the dimension of localities, translated into the account of their own city, are not reified spaces but entities caught in the flux of globalisation. Cities are in fact not only territorially bounded, but also crossed by dynamics of globalisation that have

intensified old identities and fostered new ones (Rosenau 2003:15). Two Kurdish women talking about the city of Sulaymaniyah argue:

> *Now, in Kurdistan, especially in the big cities as in the mine, everything has to be rebuilt...and it's like a frenetic race to modernity... they have and use internet... I saw for example women driving there...or using more western cloths...*
> *(12, Iraqi Kurdish woman – Rome)*

> *In Sulaymaniyah you find nowadays more Arabs than when I was a young girl. Before, there were just Arab soldiers...today, many Arabs come from the south to the north for looking for a job, or for tourism...the mixture is more visible.. .it is a very multicultural city...really cute and also safe in comparison with other cities... (...) Every summer I go there (...). Before it was a small town with one or two-floor buildings...now you find almost skyscrapers! You see people driving huge cars, as in here (Helsinki). Today you find supermarkets with all kind of food... there is ZARA, pizzerias, a lot of pizzerias...You find teenagers out on the streets, they eat out, have fun... like in Europe...when I was young, after 8pm you must be home. There was the curfew! Everything has changed....*
> *(14, Iraqi Kurdish woman – Helsinki)*

These quotations highlight the processes of transnationalism, globalisation and democratisation, as well as a sense of freedom. Northern Iraq, in particular, is an area of great change, which immediately captures the attention of the informants who came to visit their city of origin. New social activities like going out with friends or the new openness towards diverse ethnic groups, foreign investors investing in the country, brings up lots of potentiality in people's views of their cities.

With the passage of time, the perception of own locality, for those who fled, is intertwined within the global discourse. The flight to another country for the search of security, but at the same time the contacts back home, and around Europe with other compatriots, extend the locality into the global discourse. Some people who I have interviewed noticed how their lives changed, only after moving out of their hometowns and cities in Iraq. On the contrary, the Iraqis who stayed in the country were cut off from the changes occurring in the rest of the world. The 1980s and 1990s are in fact the darkest years for Iraqis and Iraq. The quotation below from an Iraqi Kurdish intellectual explains how the "cultural hole" of the regime, created a pervasive, intellectual gap in Iraqi society, which was viewed negatively by those living abroad:

> *From the '80, when the war between Iraq and Iran starts, Iraqis stop to live with the rest of the universe. For example, an average Iraqi, probably does not even know what a fax is...if you visit some Iraqi offices today, you find no*

fax…They directly use internet, because the fax was born in the '80 and died in the '90 (...) The world has made great strides but Iraq stranded apart...we can also talked about the censorship of books, movies and all sorts of knowledge...I am talking about not only those people who were hit by the regime, but also those who studied at the universities... There was a gigantic and terrible cultural hole, and not all the people were aware of it. We (Iraqis who lived abroad) saw all these crises from outside, with new eyes and forces. All the censure made there, help us to be more informed and active even if we were far away
(47, Iraqi Kurdish man – Rome).

The black hole, into which the Iraqi society sank during the 1980s and 1990s, is a recurring theme in the narratives of the intellectual expatriates living in Rome and Helsinki. Those living in the diaspora describe Iraqi society in terms of immobility, cultural decline and poverty despite the new challenges following the removal of Saddam Hussein from power. On the other hand, what became visible was the work of many diaspora intellectuals who, through their works (art, poetry, cinema, etc.) and activities, have sought to bring dignity to their people and the glorious, ancient past of their country. It could be argued that the narratives of the Iraqis in Italy and Finland bring a specific perspective of the Iraqi society that springs from their own refugees' point of views.

6.5 Helsinki as a city of settlement

In the following, I will analyse how Helsinki features as an important framework for reconstructing the life in exile focusing on the symbolic, social and material dimensions of this.

6.5.1 The symbolic dimension

Helsinki is the right place for Iraqis looking for democracy and freedom…
(16, Iraqi Kurdish man – Helsinki)

Here (In Helsinki) you do not have to fight for your human rights!
(29, Iraqi Kurdish woman – Helsinki)

The informants use words such as democracy, peace, respect for the law, normality, rights and freedom to capture the immediate difference between Iraqi cities and the recurrent periods of totalitarianism. In this regard, Helsinki is a place where people can get a second chance at life with no fear of the consequences of their actions. The

attachment to a new place is emotionally and symbolically characterised by a feeling of safety. However, with reference to their city of origin, Helsinki is described more in terms of difference than in terms of similarities. This modern city is incomparable with the old Iraqis cities, characterised by a sort of institutionalised antiquity. As an Iraqi artist notices:

> *Helsinki is modern. There are not skyscrapers, but it is famous for its technological districts and university. All kind of shops and the visual art sector (where I am in)... I see lots of potential in this city. It is really different from the city where I was born...*
> *(20, Iraqi Arab man – Helsinki)*

However, for most of the people the difference is also immediately perceived in term of natural landscapes. As this Kurdish man, who came from the green mountains of Iraqi Kurdistan, says:

> *When I came here and I had the chance to travel across the country, I was surprised. There were no mountains! Then people from Helsinki told me that in the north you can find the mountains. When I went to Lapland, some years later, I was shocked to see that there were no mountains but the tunturi[72]. I mean in Kurdistan, there you really find the mountains...*
> *(17, Iraqi Kurdish Man – Helsinki)*

The Kurdish proverb "no friends but the mountains" clearly portrays the mountains as symbolic patrimony of the Kurdish people as a "safe" place where people found refuge. Mountains also reflect a sense of belonging through which the meaning of home is revealed especially when dealing with Iraqi Kurds. However, in all the accounts, the mood of the people changed with the changing of the seasons. Helsinki, in the wintertime with its snow, the dark and the cold, is still a subject of complaint even for those Iraqis who settled many years ago. The attractiveness of the cold and dark winter, that people experience at the beginning, becomes an inhibitor for peoples' actions. A woman, coming from a sunny town, states:

> *Helsinki is cold and dark, I cannot stand the snow...only the spring and the summer are fine with me...I feel more to go out, to see people...but in the winter is bit hard...Year after year is even worse...I am not used to this winter, I come from a sunny place...*
> *(18, Iraqi Kurdish woman – Helsinki)*

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72 In Finnish, "*tunturi*" refers to the mountain in Lapland.

In other accounts, Helsinki is also portrayed as the "white city" not only referring to their white winters, but also in terms of race. An Iraqi man, who arrived in the 1990s, noticed how diverse Helsinki had become in term of populations more recently:

When we arrived to Finland we were settled in Kemi in 1994…we were one of the first families to come up to the north…it was shocking for us, but also for the locals. Especially when we walking on the streets, you could really see people staring at you, because you are different, you look diverse. (…) We stayed there for 3-4 years. Then we moved to Turku…Then I went to Vaasa, Kouvula…I have been living in diverse towns and cities than a normal average Finn…then I found my way in Helsinki, my dimension….crowded, a bit international, etc.
(45, Iraqi Kurdish man – Helsinki)

People see immediately, from your outlook that I am not from here (he touches his dark face and curly black hair) .(…) Now you can find diverse people around…
(4, Iraqi Arab Man –Helsinki)

In the interviewees' accounts, categories of whiteness and non-whiteness justify a perception of inequality which seems to be more accentuated at the beginning of people's settlement in the 1990s. At the same time, shocking experiences were related to small towns where the contacts and the practices between Finns and Iraqis were more locally bounded. However, Helsinki, despite its small size, is seen as a more diverse and cosmopolitan city today more than ever. The population is quite diverse and multicultural places and actors such as ethnic restaurants, cultural events, immigrants and refugee communities are usually recognised as integral parts of the city. Most of the people I have interviewed told me that they had previously lived in other, smaller cities due to the effects of the Finnish policy of dispersal. This policy, since 1988, scatters newly arrived refugees across different Finnish municipalities with the goal to homogeneously provide multicultural programmes and opportunities for migrants to become inclusively welcomed in a new society. However, as my informants note, moving to a big city such as Helsinki was almost a natural process for them.

6.5.2   The social dimension

Iraqi people engage in diverse forms of social activities which manifest in the public as well as in the private sphere. In particular, Iraqi and Kurdish associations hold a quite important role in stimulating social activities. Generally, they play different roles, acting as vectors, promoting participation and publicising the activities inside the community while clearly inspired by their past. Through their activities they

also strengthen the group's ethnic identity, accommodate people to diverse cultures and provide practical answers to migrants' questions about the society of settlement (for more information on immigrant association in Finland cf. Saksela-Bergholm 2009; Pyykkönen 2007). However, due to the highly structured Finnish system, Iraqi associations in Finland become secondary mediators since the municipality is usually the first player to refer to. Refugees in fact may subsequently contact the associations when looking for dialogue or second help while for example searching for language classes or job help.

In 2007, I contacted a couple of Iraqi associations, which are well known for their activities inside the Helsinki metropolitan area, and I participated in some of their meetings and other events such as demonstrations and debates[73].

The *Iraqi Women association* (Irakin Naisten yhdistys ry), created in the 2000s**,** act as a link between the Finnish and some of the Iraqi communities when referring to cultural, education and job related actions. Also other ethnically based associations such as the *Iraqi and Iranian employment association* and the *Kurdish women network* create spaces of belonging and social networks where people feel at ease. These associations are supported not only by their own communities, but also by the city of Helsinki which provides finances for them. These associations, which are mainly run by Kurdish people, basically offer information on work related matters as well as language courses even though their primary goal is preventing the social exclusion for women[74].

> *I work for this association (Iraqi Women association), like I did in the past in others in Iraq and then in Turkey as well. So, this is part of my life. Many friends call me to know if there is a special course at school or some information in general about refugees in Finland, jobs, etc... They call me and ask me questions…also about domestic violence, force marriages or problems related to kids growing up between two diverse cultures. We also collaborate with others institution and associations such as the city of Helsinki, the Monika-naiset liitto ry and the Finnish refugee council, etc…then we try to organize some events like the women celebrations days, seminars on diverse topics and other activities like summers camps, etc*
> *(14, Kurdish woman – Helsinki)*

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73 I took part in city demonstration against the B-permit (temporary residence of permit) organised by groups of Iraqi Kurds (International Federation of Iraqi refugees), Somali and Afghani activists. I took part at the Finnish social forum in Arbis, where Iraqi activists introduced their stories and talked about some issue regarding refugees' lives in Finland; I also took part in events such as the Newroz, the Halajba Memorial Day, and the other commemorative events. I have also attended private parties and other meetings.
74 The association works also as listening centres addressing cultural related problems.

What became immediately noticeable was that people who were previously involved in politics, emancipation movements, and human rights in their country of origin or in countries of previous settlement are usually those who play a major role in their associations in Finland. Even if these associations have cultural aims, they also show an affinity for political ideologies. For example, quite often I accidently met some key association leaders at debate or political events organised in the city. This gave me an idea about the complex networks, which sustain the associations as well as the people who usually utilise the associations' cultural services.

Various operations in support of the association and its activities have been sustained in the past years by the city of Helsinki through the Social Services Department, as well as The Ministry of Education and The Ministry of Justice. Generally, subsidies have been provided to ensure and promote migrant's cultural identity but also to enforce mutual dialogue between the Iraqi and the Finnish community. Moreover, internal finances are also raised through private donations, fundraisings, flea market events, etc. These events also stimulate Iraqis participation as well as the construction of a possible bond within the diverse communities.

Another association, known as the Finnish-Kurdish society (Suomalais-kurdilainen ystävyysseura), was started in 2005 with a clear message: organise a space of visible interaction between the Finns and the Kurdish people. Basically, cultural activities and events are organised e.g. for children, women and sympathisers for the Kurdish cause. On the other hand, only a few Finnish people are active members of the group, and those who are usually married to Kurds or work with them in specific sectors. The open access of these associations is also visible through the Internet. Usually their webpages provide information in Kurdish, Finnish and sometimes Arabic. The virtual visibility of these associations allows them to show their own calendar of activities, while remaining visible inside Finnish society, not only for advertising their own actions, but also as a way to ensure credibility. However, these understudied Iraqi associations, which reflect diverse cultural and political ideas, are not always able to entirely represent the fragmented Iraqi population.

Despite the existence of immigrant-driven associations, the municipality of Helsinki also participates with some specific programs. Caisa is an international cultural centre cooperating with the municipality of Helsinki since 1996. This centre was established with the precise purpose of accommodating diverse cultures within the Finnish society while promoting both integration and interaction through immigrant-run activities. The calendar is always quite full of events promoted by diverse immigrants groups and association such as art exhibitions, all kinds of courses and workshops. Rooms are also rented out to immigrants for their own activities. Researchers such as Joronen (2003), Toikka (2001) as well as Saukkonen & Pykkonen have analysed the role of the Caisa centre over the years while looking at the multicultural interaction between immigrant groups and the public officials. Caisa has been a "space" where cultural policies are usually enforced by collaborative actions and where migrants' cultural practices as well as integration projects take place. A clear example of such dialogical success was the special music festival that was launched in Caisa for the first time in 2007. The

"*Ourvision singing contest*" aimed at immigrant inclusion through a singing contest. In contrast to the Eurovision music context, which includes essentially European countries, the *Ourvision festival* organised by Caisa tries to locally reach people from diverse non-European countries utilising music as instrument of attraction. At the time of my fieldwork experience in 2007, four different globe sections, Africa, Asia, the Middle East and the Americas, were created[75]. I have attended most of these pre-selections and in particular what captured my attention was the lack of a "visible" Finnish audience[76]. However, their absence was replaced by an evident presence of immigrant communities, which follow the performances of their compatriots from the Middle East with dance steps, clapping hands or waving their handkerchief. Ethnic minorities (or a portion of them) became visible and protagonists of their own show, while the city[77] became the theatre of their actions. The event also worked as a social gathering for people who came to the pre-selection meetings to support their favourite singer. A woman attending the event simply said:

> It is a nice event. We can come here a listen our friend singing on the stage and the Kurdish songs he picked up. Then you meet people that you did not see for a while and you started to talk…then you realized the song is over and you did not listen to a single word of it... (Laught!),
> (29, Iraqi Kurdish woman – Helsinki)

This singing contest turned out to be a liberating event for the people who attended it. As one informant noticed:

> I had a tough day today…I was a bit upset and sad…and lately I was thinking on my way to Caisa..(…) I have never been here (…) I only knew that I had to have fun like my friend said…suddenly I came here and my mood went upside down again. Now I am smiling and dancing and I pull my troubles over my back!
> (22, Iraqi Kurdish woman – Helsinki)

Moreover, when recreational activities are organised inside "semi-official places" such Caisa, people's closeness to, trust in institution and opportunity for self-expression may increase. The involvement of the former minister of immigration, Mrs

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75 After 2007, "Europe" has been added as new section.
76 A couple of times, I have also tried to invite some of my Finnish friends to this event; however, in diverse occasions, people replied that they had better plans for the night instead of going to Caisa. This cultural centre was mainly considered a place for foreigners. Most probably the effect of introducing a new globe section such as "Europe" implied a more participative effort for strengthening closeness and increase dialogue between the locals and the foreigners.
77 The final show was organised at the Savoy Theater in May 2007. The event was highly publicised by Caisa as well as several newspapers such as: HS, the Six Degree magazine, etc.

Astrid Thors, in the sold out grand finale in the Savoy theatre was also an evident message of openness and cooperation towards such multicultural events. As reported by Botta' (2009) in his study on the Ourvision festival in 2008, the music gives significance to places and make them familiarising with the institutions, while crossing social, ethnic, cultural and economic boundaries. Discussion on celebrations and other Iraqi and Kurdish events, such as Newroz and Halabja, and their preponderant role in evoking and *r*econstructing collective memory is analysed in chapter eight.

6.5.3 The material/immaterial dimension

Iraqis do not just live off of their memories. Cities of settlement are also depicted as places where people move, hear, touch, taste and smell and where discussion on materiality and immateriality spontaneously take place.

The first introduction with the Finnish system is basically explained through the reception. Many of my informants had arrived as quota refugees and had, after an interview with the UNHCR's officials, been selected to go to Finland. These interviews were usually conducted in refugee camps in Syria, Jordan and Turkey. My informants in particular did not talk about the content of the interview; they instead described the time spent in the refugee camp as being a stressful experience, yet one that filled them with the hope of being resettled elsewhere. For instance, a Kurdish man talked about his experience in a Turkish camp as the following:

> *We stayed in a camp, then they moved us to as apartment…and then again to a camp…well, it was really hard to live there…so when they asked us to move to Finland we said yes, even if we did not know where Finland was.*
> *(45, Iraqi Kurdish man – Helsinki)*

Although Finland is a rather unknown country, it is still seen as a liberating place far away from the unstable situation of the war. However, the discomfort of living in a camp causes a malaise, which already started before the flight. One of my informants in fact said:

> *In the camp the time never passed…we did not know what to do…we were tired to wait…we were safe, but at that point we were also thinking to go back (to Kurdistan), because there was no solution…Then the Finnish delegation took us here…Finland? I thought it was something to eat at the beginning…Nobody knew where Finland was…*
> *(22, Iraqi Kurdish woman – Helsinki)*

Difficulty and precariousness are words usually employed to describe the life in the camp. In other cases, the life in a camp is described as a prison with small possibilities of interaction with the outside world. In this situation of *limbo*, the longing to return back seemed to be reinforced and based on uncertainty and anxiety.

When asking people about which kind of information they had about Finland, before the arrival, I got surprising answers. In the stories of Iraqis who moved during the 1990s, Finland represents the unknown. In some other stories, it appeared to be a more mysterious or "exotic" country located somewhere in Europe. In some other accounts, it was presented as a cold country with few people living in while in other stories the term "Finland" was confused with "something to eat" or simply with an object. Differently, the change on migration dynamics by the 2000s made Finland a more known place. Most of the people that arrived during that time started to follow the so-called "immigration chains", responding to calls of family and friends. For example, a mother argues:

> *I had some friends that were living here (Helsinki)... So I was in contact with them. They told me that Finland was a good country to raise babies...*
> *(14, Kurdish woman – Helsinki)*

Finland is finally a place where Iraqis feel finally protected and safe. In many cases, the idea of staying in Finland changed from time to time. In many discussions, Iraqis pointed out that, almost unconsciously, their stay became more permanent that they possibly thought at the beginning of their settlement.

However, the resettlement process, as described by both Kurds and Arabs, resettled as quota refugees is recounted nearly as a romance where they live happily ever after. An Iraqi man based in Helsinki described his experience in these terms:

> *I came with the UNCHR in 1990. The 22nd of November, can you imagine it? It was the beginning of winter when I arrived to Turku...so, when I wake up the next day, It was dark, It was 8 o'clock and I was thinking that my watch was wrong (Laughs). I have really good memories of this country at the beginning. In this program, the resettlement program of UN, I came with nothing...like this (he shows how he is dressed now) with a shirt, but no luggage, I had some books and some sketches. I did a lot of sketches when I was in Iran, in Pakistan...because I escaped from Iraq to Pakistan and then from Pakistan they took me to Finland as a refugee. I came to Turku first, I remember my first house there...I was with a friend of mine...They put us together in the same flat, the house was full of everything, the towels in the bathroom, the refrigerator was full of food and...You know...the other day, they gave us the give saying that this was our home now...and we "What? (Laughs)". Then the other day*

they gave us the bank card...and you know...everything was very, very shining...it was a good welcome! (...) After some years I moved to Helsinki.
(4, Iraqi Arab Man – Helsinki)

As exemplified by this quotation, the extraordinary experience of settlement comes with a particular materiality. The house, the flat, the towels, the food in the fridge and the bankcard are a clear example of how a physical environment had an impact on people's relocation. Iraqis were welcomed into the society after tragic situations of exile. The appreciation of materiality seems to be stressed by displaced people who basically did not have anything when they escaped. However, the system is not always a bed of roses. As one of my informants claims:

Finnish authorities forced me to take an apartment. I did not want to live in that area (Espoon keskus). So we had a discussion and she basically told me that as refugees I had just to be grateful for the privilege. For me it was so hard, and I did not understand why she was so bad with me…at the end I felt desperate. I have been forced to do things because of my past in a no-free country…and when I came I felt somehow the same pressure.
(13, Iraqi Kurdish man - Helsinki)

They (Finnish institutions) solve the problems which tormented you since you were born, but Finns make you notice this...and you have to be grateful for the house, the card, the food…. They know more than us...they organized our life, they fix everything...But they always point out that they are making a favor to you...
(10, Iraqi Arab man – Helsinki)

Despite the fact that most studied Iraqis were grateful for the reception measures, others were somewhat critical of the way in which Finnish officials handled it especially in the 1990s. For example, the last two above quotations, reveal a sense of oppression, feelings of dependency and disempowerment which results in more stress than satisfaction. Iraqis have few choices; they are overwhelmed by information while their lives revolved around courses and jobs training. The right to hold an employment and pursue an education is perceived as *external favours* more than *personal achievements*. Moreover, the fact of being extremely grateful to Finns because of the assistance received creates asymmetric relationships which accentuate the extensive dependence between the Iraqis and the Finns.

Furthermore, the contact between migrants and the Finnish institutions usually happen in a filtered way, usually with the help of a translator, who simplifies the bureaucratic system or the paperwork or accompanies them to administrative places like Kela (the social insurance institution), hospitals, etc. In this scenario, refugees

made more of an effort to take command of their space and familiarise themselves because they are unable to explore it on their own.

6.5.4   *The city as a space of experimentation*

Cities are also places of experimentation. The Iraqis' accounts usually reveal information about how people took possession of their spaces in the city. Usually, time is required for social actors to take control of life events and possibly generate change. Usually material and non-material resources, which may differ across locations, help the migrant in a new situation. Cities with their services are sites that directly and indirectly facilitate people's paths of inclusion.

In the Finnish case, refugees are inserted in a preventive system of both reception and integration which responds to migrants' requests. Paradoxically, solutions regarding inclusion are filtered and dependent on circumstances intertwined with societies' opportunities. Differently than in the Italian case, the city of Helsinki and the Finnish authorities provide more structured and organised conditions where people are preventively inserted. Iraqis' participation occurs in specifically designed spaces such as the language and culture class, workplace, accommodation, services within the neighbourhood, etc. The description of such places is clearly accounted with reference to the places, location and frequency. For example, the description of language course is not superficially described like in the cases of Iraqis in Italy, but rather comes with more details such as where it was physically organised, the users, frequency, teachers, duration of the course, etc. My perception behind this detailed information was that people lived in a really structured and organised system made of clear units, where there was limited space for unambiguous and self-organised action. In this regard, the modes of appropriation and the ability to move autonomously across these spaces, is influenced by the structural system of reception. As a consequence, people are less empowered to be architects of their own destiny.

At the same time, the city of Helsinki emerges as a collection of locations. Possibilities of interaction and space appropriation emerge in specific locations within the city of Helsinki as exemplified by the following quotation:

> *If you walk here (between Sörnainen and Hakaniemi) around 8 or 9 am it is quite common to hear and to see foreigner people...probably more than Finns. This street is quite full or ethnic shops, and kebab pizzeria, as well as hairdressers...if they are not working in their own shops...they are cleaning somewhere in the metro or the streets.*
> *(20, Iraqi Arab man – Helsinki)*

The districts of Malmi, Kontula, Espoon Keskus and Hakunila, for example, represent areas where "diversity" becomes more visible. The above quotation captures the lively neighbourhood of Sörnainen which, in the middle-sized Finnish scale, shows

a dense concentration of diverse ethnic shops that have popped up over the years. This district is characterised by a more stimulating environment where the possibilities of appropriation of space by new actors have increased during the years. However, the process of interaction between the locals and the non-locals is critically perceived. The informant, in fact, referred to a quite common circumstance since immigrants are usually employed in low paid and manual jobs. In this regard, the separations of functions between the locals and the non-locals may become more visible as well as the fragmentation of the urban fabric increased.

As explained by other Iraqis, the density of migrants in a particular area does not automatically indicate a successful interaction between the locals and the foreigners. There can be a superficial contact, but the duality between strangeness and familiarity may still persist. As explained by an Iraqi Kurdish man:

> *That's strange…Some Finns come here (to the shop) to buy some products…*
> *sometimes they come, but they just buy and go away…when Arabs or Kurds,*
> *but also Indians or African come here they always talk and talk…then they buy*
> *and then talk and talk…(Laugh!) it is different…*
> *(24, Iraqi Kurdish man – Helsinki)*

Nevertheless, the city of Helsinki is also a place of opportunities. Employment as well as education opportunities seem to be more available in bigger cities than in towns; internal ethnic, social and cultural differentiation as well as infrastructure and transportation characterise the Helsinki metropolitan area. In people's accounts, moving to Helsinki also meant the possibility to fight against isolation as experienced in small Finnish towns, improve life experiences with reference to work and education possibilities and reconnect with the different Iraqi communities.

6.6   Rome as a city of settlement

In the following, I will discuss Rome as a city of settlement from the perspective of the symbolic, social and material dimensions.

6.6.1   The symbolic dimension

> *I love Rome...before Italy (...) I love Rome who gave me a normal life to me*
> *and my friends, the peace. I mean I feel democracy here…*
> *(21, Iraqi Kurdish man – Rome)*

Rome, as in the case of Helsinki, is depicted as a place where democratic values emerge. It is a symbolic place protecting against the traumatic past which provides a safe and peaceful environment where people move and live. The symbolic dimension, created by an overlapping conjunction between past and present memories, recalls a visual and apparent sentiment of calm, normality and control of the migrant over the territory. By reconstructing a sense of belonging to the new city, Iraqis attach positive memories to it and (partly) remove past sentiments of fear, anxiety and insecurity", connected to the Baath regime, wars and violence.

At the same time, the symbolism which transpires in the city of settlement is an expression of one's own private feelings. Migrants try to find within the urban space some "spots" which can transform the city of settlement into a more symbolic and emotional place that connects to their past places of belonging and remind them of home. The quotations below describe how people were able to grasp visible traits common between Rome and the cities they used to live in:

> *Once, I was in Karbala, the holy city. I was teaching there. At that time, I used to go quite often to the mausoleum, but not for praying… it was a silent place where I felt a spiritual bond, but not in a religious sense…kind of internal peace. When I moved to Rome, I was able to find the same kind of peace within the Vatican: in the colonnade of Bernini, to the right's side of St. Peter Square, I found my way…I just sit there and enjoy the silence.*
> *(9, Iraqi Arab Man – Rome)*

> *The Tiber is not like the Tigris…But walking on the side of the river was, as I did for many years when I was still living in Baghdad, relaxing… Walking is relaxing…*
> *(11, Iraqi Arab Man – Rome)*

> *In some way Rome reminds my city…if you take a walk to the Park of Eucalyptus, or Villa Torlonia, or Ostia (a town close to Rome) for instance, you may find palms there…the same if you take a walk at the botanic garden in Trastevere, at Corsini palace…you know, palms are the symbol of Iraq…or if you move in some areas of the historical center…the small path between houses…some alleys remind me a bit about my city…there is something that Iraqis carry with them…. The Antiquities! Iraqis spontaneously live with it …From their talks you feel people's knowledge. Their past, their history like Italian with their Roman empires…*
> *(26, Iraqi Kurdish Man – Rome)*

The interviewees perceived current urban visualities such as palms trees, old alleys or the Tiber River, to evoke similarities with their past lives in Iraq. Similarly, comparisons among old Iraqis civilisation such as the Sumerians, Assyrian and

Babylonians, with the Romans or the spirituality of some important religious sites as the city of Najaf and Karbala were constant allusions in people's talks when describing Rome. The passion for the history of both Iraqis and Italians, as in the history of the Romans and the civilisation from Mesopotamia, were presented as invisible bonds between these two cultures. It is also described as a cosmopolitan and international city characterised by a mix of nationalities and traditions.

As the quotations show, the search for a silent place in Rome, in the colonnade of Bernini, reminded one of my interviewees of the quietness of the mausoleum in Karbala. In the narratives, spaces and feelings become intertwined. The city is firstly retroactively lived, and secondly reconstructs an intrinsic symbolic space. Rome is also a locus where positive emotions emerge when referring to family dynamics (such as a birth, children's achievement at schools or jobs). The realisation of these latter achievements is generally reinforced by a comparison with people's past life in Iraq, where such dynamics would probably not have been possible for all of them to achieve.

6.6.2   *The social dimension*

In the Italian context, associations help in supplementing the lack of state action, besides for promoting participation inside the Iraqi communities. Due to the intricate and various systems of networks between the civil society and the Italian institutions, Iraqi associations are the main (sometimes the only) reference in Iraqis Arabs and Kurds' stories.

At the time that I arrived in Rome in 2007, I only knew an Italian NGO named "*Un ponte per*" (literally *a bridge for*) which was created after 1991. Its primary activities were promoting initiatives of solidarity towards the Iraqi population affected by war and embargo. Today, this NGO operates in other countries such as Serbia, Turkey, and Lebanon where they promote solidarity, information campaigns and other practical activities for helping the population. This NGO became quite well- known in 2004, when two Italian women operating in Baghdad were kidnapped by an extremist group. The mobilisation of the Iraqi intellectual community in Rome and Italy was quite solid and massive at that time. After 21 days, the two women were released and since that event they have continued to work with their projects between Rome and Iraq. When in Rome I visited the NGO and one of these two ladies talked about their activities as well as introduced me to some key Iraqi informants who could provide me contacts for the study.

Over the years "*Un ponte per…*" has created massive links not only in the city of Rome, but also in Iraq though diverse "transnational" projects such as the Osservatorio Iraq[78], The house of books of Baghdad[79], and other projects focusing on education and

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[78] This project provides different kinds of information on Iraq after 2004.

women's rights watch. This NGO also has a powerful collaboration with some Kurdish associations working in Rome and others across Italy. I will briefly introduce two associations in which I performed participant observation.

The Ararat association was started in 1999 in the *campo Boario*, an area in the Testaccio district where there was an abandoned slaughterhouse complex. During the 1990s, a collective of independent architects, landscape architects, students and artists named *Stalker,* colonised the area and tried to renovate the entire complex without the permission of the city of Rome. In 1999, one of the buildings, which became the site of the Ararat association, was restored by the collective and by some Kurdish people who were already populating the area. The place immediately became a meeting place for Kurds coming from a different part of Kurdistan as well as a space to be used for socio-cultural events and dialogue among people. The *Ararat centre* was not only run by the Kurdish community but also collaborated with other institutions like the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Roma 3, which was important for creating workshops and other kinds of activities such as art exhibitions and language courses. However, in 2007 the centre worked more as a reception centre than a socio-cultural association because of the emergence of the Kurdish exodus as well as the lack of proper reception sites around the city. At that time and in the same area of campo Boario, close to the river Tiber, there were many others migrants such as Romanians, Afghanis and Senegalese, living in self constructed barracks. During the years, these barracks were demolished by the city of Rome without notice and still today, the area is under control by the police that sometimes carry out inspections. However, barracks are periodically built up.

When I visited the centre in January 2008, there was neither electricity nor hot running water inside. Only a standpipe in the yard provided cold water. At that time, 40 Kurds were living in the centre. All were men. The majority of them were of Turkish origin. However, there was also a group of Kurds from Iraq, having statuses ranging from asylum seeker, refugee to clandestine and a large number of repatriated because of the Dublin II regulation. During the day, the number of Kurds increased. Therefore, the centre became a sort of gathering place for other Kurds who come from other parts of the city. The harsh conditions where these people lived strengthened their community bond. The opportunity of sharing a daily cup of tea at the centre, was also a time for sharing memories of their *home*, criticising the incomprehensible Italian asylum system while speaking their own language, or just dreaming to go back to Iraq.

The UIKI (Information office of Kurdistan), located in a different part of the city, but connected to the Ararat centre, in contrast, provides historical, social and cultural information about Kurdistan and the Kurdish community in Europe. Besides the Internet, they also print out a magazine "Kurdistan report" and a bulletin called

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79 This project aims to protect the Baghdad's National Library which was damaged by a fire in 2003. Partners of the projects are also the EU Commission and the National Central Library of Florence.

"Kurdish world" (available also online) which has been available since 2001. The office is mainly run by Turkish Kurds. The UIKI was created in 1999 and is aimed at cooperative support in Kurdistan. They work with the city of Rome as well as with other Italian municipalities through which they promote Kurdish cultural events. Today, they also send a delegation of observers (Italians and Kurds) to the main Kurdish cities (mainly in Turkey) to verify the respect of human rights and actively report their findings on their websites. On their website, which is their main tool of communication, they also collect photo, materials and well as music links and video as forms of entertainment and information.

6.6.3   The material/immaterial dimension

The Italian reception scenario is less regulated in the reception measures according to several Iraqi Kurds who I met at the Ararat centre. Most of these people in fact were asylum seekers who were fighting to obtain information and support. Some refugees were *de jure,* but not *de facto*; repatriated migrants because of the Dublin convention as well as clandestine. Some Kurdish people who I interviewed were deported from Germany and Sweden, back to Italy during the 2000s, because of the Dublin Convention, which gives responsibilities to the first country where they arrived and applied for asylum. As exemplified by a couple of repatriated Kurds who got *stuck* in the bureaucratic system:

> *When I arrived to Rome I did not know where to go (2006)...I arrived at the Termini train station, on the side there is a square and I tried to find foreigner people, with dark skin, who could possibly speak Arabic and help me to find a place to stay, where to eat...So by asking I found the Ararat. (...) then I applied for the Asylum…but here all people do things by themselves. If we need to eat, wash, find a place where to sleep...(...) nobody comes to me offering these things...I need to move outside (of the Ararat)…*
> *(5, Iraqi Kurdish Man – Rome)*

> *None shows me how the Italian system works, none helps me to understand...They (people who work in public offices) thing that all people are able to speak Italian...English is the most spoken language in the world...maybe I am wrong, maybe in Italy is not like that...Then I do not have any money, I cannot buy anything...Even if I would like to go for a language course from one part to the city to the other one I need money for the metro or the bus...Rome is a quite big and chaotic city...If you move you need the bus or the metro..but how can I buy the tickets? If controllers come and I get a fine, how I can I pay it?*
> *(6, Iraqi Kurdish man – Rome)*

In Rome, the lack of assistance is evident in the reception system, which especially for asylum seekers, repatriated migrants and refugees, is the first obstacle. Lack of material support, such as stable accommodation or the absence of a system of interpretation for the comprehension of their delicate stories, is a cause of stress. However, most of these Iraqi Kurds, particularly those who arrived after the 2000s, showed little interest in seeking asylum in Italy, instead they considered Italy as a country of transit (cf. also Puggioni 2005). Their personal goal was not only to reach the oldest Kurdish communities and families that had already settled in northern European countries, but also to live in a more stable situation. As some interviewees pointed out:

> *10 years ago I arrived in Italy, but I did not have anything yet. My life would be better if I were in Iraq now. My heart is there. I have a wife and a young child that I met, for the first time, 3 years ago, when I went back to Iraq. After I arrived in Italy for the first time, I moved later to Germany, then England...but now they deported me to Italy again, where I am still waiting for my asylum. My documents are not good...I do not understand the Italian law...I am not so good in Italian language either...Nobody cares about your story...*
> *(41, Iraqi Kurdish man – Rome)*

> *I illegally arrived to Italy from Turkey. I asked the asylum…well, they (police) found me…Then I was in Germany where I worked in a friends' restaurant…Then I went to Sweden…I like there a lot. I had friends and a job…a place where to sleep (he takes some Swedish coins from his pocket and kisses them). Now I am in Italy, but I would like to go back to Iraq where my life could be absolutely better than here…*
> *(5, Iraqi Kurdish Man - Rome)*

According to some volunteer lawyers I met, the main problems in these cases are that the asylum seekers present (for example when they arrive to Italy or when they are repatriated) multiple asylum requests, utilising different names and providing false information, especially when they are repatriated back to Italy. By doing so, these migrants try to avoid, in the worst cases, further repatriations to Iraq. In a state of uncertainty, people reflect on their present and past and bring further ideas of possibilities of coming back to Iraq as exemplified by the second quotation above.

Although this "*do-it--yourself system*" generates feelings of frustration and uncertainty, it also encouraged migrants to rely on an organised system of networks, allowing them to maintain a connection to the Iraqi community through everyday interactions, while still being active participants in the system. Therefore, most of the Kurds from Ararat, after a while, became acquainted with the Italian system. Associations, NGOs, and other centres[80] provide information on places that provide

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80 For example, I visited the Centro Astalli (the Jesuit Refugee Centre) in Rome and the Community of Sant'Egidio during the fieldwork. Both of these places, in financial agreement with the City of Rome,

temporary accommodation, shower facilities, meals, clothing, advocacy, etc. During my participant observation, I kept *"company"* with the Iraqi Kurds who used these services on a daily basis. For instance, we went to eat together at a couple of places, or I accompanied them when having a meeting with a legal counsellor, or to a doctors' visit, or simply to take a walk. In those occasions, I noticed how the city moulded Iraqis' habits and made them aware of a new urban identity. The Iraqis I met in fact kept a little diary about the transportation, the places and the times where they could go for a lunch or dinners; a shower or sleep; legal advice; medical visits etc. as well as places to avoid because of the police controls. In this case, the civil society becomes the *first* agent of reference for these migrants.

In the past, when there was no such network inside the civil society, the Iraqis had to rely on other institutions. In Rome, for example, the Italian communist party was usually the main actor helping to protect the concerns of the Iraqi people especially during the 1970s and the 1980s. An Iraqi Kurdish man from Rome states:

> *In the 1970s, the Italian communist party helped us; they gave us information in diverse matters; the Italian institution neither helped nor created problems...then we (students) organized a league of artists from Iraq...always collaborating with the PCI - Italian communist party - We raised money from the parties we organized, or by selling pieces of art...then we helped other compatriots and other who needed help and who stayed at the central station...we asked to our friends to accommodate them in their places for days or we paid for their accommodation in hostels or so...*
> *(47, Iraqi Kurdish man – Rome)*

The Italian communist party was probably the first party to foster immigrants' socialisation, involving both migrants and migrant associations. Despite the low number of Iraqis living in Italy, at the beginning of the 1980s in fact, a group of Iraqis students set up the *Iraqi league of democratic artists, journalists and writers*, with cultural as well as political interests with the help of the communist party. However, the league soon started to receive requests for searching for accommodation and general help from those (Iraqi) migrants who recently arrived to Italy[81]. Surprisingly, when reflecting on the deficiencies of the Italian system, an Arab Iraqi man, involved in activities of the *league,* suggested that people need directions more than material solutions. In supporting his view, he explained that in Iraq, the idea of the state as a "helper" does not exist. By making a comparison with the Swedish state, where his sister is currently living, he argues that the relationship between the Iraqi people and

provide diverse kinds of services regarding the reception of migrants. In particular, the Community of Sant'Egidio publishes almost every year a little book where to find all kinds of information about Rome.
81 More details on the work and role of the league will be provided in chapter nine.

their institutions may be understood when looking at the Iraqi state as perceived in the past:

> *We are not used to the fact that institutions may help us…It is not in our idea of state...I rely on myself...We do not wait for the public help or the public money...because this is part of the oriental conception of state...the state does not ask you anything...not taxes..but it does never give you anything....like the holidays for example...there is no word in Arabic for "holidays" ...You just need to behave and for the rest the state allows you to live...on the other hand, there is the concept of clan, the tribe which has its own rules...for example, the policeman is Iraq is seen as intruder..one who makes his rules...In here (Rome) the police is an institution...people listen and obey to the police 'rules...and Italian people also expect from the states many things...*
> *(27, Iraqi Arab Man – Rome)*

6.6.4   *The city as a space of experimentation*

Because of the lack of reception resources, Iraqis experiment in a more immediate and independent way their path of reception and possible inclusion into the society. In the Italian system, the logic of structured state organisation is substituted by a more personal approach. Accounts of Iraqis living in Rome are more experimental in developing their path of inclusion which also depends on their available resources as well as personal confidence.

> *I arrived firstly in Florence, where in the 1973 I got my first job…a friend of mine, who later migrated to France, told me to ask in diverse restaurants in the outskirts of the city if they need a dishwasher...I remembered I got 5 Mila lire a day (2.5 Euros); I lived in a hostel…after a while in a pension; then with some other Iraqi people we looked for some Italian courses…in one place, then to another one….and bit by bit we tries to learn and gain more confidence…then I moved to Rome, and I did many other jobs…but at the same time I was always more comfortable with my skills inside this society.*
> *(47, Iraqi Kurdish man – Rome)*

This quotation exemplifies a slow path of experimentation and expression of power which progressively manifests in personal experiences of searching for jobs, accommodation, language courses etc. For example, differently than in the Finnish case, people talked superficially about their language and training experiences, not only due to the precarious conditions of their organisation under which these were arranged, but also due to the various and unstable nature of circumstances. Positive

experiences that occurred in a relatively open society more easily facilitated feelings of social inclusion. The city was a place to be gradually explored and conquered. For example, Iraqi Kurdish people described their days in the following way:

> *If I want to take a shower, I need to go to the city center...there you can find centers in which people give you food or where you can book a shift for the showers...(...) or Friday night, some volunteers come to Pyramid (a place near Testaccio) and they distribute sandwiches...then they talked to us, they also bring music sometimes...and in that moment you feel fine...you relax, listen and eat...*
> *(6, Iraqi Kurdish man – Rome)*

> *The community of Sant'Egidio is a nice place...it is open 3 times a week. The nicest thing is that after you take the lunch ticket, you sit where there is place and people will bring you food...you are served like in a restaurant...You do not have to queue...They food is good and the people around smile at you...you can also meet foreigners girls...also Italian homeless.*
> *(7, Iraqi Kurdish man – Rome)*

The transpiring activism reflects a situation where Iraqis (deported Iraqis but also refugees) move constantly through the city in search of basic help. After a while, it seems that people paradoxically enjoy a situation made of precariousness, but also characterised by a sense of freedom. Reception centres and specific places around the city in fact became sites of interaction between locals and foreigners. However, processes of experimentation within the city come with a specific description of areas considered as "problematic". For instance, especially in Rome the Esquiline is also a district where a number of problems have increased over time. A well settled Iraqi man in Rome, referring to the Esquiline district where he lived, pointed out:

> *This zone during the past attracted many people who suddenly bough a shops, opened an internet place, restaurants, etc...Those who do not have a shop, they just sell illegally items on the street...once the police come, they run away...it's a lively zone. (laugh). If you walk toward the station, in the morning, in the night especially you find many many foreigners living there, on the streets...sleeping in the summers and in the winters...the Esquiline is also a quarter where opportunities and decay happens at the same time.*
> *(37, Iraqi Arab Man – Rome)*

This quotation clearly emphasises that appearance can be deceiving. The Esquiline neighbourhood, in fact, has been a place of disorder such as robbery, street fights, and ethnic and local friction since the 2000s. Moreover, Oppian Hill Park (Parco del Colle

Oppio), in the same area and close to the Coliseum is well known place especially among Iraqi Kurds. In the past, this antique archaeological park was a special meeting place for children and elderly people. During my walks in the park between the winter of 2007 and 2008, the atmosphere totally changed. Weeds growing, garbage and mattresses were strewn around the park such as below the Roman arches. An Iraqi man living in the vicinity, in fact argues:

> *If you go to Colle Oppio in the afternoon you can meet many young Iraqi, mostly Kurdish people who lived there in the park. They live in cardboards…periodically destroyed by the police, who try to keep clean and safe the area. Sometimes accidents happened as well…For example, once one young Iraqi guy almost stabbed a police with a knife[82]…Many of them are also refugees who did not receive a proper reception…and they use to sleep there. Others are just people in transit…*
> *(37, Iraqi Arab Man – Rome)*

Oppian Hill Park is in fact a crossroad for young Iraqis who do not have a fixed dwelling. Some of them are refugees, others clandestine. Some of them have also temporarily lived in a reception centre, which according to the law recognised the stay for a limited time. However, the precariousness of everyday life for some migrants and the overpopulation of Oppian Hill Park have resulted in unpleasant situations, as this man explains:

> *If you arrive to the Oppian Park, you need always to watch out where you sleep…It is not so easy. For example, once I found a bench and I tries to sleep there…a couple of people came because they wanted to be paid for the bench…I did not have any money and they started to threaten me…so before fighting, I run away…*
> *(41, Iraqi Kurdish man – Rome)*

The precariousness of life revolves around dynamics where only the most powerful may survive. This dynamic has developed in places (like the Oppian Hill Park, or the central station) with a high concentration of vulnerable immigrants and refugees living on the streets, resulting in a sort of "*mafia system*" based on forced criminal collaboration. When this "collaboration" fails, consequences such as fighting and disorders may take place.

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[82] This story refers to an Iraqi man who in 2003 was almost killed by a compatriot during a fight in the Oppian Hill Park.

6.7   The embassies: interfering agents

In many stories of Iraqis coming during the 1980s and the 1990s, the allusions to the Iraqis embassy are quite a common focus. Due to the circumstances, the role of the embassies during the time of Saddam Hussein's dictatorship had been relevant when dealing with Iraqis in Finland and Italy. For instance, Iraqi students living in Rome mentioned how, for them, embassies have been important agents when processing administrative issues such as visa and study applications. However, when conducting research in Rome I heard quite contradictory stories about the role of the Iraqi embassies, such as having to join the Baath party as a condition to get a study grant. When the situation in Iraq collapsed, some years after Saddam Hussein came into power in 1968, rather few Arab Iraqis already living in Italy applied for the recognition of statelessness, mainly because they did not have any residence permit. At that time, the asylum, for people coming for non-EU countries, was not possible yet. Only after the 1990s, did the Italian Parliament approve the first policy regarding aliens (the *Martelli Law* - no 39/90), based on the Geneva Convention, with no geographical restriction. As a consequence, every foreign person could apply for asylum regardless of their own nationality and country of origin. As one Iraqi Kurdish man reported of his arrival in Italy in the 1970s.

> *Italy signed the Convention of Genève late...it was an anti-Soviet position...for the geographical limit they did not welcome us. When they took away my passport, I could not apply for a refugee status...and I ask for recognition as a stateless person. I got it for short time... then I got married and I got the Italian citizenship.*
> *(47, Iraqi Kurdish man – Rome)*

This is a case of a person who arrived in Italy in 1973, when there was still no agreement on granting asylum for those asylum seekers coming from non-EU countries. At that time and because of his contrary political views his passport, which was close to expiring, was never renewed and he subsequently became stateless. His marriage with an Italian woman, allowed him, after several years to improve his juridical condition with Italian citizenship. It was quite common, during that time either to be recognised as immigrants due to the system of *sanatoria*, or receive Italian citizenship after being married to an Italian. However, after the fall of the regime of Saddam Hussein in 2003, the configuration of the embassies changed their political commitment, becoming more democratically open.

A consistent number of interviewed Iraqis living in Rome and Helsinki criticised the work of the Iraqi Embassy and the consulate offices during the years of the ex-regime, because they felt that they would have been penalised if they did not sympathise with Saddam Hussein's ideas. Embassies were quite often described as imported cells of dictatorship with the purpose of constant inspection and espionage

towards expatriates and their activities as a way to control and report people's ideas to the main power. Punishments for those who stood against the dictatorship and refused to join Saddam's Baath party, were basically translated in bureaucratic inefficiencies such as difficulties with passport renewals, denial of study grants and at times even acts of intimidation and physical violence. As reported by an Iraqi Arab man living in Rome:

> *I always felt to be clandestine... even if I was never illegal. Many Iraqi people tell lies. Many collaborated with the regime of Saddam because of money. Here the Embassy, in the 80' paid scholarship for all who had intention to study, but they had to register to the party (Baath). I would say that the 95% of the people were with Saddam...not that support him directly...but they were member of party. I was not registered, for example, and they treated me always so bad...I had always problem with my Iraqi passport...they did not want to renew it... I came from a town, in which the majority of the people were Shia and communist...*
> *(44, Arab Iraqi man – Rome)*

This quotation highlights how group dynamics still mattered even after the migration process. The settlement seems to be dependent not only on the Italian system, but also on the Iraqi system, which was at that time less visible. Many students in fact received despite their visa, financial support for both their studies as well as personal expenses. Joining Saddam Hussein's party was the *condition sine qua non* for conducting a "safe" and "respectable" life. Another testimony from Helsinki also affirms:

> *When I was presenting the video about Iraq, a friend of mine said something I am proud about...he said that during the period of Saddam Hussein, the Embassy was the embassy of Saddam Hussein, the Ambassador was the Ambassador of Saddam Hussein…and "I " was the real "ambassador" of the people of Iraq...I was proud to hear this...I did a lot to help people at that time...for example, a guy was sick and I visited him, ladies got children, and I went to visited them, with my wife...If someone died, I went to visit their family...I try to help the people or to let them feel that they have friends, giving hope to the people...I am helping them as a sort of voluntary work*
> *(2, Iraqi Arab man – Helsinki)*

This quotation underlines how embassies were lacking in their "humanity" towards their compatriots who indirectly needed support. Fragmentation and factionalism among those supported by the system and those who were penalised became visible through processes ranging from easy affiliation to distancing from the embassies. The

role of the intellectuals abroad (against the regime) became determinant of the strength of their group dynamics, as exemplified by the following quotation.

> *(...) I was writing about democracy and promoting also the work (in the art field) of many other like me that talked about my country while others were totally absent (Iraqis institutions). My name became known across Europe like the names of many others who were in the same situation and believe in the same good thing…*
> *(33, Iraqi Arab Man – Helsinki)*

6.8   Conclusion

This chapter has firstly dealt with descriptions of the causes that directly or indirectly forced the Iraqis to flee since the 1970s. The journey, which is usually accounted in the form of escape, describes routes, arrangements, and future plans.

The second part has tackled the role of the cities as emerging space of peoples' identification. Cities are, therefore, places from where people move, settle, resettle and transit. Cities, more than nation states, arise from Iraqis stories as symbolic, social and material/immaterial dimensions. Both Helsinki and Rome are portrayed with similitude and dissimilitude comparing with the cities/towns of origins. Accounts from the city of origin and the city of settlement are mixed with each other.

From the social point of view, Iraqi associations became important points of reference for the people living in Helsinki and Rome, providing help and expertise in specific sectors and enforcing Iraqis' activities and sense of belonging while accommodating people into new environments. However, if in Finland the associations play a secondary role, due to the structure of the Finnish reception and integration system, in Italy the responsibility of these associations is amplified, due to the absence of state action. Narratives of Iraqis, regarding their reception experience, trace different paths where the materiality of the Finnish system is distinguished from to the immateriality of the Italian one. In this way, the city emerges as a site where the adoption of people's own strategies is secondary (Helsinki) or crucial (Rome) in order to be successful and/or survive. As I also stressed in the previous chapter, these cities also belong to diverse welfare states' dynamics which have a preponderant impact in Iraqis' experiences of settlement. In both cases, cities are centres of experimentation. But while in the Finnish case, the social agent's *power* is filtered by Finnish institutions, in the Italian case agents are more independently projected in their process of inclusion.

However, it is important to remember that Helsinki and Rome, are not accounted as bounded and static units, but rather emerge as constellations of localities characterised

by particular social relations. These relations connect the local with the global creating a dynamic connection between space and place (Massey 1994), such as in the neighbourhood of Sörnainen in Helsinki or Esquilinos in Rome.

7 Where do I belong? Reflections on the Complexities of Home and Belonging

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I review and critically discuss the ways through which home is portrayed by Iraq Arabs and Iraqi Kurds living in exile. Especially in refugee's studies, home involves dislocation from one place to another, which may happen in natural or conflicting way. In particular, focusing on the micro perspective (people's accounts) of these two separate ethnic groups, I will explain how people refer to home, how home is described and where it is located.

7.2 Coordinates of time and place: a way to investigate home

The framing of people's sense of home can be anticipated through a brief introduction of what I call the *coordinates of time and place*. These coordinates are associated with people's stories, which position the informant in a virtual graph where it is possible to visualise and possibly explain the intricate relation between his/her time and space.

The reason why I look at these temporal and spatial coordinates originates from the natural act of appropriation of people being displaced of their space and time *loci*. For instance, when I was asking about people's own country, I encountered quite prevalent temporal and physical disjunctions. Some people remembered the glorious time of their country, which is more often a portrait of their own city before they fled, while others reflected more on the current situation of brutality, war, hunger and disappointment as depicted by media or recounted by their families living in Iraq and/or as personal lived experiences. Sometimes the correlation between the *glorious past* and their *country's present state* were indistinguishable and recurring themes in most of the discussions. Usually, this lack of clarity and temporal overlap happens when a migrant does not have any possibilities to travel freely to his own country during his/her extensive exile. In this case, time is interrupted and the idea of "future" is blurred or even perceived as in suspension. On the contrary, visits back home enable a clear and specific distinction in the migrants' narratives between Iraq as a real country and the Iraq of their memories.

Moreover, talking about people's life experiences is a means of accessing memories that systematically run from their childhood to their adolescence and/or adulthood. The temporal shift between these described two pasts is analysed in a dual way. Their childhood is usually described as the time of innocence and happiness mainly related to the social environment; while adolescence is the time of the conscience of the individual, which is usually characterised by an increased intellectual ability and maturity and through the affirmation of their own independent identity against environmental pressures. But sometimes these two temporal horizons are intertwined, overlapping and colliding when their innocence is destroyed by a distressing situation, which follows a tragedy. Usually the distressing situation refers to the persecution of the Baath regime and the imminent wars with its consequences.

> *I was 8 when the violence hit my city…(…) I remember we were playing football in the country field…and suddenly one of our friends felt on the floor…and he was cover of blood… (pause) he stepped into a mine and it exploded…I remember there was first smoke…dust…and blood…we cried all time…that day…and others…*
> *(30, Kurdish Iraqi man – Helsinki)*

Generally, in terms of space coordinates the description of home coincides with memories of the city or town where people were born or from where their families originated, with its historical and geographical descriptions (e.g. the land of the most ancient Sumerian and Babylonian civilisations, the rivers Tigris and Euphrates with their symbolic meanings, etc.). Iraq as a country is accompanied by a more delicate presentation of a town or a city from where the informants came. In this regard, home is summarised as a physical and social place, framed into a well-defined time perspective. Usually, physical and social levels of analysis overlap, enriching each other, but emphasising an idea of home as something unique and at the same time lost.

7.3   Accounts of home in Iraqis' stories

In this chapter, the way the Iraqis handled the concept of home is explained, for both Arabs and Kurds living in Helsinki and Rome. In particular, the following specific questions are answered: how is home described? How is it remembered? Where is it located?

7.4   Sketching home

Usually geographic and historical information, as stressed before, are the first pieces of information provided by my informants. These characterisations of home could be interpreted as a way to get possession of their roots; to trace personal origins and at the same time to provide coherence and stability to their stories.

> *I come from one of the oldest town in the world, close to the town of Gilgamesh. You know the Gilgamesh epos?! Of course the new name is Samawah and it means wind to the window or to heaven...to the sky...Something like this. It means also higher place. It is a small city. It is between the Euphrates and the desert ... (...) it is an historical city with a good atmosphere....it influenced my life...My family was a liberal family. We had many books around home...and since I was young, we were active (as family). We were members of some secret associations; student unions, youth unions of left...my mother was also a member and active in a women association there. It was not normal in that time...She had a big family to take care of...and then she was also helping people...*
> *(2, Iraqi Arab man - Helsinki)*

> *Iraq is my life's point of inspiration, as history of the Sumers and other oldest dominations, (famous) people, traditions, poetry, literature, music...all these things plus my pain (from this country) that has always accompanied me because of the war and its consequences.*
> *(11, Iraqi Arab man – Rome)*

> *I come from the province of Babil (in Arabic; Babylon in English)...The town was very small and the river, Euphrates, close by...*
> *(28, Iraqi Arab man – Helsinki)*

Home is a lived space of unconditional love where the materiality of its soil is almost absorbed by the informant, making a strong and indissoluble bond that even distance cannot break, as we can read here:

> *Iraq is the place where I was born, it is my land, I ate from that land and I drank its water…*
> *(13, Iraqi Kurdish man – Helsinki)*

By outlining the importance of geographical descriptions and historical facts, my Arabic Iraqi informants usually indicate the *uniqueness* of Iraq as one of the oldest countries in the Arab world. This description could also be interpreted as taking pride

in being Iraqi in a form of mild (pre-Islamic) nationalism that began to spread during the time of independence from the Ottoman and British occupation (1920 and 1958) and was influenced by the wave of rising modernisation in the 1970s, where a strong emphasis on innovation and the glorious past were mixed together.

People provide descriptive images of their "places" as connected to their home, as a way to set up the foundation upon which to build a more intimate discussion. In some cases, belonging is also an identifying element of explicatory meaning, especially dealing with people's diverse identities. This is exemplified in the following quotation by a man from Baghdad:

> *I was born in Baghdad, but my story makes sense of itself only if I see it in a big picture, because it refers to the story of a community to which I belong to. (...) in the southern part of Kurdistan, between Iraq and Iran, there was a big community of Kurds, named Fayli Kurds, (or Feili Kurds)...It's a Shia community. My family migrated at the beginning of the 1930s to Baghdad as a way to cope with the collapse of the stock markets' crisis in 1929. ..before that they lived in the mountains, at the border, cultivating the opium seed...every year, the Shah (the Iranian king) came from Tehran to collect the opium and in return he guaranteed them food subsidies... in 1930, my father was a youngster but he still remembered that that special year, the Shah did not visit the village and there was no food (for my family)...to fight against the hunger they ate the meat of the dogs and chestnuts bark, the only fruit you could get from the mountains...So, after a while they decided to move to the nearest town, which was not the capital of Tehran to which they belonged, but to Baghdad at 150 km of distance. My grandfather got first a permit of staying and after a while the Iraqi citizenship...Many other Fayli Kurds moved to Baghdad as well at the same time and in the same area of Baghdad, where they started with some kind of trade...(..) after a while they became economically powerful and politically dangerous ...(...) Before the Jewish people were deported out of the bazaar of Baghdad in the 1960s, 1970s until 1967 to Israel, they were obliged to sell their goods and properties and... the Fayli Kurds took advantage of it, buying the Jewish properties and taking even more possession of the Baghdad's Bazaar. So, I am from Baghdad, because I lived there, I went to school in there but, I am also a person that carries specific history behind...*
> *(47, Iraqi Kurdish man – Rome)*

Tracing home is also about grasping belonging. People refer to cities and towns as the places from which their families and communities are traveling. Physical and emotional features are, therefore, linked together and represent indissoluble resources to collect and guard on against the deteriorating of the Iraqi society. Belonging is, therefore, a question of belief and confidence in a better future. Family members linked

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to specific socio-cultural contexts in fact become the role models for young Iraqis lacking general rights due the increase of repressive political regimes.

In order to explain how people switch from the historical/geographic level of discussion to a more personal one, I will introduce a sample, which I consider to be emblematic of how people develop their meaning of home. During one of our meetings, an informant used the computer software Google *Earth* to show me the exact location of the little town where he was born. It was a coincidence that he discovered this software only a couple of months before we met each other. Being immediately captivated by it, he started to use it to feed his curiosity about the familiar places which he could no longer visit after going into exile. Initially, the presentation of his town *(Al-Kut)* is a spatial and geographic account. The town is located in the south-east of Baghdad and situated on the Tigris River. Thanks to the computer software, he also showed the disposition of the centre with its old and narrow streets, the main square and how the river surrounds the centre almost creating an island. At the same time, he alluded to the economic and cultural role that the city played when he was young. The city's strategic location on the river makes Al-Kut an important centre for the trade of carpets, drapery and agricultural products. The city owes its internationality to the many foreigners who moved there in search of employment and a better life.

After the initial city description, my informant continued pointing at this virtual map and looking for his familiar places such as the house where he was born, the schools where he studied, and the libraries and other sites he used to visit. The more he kept on with his virtual guide around the town, the more intimate the discussion became. In this regard, the physical site was just a starting point for the growth of his memories, whether positive or negative ones, which were intertwined with his personal experiences. Sites and historical/geographical places are the first references used by people to reconstruct their stories. In fact, how people inhabit and experience their home transcends the mere physical narration because they are framed in particular times. When referring to their home, people also mentioned more intimate stories about their childhood and the family, the period of socialisation at schools and universities, etc. At the same time, disappointment about the destroyed sites because of the wars appeared evident during the discussions. Home becomes a more *sentimentalised* space of belonging (Ahmed 1999: 341), fulfilled by kinship, or sometimes portrayed as kinship itself. Home gains meaning as a state of being, created by social relations that expand out the meaning of home from just being a physical or territorial description of it. As explained by the following quotations:

> *The rivers have also different colors and they are so particular... The Euphrates, for example, is red because it goes across the desert and transports red sand, while the Tigris come down from the mountains, from Kurdistan, and its water is really crystalline...so clean that we used to drink it... (..) Both rivers are really important for me...(...) they accompanied my life ...many time*

*with friends we used to go up and down n the side of the river (Tigris)...
meeting people, looking at girls, have fun...*
(44, Iraqi Arab men – Rome)

*My home is in Iraq where my people are. The place...that place where there
are many problems now... I remember the rivers...in the past they were very
beautiful; now they are full of blood...now it is all red! It is blood...When I was
young I used to swim in those rivers...yes! Red, it's red, now!*
(40, Iraqi Arab man – Helsinki)

*I was born in Al-Najaf, south of Baghdad...at that time (he refers to his
childhood) it was the most miserable town... but it was a really religious
center and it had the largest graveyard ever. It is about 10 km long, and 6/7
Km large. It is very big, huge! It was a very conservative city, you know,
women cannot go out, except with the men or others but they are always
covered... But I keep good memories from my childhood and that state of
....thoughtlessness, I would say...*
(4, Iraqi Arab man – Helsinki)

Thus, home gains meaning thanks to the social relations in which the individual and
the community, the private and the public are dialectically combined. However,
belonging requires commitment and constant work to keep it alive, especially after
many years spent in exile. Sometimes people who escape from war and who suffer as a
result of this traumatic dislocation may find it more difficult to maintain contact with
their homeland and to strengthen their sense of belonging. However, after 2004 the
situation, despite the spread of insecurity across the country, was described with
optimism, especially when referring to contacts and visits.

But home is not just remembered in terms of physical and social characteristics.
Some informants for example, referred to it in a more abstract way as a place
characterised by security, peace, normality and freedom in contrast to the present
situation in Iraq. Home means the tranquillity of carrying out an ordinary life
especially for new generations as explained below:

*Home means life and family, peace, where we can take care of kids that can
grow up in a normal situation...*
(14, Iraqi Kurdish woman – Helsinki)

However, the interpretation of home as a cognitive place is not a mere projection of
people's hopes and expectations for a better future or a detached universal idea of how
home should be, but a lived reality, which gains meaning from the comparison of two
lived experiences in two countries, two states of minds, two different expectations. If
generally Iraq has been identified as characterised by the oppressive regime of Saddam

Hussein, both Italy and Finland represent the other side of the coin where freedom and democracy just happen.

> *I was born in Baghdad, a place where I always experienced problem, fear, destructions...opposite to what I have found in Helsinki.*
> *(22, Iraqi Kurdish woman – Helsinki)*

> *I just wanted some normality in my life... getting up every morning, go to school or to work, see your friends, be with your family, in and out your home with no fear..I would have seen my life like this, there. (...) But in my home was different.*
> *(43, Iraqi Kurdish woman – Rome)*

> *I was born in Kirkuk. All my childhood and my first experiences at school, universities are linked to that place, soil... How could I forget my home country? Italy is just a place, where at the moment I am staying. Here there are no bombs that explode or women and children being killed as in Iraq. Even if in Italy there is no work and it is not so nice to stay...it is always better, because I feel at least secure...Maybe home means this?*
> *(5, Iraqi Kurdish man – Rome)*

In people's accounts home is presented as a shelter, haven and refuge where people go to feel safe. Home is generally described as a warm and comfortable place; a place where people are free to exert their freedom and express their ideas without being punished and discriminated against. Home, therefore, holds a symbolic and dematerialised meaning that acquires significance mostly through reference to exile, war and persecution in their home country, and their settlement in a country that fulfil their hopes. In this case, home appears as idealised and detached with no boundaries, which firmly contain it. But it can also materialise in the new country of settlement when people's primary expectations are realised. People's sense of home as a cognitive idea emerges thanks to their past lived experiences across time and space, which are compared. Home is internalised and sometimes projected into a global framework (e.g. human rights discussions, peace, democracy etc.), even if local connotations are always ready to be discussed.

7.5   Remembering home

To answer my second question, which raises the question of how home is remembered, it is evident that home is defined through a process of construction and deconstruction. A connotation of home manifests itself through conflicting memories where positive and negative lived experiences are mixed together. The sense of rupture

between the "golden age of the past" and the "present misfortune", appears in all Iraqis' discussions, without distinction of ethnicity, but with different emphasis among those people who have been personally persecuted, both directly and indirectly, by the regime of Saddam Hussein (La Vecchia 2011: 355).

As shown, the meaning of home to Iraqis does not have a homogeneous significance, while it provided a sense of identity to people (Jansen, 1998). Identity is constructed through the interaction with the social and the physical environment where people live and through the passage of time from childhood to adulthood. Identity is, therefore, seen as a situational process rather than as reality. Discussion on identity embraces subjective and social experiences simultaneously (Brah 1996: 8). However, identity can also be constructed in opposition to other identities. For instance, in the case of Kurdish minorities, (but the same could also be argued for other minorities living in the Iraqi territory such as Christians, Turkmen, Assyrians, etc.), identity has been perceived as threatening the centralised system and has, therefore, been ostracised by the dominant, (Sunni) Arabic identity.

Home is consequently the place where power relations occur and where identity takes shape. Ethnic identities for both Kurdish and Arabs have been affected by historical facts as well as contemporary dynamics. The way through which people perceived and even organised their life and developed consequent attachment to places, for example towards a new country of settlement, is dependent on the dynamics of power relations as experienced in the country of origin. Iraq was and still is a country where diverse ethnic groups cohabitate and where the imposition of power of some ethnic groups upon others creates tension. However, the conflict between ethnic groups has also drawn a line between ethnic boundaries, which became enormously accentuated during the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein and after years of the civil war.

7.6   Situating home

In order to clarify how people contextualised their sense of belonging across Finland, Italy and Iraq, I tried to make sense of my participants' accounts by providing a thematic reading of the data. In particular, four kinds of relations to home are discovered: finding home eventually, dual loyalties, feelings of homesickness and engaging in diaspora. These themes are situational, shaped by time and products of internal and external constraints (e.g. political, social, ethnic, geographical etc.). As Anthias (2008: 8) suggests, belonging refers to location as well as to a set of values, networks and practices which are shared or denied by people. These themes, exemplifying the perception of home and belonging and effects on return, present a focus on my informants' experiences. However, it is important to stress that not all the Iraqi people with a similar background would necessarily have similar relations to home. In this sense, these themes rather than generalise Iraqis' belonging, identify interpretations of people's perceptions on such matters.

7.6.1 Finding home eventually

In particular, this theme encompasses stories of asylum seekers, clandestines or refugees who left their country when the wars (Iraq-Iran war 1980-1988, or the Gulf war 1990-1991, or the American invasion 2003-) were announced and who had undergone traumatic experiences that have marked their lives and ideas of home and belonging.

There are cases in which people felt alienated – from the place where they originated from - and this state of alienation was part of the individual even before the exile. Iraqis, especially Kurdish and some Shia Arabs, were suffering under the regime of Saddam Hussein. Most of these people were born or grew up during the wars and have lived in situations where violence against civilians, intimidation, death and suffering were almost daily occurrences. Those painful experiences paradoxically helped people to rebuild and redefine characterisations of "home". Only by comparing their previous life in the country of origin with their current life in the country of settlement, do they finally reflect on the real significance of the term home usually identified with liberty, movement and security. By comparison with the worst case in their country of origin, they realised what home should not be. Consequentially, some of them have developed an attachment to the settlement country where peace, security, civil and human rights are respected and widely recognised. In this case, the longing to return inevitably decreases with the sense of exclusion as experienced in the country of origin. In this sense, comparing the country of their past memories with the country of the present life is fundamental for people's ideas of home.

Women, in particular, coming from extremely religious families, belonging to a lower class status and coming from small towns in Iraq, often experienced a lack of social relations and suffered from a double form of marginalisation and estrangement in their country of origin, which contributed stronger feeling of dispersal when living there. Finland and Italy and in particular the cities of Helsinki and Rome became the places where people had positive life experiences for the first time, as exemplified by the following informants:

> *Finland is my home (now); because what I can do what I want to do...In Iraq it was not possible... I can study here! In Iraq I was a Kurdish woman and I could not do it...In Iran I was not an Iranian and I could not do anything...In Finland I can, I am free to decide what I want to do and I can do it!*
> *(36, Iraqi Kurdish woman – Helsinki)*

> *Uhm, sincerely, I do not feel nostalgic about my country. Many people do not understand why I feel this way...I think that it depends on the pain I*

experienced in Iraq. (...) If a country treats me badly, how can I love it? I have
lost many friends from school killed because of the war... I do not have nice
memories...or, I had nice memories before the war came...If I look at those
places where I had fun and experienced joy, today they are empty...Places
were meaningful because there were those people... If I come back, I will suffer
the pains of hell.
(35, Iraqi Kurdish man – Rome)

According to previous theorists dealing with migration and refugee studies, the original
home country can be identified as a site of oppression, tyranny and patriarchal
domination (Mallett 2004: 75; Crenshaw 1994). However, the connection between
gender, ethnicity and time is fundamental for a better understanding of how and why
people trace and explain their sense of dispersal. Moreover, the fact that these people
have lost their loved ones in Iraq became the motive of disengagement and
estrangement from the Iraqi society.

Displacement is primarily seen as a lack of territorial attachment and subsequent
seeking for a refuge in a new territory where freedom and peace are finally found.
Even if most of these people have set up a new home in these new locations, such as
Helsinki and Rome, they do not neglect their past, but they rather refer to it as a
determining factor of change.

Therefore, according to these interviewees, home is less about 'where you are from'
and more about 'where you are going' (Ginsberg 1999: 35) or where you are living, as
I would say. The cities where people settle in fact offer them a life with prospects that
are the only alternatives they have at the moment for building a new life. In the
interviewed Iraqis' stories, home should provide a safe environment where respect,
human dignity and societal participation are the basis for conducting a normal life.
Therefore, Helsinki and Rome emerge as places where one can live a "normal" life.

7.6.2   *Dual loyalties*

Dual identity or *dual loyalty* is created by a prolonged period of residence in both
the country of origin and the country of settlement (Smith, 2007). The development of
multiple location attachments or the feeling of *between-ness* (Di Stefano 2002) or
ambivalence (Kivisto & La Vecchia-Mikkola 2013) challenges the definitions of home
and nation-state, which appear to be fluid, multifaceted and sometimes confused.
People hold and identify their belonging according to contexts, situations and system
of meanings (Anthias 2008). In this regard, migrants who spoke of this kind of stories
were able to combine positive and negative assessments of both countries because of
their lively, transnational networks, which transcend mere nation state borders. Identity
appears as fluid, multifaceted and sometimes imprecise (Kivisto & La Vecchia-

Mikkola 2013). These people play a double role across two (or more) locations. They are able to contextualise their identities across time and space. Length of stay in the city of settlement, as well as a constant contact and visits back home solve the dilemma of being part of two different worlds. As these quotations show:

> *Kerava (a suburb in Helsinki) is my home....I am a "Keravalainen Iraqista", a "person who lives in Kerava but came from Iraq". They belong together...Home is peace...where I find a peaceful place, where I find my home; it is not my sentence...The cousin of the Prophet Mohammad, Ali, said that "your country is the place that carries you (takes care) in peace". Where the peace is, that is my country and Finland gave me this (...) but I am also proud to be an Iraqi...I am proud that I am from a Gilgamesh town.*
> *(2, Iraqi Arab man – Helsinki)*

> *I spent my childhood and youth in Iraq, then a nice time in Rome...I do not want to talk about Italy, but Rome, because I do not know Italy very well...I feel today I'm divided by these two countries: one as the memory, the past, to which I have an ethic duty, my home country...and another one...where I spend my current life with friends and family. (...) It is a way of saying that" The place to where you belong, it is the country of your family cemeteries" ...for me it is between Baghdad and Bassora...in the south of Iraq, and also in Rome for my wife's side. I live in tension between these two countries...I am between sky and earth...*
> *(37, Iraqi Arab Man – Rome)*

> *In Iraq I still have my house, my brothers and sisters...but in Italy, I have the same, and I have a job, a wife, a house... I feel half-way, like my spirit being in Iraq, but my body being here. (...)*
> *(1, Iraqi Arab man – Rome)*

The length of residence in the country of settlement is not the only key to clarifying how double loyalty is perceived. Their previous life in their country of origin and their motivations for leaving are also perspectives to reflect on. What do people do to keep home alive? Apart from visiting their home country while in exile, they also have the option to stay in contact with their households and friends, virtually and physically. People continue to somehow live across borders. They are also able to cope with their longing for home by using communication technology and travel possibilities. Phone calls, Skype or VoIP, email, Internet messaging services and online newspapers allow the Iraqis to keep in touch with others back home and in the diaspora. However, communication is mainly maintained by phone, since the lack of electricity during the day, in both big and small cities in Iraq, may limit Internet access. During some specific interviews, I got the feeling that belonging was not just a question of personal identification and attachment to places and networks but also a collective form of identification with the Iraqi question, the cultural history of the country and the people.

Some of these people in fact became important actors in the phase of reconstruction of the new Iraqi society as country's spokespersons due to their relations with the new political elites.

It is important to remember that these Iraqi migrants have also been exposed to traumatic events from their country of origin, but they have managed in the new socio-political situation in Iraq to reclaim their roles and compensate the losses they experienced during the exile. Many of these people are in fact intellectuals, artists, political activists and sympathisers who are able to engage in the country's affairs easier than before; they are also able to travel back and forth regularly thanks to their double citizenship. Others are people whose social and economic networks, such as family connections or business issues, bring them finally back to Iraq.

In this regard, Iraqi people manifest their dual attachment to both the country of origin and settlement with limited conflicting experiences. By doing so, they are capable of selecting and combining parts of their "culture" with the receiving society in a more flexible way.

7.6.3   *Feelings of homesickness*

The theme "feelings of homesickness" refers to those elderly Iraqis who maintain a particular attachment to the country of origin. In this case, the unidirectional loyalty, which surfaces during the accounts of their longing to return, is a debt to the Iraqi people and the country of Iraq in spite of its conflicts. This specific group of Arab Iraqis and Kurds left the country before the war between Iran and Iraq (1980-1988) to study abroad. The reason why Iraqi and Kurdish students mainly started to migrate abroad was not just motivated by their career, but also by a strategic measure against the blazing instability perceived at the political level when the Baath party began its process of consolidation. Therefore, many artists, using financial aid sponsored by the Iraqi state, began to migrate all over the world. In Italy, some of them were students who specialised in the fields of art, architecture, music and cinema and who considered their stay in Italy just a brief interlude in their life. However, when the war between Iran and Iraq started, their situation immediately changed. These migrants faced difficulties for example in having proper papers and passports renewed by the Iraqi Embassies and consulate offices in order to get back to Iraq unless they would have joined Saddam's party. Their refusal made them stateless. Those who were active in some cultural and political associations in opposition to the regime were controlled and intimidated by secret agents recruited by the regime itself. Suddenly these migrants' contrasting feelings began to implode. Specifically, some of my informants felt extremely guilty for not having supported their people back home enough, or they felt themselves blessed while other Iraqis were constantly dying in Iraq. The return to their country of origin was first postponed and then prohibited. With the passage of time, the

desire to return to their home country became stronger and stronger. Consequently, home is more idealised and mythologised than the reality, especially in the accounts of those refugees who have been away for more than a decade (La Vecchia 2011: 356). Iraqis' relation with the home country can be seen as a moral commitment that will be fulfilled when the migrant is reunited with his/her home country and people (Ibid.).

Iraq is my home; I was always thinking, no matter what, not to move out of Iraq, but something happened... (...).I like this country (Finland), but it is not my country. I like my country more...(...) I do not think for myself here, I do not go out...All the time I think that if something nice is coming...(pause) I would not sleep afterwards! Because then I think how bad Iraq is now...how people live badly....and I would feel bad of myself...I just spend all the time in this mosque... I teach Arabic language and religion to young children during the weekend...(...) and then I use internet for studying (he enrolled in a Dutch online course in Chemistry), I pray...
(48, Iraqi Arab man – Helsinki)

At the beginning, you had to escape, you had to save yourself...but when you were 18/20 years old, you had many projects and dreams about your life...only after a while you realized this sense of guilty. You felt to be a betrayer, and what you did not understand was why you must be saved, while others went down and died. Why did I have this privilege? (...) I hope to conclude the interlude of life...and go back to my country...because, sincerely, I am scared to get old and die in this country.
(39, Iraqi Arab man – Rome)

My home country is always in my mind. Yesterday, I was walking here in Rome and I was thoughtful. I was thinking to my country, my family, my friends...my life how it was, and how it is now...Suddenly, a car sounds the horn and I jumped in the air. It almost hit me... I am always with my head there... away...Especially now, because I do not do anything, I do not work, I cannot go out, I do not have leisure time...
(7, Iraqi Kurdish man – Rome)

A friend of mine when she goes shopping buys always stuff for her kids but also for her sisters, brothers, grandchildren who live in Kurdistan. (...) She thinks one day she'll go back...I guess, but I think it's a sort of fixation (...) I mean, she lives here, she goes to school, but with her mind she is just there with her loved ones...
(14, Iraqi Kurdish woman – Helsinki)

This theme frames the stories of those Iraqi who left before the wars (1970-), and suffered for not being fighters on the front line like the brothers and sisters they left behind. These people have impressed quite firmly in their minds the image of their

Iraqi cities and the people, memories of their childhood and adolescence, and the denial of return have strengthened their affection towards home as an ideal and fictionalised place.

However, feelings of homesickness emerge also through the stories of those people who migrated during the 2000s and who faced extreme isolation and sense of abandonment in the city of settlement. These Iraqis felt a recurring desire to go back to their home country, where despite instability and sectarianism, they would have had a strong social network.

7.6.4   Engaging in diaspora

The kind of relation to home that I call "engaging in diaspora" reflects the stories of those people who have limited or no space in the past and current Iraqi society. In particular, many Kurdish narratives identify with forms of diasporic belonging. In the absence of political and/or territorial recognition, Iraqi people have recreated their home through diaspora, shifting from the physical to the psychic home which provides a symbolic source for their identity. Diaspora disrupts the apparent contained image of home, produces transnational/translocal connections and communities, and reproduces the concept of home (Wahlbeck 2002).

The Kurdish example demonstrates how alternative ethnic or religious identities can flourish in the diaspora, away from the state controls of language use, religious practice and political expression (Adamson, 2000: 162). Home becomes a transnational and deterritorialised space recreated by the transnational families and communities filling the gap between the country of settlement and the country of origin.

However, regarding the case of Iraqi Kurds, identity has been shaped and paradoxically enforced because of the oppressive actions and hostile policies of the former authoritarian regime. A sense of *Kurdishness* has been growing and people took control of it, as a way to survive the *Anfal* campaign in 1988, its consequential genocide and intensive *Arabisation programme* but also as an example of people fighting for human rights recognition around the world. The reproduction of culture and the circulation of ideas (mainly political) in actual (events, festivities, etc.,) and virtual forms (website, TV channels, radio stations) enforced the Kurdish people's maintaining of strong links to the fight of the cause of the people and their dream of freedom. Home for Kurdish people has been both a mixture of loss and gain. In this sense, home increases its significance not only because of existing tensions between location and dispersion, but also for being *tension* itself.

But how did people who engaged in the diaspora refer to their home country and the place from which they originated? First, the definition of home or home country, approached by the discussion of longing to return, was not clearly defined. It was

mainly dependent on the perception of their ethnic identity. For instance, in the case of Iraqi Kurds, it is important to stress that ethnic identity is not directly linked to national identities. In the interviews words like Kurdistan, Iraqi Kurdistan, and Mesopotamia were preferred to the word Iraq when talking about home or dealing with virtual and physical connections. The reason for this peculiar specification is clearly patriotic and political, especially for those people who are active *in primis* in the political arena. A central issue that I have noticed during my interviews was that Iraq was considered to be an artificial state created by European colonial powers in the 1920s; a country where also certain (ethnic) groups have always been preferred to others. In this regard, the original home was seen as a context where heterogeneous groups were living and where identity formation was the consequential act of preservation against the majority power.

However, Kurdistan and Iraq, geographically speaking, appeared not to be the confused ones. Moreover, it seems that words like Kurdistan became quite meaningful in particular situations, closely connected to people memories as contrasting elements of differentiation with the whole Iraq. For instance, images of Iraqi Kurdistan as in the descriptions of the green mountains in the northern part of Iraq, in contrast with hot and sandy southern areas), developed further discussions on culture and historical dissimilarity (people traditions, spoken languages, music, etc.) as a descriptive way to differentiate both areas (Iraqi Kurdistan and Iraq) and people (Kurds from Arabs).

> *I came from Kurdistan...I came from that culture, so old... Today I am as I am, because of that culture. It was a really beautiful country; very different from the north (Kurdistan) to the south (Iraq)...the nature, the people, (...) the food, the music...it is another world.*
> *(41, Iraqi Kurdish man – Rome)*

> *The Kurdish society is a bit different… they are more liberal, than the Arabic societies...In general it is. The religion does not affect so much the life… Now there are some religions...Kurdish people are mainly Sunni. They can be Christian, then Yazidi, an old religion...They are also part of different nations: Iran, Iraq and Turkey...There are also different dialects of the Kurdish language: Kurmanji and Sorani dialects...with different alphabet's influence by the east and the west. But in general the Kurdish society is more liberal especially women… they are liberal, they dance, they go outside...there are cafeterias for women...they go to theatre...they are active in the society...I mean they are visible….They go outside!*
> *(2, Iraqi Arab man – Helsinki)*

At the same time, feelings of "double" exclusion in the country of origin and settlement are also perceived in the stories of Iraqis who migrating after 2003. These people, due to the new political reconfiguration of the country, experiences of widespread corruption and controversial politics, faced extreme difficulties and sometimes discrimination in the new public spaces in Iraq. However, in my

informants' accounts, the period after Saddam's removal, the civil war, and the new government are accounted with as a period of extreme change but also confusion due to the new political and economic organisation and the effects of the de-Baathification process. In many stories, the absence of political, economic and/or territorial recognition has created a scattered home which appears to be more of a symbolic source for people's identity than a reality.

7.7   Conclusions

In this chapter, I have reviewed and critically discussed the ways through which home has been portrayed by Arab Iraqis and Iraqi Kurds who live in two European cities. Home and homeland are remembered through sets of private and collective memories, but also shaped by aspects deriving from life in the new country of settlement. Home is firstly described as a physical place, specified by geographical and historical coordinates; it can be localised in a town or a city where people come from. Secondly, it is also a reflection of people's lived experiences as well as a state of mind concerning peace and security. As shown, home, involves several dimensions and incorporates the individual, group, city, national and transnational levels (Somerville 1992; Rowles & Chaudhurry 2005; Al Ali 2002).

The idea of home is also identified through both a process of construction and deconstruction. The dialectic relation between the country of origin and settlement, experiences of security and war, freedom and oppression, past and present, and private and public are particular aspects of identifying home, wherever home is found. Home, therefore, evokes not just nostalgic and sentimental images of places and households, but also acts as a powerful cognitive aspect from which Iraqis draw energy for the future.

The description of home, and how home is remembered, also prompts further discussion about where it is located. Time and space coordinates are mutually dependent conditions for explaining people's feelings of attachment and hostility. Moreover, the concept of home strengthens its meaning when the migrant faces exile, dislocation and relocation (Rapport & Dawson 1998).

The four relations to home that were identified in the interview data were: finding home eventually, dual loyalties, feelings of homesickness and engaging in diaspora. Although all of the themes are characterised by stories of violence, the time and space shift are factors that distinguish these from each other.

The theme "finding home eventually" emerges in stories of migrants who have found a new home in the country of settlement despite all the difficulties. The theme "dual loyalties" characterises stories by people who have been living in Italy and Finland for more than ten years, and have developed an attachment, which seems to be

dependent on their possibilities to visit their home country during their exile and their ability communicate regularly across time and space. "Feelings of homesickness" refers to narratives by people who have suffered (and still suffer) from a sense of guilt and a feeling of isolation from the country of settlement. In these stories, the feelings of homesickness reconnect with a strong desire to go back. Finally, "engaging in diaspora" refers to relations expressed by migrants who due to a limited role in the Iraqi society both in the past and the present, have created a transnational home which goes beyond the mere identification with the country of settlement and the country of origin.

8   The longing to return

8.1   Introduction

The topic of return is a recurring theme when interacting with refugees and involuntary migrants who are forcibly separated from their native country and who often maintain a strong desire to be reconnected with their families and friends back home (Al-Rasheed 1994; Cohen and Gold 1997; Al Ali & Koser 2002). As pointed out by King & Christou (2011: 452), the revival of studies focusing on return migration could be explained with the re-conceptualisation of the study of migratory phenomena through the adoption of diverse frameworks ranging from the mobility paradigm and the transnational approach to diaspora studies. By stressing the transnational approach, I argue that technological advancements and travel opportunities have changed not only the nature of mobility of forced migrants, but also the perception of return. However, the transnational lens exemplifies the importance and range of return by sustaining more intense and complex ties across countries. At the same time, units of analysis such as nations, communities, and groups have become less bounded and more volatile and fragile.

In the first part of this chapter, I present the *longing to return* with which I want to replace the discussion on the *myth of return* that was presented at the beginning of this thesis. In this regard, longing to return deals with a more transnational frame which overcomes the gap between the real and the fictional return. In the second part of this chapter, I highlight how the return is perceived by Iraqi migrants and what happens when a physical and mental reunification with their past is finally achieved.

8.2   Coping with the return

Research on the concept of return has been split between two different horizons: the reality of return and the *myth of return,* which defines a condition wherein the permanent return never actually materialises (Anwar 1979; Al-Rasheed 1994; Cohen and Gold 1997; Zetter 1999; Israel 2002). In terms of repatriation, the return would signify the closing phase of the refugee cycle characterised by travel, settlement and finally return (Black & Koser 1999). However, as generally understood, the return is more representative of a new beginning for the refugee than as a reappropriation of their own past (Black & Koser 1999: 9). On the other hand, sociologists and anthropologists agree that a refugee's decision to return to his/her native country is not always inevitable but may instead be driven by a combination of factors like the level

of security, families' decision, access to work and housing. For others, the return can also be driven by worsening conditions in the country of settlement and social exclusion (cf. Allen & Morsink 1994).

For most of the people that I have interviewed, returning to their country of origin played a fundamental role in their lives since their first day of exile and especially at the beginning of their settlement experience. Discussions on return have been spread across the Iraqi communities either reinforcing kinship or promoting dispersion. At the same time and especially after 2004, most Iraqis I interviewed have temporarily returned back to Iraq.

The idea of permanently returning to Iraq has, however, often failed due to the instability and precariousness of the situation in the country that was observed by the migrants during their short visits. This kind of precariousness was usually evident in the basic services such as a regular supply of water and electricity; government's inability to take care of people's needs and rights and security concerns. Despite these dire conditions, many of the Iraqis who I met both in Helsinki and Rome asserted that they knew Iraqis who moved back to Iraq after 2004 and possibly still live there. According to Marfleet & Chatty (2009: 1) after the fall of the Iraqi regime, only a few Iraqis returned back to their country. Moreover, amplified insecurity and increased violence especially after 2005 and 2006 as reported by diverse statistics (UNHCR 2008) show how the number of refugees and asylum seekers globally increased; Finnish and Italian statistics testify to the increased peak in asylum applications during that time as well (Statistics Finland – Population Structure 2011; Caritas 2006).

In terms of country reconstruction, the *Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Fund* (IRRF)[83] failed to achieve all of its objectives. The fund had the task of reconstructing and reforming specific sectors in Iraq like infrastructures and services (e.g. electricity and water supplies, healthcare, education, etc.) and providing support to the governance, which has been damaged, as a result of the wars time and the embargo. As reported by the SIGIR[84] (2006: 1), most of the expenses were actually attributed to the unexpected security spending and other administrative costs, which were not considered in the original plan. Moreover, a strategic administrative change between 2003 and 2005 had also degraded the reconstruction process. Furthermore, the original plan lacked a consistent and clear understanding of the situational conditions in which Iraq was at that time.

The Iraqi people who I met did not specifically mention the IRRF fund in their stories, but they reported a dramatic situation where basic services such as water and electricity were scarce and intermittently available during the day, especially in the central and southern parts of Iraq. Moreover, human rights violations and the lack of

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83 This fund was established by the United States Congress in 2003 for the renovation and reconstruction of Iraq.
84 The SIGIR - Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction - is an independent government agency created by the Congress with the purpose to monitor the reconstruction process in Iraq.

security were documented by *temporary returnees* as well as by organisations working *in loco*. For example, in 2009, the Amnesty International reported the violation of human rights which, despite some improvements is still a great concern to all Iraqis. Many Kurdish and Arab Iraqis who I met, in fact, stated that a possible return would be feasible when security, political stability and recognition of human rights would be widely accepted in their country of origin.

8.3   The longing to return

Previous studies (Joly 2002; Al-Rasheed 1994) have stressed how relations between the migrant groups and homeland need to be further investigated in order to understand migrants' lives in the country of settlement. However, I argue that the discussion on the "myth of return", which has usually been employed in order to explain both attachment to countries and the desire to return, has not been analytically evaluated within a transnational perspective.

My study conceives the *longing to return* as a "transnational concept" where temporal and spatial dimensions represent the frames in which people think, act and live. In particular, the longing to return enhances a sociological analysis by focusing on two sets of space and time. The spaces are usually identified with the city or town of origin (or with familial and tribal roots) and the city/ies of settlement such as Helsinki and Rome. These places are personalised locations steeped in symbolic significance (Zetter 1999; Al Rasheed 1994). Moreover, the two sets of time, the past life (in the city or town of origin) and the present life (in the city of settlement) are recurrent migrant's identifications, which may help the migrant to reconstruct their lives, once they settle abroad. Longing to return, therefore, acquires significance from the double synchronised analysis which locates the migrant between double spaces and double (or multiple) times. The transnational character of the longing to return permits one to grasp experiences of "transnationalism from below" by stressing migrants' grassroots activities across diverse countries (Smith & Guarnizo 1998). Longing to return is constituted by three diverse, connected time dimensions: past, present and future. Generally, thinking about the return brings to mind situations of the past. These situations are totally disjointed in migrants' present lives, but represent important references which may also explain how migrants act and live in the country of settlement today and possibly how they will in the future. The past is a sort of spectrum which allows the researcher to understand peoples' present actions. In this regard, *longing* to *return* and incorporating migrant's memories and stories provide better knowledge in terms of subjective and collective information concerning migrants' lives which are often overlooked. For example, memories may provide significant data for explaining transnational affections and membership as well as successive dynamics (Levitt et al. 2003: 571). Indeed, new approaches are needed which fully capture these aspects of transnational engagement and ensure that they are given the attention they deserve (Ibid.). The longing to return applied within a transnational perspective allows

for the maintenance of elasticity while moving across diverse times and spaces, and portrays the vision of return as a temporary process more than a permanent one.

Furthermore, this concept allows for a more critical perception of return by emphasising diverse shades such as a strong, mild, weak and/or almost non-existent desire to return back to Iraq. In this regard, I also argue that longing to return can be a useful concept for exploring how Iraqi migrants adapt to society while being and acting as transnational actors, as I will show in the next chapter.

In the process of migrants' adaptation, the past shapes the present consciousness of the peoples as well as their ethnic groups' dynamics. Longing to return works in practice when the migrant, through his/her past memories, recognise an interior strength which might help in their process of participation within the society of settlement. The past, which strengthens peoples' sense of present, keeps Iraqi exiles alive and motivated while distracting them from the difficulties and the obstacles they encounter in the place of settlement. At the group level, the longing to return functions as a cohesive force, reinforcing the groups' kinship ties while living in exile. Returning to the country of origin is not just a personal decision, but may also depend on coexisting family dynamics, post-war opportunities but also social exclusion related both to the country of settlement and the country of origin.

8.4   Shaping the longing to return

In the following, I introduce and explain four common themes identified by my informants when dealing with the return.

8.4.1   The city of origin

When people talk about themselves they usually bear in mind situations they have lived in their country of origin referring to their city or town they and their families come from. During the process of describing the city, geographical, historical, social and cognitive coordinates are incorporated into the analysis. Even for those Iraqis who experienced traumatic events, a consistent allusion to their country of origin is usually provided. The word "Iraq" set off a variety of emotions for people. Generally, an ambivalence that mixed the pride of the ancient cultural heritage with the current tragedy appeared in peoples' stories. Iraq is described as the *place of the roots* or the place of the oldest culture; in terms of *childhood*; as the country of the *palms*, the *desert* or the cities in *between the rivers;* an *artificial state* or simply as *Mesopotamia*. However, usually this sort of ideal presentation of the country intertwines with tragic localised events such as the *war in a particular city or town*, the torture and the destruction, the fight for Kurds and the hard life in the mountains; and the sense of

emptiness and isolation for the embargo, the anger for the loss of a brother, the mourning, and the *lack of security*; the rage, the bad, the dirt and the blood. When people shift their temporal consideration between the past and present Iraq, they utilise metaphors as a way of *explaining* or referring to their place of origin. Iraq is a place where people are still suffering but also as a place where a phase of transition characterised by hope seems to be highly perceptible, as we can read in the following passages:

> *Iraq is a wounded body but it is not dead yet ... I hope it goes well...There is still hope.*
> *(41, Iraqi Kurdish Man – Rome)*

> *Iraq is in pain...Like a woman, when she is delivering a baby and she is in a big pain...she has a new life in her...but she is suffering for her baby to come... Iraq is like this woman...And I hope that a beautiful and healthy baby will be born soon...*
> *(2, Iraqi Arab man – Helsinki)*

In particular, the metaphor of Iraq as a pregnant woman symbolises a noticeable sense of growth and development, a new project and a claim for a change. The change seems perceptible in the present, but possibly more feasible in the future. The perceptible sense of change was a recurrent topic, especially when dealing with the Kurdish northern areas of Iraq. Cities such as Sulaymaniyah or Erbil, in Iraqi Kurdistan in comparison with central and southern Iraqi cities, are usually described as quite modern places as well as safe havens with high economic power and growing tourism.

> *Erbil is a little Dubai nowadays... lots of modern and foreign shops, lots of foreign companies investing there...*
> *(24, Iraqi Kurdish man – Helsinki)*

> *Today it (Sulaymaniyah) is a beautiful city culturally active, of the most famous cities in Iraq. When I was living there it was bit smaller, practically of Kurdish majority... (...) Nowadays, you find many people living there...even the city is getting bigger (...) Tourism is increasing because the situation is getting better and safer (...) For example, there are a lot of international firms, also many Italian ones, who operate there... For example, in June there was the International Expo, a fair, an exhibition of companies working in the field of trade and industries... presenting many products for the agricultures, constructions, modern technologies, furniture, etc. They organize it every year now...*
> *(3, Iraqi Kurdish woman – Rome)*

In most of the Iraqis' stories the transition from the past of the wars to political and economic reconstruction, is recounted with reference to specific localities where people travel to or temporarily reside in. However, despite moderate economic improvement, the process of political and social reconstruction seems to be a rather slow process to achieve, especially after years of dictatorship, wars and the lack of the rule of law. In this regard, the return is usually presented as a temporary occurrence. On the other hand, discussion on permanent return primarily surfaces indecision dependent on the current political situation as well as family dynamics, as the following quotations explain:

> *If it will be peace in my town now, I will go immediately to the airport...Really...Because Iraq is my home...I would have a job...and I know I would live there better... Everyone is there, my family, my friends...but still the change is in process, there is still insecurity in the country...*
> *(16, Iraqi Arab man – Helsinki)*

> *I would like to return...my families are (in Erbil and other smaller towns)...and we travel every year there...the situation improved a lot...but it is still risky to live there...we should sell everything here (a shop) and then try to find something else...but what if we do it and then it happens again? We cannot risk, I have a family here and a small baby...but some people went back...*
> *(24, Iraqi Kurdish man – Helsinki)*

Moreover, it seems that in the new era determined by easy and fast technologies, people can no longer continue to be uninformed of worldwide events. Iraq has often been reported in newspapers, TV documentaries and Internet videos, and the phase of change has captured peoples' attention, especially those who were not immediately interested in returning to Iraq. The constant contact between Iraqis living in Europe and Iraqis in Iraq has increased especially after 2004. This process of regular access to the country of origin has also increased the longing to return to Iraq, albeit on a temporary basis as a way to feed their own curiosity or to rejoin their families.

> *The curiosity to see my country after I left...the difference...But if you think to create a new future there...that's another study...But coming back to see these places, your memories (of people and places)...the difference between how I left and how I could find (them) now...*
> *(44, Iraqi Arab man – Rome)*

8.4.2 Time

In contrast to the myth of return, where the lack of solidity of the country of origin and the passage of time, fling the refugee into a *limbo* (Muggeridge & Dona 2006), the longing to return acquires a more upgraded status where the reality of return takes over the imagination. Unlike the myth of return, the longing to return is more structured and characterised by past, present and future frames. Traveling or simply getting virtually in touch with relatives and friends living in Iraq happen in a precise time. The following quotations show how time appears to be more organised and bit by bit accounted by this migrant while temporarily rejoining with the solidity of the country of origin.

> *I arrived in Rome in 1994, but every year I went to Iraqi Kurdistan to work in a radio or writing for a newspaper...after the fall of the Regime, I stayed for 6 month there; the I went back to Italy, where I have my family...the again back to Baghdad for 10 months; then in 2005 I came back to Rome, but I had some troubles... a mess (private life); (...) I have traveled other several times back and forth...then last November (2007) I came back here in Rome...(...) who knows tomorrow...*
> *(23, Iraqi Arab man – Rome)*

> *Every two days, I contact my brother. I know that after 6 or 7 pm he is at home...So we call each other. (...) I am really happy know because I am also organizing a trip to my parents' town in Kurdistan for the summer. It would be a nice party like in the past when I was there, my other brother was there (...) All the time I go back there, I see, I check...because I do not know if I will be staying in Finland for all the rest of my life. (...)*
> *(31, Iraqi Kurdish man – Helsinki)*

Clearly, temporary visits as well as virtual contacts are usually framed in the discussion. Thinking about return brings together consideration of past events, information about the present and possibilities for the future. Even those Iraqis who experienced tragic situations in the past, paradoxically felt a strong necessity to re-evoke the years themselves in their present discussion. Said (2000: 179) referred to this as a natural way to express the *pathos* of exile. Therefore, the past tends to be a dominating reference for Arabs and Kurds from Iraq especially at the beginning of their settlement in Helsinki and Rome. However, the procedure of remembering the past is a constructed process through which people select their stories and renegotiate belonging after years of settlement in a new country. Specifically, the following quotations clarify the powerful impact of the past on the present life of these two groups living abroad.

Every day, I think about my country...the desire of coming back follows me day after day...even if the life in here (Rome) is difficult, when I look back to my past (the troubles) I try to convince myself that I can do it! I know that from here I can be probably more useful to my family...
(41, Iraqi Kurdish man – Rome)

I always took the power from my past, always, you know...When I have troubles for example, like in my job (artist/painter) and I think what I have lived before I left Iraq…all the time I have escaped from town to town, or when I have been criticized by the ex-regime (...) I take my power and my energy from that past, my people and then I realize who I was and who I am…
(4, Iraqi Arab man – Helsinki)

The past is a sort of protective shield against the uncertainties and difficulties related to the process of settlement. At the same time, the past strengthens peoples' motivation to succeed in a new country by reminding of the causes of Iraqi migration Without a doubt, the reunification with the past which may happen in physical and virtual ways[85] is sometimes a traumatic experience but ironically it works in much the same way as *Stockholm syndrome*, in that people refer to their painful past with *irrational love* (maybe it is better to use "ardour") as an incentive and strength for their future plans. Some experts, especially in the field of psychology (Somnier & Genefke, 1986; Graham et al. 1994) report that, the "Stockholm Syndrome", can be a common phenomenon among victims of torture or abuses, who tend to develop feelings of dependency towards the abusers. Similarly, elderly Iraqis seem to be especially attached to horrible events. The more painful the memories, the more love there is to be found as exemplified by the following quotations:

All I suffered, bad memories, painful situations after a while became nice...And suddenly you started to love them, even if previously they hurt you so much...and paradoxically they become your companions in the exile, your reference for the future...wherever it would be, here or there…
(11, Iraqi Arab man – Rome)

Coming back after the all time, it would be incredible… I became a person for that past made of pain, insults, fights, etc. but I also am a new person now accustomed to my work; family in here…Coming back would mean re-change again…
(16, Iraqi Kurdish man – Helsinki)

The above quotations clarify that in the process of renegotiating their identity, Iraqis have stressed directly and indirectly how important their past experiences were in their

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85 I will address this point better when talking about the *e*-memories at 8.4.4.4.

current life and how their present life would be somehow meaningless without that painful past. Therefore, the longing to return and connecting past and present experiences challenges the future by referring either to the country of settlement, or origin as possible place of settlement as well as way to renegotiate belonging after years of exile abroad.

8.4.3   Ethnicity

As Al-Rasheed (1994: 202) argues, refugees or exiles do not constitute an undifferentiated mass of individuals just because they share displacement, persecution or fear. Arabs and Kurds from Iraq belong to diverse ethnic groups, which are socially constructed and manifest a diverse home attachment and identifications as well as intensity in relation to their longing to return. Even inside the same ethnic groups, I have noticed some variance in longing to return that could be explained by a diverse political orientation, religious affiliations, socio-geographic factors and country dynamics.

> *If an Iraqi is a real Iraqi he/she wants to go back…*
> *(40, Iraqi Arab man – Helsinki)*

> *We Kurds have always fought for our cause…the state of Kurdistan.*
> *(30, Iraqi Kurdish man – Helsinki)*

Holding a longing to return authenticates and shapes the ethnic group identity. Language, cultural and historical symbols, and traditions are features which are basically identified by people when tracing borders between ethnic groups. However, both groups reveal their attachment to Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan but in diverse ways. While Arabs are of the opinion that all "typical" Iraqis would view positively the chance to return if conditions would improve, Kurds have different opinions. For the Kurds, ethnicity is constructed in terms of socio-cultural and *national* distinctiveness but also as an element of redemption in contraposition with the predominant position of the Arab majority. Usually the return is, therefore, seen as a solution which underlines a new sense of belonging as well as a fight for a political cause like the constitution of the autonomous region Kurdistan inside Iraq (like today) or a totally independent state. Today, Kurdish ethnicity is no longer recognised as a weakness, but as a possibility to rewrite Kurdish history in Iraq. Therefore, return, in its temporary or permanent form, is seen more as a right and in other cases as a duty. Transnational connections, which may be evident proof of the impact of the longing to return, also reshape ethnicity while providing a new sense of belonging that enables one to cope with territorialisation and de-territorialisation processes of the past. Through the use of technologies and increased transportation facilities, Iraqis are able to transnationally

reconnect to their localities and transform their imagined communities in concrete references (Anderson 1991).

In summary, I argue that even though both groups may manifest diverse degrees of desire to return, overall the causes initiating the wish to reconnect with places and people can be driven by different assumptions. Through the analysis of the longing to return, while for Arab Iraqis the return would represent a sort of continuity with the "golden past" before Saddam Hussein's ascent, for the Iraqi Kurds returning is intertwined with the ad hoc acquisition of social and political rights, which had been denied in the past. However, the new Iraqi political regime which emerged in the post 2003 period, supporting forms of de-Baathification, created a strong sectarian division and discrimination even among the members of the same ethnic groups which also transpired through the diversified diasporic fragmented communities.

8.4.4   *Memories*

Memories are constitutive parts of the longing to return. At the same time, memories can provide valuable data for explaining the meaning of certain transnational actions (Levitt & DeWind 2003: 571). Usually the memories recalled the human mind prior to the relevant experience. The process of what to remember and what to forget is a constitutive action which tries to fulfil a psychological need at the personal and group level as well as highlight socio-cultural and political discussions that are influential in people's lives (Gemignani 2011: 9).

However, the human brain does not work as a recorder permitting one to accurately rewind every single situation by just pressing a button. But why do people remember certain facts and situations while forgetting others? Even if descriptions bear quite specific information, there is always a degree of deformation within the memory, such as amnesia or vagueness, when the action of remembering takes place. Some scientists suggest that with the passage of time memories lose specificity and become more generalised and temporal information, such as dates, frequency, duration, and sequence, may appear somewhat confused or overlooked (Cameron 2010: 492). Processes of remembering and forgetting are even more articulated when dealing with people who experienced traumatic experiences. For example, the study of Tiilikainen (2003) on Somali Muslim women in Finland explains that the act of remembering and forgetting are highly reconnected to violent and traumatic past events which are suddenly renegotiated in the new environment where experiences of losses and discrimination may also arise. In this case, forgetting and remembering are, not just cumulative, but also contingent and malleable processes (Climo & Cattell 2002; Tiilikainen 2003).

As I discussed in the introduction, the post-Saddam phase opened up new real and symbolic spaces for people's *repressed* stories to become public. In the new phase, people are ready to come out with their stories with no fear of persecution. People are

ready to explain what happened to them, the times of war and systematic abuses of human rights after decades of silence. For Iraqis, memory becomes an important tool that permits to discuss experiences and events that are or have been denied or overlooked by history especially when referring to political refugees and other displaced migrant.

When recounting their stories, the Iraqis I interviewed referred to situations where socio-historical events, as well as personal events, are clearly inserted in a temporal frame made of clear dates, age and other temporal reference. Moreover, memory is localised in historical as well as social dynamics, which provide personal and collective identity to people. Memories, often reconnecting with tragic and violent events of the past, are positively renegotiated in the new society.

> *I just feel better when I think about my relatives…It make me understand who am I, where I can from, my people, my country, what I and we went through…*
> *(8, Iraqi Arab man – Helsinki)*

The quotation reveals how discussions focusing on the past bring to light emotions that are still alive; memories are not just questions of nostalgia, they also act as points of reference in people's lives. Memories explain who people are and where they come from and where they are going. At the same time, they contribute to peoples' own psychological well-being. Memories are, therefore, protective encounters moving from the past to the future. Through memories, the valorisation of peoples' personal and collective stories as well as the families and their cultures are evident trait of grasping belonging. Memories thus permit you to passionately explain peoples' existence. In most cases, my informants stressed that memories were the only baggage they could carry with them once they choose to flee. In this regard, the memories characterising the longing to return are important references which accompany the migrant while moving and later adjusting to the settlement society. Longing to return is a way to be loyal and demonstrate a sort of solidarity towards the home country and to bridge relationships with its people.

However, remembering is not just a natural, personal process, but can also be a constant challenge reproduced through time and structured by social group systems (Halbwachs 1992). The reconstruction of images from the past is not just automatic reminiscence of frozen and individual memories, but also interactions between the individual and his/her social group.

> *When I was young, with some friends we played a game. We had to look for some small, light birds' feathers in the countryside and collected them in a box. Then, later we had a sort of competition. Each of us put a feather in the palm of the hand… the purpose of the game was blow on the feather to make it*

flies higher and possibly the more far away in order to win. Today those feathers are just my memories. One of my friends in US, some years ago, sent me a little packet...There was no letter or card with it...just this packet. I opened it up...and it was just a small feather... (Silence, then laugh). Without speaking, he told me a lot. For me it was an extraordinary present… She went to look for a feather (in US)...like when we were young playing in the desert.
(39, Iraqi Arab man – Rome)

This passage mainly shows two things. My informant uses a metaphor to compare the feathers with which he used to play with his memories. This memory becomes significant as a shared experience. Moreover, it clarifies that memory in order to make it meaningful, and it needs to be constantly revisited. The act of remembering is, therefore, comparable to the act of blowing feathers to make them fly. Furthermore, sometimes memories can provide emotions even if they are not accounted, but just symbolically portrayed by objects that cover a certain profound meaning in the eyes of the receiver.

In the following, memories are captured and thematically identified collectively, personally and virtually.

8.4.4.1 Collective memories

What became immediately noticeable was that while the Arab Iraqis filtered their memories from a personal point of views, in the Kurdish case the memory acquired a more common shape. Assmann (1995: 129) would refer to this as *cultural memory* characterised by immutable events, which are fixed points of reference in people's mind. This kind of collective memory is embedded but also recreated through the narration of historical facts and reconstruction of cultural events. In particular in societies where the official and unofficial histories have been perceived as problematic or conflictive, the power of the collective memories provides a new status and reinforces both the survival and the reproduction of those events, which need to be remembered while obtaining publicity in the public domain. For example, regarding the Kurdish people the references to the town of Halabja, bombed with chemical weapons in 1988, were dominant narratives even of those Kurdish people who did not come originally from the attacked town and who did not experience the tragedy first-hand (cf. Wahlbeck 1999). The following quotations present the general view of collective Kurdish memory.

The worst memories are those where the Kurdish people have been killed, for example the Halabja, the Anfal...People with no reason have been killed by Saddam and his friends. The nicest day on my life was when he (Saddam

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Hussein) was captured and then killed...I was already in Italy...but it was like I was there (enjoying with my people).
(15, Iraqi Kurdish man – Rome)

The memory can be explained through the blood. I am an Iraqi Kurd (she shows me a necklace with symbol of the territory of Kurdistan and kisses it)... Presidents who are killed and dictators who took the power without the rule of law. The history repeats itself with no change. (...) Halabja for example...still today Halabja is a ghost city...and all the other villages in Kurdistan (also destroyed) ... Thousands of Kurdish people killed... Some of my friends are from Halabja...but they were not there when Saddam put the bombs... They were working in other city, close to Halabja... Then Saddam invades the Kuwait and a new war starts...then the Americans arrived, but people continue to die...The point is that before and after Saddam, the life has been as a shit for all. In 30 years we were never entirely happy.
(17, Iraqi Kurdish man – Helsinki)

These tragic, collective memories symbolise a powerful framework of conscious reference; they become sources of learning and growth (Gemignani 2011: 14). They are constructed through the interaction between the active Iraqi Kurds who experienced the tragedy and those who were affected by it regardless their participation. However, these kinds of collective memories have been institutionalised through some important events such as the Halabja Memorial Day or the Anfal Memorial day, which I will discuss later.

Conversely, in the Arab Iraqis' accounts the emphasis, when it comes to the general political situation of Iraq, is more on the general picture of instability and persecution. The division between the Kurds and the Arabs is not stressed as a particular element of distinction and there is no specific reference to a particular location or a precise episode. Moreover, the argument as exemplified in the following quotation describes Iraq as a place where changes have occurred since the 1950s and are still ongoing.

The pressure of the regime was unsustainable...I always saw violence on the streets, violence in '58, then in '63...You always see tanks, the soldier in the streets... the radio in those years transmitting the same military songs (...) we thought that the future would have been better...
(23, Iraqi Arab man – Rome)

However, this last quotation clearly elucidates a sequential period of instability inaugurated by several coups which coincide with the abolition of the monarchy (1958) and the establishment of a republic with the consequent creation of the first political party system, trade unions and the approval of a provisional constitution stressing the value of equality for all Iraqi citizens. Specifically, agreements also referred to the

Kurds. In 1963, the Baath party, which represented the opposition, organised a coup. Abd al-Karim Qasim, the former prime minister was killed and the power of the Baath party was consolidated through bloody operations which became also observable in other countries in the Middle East, such as Syria. After 1963, instability and sabotage inside the same Baath party continued with another internal coup in the 1968 which proclaimed the entrance to the power for Saddam Hussein as chairman of the Revolutionary Command Council. Another quotation introduces an important detail referring to the time of the wars in Iraq, while stressing a different perspective:

> *I see Iraq in a red color. The state of Iraq felt victim of injustice because of its petrol wealth, because of the dictatorships, because of the Western World that was supplying Saddam with weapons and chemicals, with which they are now fighting us and occupying our territory. What come here to mind in particular are the European nations and their neutral standpoint, their indifference and carefree attitude toward the issue of Iraq.*
> *(48, Iraqi Arab man – Helsinki)*

As we can see, this last quotation goes beyond the mere vision of the country of origin as an isolated actor in the global scene, but remarkably places blame on the lack of sensibilities as well as political ability of the western states which have turned from pseudo passive actors to active invaders. At first glance, it would seem, therefore that while Iraqi Arabs' narratives present a more multicultural character, the Kurdish ones report a more ethnicised view, where feelings of exclusion and indifference (from the national state) are emphasised (cf. Jensen 2002: 89 on the Serbs and Croats discussion).

8.4.4.2   Reconstructing collective memory

Rome and Helsinki represent new places where "dislocated" memories are accommodated and reconstructed. In the new locations, memories acts as healers against traumatic past, helping migrants to cope with possible problems of societal participation and acceptance. The connection between the local and the transnational space is, therefore, fundamental for the production and sustainment of the memories.

Events and holidays such as the Halabja Memorial Day, the Anfal Memorial Day or the New Year's Eve Newroz, are events through which collective memories are constructed. These events are usually accompanied by traditional music, dresses, dances, and filled with symbolism. For instance, I took part in the Halabja Memorial Day[86] in Helsinki, organised by a Kurdish community in memory of the bombings in

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86 The Halabja Memorial Day was organised at the Caisa centre in Helsinki (16/03/2007). Halabja is a town located in the northern part of Iraq (Iraqi Kurdistan), close to the Iranian border. This town was

March 1988. Once I got into the room, I was catapulted back to that date. The room had condensed into a few square metres about the tragic history of the town of Halabja. Every wall was full of pictures of the town and people, before and after the attack, images of the Kurdish flag, a map of Kurdish country and other symbols. A lit candle was in the centre of the room as a symbol of the sad but collective memory. I was one of the first people to arrive; one by one other people filled the room. The delay of the ceremony permitted a form of socialisation amongst Kurds and Arabs. People got closer to each other, moved around the room, looking at pictures and commenting on them with their compatriots. Then, suddenly the ceremony started. There were about fifty people in total, with men as the majority[87]. There was sad music playing with a voice in the background reciting something in Kurdish. Later, all the people sat in silence. After the music stopped, a five minute documentary about the Halabja's disaster was projected. The documentary was a collection of pictures taken by photographers such as Kaveh Golestan, the first Iranian to shoot after the bombs, documenting the town a couple of days after the attack. Once the camera gets into the apparent desert town of Halabja, we find the bodies of those who perished in the attacks: mainly women and children. The video, pictures and music revealed very emotional situations, which still have a visible impact on the audience who appear worn out by pain. Suddenly, people were invited to talk about their own experience, to remember the names of the people killed (usually they read the names from their own notes) and to refrain from applause after the people's speeches. As the ceremony went on, the "*pathos*" increased. The second part of the ceremony gained a more political attention, where party delegates presented their view of the current situation in Iraq and Kurdistan, and prepared questions, petitions and signed proposals, to be sent (by email) to the main party referents in Iraq.

Newroz, one of the most important celebrations amongst Kurdish festivities, is a way to celebrate New Year's Eve[88], but also a way to remember and demonstrate interest for the Kurdish cause (Wahlbeck 1999: 170). In addition to singers, traditional dances, music and a bonfire (in Italy), one can see flags and other symbols, pins with the image of Kurdistan being worn or stickers with the national colours of their countries and the image of the shining sun being distributed. In Rome, Newroz is usually organised at the cultural centre Ararat at the end of March. Year after year, this celebration attracts the attention of the city. Leaflets in Italian as well as Italian and Kurdish blogs and websites raised interest in the Kurdish community, which is mainly made up of Turkish Kurds[89]. However, the other Kurdish minorities take part in the New Year's Eve celebrations as well. At the entrance of the building where Newroz

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bombed with multiple chemical bombs (cyanide gases, nerve gas, etc.) in the evening of 16 March by Saddam Hussein causing the death of more than 5,000 civilians as I earlier specified in chapter four.

87 Usually, political party members are in charge of the organisation of this event. Due to the highly political fragmentation, diverse Halabja's celebrations are organised in diverse days and places around the city of Helsinki.

88 Newroz in Kurdish means "new day". This event (21 March) represents the end of period of darkness and the rebirth of light and life with the spring. Many Kurdish people also interpret this festivity in a political way as a day of resistance, unity and freedom.

89 Turkish Kurds represent the majority in comparison with Iraqi Kurds living in Rome.

was held, there were a couple of flags hanging over a window and huge photos of Kurdish political leaders, such as Abdullah Öcalan, (the Kurdish Turkish militant leader, founder of the PKK) accompanied by the Kurdish and Italian flags. The party started with musicians performing on a stage, singing in Kurdish and playing traditional instruments. At the same time, there were people dancing around and in the line, hand in hand, with rhythmic movements and holding a colourful handkerchief (usually a flag also) which continuously rotates. There was a kiosk, organised by the people who resided at that time at the centre, and who served tea for free. However, the most typical part of Newroz is probably the end when the bonfire is lit, accompanied by people who continue dancing and repeating some political slogans in support of Kurdistan and its leaders.

The difference I experienced, participating in Newroz, both in Italy and Finland, was mainly related to the participants. In the Italian case, I found other Italians, mainly students and other Italian political sympathisers[90], attending the celebration and also organising it, dancing together with Kurds and singing with Kurdish and Italian invited bands. In Helsinki, Newroz is a more contained event; the participants seem to be more homogeneous in terms of political and social affiliation. The organisation of the event, even if it is localised in cultural centres, and school auditoriums, is entirely run by the Kurdish community. No Finns interfere or promote the organisation of these events. Usually, the Newroz in Helsinki area takes also place in diverse places[91] and it is organised by diverse Iraqi Arab and Kurdish groups since the community appears to be more fragmented and variegated than in Italy. Moreover, even if the event is publicised through the Internet pages of cultural Finnish centres, Kurdish media and newsletter lists, the Finnish afflux is quite low. In Finland, Kurdish people also dress up in traditional clothes more than in Italy. However, in both localities, musicians (who are also invited from abroad) perform on the stage while people from the audience danced and clapped their hands. Everything is filmed with cameras and people take pictures constantly and shoot videos to be updated on YouTube. Flags of Kurdistan are a quite visible item for decorating the hall and to be used as handkerchiefs for dancing.

The process of constructive collective memories gains significance when people are sharing situations and events they experienced in their past. But the purpose of these events reminds forms of collective memories which are employed as effective means fulfilled by pedagogic aims towards the new generations who might experience a filtered *Kurdish experience* through images, video, photos, stories, paintings, rituals, music, festivity etc. The ways through which memories are shared allow people *to re-experience events in ways that are significantly different from the history of the professional historians, constructing visions of the past rather than chronologies* (Watson 1994:9). These collective happenings have the privilege to collectively share traumatic situations (or reproduce their images) and they acts as the keys which help people to metabolise the pain and to sometimes temporarily forget about it.

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90 For example, the Italian NGO "Un Ponte Per" was partly in charge of the organisation of the event.
91 The City of Helsinki cultural office Caisa, the Espoo Cultural Centre in Tapiola, the City of Helsinki cultural office Stoa in Itäkeskus.

8.4.4.3 Personal memories

People have varying ways of coping with their memories. In some cases, I was extremely shocked at how people were able to withstand their painful memories such as the loss of a family member or the atrocities visibly committed even on their bodies. At the same time, I was quite surprised to discover how people were able to remain in control of their emotions while isolating them or even ironically referring to them. I remember an Iraqi man from Finland who showed me some bruises and scars from his arms and hands, when we discussed about his memories. These were the result of the tortures he suffered in the *Rahfa refugee* camp in Saudi Arabia. He escaped from Iraq in 1990 and when the American forces found him, they left him in custody in a camp that afterwards was revealed to be a prison. He was constantly beaten by Saudi Arabians for more than one year and he constantly thought that he would die soon. However, he was able to escape. Some years later he arrived in Finland as a quota refugee. Today, his main concern is how to explain to his children how he got the bruises and the scars, without creating on his kids the prejudices against his culture and country that he loves. I encountered a similar case in Rome, where a Kurdish informant, who lost a finger during a torture session, became quite ironic, telling me that certain sad memories were more tremendous than a loss of a leg or a finger. Paradoxically, tragic memories need to be remembered and possibly explained to the new generations as part of a cultural background. This is a way to learn about Iraqi history and keep such tremendous things from happening again.

For the interviewed Iraqis, memories presented a number of recurring topics. For example, on many occasions, Iraqi people opened up their hearts remembering quite personal events regarding their first love. Here is an example of how people, when grasping their past memories, refer to love as a pure and romantic sentiment despite the tragic situation of instability in which they lived.

> *No matter in what life situation a person can be…In prison, at war…one can always experience a natural side of life where also good memories can be found. I for example have pleasant memories of the times we (me and my friends) were chasing girls, and the love stories we had with them (…).*
> *(10, Iraqi Arab man – Helsinki)*

> *I remember when I was young, when I had to go back home, I used to take a street where I knew I could meet the girl I loved…I knew the exact time when I could find her, when she was looking at of her window, and we just looked at each other. Or we wrote poetry each other… (…) using the words of the Arabic poets… their ideas..We used a lot of imagination, we were more creative (than now)…we wrote small notes each other and we secretly hide them in the books we exchanged at school..*

In my understanding, the Iraqi culture, even for those Iraqis living abroad for more than 20 years, is still the filter through which Iraqis ponder and express their feelings of love. In many ways, people, especially elderly men, refer to love in a more romantic and platonic way, stressing the difference within the Western culture where love has a less mysterious status and a hidden fascination. However, good and bad memories are usually mixed together as explained by the following quotation:

> *I felt in love just one time in my life...but (pause), but our culture is different in general than the western one. In the Arabic country, you cannot marry someone without your father and mother's approval. I met this girl, at the beginning, my father, mother loved her. But her father didn't accept me and that's was strange because our parents were friends... I do not know... However, after a while he accepted me and everything was easier. We were together 8 years...But it is not like in here...maybe two times in 8 years. I touched her hand, (laugh)... when I was in the Army, in the last year of the Iraqi-Iranian war, my father and her father accepted our engagement...and I remember that I was so happy, and I was looking forward to go back for the holidays for one entire month together with my love and finally making plans for the future...so, I went back to Baghdad...The first thing I did was visiting her...but an accident happened...she got killed from the last falling bomb in Baghdad, which hit her families' house...The brothers and the sisters, all the family died (silence)...But I will never forgot those 8 years together...it is the nice and the bad memories together.*
> *(48, Iraqi Arab man – Helsinki)*

This passage traces and explains how the loss of a loved one, in unfortunate and tragic events, is somehow accepted by my informant as a bittersweet event. In contrast with the older generation, the younger Arabs and Kurds from Iraq who were born and raised during the war and for this reason kept apart from a normal life, sentiments of love represent the unknown and are less fictionalised.

> *I think I did not have a life ... I am 28 years old and I was never with a woman. (...) my older brothers in UK they have their families...and I became uncle a year ago...My brother keeps asking if I met someone...But I stay on silence.*
> *(5, Iraqi Kurdish man – Rome)*

However, the fact that people did not have any chance to create their own family, differently than what is usually a *normal case* in their country of origin has an impact on larger family dynamics. In fact, under normal circumstances, people usually get

married at a younger age in Iraq according to families agreements on marriages. When people did not accomplish that goal, they perceived themselves, and were perceived by others, as a sort of failure. The war limited people's ability to live a normal life, but in some accounts Iraqis do not justify the war as the main cause of their failure. The following quotation shows the person's disappointment for the lack his marital status, which is also perceived as a sort of dishonourable event looking at the families' cultures, especially through comparison with other family members.

> *Is it normal that I am 44 years old...and I did not get married? Why I did not have my family as my brothers have? Kids? After so many years, I need to fill that hole in my chest... I think that all the Iraqi people and the Iraqi children are my families now...*
> *(48, Iraqi Arab man – Helsinki)*

As exemplified in the last quotation, some people try to solve the problem by redefining their meaning of love in a more inclusive way regarding *all* people of Iraq as *potential families* filling the void of their own personal lack of love.

Other emerging themes implied reference to families and tribes as common allusions for both ethnic groups. Reminiscences about families and tribes intertwined with meaning of home, or denial thereof, providing a spot for memories as well as a way to trace/enforce their roots. The alternation between positive and negative memories typically appears to be intertwined in a classic way, where sensations overlap and boundaries are annihilated.

As we can see, the threat of war is always a common concern for people, when remembering family dynamics. Despite having lived with a lack of security, families invest an important role when dealing with their children's social activities. Parents, despite the war, attempted to create a context of normality characterised, for example, by simple family reunions. In many cases, my informants referred to their past as a happy and carefree time also because their families succeeded in creating *temporal and spatial islands of* security for their children as exemplified in the following quotation:

> *I remember a nice picnic organized by my grand-mother with all our families. We travelled by two buses to the countryside. I really like a lot that day, because all the family was reunited and for a day we forgot what was happening...or what could happen the next day...*
> *(35, Iraqi Kurdish Man – Rome)*

War and violence are also recurring themes in Iraqis stories. Experiences of multifaceted violence such as bombings and tortures are still vivid memories in

people's minds. War seems to be a key memory, when dealing with most of my informants. However, despite traumatic repercussions in their lives, people stress how the war constitutes a consistent element in their lives since childhood as these quotations shows.

> When the war between Iraq and Iran started I was 4/5 years. Then For the gulf war I was 14/15 years. I was living all the time in the war time. One war started, then it finished and another war started. Year after years, they were always the same problems...you do not have a life if there is a war....
> (40, Iraqi Arab man – Helsinki)

> I remember the war of 8 years between Iraq and Iran. I was 6 years old and at that time I attended the primary school in Baghdad. The war was an extremely difficult time; a lot of people were killed but we were only innocent children unable to understand the meaning of the war; however we had to witness the killing of adult people who were brought dead back to their families, their bodies covered up with sheets and flags…Many of those killed were relatives, families members and friends…
> (8, Iraqi Arab man – Helsinki)

After years of exile, people still provide quite precise spatial-temporal information such as their age and time. They also seem to follow a framed sequence of events in their talks. In spite of their traumatic lived experiences, especially at younger stage of life, these people had to find a compromise between their innocence as children and the impact of the war that forced them to grow. However, it seems that with the passage of time, people were able to overcome the polarity of good-bad memories by accommodating their pain. By reconstructing the myriad of fragmented memories, Iraqis are able to find a solution between their past and the present lives while renegotiating their identity. Bad memories seem to enrich the good memories or to make them easier to appreciate.

Conversely, those Iraqis who left prior to the wars at the end of the 1970s, even if they did not experience the tragic situations *in primis*, stress how Iraqi society changed during the early 1970s. Their pain was filtered through the stories of their loved ones, who remained in Iraq and with whom they maintained constant contact. However, their sense of powerlessness and guilt is still hidden in the present and surfaces when talking with family members living in the country of origin.

> I have a sister who lives in Baghdad and she told me, that a man killed another man; in the middle of the street where she was walking…This situation does not make me feel comfortable. My sister has a daughter and a husband…I feel bad because I cannot help them, I could not…and I cannot do anything for them…Today, If I do not think about them I feel bad as well.

In this specific group of Iraqis, the absence of the real war experience has resulted in certain consequences. Contrary to what could be expected, the lack of exposure to the war has influenced peoples' lives. For instance, symptoms of anxiety and insecurity for what they left behind have been highly reported. For instance, a Kurdish woman living in Italy, during the year of exile argues:

> *Saddam Hussein was and still is a nightmare...When I was 16 years old, I saw his face everywhere...in the first page of the books I used to read at school, in the newspapers, in TV, on the streets... He was always and everywhere. It was like I was not free to breath. (...)When I arrived to Italy, it happened many times that I had nightmares about him...his face. I got up with this sense of shortness of breath...Still now, sometimes I dream about him and what he did...is it crazy, right?*
> *(3, Iraqi Kurdish woman – Rome)*

As we can see, even those migrants who left the country before the emergence of the war and still continue to maintain strong ties with their countries of origin, experience trauma. In some cases, memories of general war and violence mixed with personal stories of fights against the regime. For example, the following quotations have been extrapolated by stories of the *peshmerga* or revolutionary forces, who when living in Iraq, fought on the front line:

> *In Iraq then, the political situation became worse...This right socialism was rising...with the Baath party of Saddam. The democracy became blurred. It was attacked. There were a lot of secret police and a specific network, secret network controlling people...It was similar to the SS German system before the Second World War...watching people, spying people.*
> *(4, Iraqi Arab man – Helsinki)*

> *The weapons and the hate that day after day started to grow. (...) In Iraq at that time, when you were walking on the streets, you had to feel scared because of the glance of the police, or the person who sit close to you...*
> *(26, Iraqi Arab man – Rome)*

These quotations refer to the period of time around the 1970s when Saddam Hussein started a new campaign for his Baath party using tribal and family connections for strengthening his power while assaulting the democratic institutions. Torture and murder were strategies used against those people who were perceived as enemies. However, a dense system of secret networks spread across the country and even abroad

through diplomatic channels (see the discussion on the embassies in chapter 6) with the aim to monitor and possibly exterminate the regime's opponents. Some horrifying stories referred to by my informants mentioned how the distorted logic of the espionage was applied to all the people living in Iraq without any difference in age. For example, as exemplified by the following quotation:

> *Even in the school, in the primary ones…if a teacher asked to the kids: "Do you like Saddam?" And a child replied…a child that possibly does not know him, or does not understand the question and anyway he replies: "No". Then the teacher informs someone, like an agent… And the next day, there is neither child, nor his mother or his father…All gone! Probably they have been killed…*
> *(13, Iraqi Kurdish man – Helsinki)*

On many occasions, I encountered both Arab Iraqis and Iraqi Kurds who had been active in student associations or political groups back in Iraq that, during the time of Saddam Hussein's rise to power, became actively involved in measures against the regime. The awakening memories depicted a situation where the sense of brotherhood was even more strengthened by the harsh living conditions of people living in hidden and precarious spaces, as demonstrated by the following quotation:

> *We were living in the mountains...The north of Iraq that was not in control of Saddam Hussein...We were living as animals...in the caves, there were no cities...no villages, no towns, no people, no women, no television, no electricity...waiting to fight against the regime! For one year, I lived hidden under the ground... The police was looking for me...but they didn't find me, they could not arrest me...and It became as a story..(…) At that time, I helped a girl to escape from Iraq...Then I told her to write a postcard and to send it to another address, an address of another girl living in Iraq...sending greetings with my name... I taught her how to sign with my name...it was no difficult...So, then the girl in Iraq received a postcard from Czechoslovakia...and the police that was looking for me knew about it…Then she received another postcard, with my false signature from another place, and so on…so people though, even my family, that I was not in Iraq anymore…while I was. This helped me a lot, because then the police stopped to look for me after 3 months...It helped me to move, to work, to so something...Then the police arrested some people and then they started to look for me again...*
> *(2, Iraqi Arab man – Helsinki)*

This quotation also reflects on an efficient system of connections which spread out from Iraq itself as a fundamental way to run out operations while distracting the dictatorial system. However, the fight against the regime was usually perceived as risky business, which usually complicates the situation of being a combatant. The

situation of being a rebel against the regime in fact could create consequences for the rest of the family as well, as these two quotations demonstrate:

You do not fight the regime alone...They (people of the regime) do not see you alone…there are always treats…like that your loved families may be threatening because of what you do…
(23, Iraqi Arab man – Rome)

I took a risk. I was involved in this group against the regime, but it was also the Government's fault that happened this...I left immediately when the group was found...I got a phone call, and I have to leave. I did not have time to say goodbye to my mother…and at the same time I was worried that something could happen to her…
(13, Iraqi Kurdish Man – Helsinki)

As exemplified above, most of the people involved in actions against the tyrannical power of Saddam Hussein felt a sense of serious responsibility towards their families. This responsibility is often accompanied by a sort of anxiety caused by endangering the life of their loved ones.

8.4.4.4   The virtual memories: the *e-memories*

Besides the personal and collective memories, I also include a third group, which I term the e-memories. These virtual memories or cyber reminiscing (Low 2003) pop up on the Web thanks to the proliferation of the Internet where photos, videos, music and blogs are a means of re-constructing and possibly preserving people's stories. These memories are collected, stored and globally dispersed through the Web. The Internet is the platform for the transmission of these memories allowing individuals with the same interests to find a place to share memories (Low 2003: 619). Several studies (Shi 2005; Wahlbeck 1999; Bruinessen 2000; Juntunen 2009b) have shown that ethnic media consumption among diaspora migrants ensures socialisation, community mobilisation and enforces ties. In particular, Shi (2005: 66) in her study of the Chinese diaspora in the United States, states that Chinese media revive memories and provides identification with images and imaginations of the old ways of life. Similarly, several studies on Kurdish media (Bruinessen 2000) demonstrate that media are utilised as an important means through which to build a transnational nationhood, develop a modern standard language and provides grounds for recognition of the Kurdish cause in the national and international political arena. Symbols, past memories and other myths transpire in the media. New forms of communications and technology determine an interconnected social system, creating a fast scheme of global relations which may be different from the traditional ones.

In particular, these e-memories are not just personal or the collective memories, but they also encompass both levels. The Internet is an effective tool for linking Iraqi and Kurdish communities, which appear to be extremely fragmented in the localities I focused on. The Internet, with its multifaceted technology, provides a transnational, virtual and emotional platform where people are able to express ideas and desires, both individually and collectively. People can either keep their privacy, or be highly identifiable by others. Graham (1999: 42) argues that the availability of technology has an effect on stimulating desires. In this case, The Internet allows people to desire things which formerly they did not desire, or even had no idea of desiring (Ibid.). Longing to return is an example of that. Desiring "something" means also imagining that "something" would thereby happen. Therefore, memory plays an important role because it mobilises action both at the personal and group level. People are not passive thinkers but, thanks to the new media, may be constantly in contact with others all around the globe (Appadurai 1996). Discussion with families and friends about Iraq, video and news concerning peoples' past can increase the desire to see and check those places where people once lived and how those places and people have possibly changed. This desire may also be found in people who are extremely sceptical about the return, but may nevertheless show curiosity. For others, past memories represent a powerful frame of reference for their current projects of life abroad.

Moreover, unlike collective and personal memories, e-memories differ in terms of the users' role. The Internet, being an open and filtered space widens the scope of peoples' interaction possibilities allowing people who are Iraqis, and *who are not*, to comment, download and share the same information. The practice of participating in the creation of e-memories is also a way to shape the remembering itself. The Internet pages of organisations and associations, blogs as well as *Facebook* and *Twitter* accounts are evident social tools that are used and abused by people as a regular projection of their activities and ideas. In this process, the e-memories become visible through a virtual platform where people feel free to add their thoughts and ideas without being criticised while creating a virtual imagined community (Anderson, 1991) where elements from the past and the present are fused together. Internet permits, thanks to their modality, the proliferation and recreation of peoples' memories while renegotiating personal identity in a faster and wider way. For example, I noticed how often people uploaded videos on the Iraqi heritage of museums and art in general; posting folkloric and contemporary music of their countries; adding links about Arabic newspapers; attaching discussions and personal notes and comments on political themes; posting information on cultural activities, traveling possibilities to Iraq, etc. One of the main purposes of these actions could be interpreted as a way to promote access to and the spread of Iraqi culture, which has been overlooked because of the war. The *e-memories* work as a redemption against the tragic past, where there is not just passive melancholy, but also an attempt to repair Iraqi history and restore the pride of being an Iraqi abroad. The process of creating e-memories shifts from the personal level to the collective one, but goes beyond it, recapturing a more detached virtual space as well as depersonalised users.

Furthermore, e-memories are not just reflecting ethicised elements, but they also create an intertwined system whereby Arab Iraqis and Iraqi Kurds exert power, which enables the migrant to exist and stimulate membership not only within the society of origin, but also within the society of `settlement. People may preserve their language, culture, ideology and symbolic features while reinforcing kinship with their people abroad, but they simultaneously engage in *localised* discussions which provide a link between the past and present as well as the country or origin and country of settlement.

8.5   Experiences of temporary returns to the country of origin

One of the most fascinating themes is connected to the idea of the return home, both mentally and/or physically. The return to Iraq and Kurdistan is a travel to faded memories and conflicting emotional conditions ranging from pain to happiness as well as a reflection on issues such as the feeling of home and/or the estrangement.

In my research, I had the pleasure of meeting people who were able to temporally travel back to their country of origin for different reasons, such as: family, work, and simply curiosity. In most of the cases, the return happened after the fall of the ex-regime in 2003-2004. However, I was also able to find people who illegally went back sometimes even before the fall of the ex-regime and who risked losing their refugee status, or worse, their life. Usually, the *contradictory feelings* and *emotions* are predominant in Iraqis' accounts especially when crossing the border and entering the country for the first time in years. Feelings of perceptible freedom, hope, excitement, disappointment, and joy mixed with fear as we can read in the following quotation:

> *In 2003 there was a referendum for the constitution and then in 2004, December the elections...I voted in the elections...I was in the green zone...I had a chance to visit Baghdad for my work as a journalist, but also because I wanted to understand...to see… it was 35 years since I fled from Iraq and now it was a free country. I took a plane to Tehran, then I crossed the border by car...it was so strange... seeing woman in black walking to the streets, the desert, the soldiers and the Americans everywhere... At the border, I welcomed people saying:" As-Salāmu `Alaykum" (translation for Peace be upon you) and the soldiers in front of me, said they could not recognize my accent... I asked them if he wanted to check my documents, but one of them replied I was talking in Arabic better than him...no stamps, no passport check... For me it was a strange feeling of freedom in the absolute chaos...*
> *(47, Iraqi Kurdish man – Rome)*

This quotation captures the period immediately after the collapse of the ex-regime. People felt liberated and despite chaotic circumstances. Hope was perceived by my informant instantly once he crossed the border. Arriving in Baghdad is not a simple travel to the capital, but a process of re-appropriation of past memories and new knowledge of present conditions. In other stories, the expectations anticipate discussions on return. As one informant from Helsinki argues:

> *I came back after 27 years of exile, and my wife after 9 years. Iraq is like travelling to the memories, but before leaving Helsinki, I was already scared because I knew that everything was destroyed (...) the life is like a train. You collect stations that are the memories, but you never arrive to destinations. You are always so far away…*
> *(2, Iraqi Arab man – Helsinki)*

In this passage, the Iraqi Arab man elucidates how scary the process of travelling back home actually was. The materiality of Iraq was destroyed as he had learnt by watching TV and the Internet, but also as people and family told him during phone conversations. A great cultural and historical heritage was destroyed by wars and selfishness. However, travel is psychologically a difficult situation. The arrival is never an arrival *per se'*, but legitimates the awareness that the past cannot be totally restored. Travelling back to Iraq is a recollection of memories but with the consciousness that what is lost is lost forever and people, from both sides of the border, are inevitably changed (Said 1999). In other cases, the reappropriation of the *solidity* of Iraq manifests itself with the wandering to the localised places of the memories such the district where people were born, or the schools they have attended as well as other familiar places, as the following quotation shows:

> *We drove to the quarter where I was born, to the school where I studied...all the spaces seemed to be so small, and then all was so dirty.*
> *(47, Kurdish Iraqi man – Rome)*

> *My uncle accompanied me to my former house, where I lived with my family…my school was there in the same area…then I also saw the café' where I spent time with my university colleagues…Immediately, I felt to be back to many years ago…I was happy and sad at the same time.*
> *(28, Iraqi Arab man – Helsinki)*

> *Once inside the border, the smell, the food and the space were the first things that capture my brain...I stopped the car at the first kebab kiosk I found… I became drunk of food...I ate so much until the food got out of my eyes... I ate and cried...Then we headed to my family's home.*
> *(20, Iraqi Arab man – Helsinki)*

This last quotation exemplifies a more intimate reconnection with Iraq, which is fulfilled not only by sight, but also by taste and the smell. Eating, in this case, is a personal way to cope with the country's absence and celebrate a reunion. However, the reunification with the present involves a more deep analysis of what has happened in Iraq as one woman suggests:

> *I remember many woman dress in black walking of the sides of the streets when I was in the car driving to Baghdad with my husband ...in some countries the black is a good colour, elegant, it makes a woman nicer...but in Iraq, most of the Iraqi woman, do not have in their closet any other colour than black...why? It is not to be beautiful...but for the sadness of Iraq, because in every family...one, two, three people were killed in the war...Every woman in Iraq has more black outfits that others...not for being beautiful...or going to dance...but just to go to the grave yard...Saddam Hussein made the country black and now I could see it...*
> *(29, Iraqi Kurdish woman – Helsinki)*

Iraq is still a country in transition and portrayed by Iraqi expatriates as a country suffering the effects of Saddam Hussein's regime. The association with the colour black signifies mourning; unhappiness, sadness, death; the country and the people seem to live in a timeless space as almost fluctuating in a confused and slowed down reality which no immediate power can change.

However, crossing borders is also a reappropriation of childhood memories that people have left behind. Faded memories, once dusted off, appear more vivid and real than ever before. Therefore, the return after the exile is a cathartic experience through which the spectator (the migrant) assisting with the theatrical representation of his/her life (the tragedy of post-Iraq), liberates himself/herself from the painful traumatic experiences of exclusion[92]. Re-entry, after years of exile can be a challenging experience. Numerous studies conducted on political violence and post-return migrants (Stefansson 2004; Malkki 1995; Long 2004) suggest that people's accounts of their countries of origin involve emotionality. The anthropological study of Malkki (1995) on Hutu refugees in Tanzania deals with questions of memories and exile through a narrative analysis of political and ethnic violence as experienced in Burundi after a series of uprisings in 1972. The question of return to Burundi in particular, triggers discussions in which hope and fears are accounted with reference to past memories. Similarly, the account of Long (2004: 88) in her study of Vietnamese returnees argues that the return represented liberation from a restrictive, secretive or painful past. Svasek (2010: 868) argues that emotional encounters are not only shaped by direct

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92 Aristotle in the "Poetics" used terms such as: spectator, catharsis, etc. about the tragedy. The tragedy as a tragic drama was performed through the account of terribly shocking situations with the task of arousing emotions in the viewer.

interaction, but also by memories and imagination. Here, memories struggle with unexpected emotional realities, as illustrated by this Iraqi man living in Rome:

> *I left Baghdad in 1979, and then I went back in the '82 through the Iraqi Kurdistan… and stayed there hidden in the mountains until the 88-89. Then I left Iraq again and I return only in 2003. There were 26 years since I left Baghdad... I came back with lots of enthusiasm, because I thought I could realize our ideas based on our principles… Like to reconstruct a federal and united Iraq, a democratic one...far away from both religion and ideology...but unfortunately the story was different. When I return to Baghdad, for the first time after 26 years, I cried...from the beginning of my entrance to the city...I was in a car and I thought: "he (Saddam) would have built something with all that money and all the petrol!! But, I saw a dusty Baghdad, worse than 50 years ago. I remember the main street of Baghdad, the Rashid... I used to take many walks on Rashid... (Pause) I also remember a demonstration organized for the workers that last until the afternoon of the next day... I was a kid and I went to the II grade school at that time... I was with my mother and my sisters on the side of this street, as many other families... We had such a fun (laugh). I remember so well the street Rashid, but now it is worst that ever...all the columns destroyed, buildings on the side looked all the same and all is so dirty... I felt so bad and I cried for all that trip...*
> *(23, Iraqi Arab man – Rome)*

Reconnecting with Baghdad has several meanings in this case. On a personal level, usually people recall episodes of their childhood as lived social experiences. Usually the comparison between the past and the present that they are living appears with a visibly negative connotation. For example, the city seems to be smaller, dirtier, more run-down and emptier than people remembered. On the collective level, especially for those politically active people, reconnecting with their country has an ideological value for implementing the political plans that were fought for during the dictatorship.

Whereas for some people the visit to post-war Iraq is a liberating experience, for others it is a painful one. Big cities, in particular, are targets of violence, kidnapping and terrorist attacks. Especially during the post invasion years, different cities and towns in Iraq became more ethnically, politically and religiously fragmented. These forms of fragmentation emerged geographically in different areas of the cities where people who did not feel "protected" or because of their affiliation to regional minorities had no option other than to escape (cf. Juntunen, 2011: 52).

In my informants' stories, daily routines, crowded areas and rush hour traffic were avoided to avert danger. These following passages capture peoples' perception of danger and limitations of the public space once reconnected with their localities.

After the pain the sadness came… Saddam Hussein destroyed everything...my memories in a way, and my friends...my dreams for example...When I went back to Iraq in 2004. I have visited the town of my families…But, I could not visit the grave of my father and my mother... It was not a secure place to go...(...) and I tried to do...but my friends there, told me not to go, because it was dangerous...I wanted just to rebuilt his grave, clean it a bit, put some flowers...I return back to Finland with this sadness and ...(silence)
(2, Iraqi Arab man - Helsinki)

In Iraq, people teach you to never say the right place where you go, for example if you travel by taxi...it is safer not to say what your final destination exactly is…people do not trust people anymore…
(4, Iraqi Arab man - Helsinki)

The perception of danger is however not immediately perceived by Iraqi refugees especially when people have lived in exile for many years. Iraqis teach other Iraqi expatriates where and how to move once they have arrived at their known destinations. The perception of freedom seems, however, to collide with daily activities due to sectarian and ethnic boundaries. For instance, a simple visit to the father's grave, which is seen as a form of respect towards their families, can be postponed and possibly avoided in order to prevent tragedies.

8.5.1   *Reconnecting with people*

Furthermore, in many accounts, the war and the consequent fear of Saddam Hussein's regime changed the lifestyle and attitudes of the Iraqi people living in their country. Many interviewed Iraqis living both in Finland and Italy explained to me how reuniting and talking with their family members and friends was a very touching moment; sometimes even a problematic one. An Iraqi man reuniting with his younger sister described that event with certain emphasis, capturing irrational emotions, which are quite difficult to tame. The passing of time, made people realise their loss (in this case the sister has grown up far away from her brother's eyes), and reflects on the importance of their families reuniting:

Emotions, emotions... I was crying for a week there...I didn't see my sister for 18 years... she was a child when I left, and I found her a woman…I don't know if it was a negative or a positive emotion, but I need to manifest my emotions…
(9, Iraqi Arab man – Rome)

The war, the regime, the reservation of the people, and the fear of persecution, even after the fall of Saddam Hussein, have changed their families so much that sometimes

the easiest conversations were perceived as anxious ones. Brothers and sisters with the same blood felt apart and suffered in silence as exemplified here:

My family is not my family anymore. I cannot talk about despair, because I didn't experience it...but when I was back, it was so painful to see something...for example, my sister was one of the most active people against the regime...and she was forced to bend their wills. The regime has emptied the people and their principles...I have always criticized the Italian society for its superficiality and egoism, but unfortunately, when I went back to Baghdad, I saw a high level of superficiality as well...because there is not study/education anymore. Even the communists who live there they do not understand anything, they are emptied…they don't understand anything of the change of the world...Then if we look at how many kids left school...nothing! The wars and the embargo took away from people the possibility to instruct themselves...
(23, Arab Iraqi man – Rome)

Saddam Hussein was destroying everything in Iraq, the war, the tyranny policies clean the mind of the people...when you make people afraid, then you have the terror...people are not just scared...they do not think...they are empty...he made the people for 30 years for that...there was no space for democracy or Human rights...he made people scared and afraid...not let them breath! He cleaned their mind...
(2, Iraqi Arab man – Helsinki)

The war has change their life, the sense of it...I remember so well the faces of the people, of my families...it was so an hard life, so painful, anxious...from one side there was the opposition, to the other the government, but it was so easy to become a victim for each of it...
(42, Kurdish Iraqi woman – Rome)

One of the most used adjectives by Iraqis when describing people in Iraq was "empty", or the emptiness as a substantive, as shown in the above quotations. The interviewed Iraqis seemed to lack power, ideas and substance in these descriptions. The war and before that the system of tyranny worked as a cancer; people did not receive an education; creativity was set apart; political rebellions sedate; pain and anxiety dominated Iraqi society for decades. The last quotation in particular reveals how people remaining in Iraq had no possibility of choice, regardless of whether or not they supported the regime. Iraqis were also described by their compatriots abroad as people who lost their "gold soul", their purity, and their fighting spirits as we can read below:

I came back to Iraq, after the falling of the regime (...) because I fight against it for all my life...for improving it...and when I was back after 35 years of disasters, bad politics, absurd politics of Saddam Hussein, I noticed that all

was emptied materially and spiritually...the soul of the people run away both for the internal and external war and the 12 years of embargo and criminal sanctions.
(23, Iraqi Arab man – Italy)

I remember the Iraqi people as ingenuous, virtuous, honest, even sensitive and sharp...but always so generous, hospitable, friendly...I believe that they become masters of survival, they understand you immediately as you speak, as you dress up, who you are, what do you want, from where do you come...and they try to conquer you...the woman for prostitution, the young guy for taking advantage of your kindness… And it in that occasion that I do not feel comfortable with them anymore.
(47, Kurdish Iraqi man – Rome)

These quotations highlight that a situation of increasing insecurity and distrust among the surviving Iraqis in the fragmented society shaped a new social system where only the smartest and the strongest survive, disrupting the stereotyped image of the honest and virtuous Iraqi, as recalled by the Iraqi expatriates. However, the war, hunger, embargo and the ex-regime were held directly responsible for creating the situation of *stasis*, which may require several years before a complete societal recovery.

In addition, the discovering of differences is also a dual process. Iraqis living abroad understood that they had changed when meeting their compatriots, both family members and even perfect strangers. An Iraqi Arab man living in Helsinki and visiting Baghdad in 2004 in fact states:

Once I took a taxi, I was in Iraq, in 2004....And I need to go to one place...after a while we talked, the taxi driver asked me from where I was coming...and I told him: "I was from Samawa". Then he asked me: "I mean, from which country abroad do you arrive?" For me that was strange...so, and I asked him: "How do you know I come from abroad?". The taxi driver made a pause and then replied:" Because... when you shut the car door, you were different...when you told me "good morning", you were different...the way you speak to me...when you said "Please"... Then I understood about what he was talking about...For me these things, now, are just some small details...because I got used to in Finland...
(2, Iraqi Arab man – Helsinki)

However, those Iraqis who did not have any chance to travel back to Iraq mutually perceived the feelings of estrangement. Iraqi people from Rome and Helsinki, when vising their country of origin, were immediately recognised as "different" for their changes in behaviour, habits and even accent. Iraqis who have changed due to the time

spent in Finnish and Italian society realised how difficult it was sometimes to re-*occupy* a space in the new Iraqi society. On this issue, the studies of Juntunen (2011) and Bak Riiskjør (2008) conducted on the reintegration of Iraqi returnees in post-Saddam Iraq address and explain how feelings of strangeness emerge in the new Iraqi context characterised by high ethnic factionalism, political pressure and religious conservatism. Similarly, my informants reported that these feelings of unfamiliarity even when dealing with family members were not only caused by the effect of ex-regime with its physical and psychological oppression but also by a new socio-political context. When reconnecting with families and friends, feelings of strangeness sometimes transform into guilt, as expressed by one Iraqi man when visiting his sister:

> *R: Sometimes talking about the past doesn't have any sense with my family or friends, because the live in Iraq with all those wars, the ex-regime, the embargo...while the pain I experienced was just through the TV, internet, so that's different...for example... I left my youngest sister in Iraq when she was 14 and I talked to her by phone after 20 years...she asked me to tell her something about my life, what I was doing...but for me was so strange, because I talked with a "voice"... with who I didn't have any familiarity, but at the same time she was my sister...there was not that bond... that kind of bond… should be so normal between brother and sister...right? That situation made me so sad… it is not so simple to rebuild a relation...*
> *VLV: Even for your sister that situation was not so easy…*
> *R: yes, it wasn't...but maybe for them it is bit different because I was the brother who left. They pictured me as the brother who run away maybe...the brother who sent them some little money sometimes...I was useful...I was that brother who was saved...from war, misery...but for me it's different...All I did when I left from Iraq (he refers to his political action abroad) was not effective enough...I just helped the Americans and the other occidentals to get into my country and kill many other innocent people...I feel guilty somehow for so many things...*
> *(9, Iraqi Arab man – Rome)*

In the previous quotation, the sense of guilt seems to be greater in those migrants who did not come back but, still maintained a virtual relationship with families back home. Iraqis perceived their family connections in a quantitative way, measuring their effectiveness in terms of economic remittances more than in the social ones. This kind of instrumental relationship, accurately modified people's perceptions of family networks, which had lost that peculiar purity and emotive balance.

This sense of guilt rises in some people more than others when the hope of redemption is totally absent or poorly visible when looking towards future. This painful and stressful condition seems to be more common among those Iraqis who did not have any chance to visit their country and families (e.g. feelings of homesickness, chapter seven) when it was allowed. They still blame themselves for not having done

enough. However, this sense of guilt may totally disappear or decrease when the sense of responsibility, with its rationality increases. Many Iraqis, mainly those who are politically active, assert that they were able to transform the sense of guilt or harmonise it through their direct and indirect actions while helping their country. The sense of guilt was used as a great spur to improve people's conditions in Iraq as evidenced by this passage:

> *I do not feel guilty...the choice was to stay in a corner and die or doing something...I have chosen to do something...I have my opinion, I am a person of left side ideas...I am working to get democracy to my country...Since, the first day I left Iraq and I was in Kuwait, I started to write for my country...People wanted to meet me...My subject was to write about democracy in Arabic country...but in my mind, I had Iraq...(...) I was studying and working and doing lots of voluntary work, then I decided to leave the woman with I was with, because I wanted to go Kurdistan... (..) I think I did a lot for the people from my country...I am proud of my life...Living in the mountains...The north of Iraq, was not in control of Saddam Hussein...we stayed hidden in the mountains and we moved only in the night...we did not have anything, but our dreams of change kept us company....*
> *(2, Iraqi Arab man – Helsinki)*

This quotation elucidates a new role for Iraqi refugees who acquire a new status as social actors. Firstly, Iraqis are empowered actors because they are able to take control of their free will and to formulate choices despite constraints. Secondly, they cope with and finally actuate self-initiated actions despite ideal or real limitations of conditions with a quite reasonable impact on the societies where they lived and currently live. In this way, they gain a special status in both locations with the effects of being visible and exerting power. In this regard, it is opportune to remember that the current phase of change in Iraq, characterised by new political and ethno-tribal hostilities, recreates new divisions between the wanted and the unwanted people. In this chaotic situation, new forms of persecution, exclusion and economic difficulties redesigned new paths of participation and exclusion within the Iraqi society. The ethnographic study conducted by Juntunen (2011), both in Iraq and in Finland, frames the new political phase in post-Baathist Iraq, as defined by a mix of institutionalisation of sectarian politics and conservative religious norms.

8.6   Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented and discussed the theme of return. I have introduced the concept of the *longing* to *return* as replacing the well-known concept *myth of return*. Specifically, the myth is substituted by the longing to return which

better defines a fluid situation where transnational people have a desire which can be *physically* fulfilled by the increasing possibilities of travelling back on a temporary basis, and/or *virtually* thanks to the use of advanced technologies.

The longing to return transpired through several themes: country of origin, time, ethnicity and memories. It refers to cases where people virtually, physically but *shortly* connect with their country of origin. Firstly, thinking about returning brings back memories of the country of origin and in particular specific towns or cities as remembered in the past; or shaped by Iraqis' relatives and friends discussions. Secondly, due to increasing virtual connections and transportation facilities, the migrants' imagination takes over and permits to reconstruct frames of reference across time. Thirdly, ethnicity helps to grasp how both the interviewed Kurds and Arabs nurture their longing to return. While for the former group, the longing to return acquires a more collective project linked to questions of national distinctiveness also involving social and political acquisition of rights within the society, the latter group considers the return in terms of continuity with the golden past characterised by political, economic and social stability. However, the de-Baathification effects after 2003, have amplified the gap between the three main communities of Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds challenging the discussions between a temporary and a permanent return and criticising the idea of the Arabs as a unique and compact ethnic group.

In particular, both Arabs and Kurds would fit into the type of *Odyssean refugees* as discussed by Joly (2002: 9) since they refer to actors who are not just victims of the structure of conflict in their country of origin but were also committed to the political struggle in their country of origin. Finally, memories are recurrent constructed elements intertwined with historical evidence which are used by the people to make sense in the present. Despite traumatic happenings, which could have an impact on the reproduction of the memory (Cameron 2010), both Arabs and Iraqi Kurds seem to have a quite clear temporal framework where dates and temporal sequence of events are evidently defined. Personal, collective and virtual memories play a symptomatic role in the current migrants' life. They are perceived as important features because they provide sense of identity while enforcing peoples' present life. Memories in their positive or negative meanings provide as Gemignani (2011:14) said a *psychological space of safety and confidence* shifting from the past to the present and hopefully for the future. However, memories are not just a collection of lost images of the past, but also a more profound travel to the social and cultural memories and identity renegotiation. Therefore, memory gains significance in its own process of reminding the past, which may happen through diverse channels: the personal, the collective and virtual one.

In the last part of the chapter, I have analysed the consequences of temporary return and the emotions as experienced by people while reconnecting with the "solidity" of their country of origin and the people whom they left behind *physically* several years ago. Reuniting with their past is, however, the awareness that the familiar places, people and themselves have changed and they have changed forever.

9   Integration and transnational dynamics

9.1   Introduction

One of the most significant discussions on migration deals with the debate on transnationalism and integration and how these two processes may be seen as concurrent. The longing to return, previously analysed, permits but also requires a further examination of how integration and transnational practices are organised across diverse spaces. In the first part of this chapter, I will present how integration is socially constructed by Iraqis, highlighting specific circumstances in two diverse urban contexts. In the second part, I examine the diversified transnational activities of Iraqis as important constituencies of migrants' lives.

9.2   Interrelating return, integration, and transnationalism

As stated earlier, the *longing to return* is an important ingredient which helps to understand both migrants' transnational connections and integration practices. The longing to return has been identified in this study as how people articulate their transnational links (either physically and/or virtually) while at the same time providing information on social integration practices. In this regard, the longing to return provides a *thick description* aiming at specifying the migrant's practices of integration and sustainable transnationalism better by focusing on their perception of return.

In this sense, the longing to return reconnects the process of transnationalism and integration with migrants' sense of belonging and experiences of home. Integration appears not as a fixed and static paradigm, but rather as a process in which the migrant's identity is approached across localities through modes of continuity and discontinuity. The focus on personal accounts of Iraqis and their perceptions of return are placed in relationship between their experiences of integration and perceptions of home and belonging which were critically rethought after 2003.

By addressing Iraqis' stories, I will show that transnational activities do not hinder integration, but rather provide material and immaterial resources which are fundamental to surviving in a new country (cf. Portes et al. 1999; Portes 2001; Levitt 2001). As stressed in the methodology chapter, studies on refugee returnees highlight the importance of transnational practices on the return and reintegration processes in countries of origin (Huttunen 2010; Eastmond 2006). Transnationalism has challenged the concept of return by providing more flexibility of the term. At the same time, other

studies focusing on integration suggest that transnational practices should be taken into account while dealing with settlement practices (Wahlbeck 1999; Huttunen 2010).

This study attempts to show that the migrants' intention to return also provides information on integration and transnational processes. All three conditions, related to spatial and temporal dimensions, are considered as important references. As I argued earlier, the longing to return permits to overcome the dichotomy between imaginative and existent return. At the same time, physical and virtual connections permit to verify and challenge the possible return's condition. Thus, the results indicate that increasing transnationalism, alongside the negative situation in Iraq, has challenged the idea of permanent return, with a more flexible and fluid idea of it.

This chapter shows that good integration practices do not discourage Iraqis' ideas of return. Usually good integration practices represent the basis for people's mobility. Good integration practices, concerning a job, knowledge of a language, or experience of a new culture are portrayed as enriching experiences to be possibly invested in their future. I attempt to show how the perception of integration, with its abstract and concrete characteristics, is also fed by past migrants' experiences as arising from the longing of return. Thus, the longing to return with its interconnected temporal frames, permits, firstly, to politically, socially and culturally contextualise the Iraqis' lives in their past; secondly to highlight the new lives of Iraqis according to two diverse locations. In this case, the longing to return acts as a powerful force capable of *sustaining* the migrant in a new society of reception. Thirdly, it may reveal possible plans of return either as temporary or permanent ones.

9.3   Integration stories

While a variety of definitions of integration have been suggested, this study agrees with the definition by Valtonen (1998). Valtonen (1997; 1998; 1999) focuses on an actor-centred perspective and reminds us that social integration is a structural process which involves the migrants' participation within the society of settlement. In particular, this process can be understood as the accomplishment of a degree and quality of societal participation that is satisfactory to the individual, when there is compatibility between goals and actual participation (Valtonen 1998: 42).

The concept of citizenship, which addresses rights, duties, participation and belonging, provides grounds for a social dimension which goes beyond the mere national/political membership within a state. Citizenship provides a way to look at a social community and equal social commitments. In this way, citizens are social actors who also share a symbolic dimension where social responsibility and loyalty, are emphasised. Therefore, questions of citizenship go beyond the mere *bloody borders* (Huntington 1993: 34), while discovering new forms of dual and/or multiple loyalties across diverse countries. One of the key domains, where citizenship has been highly

discussed, relates to countries' integration policy frameworks (Ager & Strang 2008). Discussions on 'first-class' citizens and second-class citizens (Taylor 1994) have shifted from the general "border control" to a "control within the borders". For example, in the Finnish case, integration policies have been quite structured and systematised as a means to integrate the migrants within the majority population. In the Italian case, where regionalism prevails on national approaches, immigration policies are adapted to the local environments, creating diverse experiences of immigrants' inclusion across the peninsula. Thus, in Italy, multicultural and assimilative approaches have been discussed with reference to specific localities (Caponio 2006; Caponio & Boekert 2010). However, integration and integration policies, both in Italy and Finland, show limits with reference to the theoretical and empirical level of application.

Moreover, the countries rely on two diverse models of integration as discusses on chapter five. While the Finnish model, characterised by a strong welfare state, constructs integration channels that incorporate a top-down model of action, the Italian model, provides a less structured system which allows the presence of an articulated and visible third sector (Korac 2003; 2009; Caponio & Boekert 2010; Sciortino 2004; Wahlbeck 1999; Valtonen 2008). In practice, cities are able to *provide localised welfare assistance* to migrants living within the same municipality. Municipalities, associations, NGOs and other local actors play a significant role in the promotion and constitution of relationship between migrants and non-migrants. This seems to be a common trait of Italy that is characterised by a regional autonomy of policies and practices. Despite high level of flexibility, the limit of the Italian system, which may provide diverse forms of "*localism of rights*", may determine the formation of strong and weak areas (Zincone 1994: 15). These areas may be characterised by a notable diversity on integration approaches, services access and fights against racism (Ibid.). Rome is in fact described as a place where diverse public and social actors undertake important decisions and actions in the local governance of migration. *In primis*, social actors (church, association) due to their intense involvement are usually recognised for their active role and sometimes perceived as "free" from the public institutions especially in some areas of interventions. Helsinki, despite a more structured system, is however able to adjust national policies at the municipal level by providing localised integration plans. At the same time, immigrant and pro-immigrant associations as well as centres act as (secondary) mechanisms for supporting migrants' actions.

During my interviews, Iraqis were asked to define integration or describe specified cases through which they could provide information and ideas on integration. Therefore, integration appears as a complex and dynamic process ranging from a type of *participative sociality*[93] to other predictable issues such as political, economic and so forth. However, in all cases, discussion on integration ended with an emphasis on the encountered barriers and impediments that Iraqis' faced during their permanence in the society of settlements. In particular, integration was defined as a continuous process of migrants' engagement within the society of settlement, but influenced by previous

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93 Participative sociality is here defined not only as an extent but also as a need for social contacts.

dynamics as experienced in the society of origin. Peoples' past experiences are not automatically reset once migrants/refugees resettle elsewhere, but they become part of migrants' lives with evident repercussions on integration practices. The past, revealed through the longing to return, represents the spectrum through which people look at the present conditions. For instance, discussions on people's participation within the Iraqi society intertwined with the denounce of lack of recognition of proper social and civil rights which increased distance and entrust not only between the people and the state but also amongst the diverse ethnic groups living in Iraq. In Iraq, sectarianism as well as ethnic and social stratification became exasperated since the time of the dictatorship. A comparison between the Iraqis' lives in Helsinki and Rome reveals that, despite differences in the current integration process, the migrants' prior life in Iraq demonstrate common dynamics. In this regard, the longing to return permits to challenge the ambivalent relationship with the country of origin and the country of settlement by providing contextualisation on peoples' belongings and highlighting integration and transnational actions.

9.4   Helsinki as a context for integration

In the following, I will discuss Helsinki as a context for integration in its multiple meanings for the interviewed Iraqis. The abstract definitions will be contrasted with the lived experiences of integration.

9.4.1   The abstract way of social integration

Iraqis' accounts of integration firstly referred to its potential and abstract meaning. This implies a vague understanding of social integration as a harmonious happening characterised by a cultural dialogue to be possibly achieved in the future. Integration, described in these terms, entails an optimistic view. The following quotation positively depicts a frame where adaptation and recognition for the difference should happen in mutual and natural way. In the next passage, an Iraqi man defines integration in these terms:

> *Integration I think it should be something that automatically happens. The man absorbs, assimilates all around him…and he acts as a consequence. I mean you can come from the Equator, naked…but if you go to live in central Europe, you need the shirt…then little by little and spontaneously you understand that maybe the jeans also… …if you continue to go to the north, you understand that most probably you would need a coat…then maybe the hat or a pair of gloves because It can rain, or snow…so, you start to change, to dress as other people do…to talk about other people do, to listen and to live …and you might find the same kind of problems of other people who live here…the nice thing is*

that you can change, but also the people around you may change at the same time…they start to talk to you, maybe be interested in your story, eating your food, sharing their experience…
(10, Iraqi Arab Man – Helsinki)

This quotation uses a metaphor to explain how integration is understood, namely as an ongoing process of automatic involvement in the society of settlement. Iraqis, therefore, need to adapt to the new circumstances while absorbing the social rules of the society where they reside. However, social integration is portrayed as a neutral platform where two or more different actors interact and communicate. However, as an Iraqi Arab admits during the course of the interview:

In this society you need to work, that's all that Finns require… the problem sometimes is that people are really struggling to find a job…and it is hard! Then if you do not get it, you become a parasite…And the end, none really listens to you…
(8, Iraqi Arab man – Helsinki)

In this case, the quotation reveals a discrepancy between the goals of the state and those of the individual. When the refugees do not reach the primary goal (in this example, the employment) they are discredited and considered to be lazy parasites. Integration, therefore, emerges as disproportionate process, where refugees are imposed to follow the "economic" rules although the absence of equal powers between giver and receivers (cf. Penninx et al. 2009; Ghorashi 2005). In this case, the Finnish society appears to be a static and rigid entity with limited interest in listening to migrants' voices. Despite the large distribution of various kinds of resources, this process of integration should also result from a coherent recognition of diverse values and abilities as well as an intensification of spaces of listening.

Examples of integration, as an imaginative process conflicting with its actual effective practice, are also evident in other Iraqis' accounts. The following passage in fact depicts integration as occurring in a society where two or more opposite may attract.

It (integration) means 2 sides...So, I should accept the manners and the customs of this society and at the same time, they should accept mine...that means integration for me. Integration does not mean that I have to dissolve into the society...There no one side...Because if you want to integrate one thing into another one...you are already speaking about 2 things...2 sides...it is like a coin, with 2 equivalents. You cannot forget your past, your history, because it is always there…
(4, Iraqi Arab Man – Helsinki)

In many interviews, terms such as two parts, two sides, two equivalents, two perspectives, and two horizons are usually mentioned referring to the Iraqi culture opposite to the Finnish one. However, the relationship between the two parts is viewed with fluidity. Past and present experiences are in fact important for understanding processes of integration. This, in turn, is clarified through discussions on memory, identity and belonging.

In transnational studies, identity issues emphasise new interesting discussions on hybridised, collective, creolised and multiple identities rising from different localities. In a context of world globalisation where the process of homogenisation crashes into the process of differentiation, the rethinking of identity is a crucial detail. Mediation between cultures was also perceived quite spontaneously by my transnational informants. For example, an Iraqi Arab man married to an Iraqi Kurdish woman explains his personal idea of hybrid cultures instead of treating cultures as fixed and static features:

> *If we (talking about the wife) are at home (in Finland), here with some Kurdish friends we speak Kurdish...Because I know it...If we have Arabic friends, my wife speaks Arabic...If we have Finnish ones, we speak Finnish both of us...(...) if we have some Finnish guests we try to make them Arabic food...why? Because they can eat at home the Finnish food...not because we want to show them something...it is a way of being polite I guess...(...) when we took part to some activities, like... Newroz, the new year's eve for Kurdish people, we put Kurdish clothes...and we go to enjoy our time...If we have as guests some Islamic persons we are dressed in normal clothes...My wife dresses with long leaves shirt but because we respect them... we respect their conservative culture...If we go to the swimming pool, my wife swims, in normal bikini...we try to respect them (the Finns)*
> *(2, Iraqi Arab man – Helsinki)*

> *Living in here for me, it does not mean that have to give up my former identity...I do not think that for becoming a Finn you need to give your Kurdishness...there can be many identity at the same time....and I do not have to choose which one come first, I can be both...*
> *(29, Iraqi Kurdish woman – Helsinki)*

"Double identities" or even "multiple identities" transpire in informants' stories. Multiple identities emerge in opposition to an exclusive national identity, and respond to the questions of integration, simultaneous attachment and belonging to more than one locality (Cheran 2006; Levitt 2001; Vertovec 2000). These identities, influenced by different countries' values and reinforced by transnational practice, are therefore constructed, reconstructed and negotiated across time and space. The above quotations

show how Kurds and Arab Iraqis belong to a range of different and overlapping communities. On the one hand, Iraqis might enjoy the multiple or dual belonging as enriching conditions. Some Iraqis experienced clashes and tension within the context of the same communities, i.e. a classical example is between the old and new generation of migrants within the same community or as effects of processes of de-Baathification which occurred after 2003.

9.4.2   Integration as lived experiences

Following the previous argument, the idea of integration or participation in a new society may firstly appear blurred for forced migrants who have never properly experienced societal participation in their former home country. It could be argued that this case is especially evident when referring to people living under political repressive regime. Moreover, sentiments of exclusion or the difficulty to get *quickly* acquainted to the society of settlement may create some tensions. Furthermore, considerations on integration regarding those Arab Iraqis and Iraqi Kurds living in the Helsinki metropolitan area basically stressed some specific points: integration with an emphasis on cultural diversity and integration as a question of practices. Both points will be specified below.

During the process of integration, Iraqi people state that it was difficult to step into a new Finnish cultural setting characterised by a diverse set of cultural norms. For example, an Iraqi describes how his simple action was misrepresented by a couple of Finnish people living in the same building:

> *Here it is a different culture... I remember that one day, (...) there were 2 old women...they got a sofa from the car, it was really hard to transport, because it was so big...So, I took the sofa...I wanted to help! We opened the door, we put it in the elevator then in their house...then I said bye bye...but they stopped me...because they wanted to give me some money..."for what?"I said...and they: "for your work!"...And I: "I am not working...I was just trying to help you..." I felt bad, not angry, but...like not respected... In my country it is normal, it is something inside me...or (our) culture.... if you see an old women coming back home, with bags for example you open the door, or help her with these bags... (...) But now after years I understand better the Finnish people...I can...how to say, understand...when to speak, what to say...it is easier! The first, the second and the third years were difficult...It was a crush... a bit...*
> *(4, Iraqi Arab man – Helsinki)*

> *You need to try hard in Finland...for the language first...then also the culture is different...for example, at the beginning for me it was quite normal when meeting some Finns I knew, to ask questions about their families: "how are*

your son doing or so?"Even if I did not know personally his family…because in Iraq, it is normal to ask these things…you know…in here, people looked me strangely, like I said something wrong, or like I am too curious… It took a while to understand…now I simply avoid it. I try just to do my work and that's all.
(20, Iraqi Arab man – Helsinki)

Cultural diversity is something that spontaneously arises through the stories of my informants. The above quotations show an optimistic process where two diverse cultures meet, collide and adapt each other. This vision is obviously too reductionist since it places individuals in fixed cultural worlds with limited processes of interaction. In this regard, cultures appear as immutable entities with rigid borders, instead of social constructs. As Valtonen (2008: 61) notes culture has been frequently used as a universal marker for indicating difference and distinctiveness. As exemplified by Said (2001) the culturist discourse which implies a monolithic and static view of cultures may also drive to other problems such as the racism or indifference which I will later discuss. At the same time, cultures are not only seen as different but also marked by vertical hierarchic divisions. Similarly, in a macro perspective, the Finnish integration policies are in fact inspired by a culturist and assimilationist approach (Wahlbeck 1999) where minorities are basically absorbed into the larger community. A man from South Iraq still remembers how he felt after his first day of his language/culture class:

It (the course) was full of information… maybe too much. I had the impression to come totally from the other side of the world…I mean the main point was how we Finns are different, in our way of …talking…the silence's logic, the food the working values…I mean, when I got out of the class, I thought that the all process to get to know the society and the people, the job or so would be quite hard to combine with my life…at the end it was not so traumatic…well, I think maybe it was my problem, that I got a false picture of the system…but I appreciated the efforts the teacher…
(8, Iraqi Arab man – Helsinki)

Iraqis' first days in the courses were usually recalled as challenging experiences. The feeling of insufficiency and inferiority towards the new culture or society's rules seems to be related to a system which stresses more opposed differences than similarities. Some Iraqis in fact felt paradoxically treated as a problem in their own process of inclusion into the new society due to their (perceived) extreme cultural differences. The interaction between refugees and local actors involves a process of construction and re-construction of Iraqis' identity and ethnicity. Similarly, Gorashi (2007: 224) argues that from a constructivist perspective ethnicity is both about *being and becoming at the same time.* In this case, people's interaction would function as a neutral platform where commonalities and difference, regarding cultures, would

reciprocally emerge. However, as Ghorashi (2007: 226) suggests, in order to facilitate peoples' interaction, that it would be better not to start with the differences but with the creation of a common interspace or in-between space so that the differences get a chance to manifest in the way it is experienced, not in the way that it is thought of within constructed dichotomies.

However, the massive change produced by globalisation has caused a different kind of socio-economic and political pressure on Nordic welfare states. In particular, the rise of ethnic and religious identities has been seen as challenging but also damaging the unity of the Finnish national identity. The specific term utilised by a group of Nordic researchers (Keskinen 2009: 371; Mulinari & Rätzhel 2009), "welfare state nationalism", is used for emphasising how discourses on nationalism and culturalisation have been adopted for shaping and dividing the majority and ethnic minority groups while constructing hierarchies and exclusion; linking gender equality discourses to rhetorically perception of Finnishness or Finnish way or life (Tuori 2007; Keskinen 2011b: 375); thus, limiting possibilities of debate and spaces for mutual discussion. Different Finnish researchers (Ibid. 368) have emphasised how nationalist and culturist discourses have been intrinsically used in the Finnish welfare state context. Thus, there is an effort to present Finnish society as very cohesive and culturally homogeneous. In this regard, Forsander (2002: 281) argues that the Finnish welfare state, based on an ideal of national homogeneity, has found itself facing difficulties, especially when dealing with the increasing diversity rising in the country. A common past, identity, language and education are usually the premises for discourses on trust and subsequent inclusion. As a consequence, people who do share the same features are positioned on unequal levels.

Iraqis' narratives provide interesting views on this topic. For example, it was quite common to hear how Finnish people were generally nice to them, but at the same time distant, a little curious or even indifferent. Welfare state dynamics provide universal benefits to people, while at the same time constructing boundaries and enacting hierarchical divisions between "Finns" and their "others" (Keskinen 2011a: 153). It seems that a common past and history provide basis for logic of exclusive and internal trust which seems not only to erect barriers but also creates antagonism between the two especially in the economic sector. Conversely, it seems that entertaining good and balanced social relationships are quite important elements for the wellbeing of the Iraqis. However, in Finland indifference or isolation emerged from most of the stories. In Helsinki, a Kurdish man talking about his neighbours recounts:

> *It is quite long time that I live in the building where I have an apartment….but still I do not know anyone…sometimes I say hello, but nobody replies to me…(…) I do not remember doing anything wrong…(…) I do not understand and the society does not talk about us…I mean we are just refugees, that's all people need to know??!*
> *(16, Iraqi Kurdish man – Helsinki)*

The term refugee implies negative meanings in Finnish society, which has been previously accounted for in other studies (cf. Wahlbeck 1999; Ghorashi 2005). In Finland, refugees and asylum seekers are positioned in the lower scale of society as people with no education, lowly paid jobs, incapable and sometimes labelled as the dangerous ones or as a threat to society (Horsti 2002; 2003; Keskinen et al. 2009). In particular, Horsti (2003) approaching media coverage of Slovakian Roma in Finland, describes how the Roma are portrayed as a threats to the Finnish society and its law system. Similarly, the excerpt below captures the negative image of being refugees in Finland. This was common in the accounts of most of my informants.

Finnish people do not like foreigners…refugees? Of course not! (…) When I was in Iraq I had a normal salary, a normal life. I have a big home with two floors, then I lost everything...and it was difficult to believe it I was becoming a refugee. ...but I am not a criminal or a dangerous person… people in here thinks bad things about refugees. When I came to Helsinki I wanted to demonstrate I could do it…and in two years I properly learnt the language…
(28, Iraqi Arab man – Helsinki)

I am grateful to this country because I found a place to stay and living in peace…But I have also to admit that Finnish people…yes, they welcome us…but they do not accept us…there is always that distance…and I tried, I can tell you…But I am not an immoral person…just a person who needed to be helped at that time…
(29, Iraqi Kurdish woman – Helsinki)

Refugees seem to be voiceless; stereotypical images of refugees as reported by my informants intertwined with disadvantage, marginalisation, danger and victimisation. Refugees are also criticised and stigmatised as people of a bad reputation by the media and by the political actors who demand stricter immigration and refugee policies (Keskinen 2011). During some informal discussion, some of my informants struggled to find a justification for their stereotypical negative labels. In some cases, people agreed on saying that possibly, the fact that they originated in a country that today is recognised for violent acts, more than for cultural patrimony, has had an impact on people's perception of refugeeness. As I will present in the next section, the events after 9/11 continue to create a static and reified vision between the Western and the Eastern cultures. Precisely, immigrants and refugees have been categorised according to their ethnic and cultural background with the result of strengthening unequal power structures. The extensive production of a hierarchy between superior and inferior cultures increases the distance instead of intensifying commonalities. In contrast, I argue that cultures may also be constructed by a system of symbols characterised by common features. If commonalities and similarities can be traced across languages,

music, cinema and forms of art, in general the same could be also approached in the study of cultures. As Haviland, (2002: 26) argues every culture is learnt, shared, based on symbols, integrated and dynamic. Thinking about culture in terms of dynamism, allows one to overcome the static view of it as structured in specific territories.

I also remember that quite often Iraqis participating in the study thanked me at the end of our interviews. They hoped that their "isolated" and "negative" condition would improve in the future. They stressed how their voices received little attention and how it would be nicer to be judged for what they do and not for what is highly and negatively publicised through the media.

In many stories, integration paths emerge as questions of procedures and rules which need to be followed. Integration requires time and effort and implicitly refers to daily practices determining involvement and mutual dialogue. At the same time, a Kurdish woman describes the integration as an ongoing process, which started several years ago in 1994 when she arrived in Finland.

> *Integration is a continuous process for me…I am still trying...because you can also have a nice job, but not being integrated...I mean, after 3 years of integration plan, am I integrated? Frankly, I do not know…For me it was difficult…If I could not use a proper Finnish, I remember that I draw picture to let people understand what I wanted to say…and I am continuously learning...*
> *(14, Iraqi Kurdish woman – Helsinki)*

The process of integration is considered as a *continuum*. It usually presents a specific starting date, but there is no mention of closing stages. It is a relation that depends on peoples' personal achievement which may shift from social, cultural, political, linguistic competencies. It requires a progressive acquisition of membership and social participation. Nevertheless, this process of recognition and mutual acceptance in a new country may take more time, since Iraqis may interrelate with public institutions that in Iraq did not entirely exist *de facto.* For example, Iraqis critically analysing their own groups' dynamics, state that for some Iraqis culture and religion are still indissoluble patterns. Conflict happens when they are not able to adapt the new rules with the old ones. For example, Juntunen (2009a: 30) notices how Iraqis in Varissuo (a district of Turku), in order to avoid sectarian tensions, prefer to avoid confrontation with other Iraqis, by remaining among like-minded people. Sectarian tensions are perceptible among Iraqi groups settling in Varissuo as an effect of previous ethnic and tribal tensions in the country of origin during and after Saddam's regime (cf. Juntunen 2012). Similarly, A Kurdish woman presents how marginality is constructed in a specific district of Helsinki, in these terms:

The Finnish state helps…maybe too much sometimes…I mean, there are people who live year in Helsinki and they have never attended a language course…and when I asked them why? These women told me that they wanted to stay home with their kids, or their husband did not want that they could work…so these women do not know the Finnish language, do not have Finnish friends, they are not integrated…in Kontula (a district in Helsinki) there are many families with these issues…the man does all and the woman stays at home. They are extremely religious people and they are afraid to lose their culture…I mean they do not understand anything about the equality in the Finnish society…and this creates problems on children and in their activities like: going to a music school, to the swimming pool, doing sports…I mean religion and culture should be perceived as two diverse things…I mean the situation is really complicated and complex…
(22, Iraqi Kurdish woman – Helsinki)

According to this woman, some people still live in a past that is characterised by patriarchal power associated to masculinity and loyalty. In this case, identity is not defined in a dynamic process, but it remains static and unchanged. Al-Ali (2007:2) argues that despite the differences of ethnic and religious attachments[94], awareness should also be directed to social class, place of residence, urban or rural identity, professional background, political orientation and generation. For example, the Iraqi woman I interviewed above belonged to a middle-class urban and liberal family and she went to a secondary school and she was also an activist in women associations in Iraq as well as in Finland. In Finland, she continued to pursue further education without struggling with her Iraqi husband. She ultimately got a job and continued to work in an Iraqi women's association. According to this perspective, explicative variables cannot be reduced simply to ethnicity and religion, but also related to rupture between urban and social areas and diverse social class dynamics and available resources (Al-Ali 2007: 262). A woman from a small town in Kurdistan in fact says:

I have never studied… (…) In the town where I was there was no school…and anyway, none of my girlfriends left to school (to the cities)… why should I start now?
(29, Iraqi Kurdish woman – Helsinki)

It could be argued that my findings are in agreement with Al Ali (2007) and Sassoon's study (2011) which showed the importance of socio-geographic factors in

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[94] In particular, this study does not address the impact of religion on the migrants' integration process but recognises that a perception of Islamophobia is a constant problem in the current society where Iraqis live. By stressing on the role of prejudice, discrimination and marginalisation, the status of religion tends to be seen as a private matter, more than a public issue.

the study of the segmented Iraqi society also with reference to the expatriates' communities. Women coming from Iraqi city areas and who in the past studied and worked are those who have adapted well into the new environment. They search for jobs or courses or are simply active in civil society. By doing so, isolation is substituted by actions through which they gain forms of economic and social power. In contrast, women coming with families from small town with limited education background, once arrived in Finland, perhaps do not face experiences of extreme change of gender relations. Violence and traumatic memories are still present in these women narratives as well as their role of mothers and wives in the household routines. This situation, which is also characterised by unfamiliarity with the physical and cultural surroundings, increases feelings of isolation and strangeness. However, in a couple of circumstances, like the case of widowed mothers the situation was a bit different since their sense of adaptation to the new environment was caused by a new role in the household as the only breadwinners. Women, in specific circumstances, can acquire new roles that enable them to leave their houses, learn a language and find a job.

In other accounts, factors that seem to impede the process of integration tend to be related to the prior life of the migrants and more specifically the experience of loss and trauma. Many Iraqis who I interviewed, in fact, asserted the negative impact of traumatic experiences on their ability to integrate. A woman referring to the loss of her father and brother said:

> *I have a scar that would be always in my hearth… It is painful…I lived and saw things that go beyond the imagination. Things you cannot forget, because they are part of you (…) In Finland, you should start a new life with a smile in your face, with power, optimism… immediately… You need to get access to the system, the classes, the courses, the training, etc…But for me it was hard and still is! I am a lonely mother…*
> *(32, Iraqi Arab woman – Helsinki)*

> *Trauma can be problematic for integration. People that travel from war countries, they keep their traumas with them...so first, it is better to cure the problems, scars, and then teaching or show him a way how to do in the society.*
> *(10, Iraqi Arab man – Helsinki)*

The loss, flights, displacements and resettlements are destabilising variables that affect experiences. In many cases, especially in the resettlement processes of Iraqis in Finland, I got the same kind of responses of a sense of dispersal and estrangement, as a result of some of the informants' traumatic backgrounds. Iraqis are in fact one of the most traumatised groups living in Finland. As reported by Castaneda et al. (2012: 310) up to 78% of people of Kurdish origins interviewed in Finland, experienced a major traumatic event in their former home country like permanent injuries, tortures,

kidnapping and imprisonment. Symptoms of depression, anxiety, headache, nervousness, insomnia, if not cured, negatively affect adults' life in a new environment by enforcing social exclusion. For example, mental disorders reduce people's level of attention and awareness in learning languages or following paths of inclusion or simply looking for jobs (Ibid. 157).

In Iraqis' stories, people's vulnerability (of the past) is also associated with current socio-economic settings. The sense of stress which arises from the strictly organised Finnish system is difficult to manage when the pain of the traumatic past is still on. State actions are perceived as intrusive and demanding for vulnerable people who are not completely healed from traumatised and stressful experiences.

9.4.3   Employment in Finland

Inclusion within the Finnish society is described by the Iraqis as having a specific *economic* function in the line with the Finnish law and integration policies. Therefore, several Iraqis have underlined conditions in which Finnish people see refugees as possible competitors in the economic market:

> *I feel sometimes that Finnish people think we are here because of the job market. So, they think, we steal their jobs...Well, maybe as a Finnish I would think the same...But for refugees it is a bit different. During the regime of Saddam Hussein, we had lots of Egyptian people came to work in Iraq...Then, when the job ended they went back to Egypt. But we are different we cannot go back...*
> *(28, Iraqi Kurdish man – Helsinki)*

> *Uhm...Finnish people are in a very good position in the market today, like in the technologies...the weak point of Finland, maybe, because they are afraid to lose what they have gained. It is like someone who has lots of money in his hands, then he may think that all people around him want to take his money...I think that the Finnish nation is like this...*
> *(4, Iraqi Arab Man – Helsinki)*

Looking at statistics in general, the total proportion of unemployment rate among immigrants is higher than Finnish nationals (Forsander 2004: 212). Moreover, a tight social network within the Finnish society, based on values and in-group trust dynamics, excludes migrants or amplifies migrants' difficulties to enter into the market (Forsander 2002; 2004). Most probably, foreigner working forces are expected to increase in Finland as well (Moisio & Martikainen, 2006). Studies have shown the importance of social networks in providing work opportunities to migrants against labour market barriers (Joronen 1997; Valtonen 2001; Wahlbeck 1999; Ahmad 2005).

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For example, Ahmad (2005: 139) argues that social network is important despite the effective role of the national system of public employment. For Ahmad (Ibid.), language and vocational trainings alone do not always improve immigrants' position in labour market situations, but they can strengthen the *disparities* between the nationals and no-nationals. Others studies have focused on how the ethnic hierarchy manifested in the Finnish working places while institutionalising racism (e.g. Laurén & Wrede 2008 on health care organization). Although equality seems to be highly valued in the Finnish welfare and labour market, inequality manifests in the labour market specifically across specific ethnic cleavage (Wrede & Nordberg 2010). Based on a study of 15 thematic, semi-structured interviews in Helsinki, Laurén & Wrede (2008) show how ethnic hierarchies of work distribution emerge among immigrant and Finnish nurses in their working places. Clients' prejudices (especially referring to elderly Finns) challenges practices of work distribution among Finnish and immigrants nurses. Laurén & Wrede (Ibid.) argue that anti-discrimination measures and the implementation of a better structured management system should be revisited in order to promote equality in care organisations.

Thus, higher unemployment rates, unrecognised qualifications as well as low/medium rate of formal education combined with discrimination, restrict the Iraqis' access and participation to the Finnish employment market. The primary stress on the economic character of integration is also perceived by a Kurdish man who settled in Finland since the early 1990s.

> *In Finland I feel sad and always so stressed…here we are like robots in this society. We live like robots…working all days and pay taxes, high taxes…My life is getting up early in the morning, open the shop at 9 in the morning… nonstop until 7 in the afternoon…(…) then I go shopping, then I go home, I take a shower, I eat and I go to sleep…Before I had time sometimes to play football…when I was younger… now I am also married and I have a small child to take care of…(…) But before…I mean also before it felt… it was also this oppressions, this rigidity of rules (different than in Iraq) at the end, after all the courses, the school, the job I have and even the Finnish citizenship I have…"something is always missing"…*
> *(28, Iraqi Kurdish man – Helsinki)*

A normal life with a modest but harsh job, characterised by long working shifts and few hours of freedom, brings also disappointment as well as disaffection towards the society of settlement. Thus, this society is usually depicted as a rigid dispenser of rules with high taxes to be paid. Like the informant above, others who were employed, showed little satisfactions about their position in the job market, adding some bitter considerations on what is still missed in their lives. The point of the previous quotation regards the fact that integration seems to mainly be fragmentally oriented in economic and political terms which are translated to a (modest or low-paid) job and the

possession of the Finnish citizenship and passport which permits a better mobility. However, that *"something is always missing"* is partly explained with the lack of social contacts and perhaps openness or interaction with the Finnish society. As Valtonen (1998: 47) stresses, the social interaction with Finns was valued by the refugees, but it was not so easy to accomplish. The Finnish state seems to highly focus in transforming refugees and other migrants to "workers" instead of looking beyond and probably discovering people with ideas, projects and possibly dreams. In this case, the integration is a limited process mainly functional to the societies' need. However, the perception of marginality, as accounted by many interviewees, is a quite common feeling although the interviewees had superficial contacts at their workplace.

During my study, I encountered both employed and unemployed Iraqis. Only a few of them were satisfied with their jobs. Others offered rather little complaint, since they did not entirely believe they were employed in their trained fields. Finnish courses combined with training periods should provide career opportunities while fostering integration practices. However, sometimes these opportunities happened for short periods of time determining people stepping in and out from the job market. An Iraqi man who, since his arrival in 1999, has intermittently worked, argues:

> *I stayed all the day in the mosque... (...) I do not have any job at the moment...(...) I was a teacher in Finland for not normal children... (...) now I am waiting... I was a chemist in Iraq. I took several course (here), now just waiting...in the meantime I follow an online course organized by a Dutch University...to keep my mind busy...*
> *(48, Iraqi Arab man – Helsinki)*

> *Well, I have worked in Salo, in a factory... then I was unemployed...then again in another factory...with a training....then the contract ended...now I am again unemployed...I am waiting for an answer now or a new job....But the more I wait, the more I think that maybe if I go back to study a can get a better chance for me and my family (in Iraq)...but, I do not know... I do not know...I am very confused...*
> *(17, Iraqi Kurdish man – Helsinki)*

In these quotations, Iraqis appear as clients of the Finnish welfare system (Valtonen 1998; 2001). Gaps between the societal goal and the people's goal appear evident (Ibid.). People who received practical guidance in the working environment have to fit into the pragmatic solutions which do not always coincide with their employment expectations. Self-initiative and self-reliance are minimised because of the logic of the welfare state on providing support in case of unemployment. Circumstances of stress and inadequacy imply situations of disempowerment (cf. also Nannestad 2004 for the Danish case) and clientification (Necef 2000 cit in Forsander 2004: 211). While disempowerment reflects a state of subordination to the Finnish system and deprivation

of migrant's power of expression, clientification which is determined by the addiction in terms of public support does not encourage a strategy of self-reliance but activates a circle of dependency of the system itself. This happens when people are included and excluded from the job market at intermittence. Ghorashi (2005: 186) in her analysis of the Dutch welfare system, characterised by a hierarchical relationship between the *giver* and the *receiver*, suggests that it develops a sense of forced gratitude from the point of view of the refugees as well as dependency. Also my informants underlined the fact that this kind of forced gratitude implies a form of subjection towards the dominant power, amplifying feelings of distance, and even disappointment. From peoples' account, it seemed perceptible that the Finnish welfare state, as other Nordic welfare states, has a tendency to "clientelise" refugee groups instead of practically recognising peoples' or groups' potentials (Valtonen 1998). As Nannestad (2004:301) argues even if the intentions behind that system are certainly benign, the result on these migrants and refugees can easily be the loss of initiative, incentives and capacities to do something about one's own situation. Financial and psychological dependency and confusion may also arise.

Prior studies have noted the importance of existence of ethnic association networks especially when the state does not provide effective answers to migrants' requests. Iraqi and Kurdish associations as informal networks are important resources because they provide a sense of belonging and identity. They also construct social links with the majority population in the new society, and reduce the experiences of social marginalisation and exclusion (cf. Wahlbeck 1999). In the following excerpts, informants describe their first experience of seeking jobs:

> *Now I have a job...but I do not like it...One friend told me about this job...It is more for ladies. I am a cleaner...I asked Abdul (another friend) to help me to get another job. He always helps everybody.*
> *(40, Iraqi Arab man – Helsinki)*

> *I have the feeling that Finnish people thinks we are helpless and they need to help us…but then in the practical level if I have to think about my life… I found a job by myself, thanks to a friend…I mean, a nice job.*
> *(31, Iraqi Kurdish man – Helsinki)*

However, today, Iraqis are still one of the most unemployed groups in Finland (ENAR Shadow report 2007; 2010). Moreover, the immigrant unemployment rate remained quite high at 21.5% in 2007 as reported by the ENAR Shadow report (2007: 2). In 2007, Iraqi citizens suffered from high unemployment as well as other citizen groups such as the Somalis, Iranians and Sudanese[95]. In 2005, the Iraqi citizens

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[95] "Major Unemployment Differences among Immigrant Groups". Yle news. Aavailable at: http://yle.fi/uutiset/major_unemployment_differences_among_immigrant_groups/1663217 (Retrieved 12/12/2012)

unemployment rate was estimated around 50- 60% (Monitori 1/2007: 48). In 2010, unemployment rate was estimated as over 50% with possibilities of increasing in future[96].

A combination of diverse factors like the structure of the Finnish welfare state, followed by discrimination and racism as well as the lack of social capital and networking among migrants have been singled out as main reasons of unemployment (cf. Forsander 2004: 214). As reported by Monitori (1/2007: 48) referring to education, more than 70% of Iraqis own the primary education, 16% an intermediate education and only 12% a higher education. Some of the people who I interviewed, in spite of their high educational background, were either unemployed or employed in low-wage jobs. Only a few got prestigious jobs and carriers. As reported by a collection of articles *Maahanmuuttajien elämää Suomessa* (2005), suggested that quite often education obtained in Finland is one of the most important gateways to get a proper job. However, the link between education/language skills and employment does not always connect. For example, for educated immigrants the search of a proper job can be an exhausting and never ending procedure. For example, the economic depression of the 1990s caused difficulties for African immigrants looking for job opportunities (Joronen 1997). Even those educated in Finland struggled to find an employment due to the increased discrimination usually linked to specific nationalities and legal status (e.g. the case of refugee Somalis). Also in my study, some of my informants stressed that sometime the fact of presenting a CV with both laudable results in education and jobs experiences gained in Finland, followed by the Finnish citizenship did not always help them to get hired. Ethnic profiling, which is illegal by law (Henkilötietolaki 532/1999) is however still in existence (Enar Shadow report 2007: 17). A young talented Kurdish man, who completed his master's degree in Finland, when looking for his first student job, in fact argues:

> *I took a degree here in Finland…when I was looking for a job but it also happened when I was looking for an apartment…they (Finnish employers) usually the first thing that they see is your name , surname…they recognized Middle East name immediately in your CV…so people think that with that name you cannot speak Finnish or so…I was looking for a job…a marketing job, selling products by phone…I perfectly speak Finnish…I sent my application and after a while I called them because I wanted to know their reply. They basically told me that I was not a native speaker…Then I told them if they have read my application and I told them that I went to school in Finland and I had a school certificate with excellent grade in Finnish language and literature…and then they told me, maybe we can take you…*
> *(45, Iraqi Kurdish man – Helsinki)*

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[96] Ibid.

Therefore, instances of discrimination emerge not only by racial visibilities, but also by other racialised components such as "exotic names and surnames". In particular, the end of 2008 is a critical year in the Finnish context, not only for the global economic crisis but also for Finnish political dynamics. As specified by Keskinen (2011a: 110), since this year the rise of racist episodes, the boom on discussion on multiculturalism and immigration and the growing support for the True Finns party have characterized Finnish politics[97]. Likewise, Martikainen et al. (2012: 140) argue that since 2008, immigration and integration policies have become controversial and at the same time, anti-immigration spirits ignited political debate within the Finnish society. Similarly, Puuronen (2011) analyses how since the municipal election in 2008, discussion on racism and Finnish multicultural society became politically heated. In particular, he investigates the Finnish society since its relationship with ethnonational communities such as the Sami or the Roma people, showing how today the Finnish society still constructs racialised hierarchies among the old and new ethnic groups (Ibid.). Discussion on race, racialisation and ethnic difference are quite debated issues in the Nordic country and social media (Wahlbeck 1999; 2002; Keskinen 2011). An interviewee living in Helsinki argued that "race" is a visible marker that positions immigrants and refugees in a lower scale, precluding the establishment of deep social contacts. According to this quotation, Iraqis are mainly identified as people of *dark skin colour* who *cannot camouflage* within Finnish society.

> *The hard Finnish language but mainly the idea of prejudice obstacles the integration to happen…if you are immigrant or refugees…and a visible one (she touches her skin) you can never become "us" (like Finns). You can get the citizenship but you are visibly immigrants. Here Iraqis, but also another immigrants and refugees groups, maybe upset because they are not identified because of the job, education, families, political ideas, activities in organizations, etc…but primarily considered as immigrants or refugees…and when a refugee does something bad, that is somehow identified with all categories…*
> *(32, Iraqi Arab woman – Helsinki)*

However, race is not only accounted through biological difference, but also mystified through everyday discourses. Racism in fact circulates across our society not only in terms of physical attacks or violence, but also in forms of ideas and discourses. Racialisation involved, therefore, a process of construction of race related to meanings, histories, beliefs and habits. At the same time, racialisation involves a process of physical and cultural categorisation and construction of hierarchies among diverse groups (Barot & Bird 2001). Refugees are often stigmatised and racialised through a reference to deviant actions and cultural differences.

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97 The True Finns, a populist movement transformed into an anti EU and anti-immigrant party, was established in 1995; subsequently in various (municipal and national) elections their popularity incredibly rises up becoming in 2011 the third most voted party in all Finland.

To sum up, it seems that the Finnish system appears to be contradictory. Paradoxically, the larger number of unemployed people amongst Iraqis, Somalis and Afghans, for instance, highlights how the Finnish system has failed to achieve its goals of equal economic integration and to economically benefit from them. Moreover, the waste of *resources,* in terms of migrants' expertise*,* cultural background and experience which could be relevant in a transnational world seems to still be overlooked.

9.5   Rome as a context for integration

In the following, I discuss integration in Rome, focusing on the abstract ways of perceiving integration and everyday experiences.

9.5.1   The abstract way of social integration

> *Integration is not clear yet. Everybody talks about integration, but the concept is not defined yet. For me, it means the integration between two or more parts which have different identities, cultures, histories, etc. People do not have to forget their past, delete their historic and cultural identities, but make the others understand them with no prejudice. I can be close to an Italian, even if my culture is different. If it happens in this spontaneous way, with no forcing, maybe it can exist.*
> *(23, Iraqi Arab Man – Rome)*

In the Italian context, integration is also introduced as an abstract concept characterised by the connection and spontaneous interaction of two or more parts. However, the fact that integration is perceived in this way could also be explained as an effect of the scarce investments in the sector and as a result of a process of fragmentation related to the reception and integration system. However, situations of mutual dialogue through association meetings, or education projects in schools, bring attention to Iraqis' stories. For example, the Ararat association became a destination for students interested in Kurdish issues, refugees' experiences, and/or a place of art exhibitions.

Integration is also seen as a process of moving forward, where culture enrichment is seen as a positive features. At the same time, the fluidity of interactions determines a form of identity which appears oscillating and mutable. As one of my informants explains:

It depends on the context…I am more Iraqi at home, maybe because I talk in Arabic, I cook the Iraqi food, or listening Iraqi music…But I also feel Italian, after many years here, I talk the language, I can make pasta at home and listening to Celentano (Italian singer)…My kids are Italian…
(26, Iraqi Arab man – Rome)

Dual and multiple identities, as in the Finnish case, enforced by transnational practices, recognise the differences between the Iraqi and Italian society, but enforce forms of adaptation to new circumstances. In this case, social integration emerges as fluid form of participation, amplified by transnational processes and enforced by family circumstances.

When migrants approached diverse norms, values within a new society, emotional traits, which refer to specific feelings of home and safety, became evident (Yuval-Davis 2006). At the same time, belonging also recalls notions of exclusion, differentiation and discrimination as well. As Anthias (2008: 8) argues, belonging emerges in relational terms as a construction of "*we-ness"* and the construction of "*otherness*". However, it is important to stress that contrasting relations between the "we" and the "others" may also emerge not only in society of settlement but also in societies of origins as I will discuss later in this chapter.

9.5.2   *Integration as lived experiences*

In the Italian case, the engagement of the Iraqis within Roman society is perceived by my informant in a less structured way. Integration, therefore, acquires a more external status. Generally speaking, Iraqi refugees have always been perceived as temporary stayers in Italy, or treated as "emergency cases" to momentary deal with. Especially at the beginning of 1990, the first policies towards refugees provided a system of temporary resources, enforcing the ideas of temporary stay (Puggioni 2001). Today, as noted by diverse social scientists researching in Rome (Korac 2003; 2009; Puggioni 2005) the basic assistance provided to refugees is generally poor and probably inspired by the same idea of temporariness. Housing conditions and access to social benefit are scarce and controversial along the diverse status recognitions. During my data collection in Rome in 2007 and 2008, the reception was still a major issue when dealing with refugees, deported Iraqis, asylum seekers and clandestine. A Kurdish refugee man working in a well-known reception centre in Rome argues:

Italy is not like Germany, Sweden or UK…There, there are the laws, and people have rights…all people. In Italy it is a mess…where do they sleep? On the streets?
(21, Iraqi Kurdish man – Rome)

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The Italian system of immigration is here described by the differences. Countries of older immigration characterised by stronger welfare states such as Sweden, Germany and the UK are taken into account as places where refugees are seen and treated with humanity and where basic services are wholly provided. Moreover, these places are also key spots for Kurdish and Arab Iraqis in terms of kinship. For the many young Kurds who I met in Rome, and who arrived in Italy after the 2000s, Italy was just considered an entry-point to Europe. This main goal was reaching other destinations by crossing the border. All of them explain that the reason for breaking the "rules" was both the way to recreate kinship connections abroad and to "get a better life". A Kurdish man, deported from Germany back to Italy in 2006, under the Dublin regulation, argues:

> *Europe before leaving my country represented the possibility of change...for me and my family...a way to help my family (in Kurdistan). When I arrived in Italy, I was caught (by the police) and I applied for the refugee status...then I went to Germany, My brother lives there...and now I am here again... now it is just a nightmare...we do not have money, we do not have a place where to sleep...You need to have the status, but also with the refugees status it can be hard to find a place (to sleep). Here (in the Ararat association) we feel safe, because the police does not come...but once you turn the corner, I panic because I am scared that the police could arrest me and send me back to Iraq...because it (in this condition) is like I would be a clandestine...Going back to Iraq, then would be even better...*
> *(7, Iraqi Kurdish man – Rome)*

The fear of holding a "*pending status*" is immediately translated to the fear of possible repatriation action which in 2006/2007 was a quite common measure. Some of the Iraqi Kurdish men I met in the Ararat association at that time had a pending status while others were completely clandestine. Most of them were deported back to Italy, their first port of call in Europe. During my time in Rome, these Iraqi Kurds were waiting for a second audition at the Commission. Life in the Ararat centre was compared to living in a prison and daily existence marked by monotony as well as the risk of been caught when walking out of the centre. In this precarious situation, Iraq is a recurrent thought in terms of the dream of return. However, the same quotation highlights other problems related to those people in possession of a proper refugee status. A Kurdish man, who arrived from Greece to Rome and who obtained his refugee status in Italy at the beginning of the 2000s, said:

> *I have received the political asylum...But in reality the accommodation in a reception centre was problematic...I needed to get out in the morning and*

coming back in the night (to get a bed)...it was not like a house...During the day I needed to get out, if it was hot or cold, snowing or raining...there was no difference. Then you do not have your room...but a dormitory. (...) I remember that many people used medicines for sleeping...because the room was overcrowded...we felt physically and psychologically bad....weak...tired...(...) I met some nice (Italian) people...for all of them the problem was the government and the law...(...) They said there was also this space...and we need to help all...but we (refugees) come from cultures which are also so diverse...For example, if one screams, he bothers me because I am not be used to it...Everyday there was a fight for something...and all had to be accepted... At the end I preferred to sleep in the parks, because inside I could not sleep...I wanted to have a sort of space...where to relax sometimes...
(35, Iraqi Kurdish man – Rome)

The lack of proper structures devoted to accommodations and language tuition was a structural problem. Moreover, refugees seemed to have no choices and this forced situation of living all together created problems of cohabitations especially when dealing with small rooms to share and diverse behaviours to deal with. Despite the black hole of the refugee system, Iraqis especially after a first period of uncertainty, generally refers to the Italian society in terms of solidarity and support. Connections and networks with Italians are basically useful when looking for a place to stay, to eat and to get legal advice. An Arab Iraqi, who got the political asylum in 1995, reflecting on the strengths and weaknesses of the Italian system, argues:

The freedom you have in this system, to do...and also to make mistakes sometimes is a positive thing...however, there is no a clear law or policies dealing with refugees and integration....and that's a pity...because there are many other positive things here like people's support....
(26, Iraqi Arab man – Rome)

In this regard, the "bottom up" approaches of the Italian system encouraged the Iraqis to face up the Italian society more independently and from diverse angles. As explained by Korac (2009: 91) the Italian system of minimised welfare, in comparison with other strong ones, does not undermine agency, but provides a space for individual initiative. Differently than in the strong Finnish welfare state, in Italy the scarce impact of the Italian welfare states determine reversely a process of *responsibilization* which paradoxically empowers refugees in their process of inclusion. *Responsibilization* in the case of Iraqi people was not an alternative, but the only possibility to cope with the lack of state interventions or general inadequacies. In most of the accounts, the role of ethnic and cross-ethnic as well as the local networks became fundamental for people's experiences of inclusion and fights against marginalisation. People were connected to their neighbourhood, their training courses as well as job emplacement thanks to the role of the networks. As Korac (2009: 102) argues the lack of exclusion at the level of

state institution is counterbalanced by a micro level through close contact with locals. Stories of Iraqis who arrived as students and those who were accepted as refugees after 1990 are similar especially when referring to the modality of searching for a basic Italian language class or general support. For example, an Iraqi Kurdish lady, who arrived as foreigner student in 1981, described her first experience in Italy in these terms:

> *I found my way in this country since the beginning... I remember the Italian course for example...there were no courses when I arrived in Rome...(...) A couple of my friends who settled in here told what to do, where to go...The course was organized in Perugia (200 km from Rome) ... The language course had a fee to pay....But it was very bad...the hall full...there was never a seat available...One of my friends who lived in Austria, told me that there every student had the headphones in their classes...then you had real professors...when you made mistakes, they corrected you...In Perugia, when you start this kind of courses with many many people, at the beginning, even if I had some doubts, I did not asked for help...The there were many black people attending the course...and before that I have never seen black people....It was a situation that they (the Italian institutions) did not take into account...like for example that you come from a different country, different culture....we did not do any courses on diversity...(...) I had to pay for the course, but the course was bad...then if you could not follow it...they did not called you back to know, to understand your problems, discomfort....none of my compatriots at the end followed the course...The guys usually found an Italian friends...girlfriend and they learnt Italian...we, girls studied by ourselves...(Laugh!)*
> *(3, Iraqi Kurdish woman – Rome)*

Language courses were almost inexistent in the 1980s in Italy. Most of the Iraqis I met in Rome, in fact, stressed that it was quite common, before residing in Rome, to move to a diverse city, such as Perugia, or Siena[98], in order to deepen their knowledge of the Italian language. Over the years and especially after the 1990s, language and culture classes multiplied in many other Italian cities. However, some structural problems (e.g. available classes, levels of the courses, crowded classes etc.) still remained. A Kurdish man, who arrived in the 2000s, explains:

> *I have followed courses... one was on interculturality and one in informatics...before also on Italian language (...). I was able to speak and write too. But I have to admit that at the beginning I studied the language by myself...like the grammar...these course were not well organized...one or two hours in a week...so I studied by myself...(..) in these courses they gave us 6*

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98 Both cities, Perugia and Siena are the oldest and most prestigious places known for the University for Foreigners.

phrases to practice with, for example... and we have to repeat them all the time...(...) for me it was a waste of time...Because usually they put people in the classes with different needs and problems...
(35, Iraqi Kurdish man – Rome)

Responsibilization emerged as a response against the insufficiencies of the system which appear to be out of fashion. Refugees and asylum seekers with a permit of stay in hand, are encouraged to follow Italian language courses which are usually organised and held by NGOs and centres around the city. Usually problems as referred to by my informants may depend on crowded classes, prior lever of schooling, diverse expectations, etc. However, the objectives of these courses are to provide the basic grammar rules or the essential vocabularies in order to independently help people to make their own working experiences. In this regard, differently than in the Finnish case, where integration is a question of practices and trying hard, the Iraqi informants in Italy, highlighted that integration is firstly a question of feeling; a more spontaneous process as some Iraqis report:

Usually, having an affinity between cultures may help…but it is not true that people with more diverse culture cannot find a dialogue…
(46, Iraqi Arab man – Rome)

Before talking about what integration is and how it happens, you really need to believe in it… Since the beginning (…) especially when you live in this chaotic situation where you do not know what to do, where to go…
(11, Iraqi Arab man – Rome)

I feel fine here in Rome...Italian people are generous... we (Arabs and Italians) are bit similar, maybe because we come from the south...the Mediterranean people are open as the Iraqis'...the same customs, food, also some Italian words have Arabic roots...I mean, we have history and old culture...we understand each other…
(43, Iraqi Kurdish woman – Rome)

Integration is, therefore, described as positive feeling ascribing the increasing sense of migrants' belonging towards a new society. At first, integration implies more than an abstract, i.e. a practical vision. The inefficiencies of the Italian welfare state approach leaves the Iraqis to freely experiment with integration at diverse levels and at diverse stages. Surprisingly, in Rome, the emphasis on culture is not treated by the Iraqis as a specific element of difference, or as creating barriers or problems within the society of settlement like in the Finnish case. The feeling of cultural diversity is in fact quite attenuated towards the Iraqis who, however, represent a small group. In the Italian case, the similarities of the southern cultures, which transpire through the accounts of the family significance or behaviour patterns, allow Iraqi people to share a

priori basic positive assumptions. The familiarity with the Italian society also transpired through the accounts of the places, the ancient history roots, or simply the importance of the sociality. For example, as this Kurdish woman summarising her experience in Rome notes:

> *I have created my own space in Rome...it took time and efforts…But time after time I discovered to have some things in common (with the Italians) like the values of the families, the important of the sociality…I mean this things for the Italians are important…like for the Kurds… Here, maybe for these reasons, I did not feel completely foreigner…never, even if at the beginning I did not speak the language…*
> *(42, Iraqi Kurdish woman – Rome)*

In other cases, the sense of being foreigners or to belong to a diverse culture is perceived as an element of difference but not in negative terms. Usually, the perception of diversity implies love, commitment and passion to the country of origin but also a potentiality of double engagement within the new societies depicted as similar.

> *Here everybody called me "the Iraqi"...Even if I do not live in Iraq since ages....But I have always pointed as the Iraqi...It is my identity card! But I do not feel discriminate or different... just proud.*
> *(46, Iraqi Kurdish man – Rome)*

9.5.3 Employment in Italy

> *It's 27 years that I work in this country...but if you go to the INPS (The Italian National Social Security Institute) how many hours I have worked, since I do not have the Value added tax identification number, there is nothing…I do not have nothing. When the state or the institution do not recognize any qualities to you, to the job or so…you can integrate as you want, but you are always an intruder. When they do not evaluate your job, your demanding activities…they mortify you and make you feel useless…the state spend lot of money, but nobody knows where money are going… (…) Italy is a country killed by bureaucracy…and it is difficult to find a dialogue with it… (…). I remember that when he (Berlusconi) was elected again, in Italy all was bad and when journalists told him was massacring the Italians with his taxes…and housewives cannot anymore buy food or so…he was just laughing! But people still believed in him…I mean there people that could sell their vote for a mobile phone…(…) then every year you have to pay more.. And more…*
> *(39, Iraqi Arab man – Rome)*

This quotation immediately captured my attention. It was extracted during a lively conversation during a gathering party held in a Kurdish *pub* in Rome. The occasion was to welcome a Kurdish man who came from Germany to Italy for a medical treatment. In that occasion, around 20 Iraqi Kurds (mostly men) who have lived and settled in Italy, some for 20 years and others as little as 2 years, took part in an evening dinner and a dance party. That night stories of political resistance were accompanied by the taste of food delicacies and Kurdish music. Conversation from the refugees' reception problems switched to a broader view of Italian political crisis. Quite often discussions intertwined with daily realities such as Italian political and fiscal pressure, the lack of job opportunities, unemployment etc. These following quotations referred to a lively conversation which turned from practical refugees' problems to Italian politics.

The weakness of Italy are the politics...all the laws which are approved and the political class...I mean these people are doing just their interests...They are not able to do what they do...The positive things here is just the social factor...it is easy to make friends...
(41, Iraqi Kurdish man – Rome)

He (Berlusconi) is dishonest…and incompetent…smiling, smiling…just smiling…but he is destroying this country…he talks and convince people to vote for him…people do it…Italians, and some of my friends are Italians…are still looking for working opportunities, houses where to life with a girlfriend…The same problem I have with my girlfriend
(21, Iraqi Kurdish man – Rome)

The refugees system is totally obsolete… But I understand…how you want to improve something if you have all the problems of the world….Italy has his own problem…also the Italians do not feel good…and what the immigrants and refugees should there feel? Same story…it is so sad…at the end, after years of living in Italy it seem that we all have the same problems…pay bills by the end of the month
(11, Iraqi Arab man – Rome)

The worsening economic and political situation in Italy became one of the most common topics to discuss among the Kurds and the Arab Iraqis. On that occasion, I had the impression of being in a typical situation among my Italian friends where talks about the Berlusconi's government, the false promises on cutting taxes or increased working opportunities were cited as symptomatic cases of malaise. Scarce welfare state provision followed by high level of unemployment also obliges Italians (mainly young

people) to find undeclared jobs. A Kurdish man, who arrived to Italy in 2002, but with a job as an interpreter in fact said:

> *I understand, because Italy has lots of problems…also the Italians who stay in Italy are not fine…then it is even worse for the Immigrants and the refugees….then you see them on the streets….built up some huts in the parks…I mean it is sad...sad for all! Of course people do not want to stay…many (Iraqis) I met are in Rome they are now somewhere else…*
> *(15, Iraqi Kurdish man – Rome)*

> *Today, an average Italian has at the end the same problem that we also have...like paying the rent at the end of the month, looking for a job...the current state government is a shit for all!*
> *(5, Iraqi Kurdish man – Rome)*

Palidda (1998) argues that Rome is a city characterised by an underground economy and highly administrative mismanagement. A series of political trouble and corruptions especially at the beginning of the 1990s worsened the situation not only for the locals but also for the migrants. According to the Social Watch Rapporto (2009:102) the economic crisis equally reached both Italians and immigrants. Poverty has increased since 2008 due to the lack of intervention and waste of welfare resources (Caritas Italiana & Fondazione Zancan 2010). Despite a large number of foreign citizens, Italians with a fragile economic position[99] have increased their request of help by contacting the Caritas observatories around the peninsula (Ibid.). As a matter of fact, the increasing of poverty which hit Italian and migrant families, depended not only on the global economic crisis which assailed the market in 2008, but also on the weak and short-sighted state policies that developed in these years (Ibid.).

However, in the migrants' case, a combination between a vulnerable legal status, followed by the insertion in the shadow economy has produced an extensive debate on stigmatisation and criminalisation since undeclared job is usually adopted as synonymous of criminality (Quassoli 1999). Many Iraqis especially those arrived after the 2000s, do not have many choices because of the economic down turn. For many Iraqi migrants, the easiest and fastest option was working in the shadow economy or moving abroad. Moreover, if we consider the high number of Iraqis returned to Italy under the II Dublin Regulation the situation appears catastrophic[100]. According to the SPRAR official report (2008/2009: 83) only the 12% of returnees in 2008 and 2009 received support, while 88% were left practically homeless. In many situations, Iraqis

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99 This situation of poverty became visible when visiting certain centres (such as the community of Sant'Egidio in Rome) which provide support to people in need every day. When having lunch with some Iraqi Kurds, I was shocked when I saw many Italian homeless people queuing for food at the centre.
100 CIR data. Statistics on Dublin Returnees (2007-2009). Available at: http://www.cir-onlus.org/Dati%20unita%20dublino%202007-2009.htm (Retrieved on 12/12/2011)

referred to the employment in terms of "vulnerability" due to their legal status[101] as well as for the impossibility to get a job compatible with the educational qualification obtained (cf. also ENAR shadow report/Italy 2007: 11). For instance, a young Kurdish man, with a bachelor in history from Iraq and the knowledge of four diverse languages, since the 2000s has worked as a waiter in a bar in Rome. His dreams of finding a better job, year after year, vanished:

> *All would like to go back to Iraq...In Rome there is no work... (...) we escape from a problem like the war with the hope of improve our conditions and we get into a bigger problem...(...) I have lived in Germany for seven years, but I was repatriated to Italy because of my fingerprints...now, I seldom work...(...) All I do is thinking about my country and the documents and the meeting with the legal counselors.*
> *(6, Iraqi Kurdish man – Rome)*

Despite the gap between his dreams of becoming a history teacher and the reality of a job as a waiter in a bar, the lack of a residence permit[102], obliged him to engage in undeclared labour. This means the circumvention of the tax law, but also exploitation in terms of wages and time shifts, as well as fines, if caught, for both the employer and the workers. Another young Kurdish man with a degree in philosophy from Iraq, who received his subsidiary status some year ago, just says:

> *I have fight so much since I arrived here...I worked in a disco in a nights, but it was something I did not like...they did not pay me...Then as I waiter, but I did not have any experience...I was fired... the I did some domestic work...but it was always the same story: lavoro nero (illegal work) and low-paid! Then, I and my friend, started to participate to some municipality course...not really paid...I mean, we could eat for free (...)but It was good cause we could deepen the Italian language knowledge...After that, the situation changed. People started to call me to work with foreigners as translated or as cultural mediator.*
> *(35, Iraqi Kurdish man – Rome)*

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101 Usually a political refugee obtains a residence permit which is valid for five years. The permit may be renewed under certain conditions. Refugees with a subsidiary status receive a permit of stay valid only for three years which can also be renewed under specific conditions. People who are sent back under the Dublin regulation, and who apply for a (new) stay permit, need to reach the same police office that issued the original papers. For many Iraqis living in Rome who arrived by boat, the procedure costs money as well as time.

102 In particular, this young man received the subsidiary protection valid for three years, which was later converted into a residence permit for working reasons. In his case, the lack of a proper working contract increased the migrant's vulnerability.

Another young Kurdish interlocutor, with a degree in Psychology from the Ararat centre, who worked as an unlicensed parking attendant in the district of Testaccio, argues:

> *Here in Testaccio there is plenty of night clubs…the nights get crowded, especially in the weekend…and I help a local person to look at the parked cars… I just stand all night and wait that nothing bad happens to people' car…and when people in the morning go back to their cars, I am there and I asked if they can pay me…sometimes they do, other time no…This is the job I do…The nice thing I can stop when I want, and the center (the Ararat) is just behind the corner…so, I go to sleep…*
> *(7, Iraqi Kurdish man - Rome)*

In Italy, immigrants and refugees face problems when looking for a job. As the Italian sociologist Reyneri says (2003: 10) jobs for newly arrived people are usually characterised by tough working conditions as regards physical effort, endurance, overtime work and night shifts (e.g., working in the construction industry, agriculture, catering and domestic services). In most cases, these jobs are not properly legalised. As Reyneri (Ibid.) suggests this kind of economic informality is still quite ingrained in the Italian society and the government's efforts to prevent the submerged economy by activating fiscal controls have not been constantly utilised. As Sciortino (2013: 89) argues, corrective sanctions have never been systematically implemented both for the lack of adequate administrative infrastructures and above all for the fear of the political backlash in a country where currently around the 18% of the GDP is undeclared. Moreover, the informal economy represents a fast entrance to the labour market for both Italians and foreigners. As Quassoli (1999: 214) argues the spread of the underground economy is historically connected with a special type of economy characterised by self-employment, medium-sized enterprises usually run by families, informal arrangements and territorially differentiated labour markets. In diverse cases, the solidarity of the employer especially towards irregular migrants struggling with the search of first jobs has been confused with oppressive working situations and migrants' exploitation. It seems that the economic crisis has also increased cases in which migrants feel trapped in the shadow economy with no possibilities of improvement.

In my study, some Iraqis who migrated already in the 1970s, and continued their studies in Italy, expressed satisfaction with their employment and careers. Most of them are artists or professional architects, journalists or entrepreneurs not only renowned in Italy, but also abroad. Those of my informants who migrated in the 1990s and in the 2000s have encountered more difficulties due to a combination of several factors: the lack of asylum regulations and the inadequacy of the system of receptions and integration. Moreover, the internal political instability in Italy and well as the economic crises in 2003 and 2008 have caused major difficulties (like the municipal cut of budget) which have also affected migrants' integration paths. Although most of

the Iraqis have relied on their own experience and networks, finding jobs is not always so easy to accomplish. Even highly educated Iraqis with a legal status have been sometimes forced to find unregulated jobs due to the tight economic situation. The larger number of repatriated Iraqis who I met in 2007/2008 in Rome, once repatriated to Italy expressed their disappointment in the Italian system and its unjust laws. Some of the people who I interviewed despite the difficult living conditions, managed to find short-term jobs in the underground economy without any documents such as a residence permit or similar. However, in many occasions, I had the perception that their intentions were either to resettle in other European countries or to return to Iraq as soon as possible because of the unsustainable reception system and the poor economic situation in Italy.

9.6   Integration and *disintegration*

The processes of negotiation between past and present experiences are also highlighted by many Iraqis, living in Helsinki and Rome, while describing complexities on their current process of integration. Experiences of integration are connected to the past experiences of disintegration in Iraq. Iraqi Kurds and also Shia Arabs, who lived under the authoritarian leadership of the Baath party, felt isolated from being cut off from their political, social, economic and cultural participation inside of Iraqi society. The 1960s and 1970s were decades intertwined with both positive and negative memories. During those decades, modernisation and welfare provision blurred the line of initial political repression, violence and tension caused by rise of the Baath Regime (Al-Ali 2007). The subsequent years represent the institutionalisation of the violence in the form of wars and embargo.

As stressed by Kunz (1981: 42), emotional links of the past as well as the groups' identification and/or marginality in the former country are elements to be considered when addressing the settlement processes in the society of refuge. Thus, the settlement is not a ground zero process. The past, emerging from the analysis of the longing to return, is a constant presence for the people. Despite the knowledge that the settlement (resettlement) in a new country was a process full of doubts, difficulties and sometimes fears, many Iraqis stressed that nothing could have been worse than what they had already experienced in Iraq. The following passages provide details on peoples' perception of rights degeneration and equality disappearance within Iraqi society in the 1970s. A man from Baghdad and a Kurdish woman from Erbil talked about their pre- and post- Saddam's time, by arguing:

> *The problems came with Saddam and his Government...It was something that*
> *was not immediately clear...However, soon it became clear what he wanted to*
> *do...He respected only the people of his group and the Baath party and nobody*
> *else...For example before Saddam, the healthcare was for free...we had a*

social life before but after no...For example, if a woman became widow, before Saddam's regime, she could have an apartment where to live for free, if she needed one, and money and children had everything for free...It was very nice...But with Saddam, only his people took these rights... and we felt apart...we felt disintegrated inside the same society where we were living...
(4, Iraqi Arab man – Helsinki)

In the dictatorship anyway there are things you can do, others you can't... (..) it came gradually...bit by bit...it was like having diverse rights...not equality...(...) Especially if you were from another party and you had different and political ideas...
(29, Iraqi Kurdish woman – Helsinki)

The political affiliation within the Baath party is, therefore, the imperative for the full recognition of people's rights, and access to the public social services in the 1970s. As Al-Ali (2007: 111) notices from 1968 to 1980s that Iraqis' narratives shift between experiences of the "days of plenty" and the advancement of the women's' position in society, on the other hand, and painful memories of Ba'ath repression and suffering on the other. However, according to some other people, the lack of political, social, economic, cultural recognition was perceived in a double way, not only by referring to Saddam's dispositions but also due to the codes of people tribes' affiliation. This is exemplified in the following quotations:

Frankly speaking during my life in Iraq, I felt like outlandish and disintegrated. For these reason I used to secretly read books, which makes to a person visualizing the world in a wider manner. However, as artist you always feel bit isolated by the main society. I remember, I used to frequently meet groups of special friends like writers, poets...in a coffee place to discuss about different topics and this way we set up ourselves apart from the society. In our case, it was hard to talk about integration however we did not despise our environment...the tribal system we have is part of our culture...But for it was hard to integrate a set of inheritated customs and traditions that have been transmitted over the years but remained unchanged.
(33, Iraqi Arab man – Helsinki)

Well, it depended from your family/tribe...they exert a sort of power as well. But luckily my family was more open...I felt to be free, but obviously you need to listen to their advices, like to watch out where you are going, to be careful, to dress in a proper way... (...) other families may have stricter rules like for example get married with your cousins...and you need to observe it! (...) You fell then stifled, with no choice...
(43, Iraqi Kurdish man – Rome)

The ethnic differentiation encouraged by the regime, alongside the existence of a tribal system is perceived as motives for tension and discussion in some of my informants' accounts especially dealing with forced marriages, rules of dating, lack of general freedom etc. In the past, social participation within Iraqi society was slightly fragmented or influenced either by the dictatorship affiliations or determined by the tribes' codes which imposed specific behaviours. In both cases, *tension* is the keyword used by many liberal Iraqis to demarcate their participation in the Iraqi society while talking about the past.

In the present, once migrants settle abroad, questions of disintegration are not totally solved. For example, in some cases isolation from the same community of belonging is an evident phenomenon. Conflicts (*in primis* political but also religious and social) also emerge within people belonging to the same community. An Iraqi Kurdish man who lives isolated from any Kurdish contact in Rome argues:

> *I did it all by myself…There were some compatriots who gave information, when I arrived (in Rome), but also this is bit absurd…my compatriots who stayed here, looked me badly and I was scared to get close to them and ask help…I do not know…I felt uncomfortable… (…) or they told me go there for a course…if you go there you get an accommodation…I do not even know where I was…not in my country, handling a different (Italian) language… they (the Kurds) told me go to find a job…(…) Later I understood that politics still matters (for them)…We say we are Iraqis or Kurds…but we are different among us…we come from that politics or government which has created fear on people…not trust among us…(…) for this reason I do not care about politics now…*
> *(35, Iraqi Kurdish man – Rome)*

An Iraqi Kurdish man in Helsinki demonstrates disappointment when talking about the fragmented Kurdish community in the Helsinki metropolitan area:

> *I felt sad, because when (they) organize some social activities…I am not invited. What does it cost to send an email? It makes me sad…because I would invite them…I am disappointed because, at the end we should be all brothers…*
> *(30, Iraqi Kurdish man – Helsinki)*

Despite knowledge of the same language and same country of origin, political preference seems to be a key which explains Kurdish community fragmentation. As explained by Wahlbeck (1999: 144), this political dimension is perhaps not very surprising since most Kurds (in England and Finland) are political refugees. The case of Iraq, in particular is quite emblematic, because it has created a barrier between those politically active and those who believe that politics only reopen old scars instead of

curing them. At the same time, the effects of the process of de-Baathification amplified the distance between those who arrived after 2003 to Europe as former Baathists, who were discriminated against by the Al-Maliki government, and those who arrived earlier as victims of Saddam's regime (Juntunen 2011) as explained in chapter five.

9.7   Dynamics of Exclusions

Iraqi people discussed racism and discrimination at diverse scales. Most of the interviewees experienced diverse forms of discrimination and xenophobia, which they did not immediately identify as racism. In this study, racism is both understood as structured ideology but also as a discourse. The growth of racism, especially after 9/11, followed by other events in Europe, is shared among the Iraqis who live in Finland and Italy and who participated in my study.

Several social scientists argue that, since these tragic events, there has been a predisposition to consider migrants' culture as a source of social problems or incompatible with Western values (Ghorashi et al. 2009: 3). For example, in the same year of the twin towers attack, Oriana Fallaci, an Italian journalist, published a book "The Rage and the pride" (anticipated by an article published in a national newspaper) which suddenly created a huge scandal in Italy and across Europe for openly offending the Muslim community. In brief, the book collects polemic claims about how Muslims refuse to integrate in Western societies and claims that these two are incompatible. At the same time, offenses were followed by physical actions. For instance, Allen & Nielsen (2002) reported how after 9/11 physical and verbal aggression increased towards Muslim communities in Europe. Moreover, mosques and cultural Islamic centres were targeted by vandalism and required special security measures against threats of violence. Political slogans against Muslims also became embedded in political discourses and facilitated the entry of far right movements in political institutions.

However, forms of discursive racism can be more insidious because they are not always so visibly perceptible and, therefore, the magnitude of their significance and importance may be overlooked. Today, verbal manifestations of racism have become common and legitimized (Barbujani & Cheli 2008: 10) or officially institutionalized in the macro social-level as well as in the micro social one. Racism in the form of prejudices, discrimination and stereotypes is enacted and enforced by feelings of insecurity, threat and fear among the majority population.

 The ENAR shadow reports on racism in Europe released in 2007, 2008 and 2009/2010 show that racism and discrimination are still important phenomena which should not be overlooked both in Finland and in Italy. In Finland, the migrants' communities which are the most defenceless to racism and discrimination, encompass people from countries, such as Russia, the Middle East, Somalia and other African

countries (ENAR shadow report 2009/2010: 12). However, ethno-national or indigenous groups such as the Sami or the Roma, are either targeted by racism and/or their rights are simply ignored. Besides, in Italy during 2007 and 2008, two groups, the Roma and the Sinti, explicitly faced discrimination and racism followed by immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers from Africa, Eastern European countries and Muslims (ENAR shadow report 2007: 8). Similarly, the EU-MIDIS report (2009) examines experiences of discriminations and racists crime victimisations in all 27 European countries. The report summarises that discrimination emerges in specific areas such as education and employment and is directed towards specific ethnic groups. These negative situations have an impact on people's lives and their process of social inclusion. At the same time, experiences of discrimination, harassments and assaults remained invisible and hidden since they are not reported to the police or others competent bodies. Also, diverse researchers from Finland (Rastas 2007, 2009; Keskinen 2011; Wahlbeck 1999; Puuronen 2011; Souto 2011) and Italy (Cotesta 2001; Barbagli 2002; Dal Lago 1999) have dealt with racism and discrimination arriving at the conclusion that racism is often an overlooked phenomenon.

9.7.1   *Experiences of discrimination and racism in Helsinki*

Firstly, I will discuss exclusions that relate to the *negative description of immigrants in the media*. According to several studies, the media is one forum to disseminate suspicion and mistrust towards immigrants, especially refugees, and to perpetuate stereotypes of specific communities and ethnic groups.

Most of my interlocutors were uncomfortable with how they were portrayed in the media, especially the way Iraq was less recognised for its culture and more discussed in relation to terrorist attacks. Implicitly, the media's view has distorted the image of a country and its people who are overwhelmed by recent national unrests. Some of my interlocutors in Finland explained how perceptions of Islam impacted their lives after September 11th.

> *Well, as Iraqi (man) I became a terrorist after the attack to the Twin Towers…we all became!*
> *(10, Iraqi Arab man – Helsinki)*
>
> *Muslims people are seen as problems. The* September 11 *attacks have created a fracture between the east and the west. It does not matter if you believe or not…I mean, I understand that People feel scared…but we also are…*
> *(22, Iraqi Kurdish woman – Helsinki)*

In the above excerpts, the interviewees referred to the escalation of Islamophobia which seems to be well ingrained inside the Finnish and Italian societies. The events of

9/11 as well as the subsequent attacks in Europe and in the Middle East by extremist Muslim groups have exacerbated the dialogue and strengthened criticism on the whole Muslim group. Those who are seen as "Muslims" and "terrorists" are treated as "the others" and therefore "the enemies". Studies on Islamophobia after the 9/11 show how the political institutions and media response to the attacks by amplified and stereotyping Muslims as a homogeneous and dangerous group.

The beginning of my data collection was a period of transition in Finnish public discussions on immigration policies. The new government which took office in March 2007, was characterised by the formation of a specific new ministry for Immigration and European Affairs which basically reunited functions previously carried out by Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Internal Affairs. In addition, the period of 2007 and 2008 was characterised by rising support for the *True Finns Party* - an anti-immigration populist party - guided by the conservative Timo Soini. Keskinen (2011a: 110) notes that, during that period, racist perspectives were not only found in the Internet, but also appeared in hidden and refined forms in many local newspapers and TV programmes where interviews were conducted with selected anti-immigration politicians. As reported by the national Finnish newspaper and also confirmed by the ENAR shadow report/Finland (2007) public statements by Finnish politicians contained targeted racism towards specific groups[103]. For example, the general malcontent towards the Roma people who densely populated the streets of Helsinki was accompanied by racist comments circulating in newspapers and websites[104]. Keskinen et al. (2009a) reported anti-immigration tendencies and increasing forms of populist speech accompanied by racial harassments especially of refugees and asylum seekers. At the same time, negative images of immigrants are also reinforced with reference to economic arguments. Immigrants are often seen as merely costs for welfare states (Keskinen et al. 2009b: 14) and less as social participants within the society. My Iraqi informants argued that media bombardments have led to ethnic agitation, resentment and sentiments of alarm among sectors of the local population.

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103 For instance, see the case of Petri Salo, a conservative politician, who accused Somali people of being drug sellers. "Katainen tuomitsee kokoomusedustajan rasistiset puheet" (HS 6.3.2007) available at: http://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/artikkeli/Katainen+tuomitsee+kokoomusedustajan+rasistiset+puheet/113522560 0834
 (Retrieved 23/4/2013); Ilkka Kanerva, ex minister, on the high amount of foreign athletes as possible explanation on the decrease of Finns' interests in sports (ENAR 2007); more recent statements such as those of: Halla-Aho, MP against Muslims and Somali people (Homma forum) available at: http://cms.hommaforum.org/index.php
 (Retrieved 31/7/2012) ; Hakkarainen's statement against on Somali people, gay and lesbians "Homojen suosikki? Teuvo Hakkarainen ihmeissään" (Ilta-sanomat 22/10/2011), available at: http://www.iltasanomat.fi/kotimaa/art-1288422644346.html (Retrieved 31/7/2007).
104 In August 2011, the Roma case reached a public attention due to the destruction of a Roma shelter in Kalasatama, a district of Helsinki, by the local authorities. For more information on the Roma case check: "Roma panhandlers are back in Helsinki", (HS international edition 31/8/2011), available at: http://www.hs.fi/english/article/Roma+panhandlers+are+back+in+Helsinki/1135264816771 (Retrieved 23/4/2013).

Secondly, the interviewed Iraqis discussed incidents of *everyday racism*. This form of racism consists of daily discrimination, xenophobia and verbal attacks towards migrants. Diverse researchers have discerned the new form of contemporary *discourse*s on racism from the old *ideologies* of racism (cf. Van Dijk 2000). Forms of everyday racism (Essed 1991) reinforced through daily processes, present *a subtle and symbolic nature* (Van Dijk 2000: 34). Ignoring these racist accidents can imply belittling of the problem and therefore a sort of acceptation by the migrant. It seems that migrants' feelings are also influenced by authorities and public discourses that minimise the occurrences of such racist attacks as just exceptional cases (Human Rights Watch 2011).

When I asked about racism and discrimination in Finland, I felt that people tried to minimise the situations in which they were physically and verbally assaulted. Usually, the connotation of racism was identified with stronger ideological connotations of organised and oppressive political powers exerting premeditating actions. Wahlbeck (1999) suggests that the reason racist encounters are possibly overlooked by immigrants in Finland can be understood by their past experiences of discrimination and civil wars (e.g. in Kurdistan). In my study, the actions perpetrated by the Saddam Hussein's regime to the Kurds and Arabs in the past, actions like genocide, hate crimes and other forms of well-organised violence are in contrast to their present experiences "soft" discrimination and racism in the country of settlement. In this case, discrimination is explained as a sort of exclusion. For example, a Kurdish man remembering his time at school, characterised by a lack of contact and social relationships, explains:

> *At school, since I do not have any contacts with people…I felt to be apart… we did not play together… (…) When I was at school I was never invited to birthday's parties for example, never…and I did know why…I felt just scared of their (students) indifference all the time…*
> *(24, Iraqi Kurdish man – Helsinki)*

The time he spent at school was difficult because of bullying, nicknaming or indifference by their schoolmates. In a similar study, Souto (2011) addresses questions of everyday racism and youth membership in Finnish school environment in eastern Finland. In her ethnographic study, cultural and racial differences are constructed with reference to white, Finnish born scholars against students of immigrant background. Therefore, racial and cultural differences become the boundaries that define specific membership and consequent racism, marginalisation and exclusion. In my study, Iraqis tell stories of how perception and critique of difference is silently accepted and transformed into a "hidden and still bitter pain". This could be interpreted as a survival and a coping strategy for minimising racism in their current life. Other informants admitted that they were directly insulted in the streets, or criticised for their difference which usually refers to the use of special clothing (like a scarf for a woman) or simply

the colour of peoples' skin or for their spoken language, as exemplified by the next quotes:

> *Yes, for example once I was standing at the bus stop and there were a couple of old Finnish people. They were looking at me…and then talking…but I perfectly understood that they were criticizing me… (She was wearing the veil). I know these are stupid people, but I would never talk so bad about someone that I do not even know…*
> *(18, Iraqi Kurdish woman – Helsinki)*

> *People can look at you because you look different. When someone came to me and said, "go home Muslim, Perkele ulkomalainen[105]…" I think he is a sick and crazy person. This is not racism for me...it is more discrimination. Racism, for me, is a well-organized ideology... People who damage you or embarrass you.*
> *(4, Iraqi Arab man – Helsinki)*

Again, verbal harassments are justified as being diverse from racism. Taguieff (2001: 5) a French philosopher and historian, argues that ideological racism, characterised by biologism and anti-egalitarianism (like Nazi ideology), is basically reformulated in terms of culturist and differentialist approach. Cultural differences replace biologic differences but with the same intensity. Methods and words may change but the main characteristics remain unchanged, such as hierarchy, fear of the others, xenophobia, etc.

Nevertheless, the people I interviewed in Helsinki never personally experienced violence or specific physical attacks. Most of the informants in Finland denounced a situation of alienation not only dictated by personal choices, but also by external factors. For example, a young Kurdish woman while talking about her weekend plans argues:

> *I will go out with my husband (on the weekend)…maybe to a restaurant, and then to play bowling…that's all. We do not go to discos or a pub….This is something we do not do…it is a cultural thing. Young Finnish people (like us) are just alcohol and party...we don't! And then we did not want to get trouble…*
> *(18, Iraqi Kurdish woman – Helsinki)*

It seemed that in order to avoid possible problems Iraqis preferred to live in their own communities rather than mix within the rest of society. Iraqis living in Finland

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[105] Translated from Finnish to English, it would be: "Fucking foreigner!"

expressed to me that they do not have experiences of racism most probably because they avoid public spaces such as restaurants or pubs, or outdoor places or parks in the city centre (cf. Rastas 2009; Wahlbeck 1999). These are especially avoided during weekends and at nights. As also reported by the ENAR shadow report/Finland (2007: 18) most of the racist crimes (like the assaults) are often committed in public places and usually at nights with 40% of all crimes registered in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. In Finland, more than 700 crimes such as racist assaults were reported to police in 2007 (ENAR shadow report/Finland 2009-2010: 23). This excludes crimes that were not reported to the police and other institutions because of fear, lack of trust in the results of the proceedings and even consciousness of these rights (Ibid.).

Differently, the following three citations present a dual interpretation of alienation. While in the first two quotations, isolation is basically explained as a way to skip "problems" with possible accidents with locals such as "drunken people"; in the second case, self-isolation presents deeper grounds explained by a personal suffering and feeling of guilt. This feeling is mainly caused by the dramatic effects of the war and possibly traumatic experiences which are not overcome yet. Especially in the last quotation, a sense of guilt caused by a privileged situation of safety in the country of settlement, accentuate the vulnerability of the refugees enforcing distance with people who do not share the same past events.

> *I go to work...then at 6pm I am free...then I go to gym. Then I go home… Some people do not go outside...so they do not have problems with these Finnish drunks and other violent people...I do not go out…*
> *(40, Iraqi Arab Man – Helsinki)*

> *Recently, I do not go out so often, basically I stayed at work or at home…so, it is probably for that I do not experienced discrimination…*
> *(24, Iraqi Kurdish man – Helsinki)*

> *I do not go out...I do not see Finnish people… I do not even feel to do it…I read book... Finns do not know what is happening outside of their home... The world is dying outside (Iraq) and I cannot forget this…*
> *(48, Iraqi Arab man – Helsinki)*

9.7.2 *Experiences of discrimination and racism in Rome*

In Italy, the situation was even worse. Despite preoccupation demonstrated by European bodies and organisation, Italian politicians did not moderate their expressions and tones towards migrants (cf. ECRI report 2002; 2006). As reported by the Human Rights Watch (2011: 35), Rome became a theatre of mass violence between 2007 and 2009. The rape and the killing of an Italian woman in November 2007 by a

Romanian[106] followed by other events, led to increased hostility and xenophobia towards immigrant groups. Public accusations from left and right politicians degenerated into an atmosphere of criminalisation of the Roma people, but with repercussion of fear also to the other immigrant communities. As in Finland, Italian politicians belonging mainly to right but also to left coalition persistently demonstrated an attitude of opposition to immigrants by their public statements and other initiatives[107]. In 2007 media reports emphasising migrants' origins ignited a debate where migrants were seen more as a threat to the public order and security than the economic competitors as showed in the past (Fondazione Unipolis 2010). At the same time, securitisation and criminalisation of asylum seekers as illegal migrants (cf. Squire 2009; Lazaridis 2011) has reinforced hostility and prejudices within the European societies and impacted on migrants everyday activities. For example in Italy, the equation, + *immigrants* = + *criminality*[108] was extremely publicised by media. Usually, the criminal person was presented as an immigrant male, illegal and with specified ethnic connotations[109].

The effects of these escalations of brutal events have some visible implications such as: the immediate expulsion of (illegal) people; the high rejection of asylum seekers' applications; as well as practical removal of illegal shacks in diverse part of the city of Rome. At the same time, *the Circle of Freedom movement – Roma liberale –* launched the constitution of patrols of citizens to freely supervise districts of the city considered at risk. In the city of Rome, waves of intolerance and racism towards these groups were perceived also by the Iraqis who populated the streets of the eternal city. I also have to admit that in my way to discover these areas considered "at risk", I encountered many locals that tried to discourage me, arguing how dangerous it could be just walking alone in places like the Oppian hills, or to the other side of the Tiber close to the Testaccio district especially at nights.

Everyday racism is also presented in Iraqis' narratives in Rome. Similarly to the Finnish context, the fact to be "Iraqi" caused motives of nicknaming and bullying for students in Italian schools. For example, a young Kurd remembered how offensive the way students were calling him at school was:

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106 "Roma, è morta Giovanna Reggiani. La polizia: "Si è difesa disperatamente"Article available in the national newspaper "La Repubblica" http://www.repubblica.it/2007/10/sezioni/cronaca/tor-di-quinto/flebile-attivita/flebile-attivita.html
 (Retrieved 10/09/2011).
107 In 2006, Ettore Fusco, a politician of the Northern league (right coalition) instigated violent actions against a group of Roma people leaving in the town of Opera near Milan. Several Italian citizens took part in the criminal expedition. Many tends, in the Roma camp, were destroyed by fire, but only one person at the end was convicted for such crime (Human Right Watch 2011: 56).
108 "Immigrati e criminalita' cosa dicono i numeri". La Repubblica, available at:
Available at: http://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2010/02/04/immigrati-criminalita-cosa-dicono-numeri.html (Retrieved 2/8/2012)
109 It seems that the discussion on these themes was mainly exploited and stigmatised especially during electoral campaign, while minimised afterwards.

When I walked to school, they (Italian guys) called me "Saddam" as a nickname...because I told them I came from Iraq...It was just a joke...<<Saddam, Saddam, Saddam! >> We were young! (...) But, I do not think there is racism in Italy...maybe some ignorant people may tell you things you do not want to hear...but racism is something harder…
(15, Iraqi Kurdish man – Rome)

The nicknaming is justified as a "joke" considering the young age of the schoolmates. However, the comparison with Saddam is obviously an annoying case. Nevertheless, the interviewee believed that the problem did not exist, because it was identified as a random or minor event or something that happened in a specific period of his life. At the same time, stories from the past in Iraq, reconnect with an idea of racism as "something harder" and therefore wrong as previously discussed in the Finnish context. However, the underestimation of these everyday forms of discrimination which create evident types of imbalance of power among the social groups may create a fertile ground for the constitution of a more structured system of racism.

For Iraqis in Rome, racism and discrimination were generally less stressed by those people who argued that they visibly mixed with other southern Europeans or/and Italians coming from the southern regions. Contrarily, it seems that discrimination has been perceived by dark skinned migrants of Muslim confession especially when looking for basic accommodation or a job placement (Caritas 2006). A couple of my informants, talking about racism in fact argue:

Racism? Never... Maybe because I look like Italian…Sicilian, or from Calabria (southern region). They call me "terrone[110]*" at most! (Laugh!)*
(19, Iraqi Arab man – Rome)

One of my friends (a Moroccan guy) was targeted of racism when we were at the university. He was darker than me… (…) today, when people still meet me they thinks that I am Italian…then they recognize my accent, but If I did not tell them, they would not guess I am coming from Iraq…
(44, Iraqi Arab man – Rome)

For many Iraqis, prejudices are, therefore, mainly dependent on the colour of the skin, which may flow on episodes either of discrimination or racism. However, the doubt of coming from a "hot spot" like Iraq, determine a doubt on the public opinion

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110 "Terrone" is a typical insult used by northern Italians towards southern Italians. Literally, "terrone" means "someone who works or comes from the land or the countryside" or "someone who is dirty or does a dirty job".

that is not explicitly exacerbated, but it is visibly showed. A young Kurdish man from Rome in fact states:

> *When some terrorist attacks happen in Iraq, people look at you with diverse eyes (if they know you come from Iraq)...and you might hear discussion which disturb you...people look at you with suspect...Obviously, this is not valid for people who know you... But people generally think that if you come from that country, we know something...or that we all know each other...*
> *(41, Iraqi Kurdish man – Rome)*

This quotation presented a distorted and stereotypical vision of Iraq see as small and identical country from north to South where all people know each other; talk the same language or profess the same religion. The fact of coming from Iraq implies that one should know the terrorists names or be familiar with antidemocratic movements. In some cases, my informants found it difficult to fight against these kinds of prejudices when dealing with acquaintances and working colleagues.

In the interviews with the Iraqis, experiences of integration, inclusion and exclusion were combined with stories of transnational relations with their families and border-crossing economic and political activities. In the following I will discuss these in detail, before focusing on the links between experiences of integration and transnationalism at the end of the chapter.

9.8   A new intensified transnationalism

Despite the previous dictatorship, communication with other Iraqis across the globe has for long played an important role for Arabs and Iraqi Kurds. Even when modern media such as the Internet was not available during the 1970s and 1980s, Iraqis abroad found ways to express their criticism of the regime through political and cultural activities. Hassanpour (1998) for example suggests that media has been fundamental in the construction of Kurdish national identity and national belonging. As Juntunen (2009b: 122) suggests, cyberspace became an important space to address political views, debates, religious speeches and literary meetings in Iraq after 2003. Cyber-transnationalism which may incorporate diverse kinds of overlapping sectors: cultural, religious, political, social, linguistic, etc. implies a new visibility and re-structured power while strengthening and distancing cultural and group dynamics.

At the same time, cyberspace communication is made possible due to changes in the Iraqi society. For example, after 2003 mobile services subscribers in Iraq has risen.

As reported by the NYT[111], in the beginning of 2011, mobile diffusions in Iraq is estimated to be around 77%. Also the use of the Internet spread around the country due to the availability of new satellite systems, the growth of internet point cafes around many cities in Iraq, with affordable prices. During the reign of Saddam Hussein, in Iraq, Internet services were restricted[112] and controlled. Moreover, high fees limited access to the Internet platform for the average Iraqis. The wars destroyed most of the country's infrastructure, which after 2003-2004 has undergone a process of renovation and reconstruction.

On the other hand, the system is in constant state of improvement. Even though according to statistics the number of the Internet subscribers is still low (ITU - International Telecommunication Union[113])**,** people also connect to the web using friends' or neighbours' subscribers. Email, chat, blogs, forums, Skype, VoIP and social networking sites like Facebook, Messenger or Twitter, are very popular among young Iraqis in Iraq and abroad. For example, I found it quite fascinating the fact that Iraqis were able to find photos of their childhood, with relatives and parents or schoolmates, through their friends' networks and to upload these on their Facebook pages. Usually photos are also commented on by personal stories, poetry and phrases from songs dedicated to their beloved dead ones or generally to the people who have suffered the war and the exile. These elements may be seen as a tribute to their past, but also as privileged experiences of growth and resurgence. Despite these, photos and videos also portrayed travels undertaken to be reunited with families back in Iraq and in other places in Europe and around the world in search of their transnational families. The vast majority of Iraqis living in Rome and Helsinki consider the Internet as an important tool to keep in contact with their people (in Iraq and broad). Through their social network sites, Iraqi people updated information on their current status, activities, or interests related to Iraq, videos, collections of photos of their last trip; or photos of friends, families, childhood as well as political petition political and cultural happenings. They also quite often exchanged e-mails, phones numbers and Facebook pages with me after the interview, so that we could keep in touch.

This form of cyber-transnationalism is also apparent in Iraqi and Kurdish TV and radio broadcasting, which seem to be quite common devices in Iraqi households. When visiting Iraqi families at home it was common for them, to show me, most of their private and public TV channels such as Al-Iraqiya, Kurdistan TV, KurdSat, Al-Sharqiya, Al-Sumaria etc. and radio stations such as Voice of Iraq, and Radio Dijla. Internet and other media platforms are tools which promote active (with people) and passive (online newspapers, TV programmes) communication, and provide a social

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[111] "A Big Push to Expand Mobile Service in Iraq" NYT, available at:
http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/03/world/middleeast/03iht-M03B-ZAIN.html?_r=0 (Retrieved 12/9/2011)
112 The restriction regarded the block of free email service and many other websites. As a matter of fact, only government-monitored e-mail and limited websites were allowed.
113 Internet World Stats. Data available at: http://www.internetworldstats.com/me/iq.htm
(Retrieved 12/12/2011)

platform (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube) through which people reconstruct their lives in exile. The Internet also works as a stage where people are able to express their ideas while ensuring their sense of community and responsibility. Especially after 2004, people outside of Iraq have been able to express their feelings and emotions about their past without the fear of persecution. For those people who were not able to freely travel back to Iraq, however, the Internet provided an answer for their questions of curiosity about their country of origin and its changes.

9.9   Forms of transnationalism in Helsinki

In this section, I discuss how different kinds of transnational relations are established and kept alive by Iraqis living in Helsinki. These include economic, socio-cultural and political transnationalism.

9.9.1   *Economic transnationalism*

Arab Iraqis and Iraqi Kurds engage in economic activities with families living in Iraq and abroad. However, economic remittances are less visible over time since they have been restrained to the private sphere.

As remarked by my informants, in the new phase of country reconstruction after 2004, the economic rebuilding is a challenging and ongoing process which is reconnected to country security and corruptions' issue. After Saddam, different financial companies that started to operate in the country created a passage from a state-run economy to a liberal market economy (Crocker 2004). Iraqi financial system is today organised among different state and private banks, Islamic and/or foreign banks and different financial companies. However, it is important to remember that Iraq is still a cash society and therefore it is difficult to track precise data on the amount of financial transfers especially outside the formal banking system (Crocker, 2004).

As accounted by my informants, in the past, decades of oppressive state-run economy, and the effects of the embargo slowed down the functioning of the economic system. The instability caused by wars and the international sanctions have impacted ways of sending and receiving financial aids. Due to the tight control over the banking system especially during the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein, Iraqis have devised other ways of engaging in financial transactions with their families and friends. As exemplified by the following quotations:

Well, I send money 5/6 times per year…sometimes even more…then to my cousin or my brother through these transfer companies…bank are not properly working yet…since Saddams' time banks were blocked especially for international transfers…now bank are doing better, but sometimes you need to wait a lot before getting the money, and then charges and fee are higher…
(20, Iraqi Arab man – Helsinki)

We send quite often money to my family. Almost every months…(…) There are different way through which to send money to Iraq…you can ask people who travel to Iraq to give money to your beloved…after the fall of the regime it was easier…or you can send to banks in neighboring countries like the United Arab Emirates*, or Syria, Jordan...and then someone go to pick it from there…in south of Iraq there are no banks working.*
(8, Iraqi Arab man – Helsinki)

Remittances were either forbidden or under control during Saddam's reign in power. As my informants disclosed, the most common ways to send remittances was based on a method of payment called "*hawala*". This system of payment is fast, cheap and less bureaucratic since there is no document to be signed. *Hawala* is based on trust due to the connection to family-tribes. These brokers, who usually belong to the same tribe, use a dense network of contacts for transferring funds. Looney (2005: 5) when explaining how the *hawala* system works in the Iraq case, explains that a person desiring to transfer money exchanges cash for a *hawala* note, often coded or secretly marked to foil potential counterfeiters. This note is then transferred to the other party via mail or courier, who in turn presents the note to an associated exchanger in their country, who converts the *hawala* note back into the appropriate cash specified in the note, minus a handling fee (Ibid.). In few words, money does not physically leave the country but remains always inside the same territory thanks to a well-established network of collaborators and their technological advancements. This form of financial transfer, is also adopted by migrants who either lack access to formal banking system or feel more comfortable transferring small amount of money abroad with lower rates (Thompson 2007: 280). An Arab man explained this form of money transfer in these terms:

Usually I contact a person here for sending money home…usually this person has contact back home (or in another country in Europe)...he works as …well, kind of a broker…they do not exchange money…but they used codes…this person contact another person, then that person another one and so on since he arrives to my family which finally received the money… it is a sort a network of people who collaborate…they trust each other…at the end my family gets the amount of money I decided. This service is not for free, but it is safe at least…we did not trust banks during Saddam's time…
(10, Iraqi Arab man – Helsinki)

The *hawala* method of transferring money, which ensures privacy and confidentiality, has been especially used in countries where war[114] has occurred such as Iraq, Somalia, Iran etc. (El Qorchi et al. 2003). In Iraq the use of *hawala* was devised due to the collapse and the weakening of formal institutions (Thompson 2007: 280). After the fall of the regime, the financial sector in Iraq has been brought back to life with a new and modern banking system, the rise of private banks and diverse financial and international companies like Western Union, MoneyGram, and etc. Obviously, more studies are needed to determine the evolution and the impact of these remittances in both the Finnish and the Iraqi context.

At the same time, after 2004, it was common for people who have travelled back to Iraq to bring some money to their beloved ones. However, in many cases, they stressed how sometimes they felt *embarrassed* by their *moderate* wealth while visiting their compatriots especially those living in precarious conditions with no water or electricity. However, remittances in this case, have travelled with people themselves as reported by my informants:

> *I did not want to have any argument with my brothers and sisters, so when I left their house (in Iraq) I gave some money to the kids, without that their parents would notice it...*
> *(31, Iraqi Kurdish man – Helsinki)*

> *I visited maybe 23/24 families in Iraq, just to say them hello (when I went back to Iraq)...it is a form a respect, because...when I was young I was visiting them, I ate with them, talked with them...played with them...then I have to escaped...But when I went back I went to visited them again...I just took some gifts, like fruits, or sweet things...(...) I visited these families...they were so poor...and I left the money in the sofa, sealed in an envelope for their kids....*
> *(2, Iraqi Arab man – Helsinki)*

These two quotations exemplified a sense of discouragement which while in the first case derives from a visible situation of conflict; in the second case it arises as a natural observation of inequality. The act of hiding money prevents a sense of mortification as well as embarrassment between the donor and the recipient. A recognised upper status created visible and invisible tension within the same families sometimes.

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114 Since there is no proper transaction documented by any paper, this system has also largely abused by terrorists for transferring large sums of money from one side of the world to the other. That could be one of the possible reasons why people do not like to talk about it.

9.9.2   *Political transnationalism*

Iraqis' political affiliation in Helsinki is characterised by strong transnational connections. Although this study does not attempt to provide a detailed picture of the political transnational affiliation of Iraqis living in Helsinki and Rome, it offers a limited view of political transnationalism during 2007 and 2008. In this regard, a lack of Arabic language limited my access to the diversified landscape of Iraqi political parties, with evidently has consequences for my work.

Political transnationalism becomes visible through diverse activities such as: voting, supporting parties, attending debates and meetings, signing petitions, participating on city demonstrations etc. Political transnationalism developed by the support of diverse groups parties like: the PKK Kurdistan worker Party, the PUK- the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, the KDP – the Kurdish democratic party, the communist party of Iraq, the worker communist party of Iraq, the United Iraqi Alliance, until the new Gorran one, Shia parties like SIIC and Da'wa etc. Political parties in Iraq are not only shaped by diverse ideologies but also structured across the line of diverse ethnic, religious and sectarian lines. In this regard, their political orientation and history is different. However, despite analysing parties' characteristics and historical formation, is important to stress that after 2005 and 2006 the formation of national government in Iraq as well as the characteristics of the parties changed. In particular, the new political situation provided opportunities for new parties and new alignments across the ethnic and sectarian divides (Marr 2007: 1). New political parties (such as the Gorran) but also a leadership characterised by the "insiders" versus the "outsiders"— exiles who have spent much of their adult life outside Iraq, or by Kurds who have lived in the north, cut off from the rest of Iraq — characterized the new political situation, as reported by Marr (Ibid.).

At the same time, the process of de-Baathification in Iraq increased the distance among Baathist and ex-Baathists, Sunnis, Shias and also Kurds, with repercussions also in the diaspora communities. Many Iraqis, living abroad, are cautious and suspicious about new refugees, mainly Sunnis, who arrived after 2003/2004. Many of them who suffered of discrimination under the Maliki government, because of their affiliation to the Baathists, were quite different from those compatriots who left during the 1990s like Iraqi Shias, Kurds, Armenians, Mandeans and Christians (cf. Juntunen 2009b; 2011).

As my informant explained, people who have been active in their country of origin, continue to undertake regular actions in the country of settlement. Power is, therefore, reproduced across countries and locations. In order to be successful, action has to be maintained, renewed, and reconstituted through network with the country of origin, across Europe and Finland (La Vecchia 2011: 351). Shia parties like the DAWA Party, the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (SIIC) and communist parties are quite organised

in Finland[115], even if during the time of my participant observation, Kurdish parties were more visible. It is important to note also that cyberspace became an important tool of communication and negotiation of the political future of Iraq (Juntunen 2009b). Internet became an important space for discussion for their transnational political negotiations, but also a platform to search for lost and missing relatives (Ibid.).In these terms, the net became a mirror image of the complex and segmented Iraqi society (Ibid.).

As Natali notices (2004: 111), the autonomous region of Iraqi Kurdistan has become a magnet for trans-border Kurdish organizations, political parties, publications and modern telecommunications networks. New political transnationalism intertwined with the plan of political reconstruction in Iraq, has also been challenged by the overall Kurdish nationalism, which is to make Kurdistan either an autonomous or an independent country, considering the Kurds of other countries reunited in the ancient cause. However, the Autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan, in the northern part of Iraq, has gained international attention politically and economically after the ratification of the constitution in 2005. In this way, as Natali (2004: 113) explains, the *Kurdish diasporas have reframed their nationalist programs in relation to the political opportunity structures tied to their host-country settings.* Based on this, during my data collection period it was quite normal to note that Iraqi Kurds talked about new ideas and new party movements such as the *Gorran -Movement for change[116]* a Kurdish political party born in 2006 as an alternative to the two main Kurdish parties. Kurdish politics has been characterized by competitive relations between two main Iraqi Kurdish parties: the Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic party (KDP) and the Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). In particular between 1994 and 1998, these two parties in Iraq were involved in a fratricide civil war which caused the loss of many people from both sides. At the time of the writing, the relationship between these two main Kurdish parties has improved even though frictions are still observable not only in Iraq but also abroad in terms of community' social cohesion[117]. As an Iraqi Kurdish man, referring to this disaggregated community situation, argues:

> *I participate with my family to 4/6 Kurdish happenings per year (in Helsinki)…the problem is that the main parties: the PKK and the PUK are not like brothers but they are always fighting…It was the same in Iraq...and the same in here…*
> *(24, Iraqi Kurdish man – Helsinki)*

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115 For example, in Finland, there is a political body named the "Coordinating council of active Iraqi political forces" which reunites members of different parties, such as the SIIC, the DAWA, the Assyrians, the Communist, the KDP and the PUK. For obvious reasons, Sunnis' parties are excluded.
116 Particularly, this party was formed through the coalitions of previous party members of the PUK and the KDP, intellectuals and former *peshmerga*.
117 Lack of cohesion and factionalism among Iraqi Arabs and Kurds in Finland has also been investigated by previous studies (Wahlbeck 1999; Juntunen 2009a; 2011).

During my data collection, I observed that festivities and celebrations (like Halabja and other memorial ceremonies and Newroz) were organised in collaboration with diverse political parties and almost contemporarily celebrated in diverse parts of the city. Instead of being reduced as unique events, these commemorative and entertaining celebrations popped up following the separation between the lines of the main political parties. Basically, I would argue that this is proof of profound heterogeneity and sometimes divergence between diverse political groups which are also in charge of cultural activities. The effect of this fragmentation may also create stress on people who ethnically belonging to the same groups, but who do not share the same political convictions or even interest in politics. An Iraqi Arab justifies the political conflicting situation by stressing on the importance of the tribal affiliation and loyalty within the same party structure.

> *If you look in the Kurdish territory, you see fragmentation because tribal loyalty still matters…and make the difference…the main political parties for instance are sustained by families and tribes which are different…and located in diverse areas…*
> *(8, Iraqi Arab man – Helsinki)*

As Yavuz (2004: 126) explains *even the Barzani and Talabani coalitions are formed around tribal structures.* Originally, while the KDP controls the city of Arbil and the north-centre regions, the PUK is quite deep-rooted in the Sulaymaniya and the southern part of Iraqi Kurdistan (Sassoon 2011). In other words, these parties have exerted a sort of patronage which dominates the landscape of Iraqi political discussion despite few exceptions[118]. According to some experts, these tribal and political loyalties, which happen to be regionally localised in four diverse countries, impeded the process of consolidation for Kurdistan (cf. Bruinessen 1992).

However, it became increasingly difficult for Arabs and Kurds from Iraq living abroad to ignore the high level of corruption which spread in these parties by the end of 2003. From my interviews, I observed accusation and disappointment expressed by my interlocutors when dealing with political parties' considerations. At the same time, NGOs like Amnesty International (Amnesty International report 2003) as well as Human Rights Watch (January 2011)[119] have also criticised these parties for asserting violence against dissidents and abuse of powers. Intimidation, harassment as well as physical assaults are commonly used against the opponents, which questions the issue of liberty and freedom in the new Iraq. A specific assault happened also to a Kurdish

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118 The Gorran has been a movement/party that criticised the patronage of the two main Kurdish parties. It was founded in 2006 and it briefly galvanised the Kurdish attention, so that in the Iraqi Kurdistan legislative elections in 2009 the Gorran reached a quite good consensus.
119 World Report Chapter: Iraq . Available at:
http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/related_material/iraq_1.pdf
 (Retrieved 12/12/2011).

man living in Helsinki, interested in politics and human rights, but with Finnish citizenship. In 2005, he was invited for a public talk by a student association of the University of Sulaymaniyah**.** After expressing his concern about the importance of equal rights significance, he was captured when criticising the role of PUK in Kurdistan. As he remembered during the interview:

> *I was kidnapped in May 4th 2005 during a speech at the University of Sulaymaniyah… they put me in prison but suddenly Finland helped me…*The Finnish Ministry for Foreign *Erkki Tuomioja*[120] *also intervened since I have the Finnish citizenship….Well…People in Finland and abroad started to help…petition was sent to diverse PUK offices from Canada to Germany…After a week I was released.*
> *(30, Iraqi Kurdish man – Helsinki)*

Political transnationalism however materialises in diverse forms: demonstration; network of contacts through party committees; email and online petitions; newspapers publications, television stations and public talks (cf. Wahlbeck 1999). Some of my informants in effect stated to have participated in the parties plenum and other official and unofficial meeting both in Iraq and abroad. Moreover, diverse demonstrations were also organised in Finland during the 2007. In particular, the IFIR[121] – in April and in June 2007[122], organised diverse activities such as: online petitions against the B permits and the detention centres and several demonstrations. The Internet is the main platform where people exchange information and where activities are documented. The *Bulletin Refugees* and the *Echoes* are in fact two online newspapers of the IFIR which come on a newsletter forms and report information on demonstration and campaigns on the Iraqi refugee's cause (for example against the deportation), petitions and conferences across the world.

In 2007, two rallies, to which I took part, were organised in front of the Finnish parliament building and in one of the main square in Kamppi. The IFIR, other refugee organisations and NGOs like Amnesty international protested against the use of the B

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120 "Finnish national released from custody in Iraq" available at:
http://www.hs.fi/english/article/Finnish+national+released+from+custody+in+Iraq/1101979470126
(Retrieved 10/10/2011).
121 The International Federation of the Iraqi Refugees is a network constituted by several branch offices situated mainly in U.K. Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Switzerland, Canada, etc. Even if they do not have any political missions in Iraq, most of the people sympathize for leftist movements or parties such as the Worker-Communist Party in Iraq, etc. The first congress was held in Stockholm in August 2007 and it gathered also people from human rights organisations and NGOs. The main focus of the meeting was stressing on human rights discussion while opposing to the forced deportation of Iraqis back to Iraq (Federation – IFIR 2007).
122 20 June is known as the international refugee day. The meeting was organized by the Finnish Refugee Council in the center of Helsinki. The meeting reunited many politicians, refugees and associations with the intention to promote a campaign for the abolishment of the temporary residence permit (B-permits).

permit, which was regularly issued especially to Iraqis, Somalis and Afghans. There were also protests against forced deportations to Kurdistan considered as a "safe area". The resonance of such an organised demonstration was successful. Today, in practice B permits are no longer used, or at least in a really low scale. This is an important outcome of how the civil society may have an important role in attempts to change discriminatory actions, promote human rights discussions and protect the people who search for help and security.

9.9.3   Socio-cultural transnationalism

In this study, "social remittances" generally refer to normative structure such as ideas, behaviours, identities, and social capital (Levitt 2001: 11) that unifies the migrant's country of origin with the country of settlement. Social remittances prevail due to the virtual flux of information spread by new technologies and/or physically thanks to the increment of cheap and fast transportation. These two main channels provide the studied Iraqi people the opportunity to hear and be heard by their compatriots in Iraq and abroad.

People exchange various kinds of information ranging from: human rights discussions, Iraqi culture revivals and social and cultural ideas such as democracy or equality. Social remittances which today circulate particularly through the media define a new space of migration where the Internet, phone calls and exchange of texts as well as narratives are the predominant features. As stressed by my interviewees, new communication technologies modifies and improves people's networks. Thus, maintaining regular ties with some families and friends is a common attitude among the Iraqis living abroad.

Travel opportunities connecting Finland to Iraq have also been facilitated due to new and better connections. Iraqis and Iraqi Kurds who travel back from Finland explain that going back to Iraq is a travel to families and friends which usually originated from other countries such as Sweden or Germany. Sweden is a country where many Iraqi Kurds and Arabs reside. There you can find various flights which directly connect diverse cities like Erbil, Sulaymaniyah or Baghdad with affordable prices.

> *We try to go to Kurdistan when we have holidays…and when here there are holidays…now it is easier to travel, and actually many people do than before…in Kurdistan the situation improved nicely…going back is like travelling into the past…Usually we stop a couple of days in Sweden where my brother is living…and then we take a direct flight and suddenly after some hours we are there.*
> *(2, Iraqi Arab man – Helsinki)*

Iraqis are connected in a complex way and across diverse countries. Even if the focus of this study has mainly been on specific locations related to country of origins and country of settlement, it can be argued that Iraqis' transnational spaces is constituted by even more complex affiliations and social network which span over different countries where Iraqis temporally lived, studied or where their families reside. Throughout my interviews, extended Iraqi families are associated with lives in different countries. Iraqis' transnational families are able to create and recreate bonds with Iraqis and societies both in Europe and beyond. For example, on some occasions people showed me photos of their travels for visiting their friends and families across the globe. I interpreted such action as a way to recreate networks and revitalise contacts against the rupture caused by their forced migration (Brycenson & Vuorela 2002). In some cases, these visits were accounted with more relaxed feelings in comparison with experiences of visits in Iraq where resentment and emotional distance could survive.

Traveling back to Iraq is not just a question of going back for holidays but it is also a way to responsibly take part in life events such as marriages, births, or deaths and to meet other Iraqis living abroad. A repatriated Iraqi Kurdish man living in Rome said:

> *I come from Halabja, the city that Saddam bombarded…you know…the ghost city…I came there last year to see my family. I have a small child now…who I did not see before… and a wife. I need to think about them.*
> *(41, Iraqi Kurdish man – Rome)*

> *We are going in the summer in Kurdistan…my sisters also come from US it would be a little party also to celebrate my father birthday.*
> *(22, Iraqi Kurdish woman – Helsinki)*

In some cases, traveling back to Iraq is also an opportunity for overlapping dynamics such as political, economic, cultural and personal. For example, some informants, outside family reunions and meetings, were also invited to partake in cultural debates and other happenings back home. For example, giving lecture to young students on the role of the intelligentsia, or participating in political and cultural events provides the basis for a process of social reconstruction. These ideas had an impact on the process of general rebuilding of the country, and on the reconstruction of severed family ties, as well as informants' feelings towards temporary or permanent return. The exchange of information, as well as the possibility of moving temporarily back to Iraq with a baggage of resources (e.g. intellectual skills, ideas, working experiences, work ethics) acquired in the receiving country highlights a process of reverse brain-drain. However, as exemplified by almost all informants, Iraq in 2007/2008 was still a country under a process of reconstruction with promising interests in democratic development.

Before in Iraq there was this black hole…nobody knows exactly what was happening…now, you can feel the change…if your go there…or I you talk to people (by phone, internet)…Of course it is still something in process, because you do not reconstruct a country after 30 years of war is not easy…(..) I mean, In Finland, there was the winter war but not even for one year…we had 30 years of wars in Iraq! Saddam Hussein destroyed everything (...) the tyranny policies clean the mind of the people….Now, discussion of democracy are common when dealing with Iraq as we see for our experiences in here is important in the process of state building…
(4, Iraqi Arab man - Helsinki)

Dynamics of changes in Iraq proceed slowly as accounted by many people. However, the role of the new government or the process of de-Baathification is not critically addressed. The rise of internal conflicts between Shias and Sunnis since 2006, the "epuration" from the former Baathists from political and economic sectors and the increased conservatism happen in a parliamentary representative democratic republic like Iraq. Today Iraq is still a dangerous place where ethnic minorities suffer from violence and where ghettoised areas substitute previous mixed multicultural areas. In this new context, diversity is seen as a threat and potential "enemies" are set apart. In my understanding, the reason why people did not *critically* address this issues, can be both related to a situation of chaotic change, or to a consideration that a "violent" redemption is a result of a "violent" past.

Besides these considerations, ideas of change in Iraq are also described with reference to the increased virtual connections which are important parts of people's daily routines. The informants had access to the Internet either at home, at work or in public places.

I can watch Al Jazeera as much as I want, or chatting with messenger with my cousin in Canada… We talked about friends we have in common, people who met after a while (through Facebook)…exchange photos of our family members, the new ones, the little ones… I also discovered a photo which I thought they were lost forever…It was really emotional.
(20, Iraqi Arab man – Helsinki)

As suggested by my informant, people living in Iraq are able to connect more easily than before through wireless 'hot spots', Internet cafes, universities and public offices as well as home internet service providers. However, as underlined by most of my informants, Iraq is still lacking proper electricity, therefore daily blackouts can be a regular occurrence depending on the zone and the area where people live.

*We call each other…we exchange emails...you just need to be organized, since
sometimes there (Baghdad) is no electricity during the day...*
(16, Iraqi Kurdish man - Helsinki)

In Finland, the role of media in sustaining socio-cultural transnationalism is quite
relevant. For example, the Newroz celebration becomes a media event. Internet pages,
video and photos also publicize many Iraqis musicians and dancers who take part in
other Newroz celebrations in Helsinki, Espoo and Vantaa. Videos of the event as well
as photos are easy to find across the web on YouTube and on other Internet pages.
These remittances also materialise across space by receiving real and virtual publicity.
Socio-cultural remittances are therefore consciously and unconsciously means through
which people enforce cultural practices and social values.

However, cultural transnationalism is also promoted in the field of art by
organisations and associations. For instance, a couple of Iraqi artists living in Finland
started up in 1997 the "European Union Migrant Artists' Network". This union reunites
both Iraqis and other migrant artists who are living and working in other Europe
countries. The aims of this artist group in Finland are of two fold. Internally, the
network facilitates the integration of artists in the new country of settlement and
externally, promotes a well-organised network of relations amongst artists abroad
which support the same principles. In this regard, associations promote integration
discourses at diverse levels, are generally important resources for refugees especially
against possible exclusion (cf. Wahlbeck 1999; Alinia 2006). The *EU union of
Migrants' artists* organises national and international exhibitions, seminars, workshops
and other cultural activities especially in a country like Finland, where limited
migrants' visibility was perceived as a problem. Moreover, the network since 1997 has
published a quarterly magazine called "Universal colours". This is available online but
and also distributed across Europe.

The period of my data collection, was an important time for the network. The 10th
year anniversary, came in fact with a well know exhibition in the city of Helsinki at the
Cable Factory in March 2007 in which 23 artists, Iraqis included, exhibited their
works. Words such as cultural hybridity as well as third culture worked as a symbolic
platform to these artists. Most of the artists had experienced exile in forced and
spontaneous ways. These migrants came to Europe with diverse reasons and dreams
and with various ideas of artistic practices. As I previously said, the country of origin
impacts the lives of these Iraqi migrants who faced isolation, threats and violence.
General social remittances transpired through the circulation of peoples' ideas (such as
through the "Universal colours" magazine) and their periodical actions (exhibitions;
meeting); therefore this sort of cultural shift creates resources while promoting cultural
exchange with Iraqis in Iraq and in the diaspora. Artists' activities are widely

publicised by Arabic and international media[123], Arabic art forums, and by their own websites through which they express their opinions as well as their skills to their country of origin. In particular, in several interviews these groups of Iraqis, critically reflected on the Iraqis transitional time, not only condemning the terrible cultural damage to the Iraqi museums and galleries, but also attacking on the media, for not informing on the loss of Iraqi cultural heritage.

9.10 Forms of transnationalism in Rome

In the next section, I analyse the economic, socio-cultural and political transnationalism of Iraqis living in Rome.

9.10.1 Economic transnationalism

Similar to the Finnish case, Iraqis living in Rome highlighted how economic transactions became easier after Saddam Hussein's fall. However, from a social point of view, remittances have also created some tension within families' highlighting a stronger border between the "rich and fortunate Iraqis" who left the country and the "poor and unfortunate ones" who stayed. These circumstances became more accentuated for those Iraqis who moved before the escalation of violence. Here, an Iraqi Arab man, who arrived in Rome in 1982, explains:

> *From the embargo's time until today, I have always helped my sister...I received phone callings also from other relatives and friends. They just needed money and I send almost every month. But Saddam was also good on creating the hate between "us" who live abroad and "them" who remained in Iraq. Our faces are in fact more rested, relaxed, healthier…Our families are happy because we are doing fine, but there is always a bit of resentment especially when you go there… But sometimes when I sent money, there were problems (...) I asked them to equally divide the money amount among all the family members…But they do not do it! So then they call me and we started to fight! They try to explain that for example, the husband does not work, so they would need more money, that the other person who works, etc. But, I know it is hard…so I said to equally divide them again, otherwise I would not anymore helped them…so at the end they did it…*
> *(44, Iraqi Arab man – Rome)*

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123 One of my informants, appeared both in Finnish and international media like the RT (Russian television networks that broadcast in Arabic) or *Thaqafa* a Lebanese publishing & Distribution Company, or in the Iraqi national Newspaper *Al Sabaah*.

Looking into the transnational dimension of Iraqis living in Rome, I encountered unique cases of *reverse remittances*. These remittances flow from home communities and/or diaspora communities to migrants living in Rome. These Iraqis lacked proper help from public institutions and/or were not able to support themselves. In practice, they rely on forms of external support from relatives and friends back home or abroad[124]. In various cases, the lack of security as a result of their "condition", forced them to request financial support back home and from relatives across Europe. Financial aids were utilised for their basic needs, such as buying city transportation cards, medicines, phone cards and sometimes food. Mazzucato (2011: 457) in her study of Ghanaians' reverse remittance in the Netherlands, notes that these kinds of remittances may also materialised in the form of food, medicines videos, clothes sent to migrants by their network members. I noticed how this situation of "*reverse remittances*" was quite common in Italy, where the system of refugee status recognition may be still quite long, bureaucratic and even precarious. These quotations try to capture this precariousness:

> *How can I live in here without anything? In Italy I do not have anything. My parents send me money sometimes...you know...I hope, that when I will have a job, I could send money to them.*
> *(6, Kurdish Iraqi man – Rome)*

> *If I need something I call my older brother that lives in England with his family. If I need money, a dress, medicines or something he helps me. For example, I am now waiting for a mobile phone he sent me few days ago. It will arrive at the "Centro Astalli". It is mobile phone with internet also. I can take picture and look at my email...*
> *(7, Kurdish Iraqi man – Rome)*

> *I do not have money at the moment. Yesterday, I called my brother who live in Kurdistan and I asked him to send me money...I hope to find them at the western union office soon.*
> *(41, Kurdish Iraqi man – Rome)*

This kind of reverse remittances system has also been discussed by Sassoon (2011: 149) when addressing the case of a large number of Iraqis living in Iraq's neighbouring countries. These Iraqis mainly rely on their savings or on remittances from their families in Iraq. For example, in Syria, Iraqis suffer a double problem; firstly, the vulnerability of their legal protection limits their employment possibilities; secondly, their only option remains the shadow economy with high percentage of exploitations weather in terms of low wages and working conditions (Sassoon 2001: 76). Similarly in Italy, refugees and other migrants with pending resolutions to their legal status, and

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[124] Specifically, I refer to deported Iraqis, refugees and also clandestine who lived in Rome in a building, run by the Kurdish association "Ararat".

with few resources are negatively affected by financial instability. Moreover, a scarce knowledge of the local language, followed by difficulties of finding jobs, the lack of proper accommodation create not only stress and frustration, but also alter the dynamic of remittances cycles "from out to in" countries where Arab Iraqis and Iraqi Kurds are living. This is an evident case of migrants who may be forcibly engaged in transnational activities. In these circumstances, transnational family network are understood as important material and immaterial resources. Generally, it can be argued that the phase of forced transnationalism usually anticipates patterns of spontaneous transnationalism once the migrant found a sort of equilibrium. It is important to stress that this forms of reverse remittances may happen for a limited time. They provide in fact the basis on which Iraqis may construct personal path of integration and socio-economic balance.

9.10.2 Political transnationalism

In Rome, the form of political activism with a transnational twist dates back to the 1980s when some Iraqi Arab men, set up *the Iraqi democratic writers', journalists' and artists' league* which counted in those years about 50-60 active people of leftist background. This league could be defined as hybrid between cultural and political transnationalism. One of the former activists in fact argues:

> *The league of democratic Iraqi artists, journalists and writers was mainly a cultural organization driven by politics. We were against the regime of Saddam Hussein…In those years, when he was at the power he obliged artists to collaborate with him through all forms of art. Artists have tp reproduce him through the statues paintings about his militias in the Iran-Iraqi war…artist have to reproduce him, always him…Our League was against these artists' regime…(…) We depend on Beirut, where the was the main office…but suddenly diverse cells were created around the world. 15 people were needed to constitute a branch office…If Countries did not allowed Iraqis to create his own group, like Spain or Algeria which did not give any permission, Iraqis could lean on other people from other countries, like us in Italy. We organized exhibitions and concerts in Italy while collaborating with diverse municipalities like Rome, Florence, Venice, Milan….but also abroad like France and Syria in Damasco (…) we also had a magazine called "l'Alternativa" which was printed in Arabic in Beirut and then sent around Europe. Then we organized debates…. political ones…for example if a poet came to Rome, or a politician also from other states than Iraq like Jordan, Syria, who joined out ideals we tried to meet…also Italian interested and with the help of a translator sometimes participated as well…in those years, in fact, the Italian communist party, helped a lot the Iraqi communist party either for*

the ""festa dell'Unita"[125]" or/and for the congress party; (...) We also had connection with Iraq, through the Kurdistan…it was limited but what was discussed in here arrived also there…for example the magazine, which I talked before, from Syria was secretly exported to Kurdistan….and also petitions against the killed people, or abuses on women…arrived also there…now with the new technologies is much easier…Before in the 1980s all was organized by phone…but you needed to be careful because you could be intercepted… today you can write from home, there are forums, blogs, to which you can participate…Before all was done in secret. We secretly worked in Rome, for example in the intercom I have never put my name…I changed my name…because it was dangerous…For example once, one person of our group was also hit on the streets…we needed to watch out…
(37, Iraqi Arab man – Rome)

It was basically a cultural organisation that dealt also with the political problems caused by the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein. The main office was in Beirut, but several other branches spread widely across Europe. They organised exhibitions, conferences and petition also with the collaboration of the Italian municipalities, the communist party *in primis* and other active organisations working in the field of human rights and culture. The political activities engaged them both in the country of origin and in the country of settlement. But at the beginning of 1991 the league's activity slows down and almost disappeared in 2003.

After 1991 all the dreams and the desires slow down…the idea that now the war ends and we all go back, vanished…People got tired to wait and at the same time, some people started to have kids, to built up families…and when your child 15 for example…you need also to think about him…Then there was also the fear…we were known for our activities…then in 2003 we organized something…but you suddenly see your friends and myself included, who turn 60, 65 years old…and you need new forces…young ones. We still sometime collaborated with some other associations, like the association "Friendship Italia-Syria"…they are young, the know the Arabic language and they have met young Iraqis filmmakers who escaped from Baghdad…they have organized nice meetings in Milan…some others Iraqis came from Sweden, The Netherlands…Now I am in contact with an Iraqi friend who lives in London for organizing something again here in Rome about photography…we want organize an exhibition of photos of Iraqi writers, artists lived in exile … after a

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125 The "Festa dell'Unita" is a folk political festival organised by the Italian communist party (PCI) since the Second World War in many Italian municipalities. One of the main goals of this festival was raising money for financing their newspaper "l'Unita'". During the years, due to the transformation of the PCI, the festival is annually organised by the Social Democrats (DS) which turned the political meeting in a more social event. Various events such as political debates and scientific forums are accompanied by other happenings like music concerts, food markets, dance stages, sports tournaments etc.

photo catalog, with 70 Iraqi intellectuals…Then we are waiting for something from the Ministry of Culture (in Iraq) , but they do not have money at the moment…
(37, Iraqi Arab man – Rome)

The reasons why the political activism of this group of Iraqi students and artists vanished are multiple. Some Iraqis move abroad, others began to show depression for the everlasting conflict, others simply felt tired to be active. Political transnationalism collapsed because of the lack of new generations of Iraqis permanently living in Italy, but also for the inadequate sense of *community* among the same ethnic group. Moreover, new actors such as NGOs (e.g. *un Ponte per)* and other immigrant associations replaced their cultural activities. Isolation among the same members happens to be a quite normal situation due also ageing, family duties and other personal interests. One of the followers of the League describes the end of the League's activities in these terms:

Now, we are a bit distant each other...maintaining this friendship is not so easy anymore...we are few, and since one of our best friend, a poet died, Sayad, meetings are not anymore so common...he was the pivot of the association...there had more strength than us…to meet, to discuss, to talk...others moved away...it seems that today we just talk about what's happen to us...family, work, kids, divorce...there is not anymore the link it was before...I mean there is but it is more personalized…I feel isolated from the others...maybe it is just a mental fatigue...in Rome there was never a community...but a group of active Iraqi people, mainly students...we met almost every nights, we played also chess, some other read, other organized political debates, or an exhibition, it was a cultural thing...but as living in a family...
(9, Iraqi Arab man – Rome)

This quotation reveals some information not only about the social and political function of the league, but on the role of some people, like *Sayad,* who strengthened internal affinity and cohesion. In the case of Iraqi Kurds, their political transnational activities are managed by specific political parties (mainly the PUK) and partly by the information office *UIKI- onlus* which I discussed in the previous chapter. Both organisations have a strong network of Kurdish minority across Europe and Kurdistan and power to lobby the national government and European institutions to get attention on their case. The interconnections between national, sub-national or even cross national units has expanded also thanks to new forms of communication and modern information technology. Especially the PUK party is well eradicated in the society of Rome, not only for the promotion of their political activities, but also a point of reference for the Kurdish people who require help. For example, a young activist of the PUK party explains the transnational role of the party in this way:

We tried to participate in both the Italian and the Kurdish society in Iraq. We organized political seminars to which also Italians attend...The Kurdish cause which is divided across diverse countries such as Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Turkey is really heated today...Because these states are not always supporters of the Kurds... I work to make Iraq a democratic state and Kurdistan free...after Israel, Iraq could be a free, democratic and where rights could be recognized and where freedom of religion would also be possible to achieve...As a party (PUK) we work in two directions: in international relations and as internal organization. We have branches in all Europe: Germany, the Netherlands...who are coordinated by the main office of the party. Every branch office works according to what it is needed in the country...For example, in Italy we work with Kurdish people, we try to find them and help them, for the job haunting also... we also organized cultural activities...Then our international office works or informs the Party office in Kurdistan...basically there is a rappresenter in every EU states...then we organize big periodically meeting in these EU states...(...) in turn it is chosen a diverse location for these meetings...but we also go to Kurdistan to meet officials, and to see what to do... (...) we also give information for example on how to start up companies in Kurdistan...there are many companies now..
(15, Iraqi Kurdish man – Rome)

As exemplified by this quotation, the role of the political Kurdish party (PUK) in Rome is quite complex. Political transnationalism appears evident in two versants: inside the same party with connections around Italian cities and internationally among the branch offices and the main office in diverse cities in Kurdistan and around the world. PUKs' delegates meet regularly across diverse locations, but also they organise expedition to Kurdistan to get more personally involved in the reconstructing the political space. The PUKmedia (media office of patriotic union Kurdistan) website is also an important multilingual tool which provides information on the Kurdish party's activities as well as information regarding the Kurdish area in terms of culture, economics, global politics, history, free time, entertainment etc. During the discussion with one member of the PUK, a new frame emerged where the intentions of the new party activities would also be directed to the support of creation of an Italian consulate office in the Kurdistan Iraqi region due to the economic and cultural relations between the two countries. The Italian consulate office in fact opened in summer 2011 in the city of Erbil[126].

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126 During the time of participant observation, it came quite obvious that diverse Kurdish people living in Finland reflected on the importance to open a new Finnish consulate office in the Northern part of Iraq (Kurdistan) as a way to strengthen (mainly economic) connections between Finland and Iraq. A poll on "Should Finland open consulate in Iraqi Kurdistan?" was also launched in a Kurdish-Finnish website reaching the 89.5% of positive preference. Info available at: http://www.kurdistan.fi/ (Retrieved 12/12/2011).

9.10.3 *Socio-cultural transnationalism*

Similarly as in Finland, in Italy the Iraqis' socio-cultural transnationalism manifests through the connections of transnational families or associations and organisations promoting exchanges of ideas, values and practices. At the same time, as in the Finnish case, Iraqis encompass forms of socio-cultural relations which go beyond the binomial link between the society of origin and the society of settlement. Easy, fast and cheap travels are considered more accessible after 2003. Some informants who visited Iraq say:

> *From Rome in 5/6 hours we are in Erbil…My family is all around the world…my sister lives in Germany…another one in US...and the rest in Kurdistan. And when I go there I try also to organize with my other sisters too...so, we can meet at the same time...*
> *(43, Iraqi Kurdish woman – Rome)*

> *It is good to talk about what it is happening in Iraq…and of course years after year the situation improves (…) It has already improves in certain areas…some areas are safer than others, like in the north… and some people I know have gone back…(..) talking about security, life experiences in our Iraq is important because people may choose what to do…if going back or remain…In the case, they go back, they also have some potentials that have acquired while studying and working in here…you know? It can be just good…*
> *(41, Iraqi Kurdish man – Rome)*

Transnational socio-cultural networks cross from location to location, linking the local with the global. Social remittances are moving from countries of settlement to the country of origin, but they mutually happen across spaces and extended to other social spaces. One of my informants from Rome, when talking about the artists who participated in the Newroz New Year's Eve party, organised at the Ararat association, argues:

> *In Newroz we also invite Kurds from the European diaspora…for example in 2005 we had a for example the Kurdish singer Fevzi Kilic…then we have also invited in a week in Rome the Kamkars from Iran, they have been performed in Rome and also in Iraq, in London, in Sweden and many other places…here they have also participated to seminar about music and peace…We have many contacts around the world…*
> *(41, Iraqi Kurdish man – Rome)*

Most of the events that require fluxes of contacts identify the Internet as a fundamental platform. The extraordinary power of the Internet is even more stressed by those Iraqis in Rome, who remembered how they survive in the past and how difficult it was to be daily informed about their country. The rising social space, connecting Iraqi diaspora and Iraqis at home, allows shares values, social rules and cultural codes which are challenged and confronted, while people renegotiated their identities. Moreover, social remittances which basically sped up after 2003 also permit one to find and create a new balance between familiar obligations and opportunities. As an Iraqi man living in Rome reported:

> *Now, I check Iraqi news through Arabic channels, internet, exchanging emails with friends in Iraq and abroad. When I arrived in Italy in 1994, there was no internet…I remember that I was looking for Arabic printed newspapers at the kiosk…(…) for example for the Al-Hayat from London…Sometimes I found it sometimes no…then internet gave me the possibility to follow the news and to implement my contacts with the (Iraqi) people….what to do in case, how to help…well to be present in their lives…*
> *(23, Iraqi Arab man – Rome)*

The Internet is part of daily life in Italy, even for those lacking home Internet access or living in a precarious situation. Particularly, this was the case of a number of migrants who were able to connect with their beloved ones and at the same time to get help if needed. The net in fact allows people to virtually get closer to families and their life events which either positively or negatively affect people's lives. For example, an Iraqi man talks in these terms:

> *Almost every day, I go the Termini station where I can find diverse internet points… It doesn't cost much…There I can talk with my sisters for hours by phone…and if I want…and see my new nephew in skype, …then we talked about happens in here…and there, if what TV news shows is really happening in my own town…you know sometimes you hear bomb which exploded, and people got injured…I am always scared if something happens to them…*
> *(7, Iraqi Arab man – Rome)*

Through the process of social remittance, future aspirations such as possibly moving back to the home country are influenced by the media (Appadurai 1996). In this case, media may strengthen peoples' and groups' perspective of returning back or simply to weigh motives of a possible return. However, media in this study has been seen as bridges which connect diverse countries, in particular Italy, Finland and Iraq, enforcing and challenging continuity.

9.11   Conclusion

This chapter analysed the emerging significance of integration for Arab Iraqis and Iraqi Kurds living in Rome and Helsinki. Integration is a pluri-dimensional process which intersects diverse sectors; economic, social, political, and cultural, reflecting peoples' personal ideas and achievement. At the same time, Iraqis are able to speak more than one language, they move more easily than in the past between countries and cultures and they are able to pursue different kind of interests (economic, political, social, religious, and cultural) both in the society of origin and in the society of settlement. These interests not only highlight the kinds of connections Iraqis have to their home country, but they also represent a successful way of shedding light on migrants' lives across and inside borders which are inextricably related.

Discussion on return, exemplified by the concept of the longing to return, has been essential to investigate both integration and transnationalism. It became quite clear that the fall of the *Baath party* also signified the fall of alienation and the beginning of a new phase of easier "virtual and physical connections" between the Iraqis living in Iraq and those living in the diaspora. In particular, the longing to return clarifies how the (temporary) return is accounted, motivated, postponed or avoided while referring to specific transnational and integration processes. Iraqi people embraced weak or strong dynamics of inclusion and exclusion in the society of settlement while at the same time developing transnational relationships, which reflected their broader solidarity, loyalty, membership, responsibilities, etc. The longing of return has been a helpful concept for explaining the correlation between integration and transnationalism.

This chapter demonstrates that transnational ties provide resources for Iraqis living in Helsinki and Rome. Ongoing contacts with Iraqi people in Iraq and in the diaspora strengthen Iraqis' intentions to "survive" and then "succeed" in a new society. At the same time, transnationalism helps to redefine migrants' membership and loyalties. Contacts directly and indirectly remind Iraqis of the reasons they fled, the darkness of the past and the ongoing future. Relying upon both transportation and communications technology, Iraqis in Finland and Italy acquire general information related to the family as well as the state and group dynamics, which may shape future decisions about staying or returning. However, transnational dynamics also reflect limits or opportunities which are bounded to local settings. For example, political transnationalism in Helsinki is more organised and diversified than in Rome due to a constant presence of a relatively big refugee community. In Rome, the passage from the 1980s to the 2000s is characterised by a decline of political Iraqi organisations and the replacement of old Iraqi political groups with new and stronger organisations. Moreover, a fragmented sense of community and the perception of Italy as a transit country undermine the formation of strong and constant political actions. Economic transnationalism, which in Helsinki is accounted as more constant flows of capital from Finland to Iraq, in the Rome becomes problematic. Reverse flows of capital, from Iraq and other countries to Italy, caused by lack of economic opportunities and legal status recognition, are quite common for migrants during their first phase of settlement.

Differently, social remittances, amplified by technological and transportation facilities, shows similar dynamics in both contexts. However, transnational families are mapped and remapped in a broader geographical space which surpasses the limited identification of the country of origin and country of settlement. Although this study has simply focused on family dynamics concerning Finland, Italy and Iraq, it is important to remember that Iraqis' transnational families engage in even more complex relationships reuniting Iraqi families across the globe.

Political, economic and social remittances accompanied by short-term visits to Iraq/Kurdistan not only strengthen people and group identities, but may also anticipate future plans of reintegration. Transnationalism also reveals perspectives and limits on return by assessing living conditions in a country like Iraq characterised by its troubled "past" and problematic "present". The shift between ideas and reality of return is basically summarised through the longing to return. The longing to return in fact brings direct and indirect information on the conditions of change in Iraq and in its process of country *reconstruction* in a post war setting. Longing to return would encompass the premises of what has been defined as "a transnational return" (Eastmond 2006) since it reunites both virtual as well as real connections generally adopted to verify future and possible conditions of return.

At the same time, thinking of return brings also consideration on present conditions in the country of settlement. Questions of integration in the receiving society bring back sentiments of difference and plurality as lived in certain historical periods in Iraq. Particularly, the rise of the Baath party lead to increased sectarianism, which was facilitated by the divide-and-rule tactics of the regime of Saddam Hussein. In this regard, processes of integration as described by Iraqis living in Helsinki and Rome show a totally new condition which requires some time, efforts and beliefs before getting into action. In the cases of Iraqis living in Helsinki, I assessed integration as an issue of practices while critically discussing problems that arise when cultural diversity is perceived in terms of a *clash of cultures*. In the cases of Iraqis in Rome, I stressed less on cultural diversity as a constraint and instead considered integration both as a belief and an action. However, Iraqis in Helsinki and Rome participate in the society of settlement at diverse degrees. In the Finnish context, my informants' perceptions of integration emerge as a *compartmentalised system* characterised by the temporal succession of diverse kinds of interconnected sectors. Once linguistic and economic integration are accomplished, the migrant is expected to move over to gain social and political integration. However, this system is not without problems. For example, discussions on isolation, discrimination and racism may be the first symptoms of the system's imperfections which can create hindrances to migrants' processes of incorporation. Conversely, in the Italian system, assistance and initial reception by the state is almost non-existent. Questions of respects for human rights and human dignity are fundamental issues if we are to fully understand integration practices. Secondly, due to its blurred status, integration is generally explained as a feeling, a belief or a more spontaneous process of migrants' competence. However, Iraqis' criticism of the Italian volatile system of reception is complicated by the solidarity and the support

demonstrated by the Italian civil society (cf. Korac 2003; Puggioni 2005; Caponio 2005). Nevertheless, problems such as discrimination and racism also arise especially in Rome.

This chapter has demonstrated how transnational practices are common amongst Arabs and Kurds from Iraq in terms of social and political obligations and kinship. At the same time, they do not hinder integration. On the contrary, integration and transnationalism are seen as intertwined processes that feed into each other.

10 Concluding remarks

10.1   Introduction

The aim of this thesis has been to study Iraqi migrants' perceptions of return to Iraq after the removal of Saddam Hussein from power in 2003 and the different factors that affect this. Thus, the study provides detailed information on integration, transnational practices and belonging. In particular, the notion of longing to return is contextualised and placed in relation to contemporary debates on transnationalism and integration.

In particular, this study provides an understanding of first generation Iraqi migrants, both refugees and immigrants, with reference to their local experiences of integration in two European cities: Helsinki and Rome. The subjective experience of migrants with their past, present and future perspectives provide rich data on Iraqis' lives abroad. The unique experiences of these individual migrants, which encompass diverse time frames, offer vivid images of migrants' lives across diverse countries, experiences of inclusion and exclusion in Finnish and Italian society, as well as perspectives on the return. The research involves a discussion of the longing to return, as a strong or weak component of migrants' lives, explaining how migrants relate to and indentify themselves with diverse spaces (Iraq, Italy and Finland) and according to various times (present, past and future). In this kind of study, a transnational perspective directs the researcher's attention not only towards the migrants' adjustment process into the society of settlement, but the relations of these to considerations on migrants' places of origin.

10.2   The triad: return, transnationalism, and integration

The concept of return is approached through a comparative analysis of Kurdish and Arab Iraqis, living in Helsinki, Finland and Rome, Italy, in order to show how the contexts of origin and settlement are important references for understanding how the return is perceived. In this regard, the return is dynamically addressed and not taken for granted. Therefore, the return to the country of origin may be personally desired, longed for, postponed, but also hated, or rejected under specific conditions.

In the Iraqi case, the return, frozen for years, became a possibility after the overthrow of the dictatorship and the capture of Saddam Hussein between 2003 and 2004. By possibility I mean that people reflect on the return as a potentiality, but not as a permanent act. The temporary return is not based on the unknown, but rather constructed and deconstructed through a well-organised network of contacts, visits and information linking Iraqis across societies of settlement and the society of origin. Even those Iraqis who did not express any desire to go back to Iraq, due to their traumatic

experiences and lack of close social contacs, argued that "temporary visits" could be an attractive thought in the future. This attitude could be explained by a simple curiosity, supported by the spread of information, especially circulated through the Internet, publicising the post-Saddam Iraq as a place where change was happening. For others, expressing mild or strong concern, the return is considered as a temporary travel. At the same time, structural problems in Iraq such as insecurity, high level of corruption, political pressure, incertitude of the future as well as personal motives related to family conditions in the country of settlement, have exacerbated Iraqis dreams of a permanent return. Despite political and economic reason, Iraqis demonstrate strong but contrasting motivations towards returning to Iraq. Mainly particular locations in Iraq, as exemplified by my informants, were accounted with attraction and repulsion, love and hate (Smelser 1998: 5). Past and present memories embedded in people's minds travelled across stories of loss and violence but also through pleasant accounts of childhood and adolescence. For the first time, Iraqi people after the post-Saddam phase were not afraid to talk about their traumatic stories of the past without fear of persecution for them and their family. Iraqis felt finally "ready" for public speaking without the former government interference. In this new phase, cyberspace played a major role in reconnecting people across different countries along with new transportation opportunities (cf. also Juntunen, 2009b; 2011). However, social fragmentation caused by new political configurations after 2003, have led to deep divisions both in Iraq and in the diaspora as exemplified in this study. In the new political phase of transition, Iraqis are also conscious, despite their longing to return, that they can be unwanted visitors because of their political, sectarian, ethnic or professional background. In this regard, ideas of return go beyond the mere nation state discussion, but practically intertwine with local opportunities. The return is always spatially set in contexts of personal identification that refer to localities such as towns or cities characterised by strong familial responsibilities and capabilities. At the same time, the return can also be a question of economic motives especially when dealing with regained properties or start-up businesses. In both cases, sentiments of return may also be driven by feelings of guilt, which have persecuted migrants during their exile.

But what is behind the dilemma of return when especially dealing with displaced people? Though both sociological and psychological attempts are important to clarify migrants' ambivalence (cf. Kivisto & La Vecchia-Mikkola 2013), it is important to discover the conditions which place the migrants in such circumstances. A focus on the return, either longed for or despised, enriched by a transnational perspective may be beneficial to this type of study (Huttunen 2010; Eastmond 2006). The dilemma of return is particularly renegotiated by the longing of return which reveals symbolic, socio-cultural, political and economic affiliations which are configured across diverse locations of settlement. At the same time, a life reconstructed in a new society, like in Helsinki or Rome, may determine new priorities and new life circumstances.

In this regard, the longing to return provides a broad description with the purpose of locating and correlating migrants temporally and spatially. The longing to return has been indentified in this study as the key to explaining and exploring how people

articulate their transnational networks while at the same time providing information on social integration practices.

10.3   Overcoming the myth of return with the longing to return

From a sociological point of view, one of the more significant findings to emerge from this study is connected to the reformulation of a former concept, the myth of return, so as to render it more congruent within current debates on transnationalism. Prior studies have found that the myth of return has been employed for understanding how uprooted people perceive exile in the receiving society, while moving from past experiences to future perspectives (Anwar 1979; Al-Rasheed 1994; Zetter 1999). Generally, from the refugees' point of view of the myth of return can be translated as a desire or wish to return (Anwar 1979). However, with the passage of time the return never materialised leaving the migrants in uncertainty. In my opinion, the myth of return is an ideal or ideological representation of a collective ambition of people, living in a sort of blurry and nostalgic circumstances, to return in an unspecified future to their former countries. However, with the passing if time, their image of their country of origin appears as an amplified icon surrounded by a legendary aura, especially because the return is postponed or it never occurs. The concept of the *myth of return* seems to no longer be appropriate in transnational societies like Iraq after 2004, where people's mobility reshape questions of return. In fact transnationalism stretches the way through which people communicate, travel and live across space. The return therefore occurs but acquires a more temporary rather than permanent status[127]. This trend has determined consequences which shake the foundation of the myth of return as an idealised concept. For this reason, I have preferred to replace it with "*longing to return*", a concept that refers to a strong, mild or weak yearning of (temporary) return that in certain circumstances may be easily fulfilled.

The concept of the "myth of return" seems to be dependent on the relationship of the refugee group/s with the people of the homeland before the flight which seems to be physically but not emotively interrupted (Al-Rasheed 1994). The longing to return constitutes an upgraded form of the myth of return highlighting circumstances where relations happen to be less idealised and consequently more concrete. Visits back home as a matter of fact disrupt the myth, because people are reconnected with the physical and familiar environments. The first visit, in particular, represents a unique experience where reality prevails over imagination (Donà 2004). As Muggeridge and Dona' state (2006: 256) the first visit to the country of origin is in fact a specific event which breaks a barrier by closing one chapter and unlocking a process of engagement with subsequent events. In this regard, the longing to return is suitable concept for understanding and explaining the dynamic between imagination and reality. For instance, in my sample many Iraqis, legally and illegally, travelled back to Iraq with

the consequential result to disrupt the mythical idea of their past country as they have envisioned it since they left. In many accounts, the inability to go back to Iraq because of the ex-regime's limitations increases the desire to be reunited with the Iraqi and Kurdish people. It could be argued that today, Iraqis are no longer *out of space*, but they *live in a space(s)*, and *act in a space*/s which is (are) shaped both by physical as well as virtual elements. Iraqis' actions are therefore embedded in social and historical relations that connect different countries. If transportation may facilitate reuniting with the place, technology may help with virtual relations the isolation determined by the myth of return. The re-appropriation of personal spaces and the reunion with family members, which has been amplified during the exile, challenge the memories and the imagination, restoring a "life" which is visibly and psychologically diverse with respect to the past.

Secondly, the return itself has been stressed by my informants as a temporary occurrence and in other cases as possible and feasible condition possibly performed in the future when specific circumstances will commonly occur (for example: retirement, implementation of security in some Iraqi areas, family decisions, growth of children reaching legal or social adulthood etc.). In most of the cases and particularly in specific zones (such as in the northern part of Iraq) both Arabs and Kurds from Iraq had the possibility to travel back after 2004. Family reasons as well as political and cultural events were often the basis for such travels during the time I was conducting interviews. Most of the Iraqis also stressed that, the temporary return's effectiveness was also able to fulfil the desire to finally be reunited with their people after years of absence. In a transnational frame where physical and virtual connections are highly synchronised, the idea of a permanent return is substituted by a more fluid image of a temporary return which ensured the back and forth travels. Therefore, considering the return as a temporary condition, rather than a permanent one, entails a new perspective which represent the basis for the "reality checks" (Barnes 2001: 408) for a possible permanent return as well as a "transnational solution" for convincingly being part of two places. The same argument has also been raised by other social scientists (Eastmond 2006; Cassarino 2004; 2008; Huttunen 2010) who have highlighted how transnational practices have facilitated migrants' return to and reintegration into their home countries. At the same time, the longing of return could be seen as possible precondition for a permanent return.

Thirdly, following the above point, the myth of return compresses the three dimensions of time where the past, the present and the future are united. If in the myth of return the time coordinates appear to be blurred and undetermined, the longing of return could be seen as emphasising the fluidity of temporalities involving movement between past, present and future. In the first case, when Iraqis think about the return, they imagined their past lives in Iraq/Kurdistan. In this instance, the longing of return permits the contextualisation of the lives of Iraqis politically, historically and culturally prior to the exile. Secondly, in the present condition, the longing for return is kept alive through the engagement of the migrants within the network of transborder contacts and temporary visits which potentially disrupt the imagination as accounted in the myth. In

many Iraqis' accounts the possibility to get "virtually and physically close" to their families, is usually accounted as a powerful way to cope with exile, improve relations and reexamine migrants' position in a new society. At the same time, the longing to return shows possible obstacles to return when looking at other perspectives. For instance, on-going sectarian and religious tensions, the effects of the campaign of "de-Baathification" on the social, economic and political sectors, internal displacement and the demographic transformations and the lack of proper services and infrastructures and property disputes act as a deterrent for potential returnees, especially those who belong to vulnerable groups in current Iraqi society.

Meanwhile, the longing of return sheds light on the actual conditions faced by the Iraqis during the settlement process (inclusion/exclusion) in Helsinki and Rome; the past, extrapolated by the longing to return's discussion, represents the power that reinforces peoples' present lives abroad. Finland and Italy and in particular Helsinki and Rome represent second chances for the Iraqis after the dramatic Iraqi events. Thus, the longing to return is a survival strategy applied in the country of settlement shaped by needs and ambitions that in the country of origin were not possible to achieve. At the same time, the longing to return shows the role of inclusionary and exclusionary processes as experienced by the migrant in the country of settlement. Thirdly, the longing of return, may also provide information on how people evaluate the return as a temporary or permanent option for the future. Narrowly, the longing to return would encompass the premises of what has been defined as a "transnational return" (Eastmond 2006) since it reunites both virtual as well as real connections generally adopted to verify future and possible return conditions.

As exemplified in chapter eight, the longing to return functions to better frame the life of a migrant within temporal as well as spatial coordinates challenged not only by memories but also shaped by ethnicity. In this regard, the longing to return acquires a special meaning. It is argued that for the Arab Iraqis the longing to return is generally understood as a sort of continuity with their past, or with the "golden ages" of Iraq before the dramatic events of the Baathism and the escalation of current violence. Continuity is also a question of rediscovery and revival of roots, ancestry, and family dynamics. In the case or Iraqi Kurds, however, the question of return intertwines with the recognition of ethnic diversity and their political, social, cultural rights within the area of Iraqi Kurdistan.

Fourthly, the myth as well as the longing to return is highly connected to the analysis of concepts like home and belonging (Zetter 1999). As previously mentioned in my study, perceptions of home and belonging among uprooted people may vary (Black 2002). This point is important when studying how people cope with displacement as well as their ideas of a possible return. However, it is misleading to think that the refugees' return is automatically considered when opportunities in the country of origin are finally offered. Although the study does not focus on an analysis of gender, age and religion, the results suggest that when moving from countries and at specific conditions gender relations may change. For example, I noticed how widowed

women acquired new household activities and responsibilities in the new environment while coping with survival strategies. In some cases, a traumatic past and the lack of current social relationships with Iraqis in Iraq, weakens the person's longing to return. With reference to age, the longing to return seems not to be dependent on the age of the people, but acquires a special meaning only if framed into the different periods of people's migration. The role of religion and/or its absence was not deeply discussed both for avoiding "possible" tensions during our meetings and for the complex nature of its traditions and manifestations. However, most of the people I met were either atheists or practiced religion as a private matter. Probably, the religious revival amplified since the 1990s, and the current recognition of the Muslim religion as a state religion in the new Iraqi Constitution, created more distance and confusion in the topic when discussing return issues.

Generally, Iraqis provided geographical and historical information for explaining the uniqueness of their country by mentioning cities and towns of origin and their families, tribes and roots. This broad information provides a "fertile ground" upon which to contextualise specific socio-cultural contexts where memories, personal and historical accounts and individual and communities narratives are intertwined. However, home is also a cognitive dimension, where hope of societal improvement and expectations of a better future are symbolically internationalised and constructed with reference to a troubled past and possible future dynamics. Thus, home is shaped by geographical, social and cognitive spheres while being constructed and reconstructed according to diverse time frames. Thus, Iraq with its cities is usually referred to as a country with a glorious past; a place where artists and scientists came from; a place of the old civilisation and other historical heritages; a place where diverse ethnic groups generally coexisted with no special tension. In all the cases, these historical and geographical locations represent the basis for constructing Iraqis' pride, reference and inspiration. On the other hand, the disappointing contemporary interval visibly initiated with Saddam's ascension to power in 1968-69, characterised the people's memories regarding episodes of alarming but localised violence and ethnic and religious factionalism. Diverse authors (cf. Al-Khalil 1989; McDowall 1997; Tripp 2003; Makiya 1989) in fact, note how the Baath party gradually consolidated its powers while constantly controlling the society and its ethnic groups by establishing a special secret networks inside and outside Iraq. These actions along with unequal power relations became more visible especially for Iraqis who settled abroad during the 1970s and 1980s and those migrants who sought for asylum after 1990s.

Informants' narratives helped to situate home across locations. Iraqis' sense of belonging is therefore materialised in specific *loci* but fed by meanings, values and possibly by transnational network (Anthias 2008). The four themes (dual loyalties, feeling of homesickness, engaging in diaspora and finding home eventually), which were identified from the analysis of my participants' stories, provided in this study and discussed in chapter seven, explain how people negotiate home and belonging at different levels.

These results do not intend to represent a larger Iraqi diaspora, but can be useful for anticipating studies on voluntary repatriation programmes and reintegration. A contextualisation of Iraqis' stories, through the longing to return, can be beneficial in fact for addressing questions of participation in society of settlement, reconnections with the country of origin and thoughts on repatriation and reintegration difficulties. Despite the fact that this study does not provide specific data and analysis on the last two processes, it can still serve as a filter for understanding the feelings of strangeness, unwantedness, familiarity and ambivalence with the context of origins.

10.4 Localising transnationalism and integration

This study has found that Iraqis are generally involved in diverse transnational networks consisting of political, economic and socio-cultural activities. Iraqis entertain strong, multidimensional and constant relations across countries and locations resulting in a pluralisation of "territorial" and "social" points of reference which arise in specific time and space coordinates. Korac (2009) explains how transnational practices are exemplified for recreating spaces of continuity across borders. Identity and sense of belonging are therefore reconstructed in new localities and within the migrants' communities. Similarly, Al-Ali & Koser (2002: 2) state that a transnational perspective can provide new insights into transnational migration by reconsidering people' easy access to telecommunication and transport, by developing new multiple identities according to multiple localities of peoples' reference as well as by reconstructing and upgrading the relationship between sending and receiving countries.

On the other hand, migrants and in particular refugees are not passive victims, but usually social actors capable of deciding whether to leave their country under specific circumstances and settle in new ones (Al Ali & Koser 2002; Wahlbeck 1999; Korac 2009). Migrants usually do have as well as produce resources. Resources may be derived by the migrants' communities like associations, organisations, transnational linkages and set by the municipality under a particular welfare state regime. These resources, which may derive from their transnational networks, may also represent the premises for developing and feeding successive transnational actions. Transnational networks of various kinds, as in the Iraqi case, may be independently or forcibly encouraged as explained in the previous chapters. The longing to return which transpires through the transnational frame is a way to look at the past, think about the present but also to wish for the future. Thus, the longing to return, amplified by new means of communications, permits to break down the barriers of the imagination. Talking with friends, or entertaining political and economic activities is also a way to recreate their familiar places or simply search for continuity (Korac 2009), regain sociality (Huttunen 2010) and construct and reconstruct belonging.

In this regard, cities of origin and settlement happen to be places of identification and where transnational and inclusion/exclusion practices emerge. Specifically, the city

is the empirical space where the migrants mold their lives; where they meet the locals; where conflicting and peaceful cohabitation practices take place; where immigrants and refugees implement transnational political, economic and cultural actions which may overlap each others. Usually, peoples's connections between the country of origin and settlement are expressed in forms of social, economic and political ties and facilitated by new technological and transportation opportunities. The case of the Iraqi people living in Helsinki and Rome particularly shows how transnational actions across national borders became more visible and efficient during the 2004. Moreover, comparing Iraqis across two diverse countries shows how transnationalism and the dynamics the inclusion/exclusion occur differently; how the Iraqi population operates in specific localities according to their social composition and advantages and disadvantages of their countries of settlement. Nowadays, Iraqi people are acting and living in a space or spaces where physical and virtual connections to Iraq have been improved and renegotiated across localities. The emergence of localities of origins and settlement become known through a dense intersection of transnational practices. As a result, transnationalism not only guarantees a special *continuity* (Korac 2009) but also raises questions of *ethnic dignit*y. Ethnic dignity requires a special commitment and constant work by the Iraqi people. It not only refers to ethnic minorities being threatened by a dominant group, but also to a general discourse of appreciation and revival of the groups' ethnic specificity. Ethnic dignity however transpires not only in terms of a groups' self-esteem (Phinney 1990), but also as a process aiming at describing Iraqi Arabs and Kurds as less caricatural groups far from prejudices and stereotypes caused by culturalist and securitisation discourses. *Ethnic dignity* implies that Iraq and Kurdistan's localities emerge as areas of history and rich culture, to be enhanced and re-thought beyond negative past events. As also explained by other studies, the recognition of a new federal republic in 2005 and the Kurdish state in north of Iraq might have also amplified diverse transborder practices facilitated by transportation (cf. Khayati 2008). In this regard, it is important to stress that transnationalism does not determine deterritorialization, but increases the role and importance of "localism".

Helsinki and Rome are not just "places" where people live, but represent "spaces" where narratives of Iraqis emerge. Feelings of familiarity or estrangement in the new environments are filtered by people's memories and their transnational actions. When moving from personal to collective and virtual memories, transnationalism increased. At the same time, the connection between local and global becomes indissoluble. From a researcher's point of view, both locations became important frames of interpretation of Iraqis' lives. Through stories of Iraqis in Rome and Helsinki, issues like return, transnationalism and integration are spatially framed. Thus, the longing to return intertwining with concepts like belonging, home, transnational practices and integration provides a more fluid and dynamic approach especially when dealing with high fragmented communities.

With reference to integration, the results of this study indicate that integration symbolises the Iraqi migrants' willingness to firstly "survive" and then to "succeed" in

a new country. Integration is therefore defined as a continuous process of migrants' engagement within the society of settlement, but also influenced by previous dynamics as experienced in the society of origin. The process of inclusion in a new society is transversely accounted by referring to past experiences of inclusion/exclusion. In this regard, the question of "disintegration" within the Iraqi society (during the time of the Baathism), the absence and the lack of trustful institutions and the scattered violence obliged people to rediscover new points of reference such as their community and ethnic groups while searching for help and resources. Iraqis' stories of settlement in Europe reflect the contradictory experiences between the past and the present. As stressed by my informants, once settled in Helsinki and Rome, the necessity to get acquainted with the receiving society has been described as a gradual process of insertion characterised by a regaining of *trust* in authorities and institutions while coping with traumatic events of the past. In this regard, the integration is a complex process, which occurs in a particular local setting, but nourished by past memories.

Moreover, integration is shaped by two diverse mutual components. The first refers to the aprioristic potential/abstract meaning of integration as ideally portrayed by the migrants, while the second component deals with the results of such processes of integration once implemented in the country of settlement. However, the clash of the abstract with the concrete practices of integration is only revealed when the migrant settles abroad. Life in a different society may result in doubts and uncertainty on the migrants due to new set of rules, values and behaviours. In contrast to the Iraqi refugees of the 1990s, those who migrated in the 2000s seem to have a better plan on how to escape from Iraq, where to hide, settle and resettle.

With particular reference to the city of settlement, Helsinki and Rome encompass diverse welfare states' dynamics, which have a preponderant influence on localised Iraqis' experiences of settlement. While Rome is described as a place of experimentation, the city of Helsinki provides a more structured profile; in this regard, there is an internally different logic which determines the level of migrants' dependability as well as undependability on welfare state dynamics, which at the local level, have an impact on the success of integration practices.

10.5   Rome and Helsinki: two sides of the same coin?

Helsinki and Rome are two European capitals recognised for their political, economic and cultural potential. Partly in the 1980s, but mainly since the beginning of 1990s, migration flows facilitated by globalisation processes, the end of the Cold War, the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the process of EU enlargement, delineated new migration trends and mobility to countries such as Finland and Italy which were previously considered as main emigration areas (Bonifazi et al. 2009; Wahlbeck 1999). In this regard, these countries represented places attracting diverse kinds of migrants who were searching for opportunities. For refugees, who mainly arrived after the

1990s, *these countries* firstly symbolised the search and the achievement of peace and security; secondly, the *cities of Helsinki and Rome* became not only permanent places of settlement but also contexts where forms of social and economic solidarity could be reconstructed.

However, comparatively speaking, being an Iraqi in Finland and Italy is a different experience. Before embarking into a discussion, it is important to briefly outline characteristics of the Iraqi populations within both locations. Similar to a study by Khayati (2008), which focuses on diaspora formation and transnational practices of Kurds living in France and Sweden, this study shows that the Iraqi population structures vary in the Finnish and Italian contexts. In Helsinki, the Iraqi population is more variegated in terms of political, social, ethnic and cultural characteristics. Chain migration seems to be a current phenomenon in Finland more than in Italy. In contrast, Iraqis in Rome are less diversified. This could be explained by the idea of temporariness linked to the Italian refugee' system. But it can also be linked to migrants' personal plans to migrate to other countries where either Iraqi communities are stronger or where the welfare state provides better resources in order to adjust. Thus, Rome has been considered as a place of passage more than a permanent settlement especially for Iraqis who migrated during 2000s. Moreover, due to the common practice of illegal entry to Italy, the gender ratio is mainly characterized by young male migrants.

Italy is a country characterised by evident regional differences. Dialect variations, history, and the economic unbalance between the north and the south did not disrupt the Italian national cohesion, but simply created a stronger regional logic. Obviously, this "cultural" fragmentation has also an impact on peoples' perception of nationalism and national identity. However, this does not mean that the Italian national identity loses its status or importance, but it appears just more diversified. As suggested by social scientists, the regional differences followed by a diverse configuration of social, political, cultural and economic structures created a more fluid system of preferences for migrants as well. In this regard, the migrants' engagement within a new society/locality is less structured and able to challenge the occurring socio-economic and political changes. At the same time, actors rely on transnational and local resources while conforming to a system characterised by regional/local particularism.

The study also indicates that migrants' reflections on their personal path of integration intertwine with welfare state dynamics. The conservative Italian welfare (Esping-Andersen 1990) frame tackles migration indirectly. The scarce impact of the Italian welfare states determines paradoxically a process of *responsabilization* which paradoxically empowers refugees in their process of inclusion. The role of ethnic and cross-ethnic associations as well as the local networks became fundamental for people's experiences of social and economic inclusion. My research shows that despite the absence of a corpus of law relating congruously and specifically to refugees and asylum seekers, the local actions have developed more humanised grounds where relation of trust, reciprocity are developed more spontaneously with the passage of

time. However, despite the role of increasing solidarity, *de facto* refugees are not entirely welcomed. Receptions measures are quite scarce and the path of integration is fragmented or mainly dependent on local initiatives, which appear to be quite disjointed. Self-employment strategies and the informal economy are usually valid options for entering into the labour market. Although the effects of the economic crisis also touched the Italians, the migrants are those who are usually employed in *ad hoc* occupations which do not match their aspirations or their educational backgrounds. Deported Iraqis I met were not desperate, but they became desperate as a result of the stressful daily circumstances of survival or by the wrong expectations they had about Italy either as a transit country or a country of settlement. These people knew that in spite of the low assistance provided by the welfare state, they could survive even without a residence permit. Thus, Italy is a country where people may survive. Short-term irregular jobs represent temporary solutions, but also an easy one, for saving up money in order to travel to another country or for biding their time while looking for another job. Once arrived in Italy, the necessity to reach Rome, the capital, was intended as a means to seek out possible community links, economic opportunities but also legal/diplomatic references.

In contrast, Finland has been seen as a country with a strong national identity. As exemplified by diverse studies (Saukkonen 2012; Keskinen et al. 2009), Finland is a country where nationalism plays a major role in erecting hierarchies especially among the nationals and specific non-nationals. In Iraqis' accounts, terms such as culture impenetrability, cultural differences, closure and introvert characters were usually used to portray Finnish society and the Finns. Despite extensive reception and integration measures actuated once migrants settle in specific municipalities (e.g. welfare benefits, secured basic life condition, legal residence, etc.), Iraqis questioned themselves and their "integration paths" even after a decade of living in Helsinki. Despite the ideal of equality and universalism portrayed by the Finnish welfare state, migrants are not fully inside, but neither fully outside (Forsander 2004:220). Moreover, the assimilative character of integration policies has been masked by the intention to recognise equality, while simultaneously identifying disparities (Wahlbeck 1999; Forsander 2004). In this regard, the integration policies are constructed to protect the concept of Finnish community, while at the same time, provide cohesion and equality to the system. Actions need to fit into a schematic approach where there is little attention to spontaneous measures. In Finland, migrants' inclusion happens within a *compartmentalised system* of integration. By this definition, I mean that migrants' participation within the society is expected to proceed step by step. Integration policies and practices are composed of diverse spheres or distinct compartments (economic, political and socio-cultural) which are connected in a row. Once the economic integration is achieved, the migrant are expected to automatically move forward towards the next steps in the integration process. Obviously, as also grasped by my interviewees, the Finnish system presents some defaults. According to previous studies, the Finnish welfare state (Keskinen et al 2009; Mulinari & Rätzhel 2009) may generate conflicting modes of behaviour or unexpected reactions especially for people who do not fit or identify with the system. Discourses on discrimination and racism as

suggested by previous studies may be the key for explaining unemployment and/or labour market segmentation and marginalisation.

10.6   Achieving and not achieving?

This study has been supported by the need to develop empirical research that understands both the diversity of migrants' experiences inside the communities and the complexity of processes of integration and transnationalism in order to contribute to the goals of advancing refugees' welfare and social inclusion at the local level. In this regard, the current findings add to a growing body of literature on integration and transnationalism. These two processes are seen as intersecting each other (Kivisto 2003; Levitt et al. 2003) and as inevitably necessary for explaining how migrants reconstruct and negotiate their membership while living across diverse countries. In particular, the longing of return has transversally approached integration and transnational dynamics providing contextualisation and offering "grounds" when dealing with forced migrants. Local, nation and transnational scales analysis followed by a temporal analysis between past, present and future events provide coordinates for better understanding how integration happens. In this regard, question of migrants' ambivalence is investigated not only towards the country of settlement, but also towards the country of origin (Kivisto & La Vecchia 2013).

Perceptions of integration therefore reflect on Iraqis' socio-cultural, political and economic background, which do not always correspond with the Finnish/Italian understandings of integration. The migrant's perspective reveals the potentialities as well as the limitations of these concepts. Thus, integration is firstly accounted as a potential process of mutual adaptation (cf. chapter nine, the abstract description) but at the same time is constructed through a process where inclusionary and exclusionary experiences are mixed together. The shift from the abstract to the concrete level of analysis of integration is therefore located within cities and/or specific neighbourhoods both in Helsinki and Rome. Likewise, past references to life in Iraq, and in particular to the thirty-years of Baathism with its consequence of distrust of the political institutions, contributes to clarification of how inclusion was perceived by the social actor within his/her society before they fled. Reminiscences of the Baath party regime (e.g. sectarianism, oppressions, and violence) increased the Iraqis' distance from the state causing lack of trust and mutual dialogue. In this regard, it is interesting to note that the Finnish welfare state with its effort to quickly "integrate" people into a predetermined system can be counterproductive, resulting in stress, dissatisfaction and feeling of inadequacy towards the dominant culture.

The findings of this study suggest that transnationalism is a central process for approaching migrants' integration. Transnationalism may alter people's identity, and perception of belonging which are important elements to be considered in the context of social integration and possible returns' consideration. Clearly, further research on

this area is needed in order to explain how and why diverse groups negotiate successful models of inclusion. Today, the strong emphasis on cultural differences materialised through nationalist discourses where people's cultural proveniences are presented as problematic. The extensive production of a vertical gap among superior and inferior cultures radicalises the distance instead of intensifying commonalities. The focus could be placed not only on differences but also on common features that cross national borders. But what would happen if cultures would be approached for commonalities rather than difference? Would migrants feel more welcomed? Specifically, what would happen if language and culture courses would insist less on cultural difference and more on promoting cultural commonalities? The results of this investigation show that educators and researchers should reflect on implementing new strategies of action as well as research methodologies able to grasp not only difference but also commonalities across cultures and migrants.

In this regard, the longing of return discussion has been a key concept for providing "direction" when studying Iraqis' sense of home, belonging, processes of integration and possible returns' ideas. The results of this study indicate that municipalities in collaboration with civil society, should elaborate flexible mechanisms for refugee inclusion by bridging the gap between the diverse cultures; cultures that should not be seen as opposite but as mutually connected. At the same time, the ambiguity of the term "immigrant or refugee community", as a unified and culturally bounded unit, should be critically analysed in order to facilitate a more fluid understanding of it. The difference among ethnic groups should also be addressed internally by considering not only generations, gender, religion and time but also socio-geographic factors of provenience as in the case of Iraqis. Narratives in this case may provide critical and powerful reflections while enriching migrants' life interpretations. Thus, narratives provide details on personal, social and cultural identities (cf. Gemignani 2011:21) especially in cases where national belonging does not necessarily coincide with a specific territory (cf. the case of the Kurds).

Moreover, the study has also led to questions regarding the significant role of localities in promoting or limiting migrants' actions. Despite the importance of the national context, integration is usually shaped and lived in local contexts: the city, the neighbourhood where migrants, associations and other actors interact. In this regard, this study has brought up many questions in need of further investigation especially referring to the diverse city scales that could be taken into consideration. Specifically in Finland, research focused on localities could also provide important questions when dealing with migrants' inclusive and exclusive practices.

In summary, the longing to return is an explanatory concept which allows for an investigation into transnational and integration dynamics. Transnational networks of various natures intersect with discussions of Iraqis' inclusive and exclusive process of integration. This thesis has sought to show that the longing to return, referring to "dual" ambivalence, permits the highlighting of opportunities and limits that migrants encounter in a new society as well as the perception of return.

Appendix 1: Informants

N.	Ethnicity	Sex	Decade of arrival	Country	Education	Marital status
1	Arab	M	1970s	ITA	University	Married
2	Arab	M	1990s	FIN	University	Married
3	Kurd	F	1980s	ITA	University	Married
4	Arab	M	1980s	FIN	University	Married
5	Kurd	M	2000s	ITA	Diploma	Single
6	Kurd	M	2000s	ITA	University	Single
7	Kurd	M	2000s	ITA	University	Single
8	Arab	M	2000s	FIN	Diploma	Single
9	Arab	M	1970s	ITA	University	Married
10	Arab	M	2000s	FIN	University	Married
11	Arab	M	2000s	ITA	Diploma	Married
12	Arab	F	1990s	ITA	Diploma	Married
13	Kurd	M	1990s	FIN	University	Married
14	Kurd	F	2000s	FIN	Diploma	Married
15	Kurd	M	2000s	ITA	Diploma	Single
16	Kurd	M	1990s	FIN	Diploma	Divorced
17	Kurd	M	2000s	FIN	Diploma	Single
18	Kurd	F	2000s	FIN	Diploma	Married
19	Arab	M	1990s	ITA	University	Married
20	Arab	M	1990s	FIN	Diploma	Married
21	Kurd	M	1990s	ITA	Diploma	Divorced
22	Kurd	F	1990s	FIN	Diploma	Married
23	Arab	M	1990s	ITA	Diploma	Married
24	Kurd	M	1990s	FIN	Diploma	Married
25	Arab	F	2000s	ITA	-	Single
26	Arab	M	2000s	ITA	University	Divorced
27	Arab	M	1990s	ITA	University	Married
28	Arab	M	1990s	FIN	University	Divorced
29	Kurd	F	2000s	FIN	Diploma	Married
30	Kurd	M	1990s	FIN	University	Divorced
31	Kurd	M	2000s	FIN	Diploma	Single
32	Arab	F	2000s	FIN	Diploma	Widowed

33	Arab	M	2000s	FIN	University	Married
34	Arab	F	2000s	FIN	Diploma	Married
35	Kurd	M	1990s	ITA	University	Single
36	Kurd	F	2000s	FIN	Diploma	Widowed
37	Arab	M	1970s	ITA	University	Divorced
38	Arab	F	1990s	FIN	Diploma	Widowed
39	Arab	M	1980s	ITA	University	Divorced
40	Arab	M	2000s	FIN	Diploma	Single
41	Kurd	M	1990s	ITA	Diploma	Married
42	Kurd	F	2000s	ITA	Diploma	Single
43	Kurd	F	1990s	ITA	Diploma	Married
44	Arab	M	1980s	ITA	University	Married
45	Kurd	M	1990s	FIN	University	Married
46	Kurd	M	1980s	ITA	Diploma	Married
47	Kurd	M	1970s	ITA	University	Divorced
48	Arab	M	1990s	FIN	University	Single

This list provides some information about my informants. Numbers are used to protect their anonymity. The interviews were conducted in Helsinki in 2007 from February to July, and in Rome from October 2007 to March 2008. By diploma I mean the equivalent of a certificate gained in both a secondary or vocational/professional school. University education means that people have gained an academic degree such as a bachelor's or master's degree.

Appendix 2: Interview guideline

1. Migrants' past experience in Iraq

- *Can you tell me about you and your country and the life you had there?*
- *When did you realise that you could not live in Iraq/Kurdistan anymore*?
- *Did you have basic rights in Iraq? Political, social, economic, cultural participation?*
- *Do you have a specific memory (good/bad) connected to your life in Iraq?*

2. Memories and home

- *Is Iraq your home? Why or why not?*
- *What does home mean to you?*
- *Do you feel "at home" in Finland/Italy as well? Why or why not?*
- *What comes to your mind when you think about "Iraq"?*
- *What do you particularly miss about your country? What do you not miss?*
- *Which kind of activities, customs, or symbols do you use to remind you of a sense of home?*

3. Time

- *Has your attachment to Iraq changed over the years?* How?
- *Do you think that the passage of time creates a situation in which your sense of belonging is related more to Finland/Italy than Iraq?*
- *Do you think that is possible to be attached both to Finland/Italy and Iraq? Why? Why not?*
- *Do you think that the personal attachment to your country (Iraq) can create problems for your social inclusion in Finland/Italy?*

4. Return

- *Did you have a wish to return to Iraq when you left your country?*
- *Has your wish of return to Iraq changed during your life in Finland/Helsinki?*
- *Currently, do you have any wishes to return to Iraq? Why or why not?*
- *From what is the wish of return characterised?*

- *Do you think that women/men in your community have the same wish to return or are there some differences?*
- *Did you have the possibility to visit your country during your exile? Follow up, If "yes": how was it? How did you feel? With what frequency do you go back to Iraq? What do you bring there? What do you bring from there?*
- *Would you like to return to Iraq? Why or why not?*
- *Does the life you had in Iraq still have a strong influence on your life today in Finland/Italy? How? Why?*
- *Do you think that people of your community want to return to Iraq?*
- *What could be the reasons for return?*
- *Do you know people from your community who have gone back? Follow up, if "yes": why did they move back?*
- *Do you think that Iraqis could prefer to move to another country instead of going back to Iraq? Why?*
- *Do you feel your permanence in Finland/Italy is temporary or not? Why of why not?*

5. Countries

- *Can you please tell me how you arrived in Finland/Italy?*
- *Have you lived in another foreign country before Finland? If "yes" why did you move from it? Did you plan to come to Finland/Italy? Why?*
- *Which kind of information did you have about Finland/Italy before your arrival? From whom? Which information?*
- *Did you already have friends living there that pulled you to come here?*
- *Who helped you when you arrived in Finland/Italy?*
- *Which kind of support did you receive from the Finnish/Italian authorities?*
- *What is the best and worst thing about being a refugee? Why?*

6. Current situation in Finland and Italy

- *Do you work? What do you do?*
- *What are the strengths and/or weaknesses of the Finnish/Italian society from your point of view?*
- *Do you consider yourself to be integrated into the Finnish/Italian society? Why?*
- *Is integration important from your point of view? What is integration for you?*
- *What are the major obstacles to integration?*
- *What type of difficulties did you encounter before you got used to life in Finland/Italy? And now?*

- *Who helped you in the integration process in Finland/Italy? Ethnic group? Receiving society? What services do you use or activities do you participate in the Finnish/Italian society (education, employment/unemployment, associations, voluntary work, etc...)?*
- *Do you think that a person can be well integrated into the Finnish/Italian society and at the same time hope to return one day to Iraq?*
- *Do you think that an Iraqi would want to return to Iraq because they are not well-integrated into the Finnish/Italian society? Are there any other reasons?*

7. Inclusion/exclusion

- *What kind of opportunities and threats do you have in Finland/Italy? Have you experienced discrimination/racism in Finland/Italy?*
- *How do you think Finland/Italy has to improve in helping refugees feel welcome? How?*

8. Social network

- *Do you have many Finnish/Italian friends? Follow up: If "yes", how did you meet them? If no, why not?*
- *Do you have contacts with other immigrant communities in Italy/Finland? And elsewhere?*

9. Relation with homeland

- *Do you have contacts/networks with Iraq? Follow up: if "yes" What kind of contacts? Social? Familial? Politic? Economic? Religious?*
- *How do you try to maintain these contacts (phone, Internet, visits home, letters and postcards)?*

10. Identity

- *Do you feel like you are a part of a specific ethnic group today in Finland/Italy as well? Follow up: If "no" what has changed since then? From what did the change depend on? If "yes" how do you conciliate it in the Finnish/Italian society?*
- *If you compare your life before (in Iraq) and after (in Finland/Italy) what have you changed?*
- *Do you feel like you are more Finnish/Italian each day?*
- *In your opinion, is it difficult being an Iraqi in Finland/Italy?*

11. Culture

- *Do you try to maintain your culture*?
- *In what way is your culture different from the Finnish/Italian one?*
- *Do you think by living in Finland/Italy you have lost your culture? Why or why not? How?*

12. Gender

- *Is there a difference between women and men in Iraq, how would you describe it?*
- *Do you think that women have more problems than men in Finland/Italy? Why? Why not?*

13. Religion

- *What was the role of religion in your life in Iraq? and now?*
- *Are you observant? Follow up: If "no" why not?*

14. Iraq today

- *What do you think about what is happening in Iraq? How do you get news from Iraq?*
- *What, for you, would be the best solution for Iraq today*? *Do you participate directly and/or indirectly in the reconstruction of Iraq? Prompt: political, social, cultural, economic activities? Es. Regular contacts and visits? Exchange of ideas and knowledge? Involvement in community associations promoting and upholding social ties? Charitable collections?*

15. A closing question

- *Where would you like to see yourself in 5 years?*

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